



مجلة بحوث الشرق الأوسط

مجلة علمية مُدكَّمة
(مُعتمدة) شهرياً

العدد الثامن والثمانون
(يونيو 2023)

السنة التاسعة والأربعون
تأسست عام 1974

الترقيم الدولي: (2536-9504)
الترقيم على الإنترنت: (2735-5233)



يصدرها
مركز بحوث
الشرق الأوسط



الأراء الواردة داخل المجلة تعبر عن وجهة نظر أصحابها وليست مسئولية مركز بحوث الشرق الأوسط والدراسات المستقبلية

رقم الإيداع بدار الكتب والوثائق القومية : ٢٤٣٣٠ / ٢٠١٦

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شروط النشر بالمجلة

- تُعنى المجلة بنشر البحوث المهمة بمجالات العلوم الإنسانية والأدبية ؛
- يعتمد النشر على رأي اثنين من المحكمين المتخصصين ويتم التحكيم إلكترونياً ؛
- تقبل البحوث باللغة العربية أو بإحدى اللغات الأجنبية، وترسل إلى موقع المجلة على بنك المعرفة المصري ويرفق مع البحث ملف بيانات الباحث يحتوي على عنوان البحث باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية واسم الباحث والتايتل والانتماء المؤسسي باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية، ورقم واتساب، وإيميل الباحث الذي تم التسجيل به على موقع المجلة ؛
- يشار إلى أن الهوامش والمراجع في نهاية البحث وليست أسفل الصفحة ؛
- يكتب الباحث ملخص باللغة العربية واللغة الإنجليزية للبحث صفحة واحدة فقط لكل ملخص ؛
- بالنسبة للبحث باللغة العربية يكتب على برنامج "word" ونمط الخط باللغة العربية "Simplified Arabic" وحجم الخط 14 ولا يزيد عدد الأسطر في الصفحة الواحدة عن 25 سطر والهوامش والمراجع خط Simplified Arabic حجم الخط 12 ؛
- بالنسبة للبحث باللغة الإنجليزية يكتب على برنامج word ونمط الخط Times New Roman وحجم الخط 13 ولا يزيد عدد الأسطر عن 25 سطر في الصفحة الواحدة والهوامش والمراجع خط Times New Roman حجم الخط 11 ؛
- (Paper) مقياس الورق (B5) 17.6 × 25 سم، (Margins) الهوامش 2.3 سم يمينًا ويسارًا، 2 سم أعلى وأسفل الصفحة، ليصبح مقياس البحث فعلي (الكلام) 13×21 سم. (Layout) والنسق: (Header) الرأس 1.25 سم، (Footer) تذييل 2.5 سم ؛
- مواصفات الفقرة للبحث: بداية الفقرة First Line = 1.27 سم، قبل النص = 0.00، بعد النص = 0.00، تباعد قبل الفقرة = 6pt (تباع بعد الفقرة = 0pt)، تباعد الفقرات (مفرد single) ؛
- مواصفات الفقرة للهوامش والمراجع: يوضع الرقم بين قوسين هلاكي مثل: (1)، بداية الفقرة Hanging = 0.6 سم، قبل النص = 0.00، بعد النص = 0.00، تباعد قبل الفقرة = 0.00، تباعد بعد الفقرة = 0.00، تباعد الفقرات (مفرد single) ؛
- الجداول والأشكال: يتم وضع الجداول والأشكال إما في صفحات منفصلة أو وسط النص وفقًا لرؤية الباحث، على أن يكون عرض الجدول أو الشكل لا يزيد عن 13.5 سم بأي حال من الأحوال ؛
- يتم التحقق من صحة الإملاء على مسئولية الباحث لتفادي الأخطاء في المصطلحات الفنية ؛
- مدة التحكيم 15 يوم على الأكثر، مدة تعديل البحث بعد التحكيم 15 يوم على الأكثر ؛
- يخضع تسلسل نشر البحوث في أعداد المجلة حسب ما تراه هيئة التحرير من ضرورات علمية وفنية ؛
- المجلة غير ملزمة بإعادة البحوث إلى أصحابها سواء نشرت أم لم تنشر ؛
- تعتبر البحوث عن آراء أصحابها وليس عن رأي رئيس التحرير وهيئة التحرير ؛
- رسوم التحكيم للمصريين 650 جنيه، ولغير المصريين 155 دولار ؛
- رسوم النشر للصفحة الواحدة للمصريين 25 جنيه، وغير المصريين 12 دولار ؛
- الباحث المصري يسدد الرسوم بالجنيه المصري (بالفيزا) بمقر المركز (المقيم بالقاهرة)، أو على حساب حكومي رقم : (9/450/80772/8) بنك مصر (المقيم خارج القاهرة) ؛
- الباحث غير المصري يسدد الرسوم بالدولار على حساب حكومي رقم : (EG71000100010000004082175917) (البنك العربي الأفريقي) ؛
- استلام إفادة قبول نشر البحث في خلال 15 يوم من تاريخ سداد رسوم النشر مع ضرورة رفع إيصالات السداد على موقع المجلة ؛
- تحصيل قيمة العدد من الباحث (نقدًا)، ويستلم الباحث عدد 6 مستلآت من بحثه 5 منها (مجانيًا) و (15) جنيه للمستلة السادسة الإضافية ؛
- المراسلات : توجه المراسلات الخاصة بالمجلة إلى: merc.director@asu.edu.eg
- السيد الدكتور/ مدير مركز بحوث الشرق الأوسط والدراسات المستقبلية، ورئيس تحرير المجلة جامعة عين شمس-العباسية- القاهرة - ج.م.ع (ص.ب 11566)
- للتواصل والاستفسار عن كل ما يخص الموقع : محمول / واتساب: (+2) 01555343797 (وحدة النشر merc.pub@asu.edu.eg) (وحدة الدعم الفني technical.support@asu.edu.eg)
- ترسل الأبحاث من خلال موقع المجلة على بنك المعرفة المصري: www.mercj.journals.ekb.eg
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مجلة بحوث الشرق الأوسط

مجلة علمية مُدكَّمة متخصصة في شؤون الشرق الأوسط

مجلة مُعتمَدة من بنك المعرفة المصري



موقع المجلة على بنك المعرفة المصري

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- معتمدة من مؤسسة أرسيف (ARCif) للاستشهادات المرجعية للمجلات العلمية العربية ومعامل التأثير المتوافقة مع المعايير العالمية.
- تنشر الأعداد تبعاً على موقع دار المنظومة.



العدد الثامن والثمانون - يونيو ٢٠٢٣

تصدر شهرياً

السنة التاسعة والأربعون - تأسست عام 1974



مجلة بحوث الشرق الأوسط
(مجلة معتمدة) دورية علمية مكمّمة
(اثنا عشر عددًا سنويًا)
يصدرها مركز بحوث الشرق الأوسط
والدراسات المستقبلية - جامعة عين شمس

رئيس مجلس الإدارة

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الرؤية

السعي لتحقيق الريادة في النشر العلمي المتميز في المحتوى والمضمون والتأثير والمرجعية في مجالات منطقة الشرق الأوسط وأقطاره .

الرسالة

نشر البحوث العلمية الأصيلة والرصينة والمبتكرة في مجالات الشرق الأوسط وأقطاره في مجالات اختصاص المجلة وفق المعايير والقواعد المهنية العالمية المعمول بها في المجالات المُحكَّمة دولياً.

الأهداف

- نشر البحوث العلمية الأصيلة والرصينة والمبتكرة .
- إتاحة المجال أمام العلماء والباحثين في مجالات اختصاص المجلة في التاريخ والجغرافيا والسياسة والاقتصاد والاجتماع والقانون وعلم النفس واللغة العربية وآدابها واللغة الانجليزية وآدابها ، على المستوى المحلى والإقليمي والعالمي لنشر بحوثهم وإنتاجهم العلمي .
- نشر أبحاث كبار الأساتذة وأبحاث الترقية للسادة الأساتذة المساعدين والسادة المدرسين بمختلف الجامعات المصرية والعربية والأجنبية .
- تشجيع ونشر مختلف البحوث المتعلقة بالدراسات المستقبلية والشرق الأوسط وأقطاره .
- الإسهام في تنمية مجتمع المعرفة في مجالات اختصاص المجلة من خلال نشر البحوث العلمية الرصينة والتميزة .



مجلة بحوث الشرق الأوسط

- رئيس التحرير د. حاتم العبد

- الهيئة الاستشارية المصرية وفقاً للترتيب الهجائي:

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• دراسات مكتبات ومعلومات

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(دراسة تحليلية)
أبرار وليد الشباك
- 264-236 7. خطة مقترحة لتطبيق تقنيات أنترنت الأشياء في مكتبات المدارس
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الدراسات اللغوية

LINGUISTIC STUDIES

**A Shared Breath:
Vocal Performance and Manifestations of
Cultural Identity and Acts of Survivance
in Chantal Bilodeau's *Sila***

**نفس مشترك:
الأداء الصوتي ومظاهر الهوية الثقافية
وممارسات البقاء والمقاومة في أداء سيلا
لشانتال بيلوديو**

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المخلص:

إن السكان الأصليين في أمريكا الشمالية بشكل عام وكندا بوجه خاص ليسوا ضحايا للاحتلال العسكري والقمع واستغلال الأراضي والموارد فحسب، ولكن أيضاً للاستئصال المنهجي لثقافتهم وأشكال الحياة الأخرى. إن هدم الممارسات المحلية ونظريات المعرفة مبني على افتراض مركزي أوروبي يدعم دونية وقصور كل ما لا ينتمي إلى الثقافة الغربية. و قد أدى نشر المفاهيم الاستعمارية مثل "الهندي الإيكولوجي" إلى كوارث مجتمعية كشفت عن ارتباط استغلال كلا من الأراضي والشعوب.

على مدى سنوات من القمع والانتهاكات ، استخدم السكان الأصليون أنماطاً تمثيلية وجمالية من أجل الحفاظ على هويتهم الثقافية وحمايتهم وسط ثقافة غربية سائدة تهدف إلى قمع ثقافة السكان الأصليين. حيث يقوم السكان الأصليون بممارسة ما يشار إليه باسم "ممارسات المقاومة والبقاء" التي من شأنها الحفاظ على الهوية الثقافية الأصلية. قام جيرالد فيزينور بصياغة مصطلح "ممارسة البقاء والمقاومة" حيث يشير إلى عملية البقاء بصفقتها عمل نشط لمواجهة هيمنة واستعمار وإيذاء السكان الأصليين من قبل المستوطنين.

حيث ربط السكان الأصليون دائماً حاضريهم ومستقبلهم بجذورهم التاريخية عبر فن القص وفنون الأداء فإنه يمكن اعتبار الممارسات المتجسدة مثل الأداء البيئي المعاصر بمثابة عمل ينطوي على "ممارسة المقاومة والبقاء" حيث يقوم من خلاله السكان الأصليون بالحفاظ والابقاء على أساليب حياتهم. إن التقاطع بين دراسات السكان الأصليين ودراسات الأداء ودراسات الثقافة والدراسات البيئية يعد بتفكيك المفاهيم الأوروبية والخطابات الاستعمارية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى اعتبار فن الأداء بمثابة "ممارسة للبقاء والمقاومة" بالتركيز على الأداء الصوتي مثل الغناء الحلقي وشعر الكلمة المنطوقة في مسرحية سيلا لسانتال بيلودو بالإضافة إلى دور الأداء الصوتي في إظهار ديناميكية الهوية الثقافية الأصلية بعيداً عن جمود القوالب التي فرضها الاستعمار.



يهدف الأداء الصوتي في سبيل إلى إثارة حوار من خلال التجارب المشتركة حيث يتعارض مع خطاب الفكر الفردي الذي يفرضه الخطاب الاستعماري. إن كلا من الغناء الحلقي و شعر الكلمة المنطوقة يهدف إلى تقويض الخطاب الاستعماري الأحادي الذي تم بناؤه بشكل منهجي من المنظور الغربي من أجل استبعاد الفنون والأصوات المحلية. هذا النفس المشترك هو بمثابة "ممارسة للبقاء والمقاومة" حيث أنه لا يقوم فقط بالحفاظ على المعرفة والجماليات والمفاهيم الخاصة بالسكان الأصليين ، ولكنه أيضًا يتيح سماع مجموعة من الأصوات التي تنتمي إلى أزمنة وأنواع وأجناس مختلفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الغناء الحلقي - شعر الكلمة المنطوقة - دراسات السكان الأصليين - دراسات الأداء - الدراسات الثقافية - دراسات النقد البيئي.

**Abstract:**

Aboriginal peoples of North America in general and Canada in particular have been victims not only to military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands and resources but also to systematic eradication of their cultures, and other life forms. Demolition of indigenous practices and epistemologies is based on a Eurocentric assumption that proposes the inferiority and insufficiency of all that does not belong to the western culture. Propagating colonial notions such as the “ecological Indian” led to communal disasters revealing that the exploitation of land and people are connected.

Throughout years of oppression and abuse indigenous people have used representational and aesthetic modes in order to keep and protect their cultural identity amid a dominant western culture, that aimed at suppressing theirs, practicing what is referred to as “survivance”. Survivance is a way of life that maintains indigenous cultural identity implying both survival and resistance. Anishinabe scholar Gerald Vizenor coined the term survivance. Survivance does not simply refer to the survival of indigenous people but to how survival has been transformed into an active act to confront the domination, colonization and victimization of indigenous people by settlers.

In telling stories, natives have always tied their present and future to their historical roots. Consequently, embodied practices such as contemporary ecoperformance can be regarded as an act of survivance through which Aboriginal peoples nourish their ways of life. The intersection of Native studies, performance studies, culture studies and ecocriticism promises deconstructing the Eurocentric notions and colonial discourses. In focusing on vocal performance such as throat singing and spoken word poetry in Chantal Bilodeau’s *Sila*, this paper aims at regarding this performance as an act of survivance in addition to showing the dynamicity of indigenous cultural identity.

Vocal performance in *Sila* is intended to provoke a dialogue through shared experiences. Both throat singing and spoken poetry are counter posed to the single-thought discourse enforced by the colonial discourse. They undermine the monological colonial discourse which has been systematically constructed from the Western perspective in order to exclude indigenous voices. This shared breath is an act of survivance as it not only nourishes the indigenous epistemologies, aesthetics and conceptions, but also allows for a range of voices that belong to different times, species and genders to be heard.

Keywords: Throat singing, Spoken-word Poetry, Native studies, Performance Studies, Ecocriticism



Introduction:

Aboriginal peoples of North America in general and Canada in particular have been victims not only to military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands and resources but also to systematic eradication of their cultures, and other life forms. Demolition of indigenous practices and epistemologies is based on a Eurocentric assumption that proposes the inferiority and insufficiency of all that does not belong to the western culture. Propagating colonial notions such as the “ecological Indian” led to communal disasters revealing that the exploitation of land and people are connected. Throughout years of oppression and abuse indigenous people have used representational and aesthetic modes in order to keep and protect their cultural identity amid a dominant western culture, that aimed at suppressing theirs, practicing what is referred to as “survivance”. Survivance is a way of life that maintains indigenous cultural identity implying both survival and resistance. In telling stories, natives have always tied their present and future to their historical roots. Embodied practices such as contemporary ecoperformance can be regarded as an act of survivance through which Aboriginal peoples nourish their ways of life. The intersection of Native studies, performance studies, culture studies and ecocriticism promises deconstructing the Eurocentric notions and colonial discourses. In focusing on vocal performance such as throat singing and spoken word poetry in Chantal Bilodeau's *Sila*, this paper aims at regarding this performance as an act of survivance in addition to showing the dynamicity of indigenous cultural identity.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, eco-scholars have exerted tremendous efforts in order to prove the interconnectedness of the human and the nonhuman world deconstructing notions and binaries such as culture/nature and human/nonhuman. Despite these efforts, human beings still regard themselves as a superior species, consequently resuming their ill practices towards nature. In her monumental article "There Must Be a Lot of Fish in that Lake"



published in *Theater* in 1994, Una Chaudhuri argues that “[e]cological victory will require a transvaluation so profound as to be nearly unimaginable at present. And in this the arts and humanities-including the theater- must play a role” (25). Therefore, one should be aware that the environmental crisis is not merely confined to ill practices against nature but is also a crisis of values.

Performance is a culture-making arena where stories and experiences can be revealed and shared. An eco-performance indicates a relation between performance and ecology. It can be considered a new sub-genre of performance studies, which involves an explicit ecological message. An eco-performance can be regarded as a cultural project that aims at opening a dialogue between nature and culture. It is an interdisciplinary paradigm, where nature plays a role as a performative element bringing nature and human relationship to performance. Looking at eco-performances that engage with North American indigenous presence provides an opportunity to re-examine human and nature relationships as well as to speak of the colonized bodies as dominated territories.

Eco-performances, which accommodate indigenous presence, challenge notions of cultural identity that have been imposed on indigenous people for centuries. Nature, in these particular types of performance, is no more a backdrop for humans’ actions, but rather a performative element that is enmeshed with indigenous bodies, epistemologies and cultural identities. An eco-performance that engages with indigenous presence tends to deconstruct the culture/nature dichotomy without either effacing the cultural context or losing nature to culture. In fact, these performances offer multifaceted stories that link environmental crisis to indigenous peoples’ identity crisis acting as both a memory and a realm of resistance. These performances combine performance art; such as theatre, vocal performance, music and dance as well as rituals and activism in order to engage with the community, raise awareness, create a resisting force and rewrite historical narratives. What these performances are dealing with tends to link ecological justice to social



justice bringing to light how political, economic, social and ecological devastations are interconnected.

Anishinabe scholar Gerald Vizenor coined the term survivance, which he defines as “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (*Manifest Manners* vii). Thus, survivance does not simply refer to the survival of indigenous people but to how survival has been transformed into an active act to confront the domination, colonization and victimization of indigenous people by settlers. Survivance is an approach which sustains and cherishes the traditional indigenous epistemological methods in order to assert the ability of indigenous identity to adapt to contemporary context. However, this adaptability does not mean compromising or giving up the traditional values but upholding them as a way of living and as an act of autonomy. Vizenor calls it a “practice, not an ideology, dissimulation, or a theory” (*Survivance* 11). The word here does not reflect a mere reaction, but extends to an autonomous aesthetic expression of the indigenous experience in any medium or form of art.

Since the sixteenth century tribal cultures have undergone systematic operations of elimination and suppression through establishing distorted images and conceptions of “Indianness”. Vizenor explores those false notions and representations of Native Americans which he believes reflect nothing of the “realities” of tribal cultures but are mere simulations (*Manifest Manners* 16-7). As a result, survivance becomes part of the ontological existence of indigenous people, it is a way of living that aims at manifesting indigenous epistemologies to counter and undermine those simulations that propagated the “Indian identity”.

Undermining domination, abuse, absence, sacrifice and victimary is what both survivance and eco-performance seek to achieve. Hence, an eco-performance, which involves indigenous



presence, can be considered an act of survivance on two levels, since it provides actions and narratives of survivance of both nature and indigenous people. Such a performance presents a new story, one which constructs a visual memory that stands against homogeneity and acts as an evidence of the survivance of both.

The question of survivance is inseparable from questions of identity and culture. To achieve survivance, it becomes necessary to create a specific indigenous subject that takes into consideration the native cultural identity and heritage as well as the American cultural and literary history. Karl Kroeber argues that American Natives asserted their presence as they “successfully sustained their cultures through the exercise of a remarkable adaptability” (36). Hence, identity for a Native American is far from being a fixed or firmly established notion. Stuart Hall believes that identity does not “signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change” (“Who Needs Identity?” 3). Kroeber sustains the same idea of Hall concerning the cultural identity of a Native American, as he argues that culture “can be most effective only if it retains its liberating qualities, facilitating our capacity to change ourselves as well as to change our environment” (37). In a settler society, both the “Indian” identity and nature were represented and defined within a nationalist discourse that sought to establish a sense of harmony in the American society hence romanticizing both. However, for a Native American who survived, resisted and endured, who in other words practiced survivance, identity remains a flexible process rather than a fixed notion. The cultural identity of a Native American adopted a nexus position between a traditional heritage and a new social experience dominated by western white settlers, who had sought to dictate a certain definition of identity. Charles Taylor in “The politics of Recognition” argues that “my discovering my own identity doesn’t mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. [...] My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others” (34). According to this view, a



dialogical position stands in opposition to an internalization of a position of inferiority.

Consequently, eco-performance that involves a Native presence, one may argue, is an act of survivance, it is a re-representation that undermines the simulations of dominant culture. These performances deconstruct and alter the myth of the noble, savage indian as well as that of the progressive project of the West. They are shared stories that counter notions of collective identities and nationalism. It is an aesthetic response to the physical and cultural genocides of indigenous people. In these eco-performances, there is a story being retold, a narrative that acknowledges presence rather than absence, and one which is different from that recounted in a history book or presented in a movie or kept in a museum. Incorporating themes of resistance, endurance and survival they act as acts of survivance. Eco-performance is a testament that shows how the usurpation of Native bodies and cultural identity is combined with the usurpation of land. Through images and language eco-performance tend to memorialize the culture of indigenous people.

The manifestations of survivance in such performances can be detected in themes, language, aesthetics, where active revival of traditions and narratives of resistance undermine the senses of absence, tragedy and impotence initially propagated by the colonizer. In these performances, survivance works through the overlapping of indigenous aesthetics and post dramatic theatre techniques to assure that Indigenous peoples' cultural identity is not fixed or firmly attached to a precolonial culture; on the contrary, the flexibility and flux of an Indigenous cultural identity enables Indigenous people to adapt to different situations, times and even ecological conditions in productive and visionary ways that guarantee the continuity of their cultural identity despite the attempts made to efface it.

In order to understand how these performances act as methods of survivance for Indigenous people, it should be understood how



Native Americans involved in these performances experience and demonstrate their traditional culture to assert their particular existence and sustain their cultural identity in the midst of dominant Eurocentric social and political structures. Thus, the idea of cultural performance becomes important in considering and analyzing these performances. Such performances embrace history, art, aesthetics and religion of indigenous people. They reveal the multi-layered history and culture of the Native American people and show how they are intertwined with the Western history and culture. The integrated cultural factors in these performances mark both a persistence to maintain traditions, aesthetics, language, religion, and ancestry; and a dynamic cultural identity which strives to assert its existence, epistemologies and aesthetics in a modern social context which is tremendously different from the tribal community.

Performance, in its many forms of expression and structures, opens a window allowing seeing through other cultural structures; such as identity, politics, economics, religion and language. Both Victor Turner's elaboration on Arnold Van Gennep's rites of passage and Milton Singer's concept of 'cultural performance', which marks off various performances that he regards as "the elementary constituents of the culture and the ultimate units of observation" (Singer 61) mark a performance turn in cultural studies. Moreover, they demonstrate the way such performances extend and develop in modern complex societies.

In describing the aspect of cultural identity, Myron W. Lustig argues that "[b]ecause cultural identities are dynamic, your cultural identity [...] exists within a changing social context. Consequently, your identity is not static, fixed, and enduring; rather, it is dynamic and changes with your ongoing life experiences" (146). In observing cultural identity through the lens of performance we are able to see how that both are far from being fixed, rather; they can both be regarded as generative tools which participate in the making and remaking of each other. Judith Hamera argues that "[a]s event or as



heuristic, performance makes things and does things, in addition to describing how they are made or done” (6).

Performances or embodied practices not only include historical practices but also are concerned with the representation of present and future of Native people and environment. Hence, they act as mediums through which memory, social epistemologies, aesthetics and an awareness of cultural identity are asserted through what Schechner describes as “twice-behaved behavior” (*Performance Studies* 28).

Sila is an eco-performance. It is the first play of *The Arctic Cycle* which consists of eight plays that examine the impact of climate change on the eight countries of the Arctic. *Sila*, premiered at Underground Railway Theater in Boston in 2014, explores the contesting interests of the population inhabiting the Canadian Arctic including the indigenous population, namely the Inuit. The performance is about an Inuit activist and her daughter, a climatologist, two Canadian coast Guard officers, an Inuit elder and two polar bears who inhabit Baffin Island in the territory of Nunavut. Throughout the performance, it becomes clear that the competing interests of this ensemble of people and voices does not deny the fact that their lives are complexly intertwined into a network that poses challenges on all of those who are involved. *Sila* foregrounds the crisis of the changing climate and its devastating effects on both human and animal lives. *Sila* does not only show that climate change has turned multiyear ice into a fragile ground that is incapable of holding polar bears any more but also highlights the fragility of the interconnected environment of human beings and animals. The indisputable aspect of human-driven climate change threatens and sets challenges for all species who try to raise and protect their off-springs. The performance employs polar bear puppets highlighting the overlapping issues between the lives of polar bears and the lives of humans. It also mingles science with indigenous mythology and epistemology in a way that blurs the boundaries between native epistemologies and science.



Through exposing the stories of the climate scientist, the Inuit family and the mother and cub polar bears (Anaana and Paniapik), Chantal Bilodeau shows how the community in the village of Iqaluit suffers from climate change. The tension is cultural between indigenous and western epistemologies and political between nation-state and indigenous sovereignty. The Inuit family in *Sila* consists of Leanna the grandmother, an activist, her daughter Veronica, a school teacher a spoken-word poet and a vocal artist, and Samuel the grandson. Whereas Leanna struggles politically, Veronica practices resistance through art. Veronica is struggling to keep her indigenous cultural identity amid a changing environment that threatens the whole Inuit culture and Inuit youth including her son. Two very prominent aesthetic aspects used in *Sila* are throat singing and spoken poetry. Bilodeau utilizes Tanya Tagaq's, a Canadian Inuk throat singer, records as well as spoken word poetry or performance poetry from Tqralik Partridge, an Inuit throat singer and writer from Kuujjuaq, Nunavik.

According to the *Historical Dictionary of the Inuit*, throat singing is a “[t]raditional form of Inuit musical expression generally performed by two women who use each other’s mouths as sound boxes to resonate tones. Although there are some concerns that throat singing is a dying art, there is also evidence that throat singing is being adapted to contemporary needs.” (Pamela R. Stern 145). Throat singing or the katajjaq is a form of musical performance, however it cannot be said that throat singing is the prime musical genre of the Inuit people. In fact, for the Inuit culture, the main musical genre is drum dance. Throat singing was not originally intended as a form of music but as a form of breathing or vocal game which Inuit women played as a sort of entertainment while their men went on hunting trips. During a Katajjaq, two women confront each other and they start performing, with their mouths so close to each other, by exchanging sounds. Each game has a motif and if one woman changes the pattern or the motif, the other woman has to follow her. The winner is the one



whose breath outlasts that of the other and of course she should keep a certain standard to the quality of the sound.

The two women perform repeated rhythmic patterns of inhaling and exhaling. Although there is a winner and a loser, the description of throat singing game cannot just be limited to being a competitive game. It rather creates a state of cohesion between the two women involved in the performance as they try to create a sense of harmony and correspondence while they repeat the sounds to the extent that it becomes difficult to distinguish who started or changed the motif as the tones fluctuate from one performer to the other.

Today, throat games have turned into stand-alone songs, often performed during indigenous celebrations or festivals to revive indigenous culture. Traditionally, throat singing was performed to celebrate the final kill during the hunt by telling its story. Hence, it was considered part of the hunting rituals and celebrations. For this reason, many of the sounds performed during throat singing are similar to noises and sounds made by animals. Jean-Jacques Nattiez in his article entitled "Inuit Throat-Games and Siberian Throat Singing:" describes the sounds of throat singing as "[m]ainly two strings of homogenous sounds: one of low sounds (the so called throat-sounds) and a string of higher sounds. We also hear the constant use of inhaled and exhaled sounds which create what can be called a "panting style" (400-1). In fact, Nattiez's article raises two important points, which are the cultural significance of throat singing and the relation of throat singing to indigenous languages. Despite the fact that throat singing is originally a female game used to entertain both the performers and the audience, Nattiez argues that throat singing is a multi-layered practice that has cultural, social and musical connotations. It is originally a game however the sounds can be transcribed into a musical notation. It is a performance that involves both sounds and body gestures and poses. (Nattiez 401-2)



As a practice, throat-singing lies in a liminal position. Its in-between status originates from being a game and a musical expression. Before defining or describing play and games, Richard Schechner poses several questions that show the complexity of play. For him, one needs to ask:

If the dichotomies dividing play from work, serious business, and ritual are too rigid and culture-bound; [...] if ethological and semiotic studies show that play's functions include learning, regulating hierarchy, exploration, creativity, and communication; if psychoanalysis links playing with fantasy, dreaming, and the expression of desires; if the "in between" and "as if" time space of playing is the source of cultural activities including arts, sciences, and religions...can we ever really understand something so complex? (*Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 91)

Play is supposed to be an escape from the real. It is a fun activity that has its own rules and which is supposed to be void of any moral duty. However, it is important to consider that throat singing games were bound to a certain rite. They were part of a ceremony and were knitted into a prime social activity. The rules, which the two women involved in a throat singing game follow, are no longer those of real life. The game depends on the aspect of endurance but it also involves playfulness and laughter. However, Nattiez asserts that the entertaining aspect is not the only function of throat singing games. An Inuk woman told Nattiez that throat singing games were women's way of participating in the hunting. It is a way of communicating with animals and natural elements to help their husbands or the hunters succeed in their mission. As a result, Nattiez contends that "women have been participating on equal footing with men in the survival of the community" (405). While men go hunting, women vocally perform sharing their breath with the rest of the world in order to guide the spirits and the animals. Indeed it is "survival music" for the traditional Inuit society, but in a contemporary performance like *Sila*, it turns into a survivance act.



Activities like songs, dances and games particular to a certain culture are originally bond to a system of symbols that was accumulated and constructed historically and culturally. Tagaq performs solo throat singing. This means that, what she performs is a symbolic form that has another connotation than that which the traditional throat singing games had among traditional Inuit people. Nattiez believes that “[t]he semioiological distinction between the signifier and the signified in an historical perspective will help us to understand how a similar form (a similar signifier) gets a new meaning (a new signified) in a different culture” (414). Consequently, the relationship between human and the more-than-human-world can only be regarded through historical and cultural contexts. The cultural context which once existed between throat singing as a game, that had a social and cultural function in entertaining women as well as influencing animals and nature while men went hunting, does not exist anymore. Whereas Nattiez argues that the signifier “best resists transformations through time” while “the signified [...] associated with these forms are evanescent” (414), one tends to believe, that in the case of Inuit throat singing, the signifier keeps much of its characteristics, yet it also changes and adapts itself to new contexts through time and so the signification or the cultural function itself changes.

Inuit throat game still exists up till the present day despite the fact that it is not associated with the same activity it used to be associated with. However, with Tagaq, the form is changed or transformed to a solo performance. Therefore, the traditional symbolic meaning related to religion or hunting rites or ceremonies has disappeared and has been exchanged by some other symbolic meaning for Inuit people. With Tagaq performance, the association of the performance with the game or the competition disappears as the form itself transforms. While the musical or vocal technique itself survived with Tagaq's performance, the game or the competition disappeared.



In “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, Stuart Hall speaks about two distinct sides or aspects of cultural identity. First, cultural identity which can be perceived from the point of view of the society or the community as individuals become part of a common shared culture. The second, is the one which Hall describes as “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’” (225). It is the way individuals differentiate themselves from other individuals based on personal experience. Although Hall is concerned with the Caribbean identities, his talk of “the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture” (226) applies to indigenous people’s cultural identity. For Hall, it is important to consider “the dialogic relationship between these two axes” (227) to show the effect of history and location on identity. In addition, it reminds us of the unfixed nature of identity which at some points, because of changing social contexts, deviates from this history and location and transforms into something new. These two courses link the individual identity and hold it to its place in the communal and collective environment but at the same time Hall stresses on the fact that a cultural identity is not determined by them. Personal experience plays a role in shaping our identities as Hall argues that “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (225). Thus, the dialogic relation is set up between the individual and the communal as well as between the past and the present.

The transformation of throat singing with Tanya Tagaq from a game between two women that involves vocal expression to a solo musical expression shows how this dialogue is constructed between the present and the past as well as between the communal and the individual history. This transformation also drives our attention to what Bill Ashcroft has stirred up in *Post-Colonial Transformation* about the relation between creativity and the representation of cultural identity. The construction of cultural identity is based to a great extent on the way it is represented. Ashcroft believes that:



The imaginative and the creative are integral aspects of that process by which identity itself has come into being. Cultural identity does not exist outside representation. But the transformative nature of cultural identity leads directly to the transformation of those strategies by which it is represented. These strategies have invariably been the very ones used by the colonizer to position the colonized as marginal and inferior, but their appropriation has been ubiquitous in the struggle by colonized peoples to empower themselves. This suggests that ‘resistance’ can be truly effective, that is, can avoid simply replacing one tyranny with another, only when it creates rather than simply defends. (5)

It is through representation that individuals substantiate and manifest their identity. Despite the white settlers’ and the Christian missionaries attempts to efface and suppress the Inuit cultural practice of throat singing, Tagaq adopts her people’s traditional practice of throat-singing games and chooses to transform it into something which reflects their contemporary cultural identity. By denying the aspect of the game and turning it into a complete musical expression, Tagaq gives throat singing a new meaning. It is through, what Stuart Hall refers to as “cultural circuits” that things, practices or events are given new meanings (*Representation* 3). The way Tagaq uses, transforms and represents throat singing gives it a new meaning.

Similar to Hall’s classifications of personal and collective aspects of cultural identity are Patrick Clam Hogan’s practical and reflective aspects of identity. As for practical identity, Hogan describes it as “one’s unreflective knowledge about how to act or interact in typical situations” (9). By typical situations he means general or communal ones which are more related to traditions and ways of dealing with other members of the society, whereas by “reflective identity” he refers to that which has to do with the definition of one’s identity in being able to know who one is and his/her purpose in life. Reflective identity has to do with how



individuals prioritize their values from a personal perspective and according to personal beliefs. However, these two aspects are not separated but are the outcome of processes that are subject to social traditions, systems and practices rather than individual choices (9). Both have to do with certain social constructions and behaviour codes that are taught or ingrained during the process of upbringing.

Tagaq, like all Inuit people of Canada, lives in a conflicting cultural setting where “[t]he practices that are normal and natural in indigenous culture are often inappropriate, and are almost always denigrated, in colonial culture. One’s reflective identity as defined by the colonizer is brutally demeaning” (Hogan 10). The response to such attitude differs from one individual to the other. Some people tend to stick to their indigenous traditions and practices; others adopt western features and identify with the Western culture. Nevertheless, there is a group that chooses to merge both cultures (Hogan 10). Where some choose to keep the tradition of throat singing games alive in cultural festivals, Tagaq chooses to change some of its inherited characteristics. Tagaq ignores the competitive aspect that characterizes the game and with it of course its association with hunting and its rites. She uses the traditional vocal techniques but in a way that makes her look like a pop singer as she releases albums, singles and videos. The animalistic sounds Tanya produces in her solos through the panting style keeps her attached to the Inuit tradition and the elements of nature imitation. She defies the European definition of both her practical and reflective identity as an Inuit and a woman through using her throat vocal techniques and she also defies the European definition of what a song is. What she presents cannot be categorized only as a heritage that is celebrated during cultural festivals, it is rather something expressive through which she transcends boundaries of race and gender. The only words associated to her songs are those of the titles which are sometimes in Inuit language at other times are English language. English titles like “Force”, “Howl” “Retribution”, “Rape Me”, “Going Home Star” “Blood”, “Hunger” are attached to nature expressing something strong



and primitive. From a survival music associated with hunting to a survivance music associated with transgression of boundaries, Tagaq's sound rejects the European definitions imposed on her people, gender and traditional performance as she chooses to give new meanings through the representation of throat singing.

Another form of Indigenous aesthetic modes used by Chantal Bilodeau in *Sila* is spoken-word poetry. Bilodeau's choice of Taqralik Partridge's spoken-word poem "Eskimo Chick" for Veronica to recite before the audience in the bar in Scene 5, Act 1 can be discussed in relation to several issues. First, it is important to discuss Partridge's position as the daughter of an Inuk father and a white mother since this position reflects on the themes and techniques of her poems. It is also worth mentioning that Partridge has been brought up in Kuujjuaq, a village in Northern Quebec. In an interview, Partridge herself discusses the relation of place to her identity and how it affected her poetry's themes and techniques. Partridge says that "[b]ecause I grew up in the north, I identify more with being Inuk. But I never had an Inuk woman in the house," she says. "I feel like everything about Inuit women fascinates me because there's that little bit of otherness, and they're also me at the same time" (Leventhal). In general, Partridge spoken-word poetry has to do with ordinary subjects that have to do with everyday life. In "Eskimo Chick" particularly, she discusses how an Eskimo girl is different from the Western girls who "have Louis Vuitton baggage and Calvin Klein pasts". An Eskimo girl does not care about brands and fashion; she prefers a garment which is made of seal fur or skin. She adds "but you and me, we got sealskin hopes and dreams" (*Sila* scene 5). She prefers something practical that keeps her warm and protects her, a costume that connects her to her roots and to her environment. Partridge is concerned with the complex life of an Inuit girl and issues of identity she has to face in a town which she resembles to a "Maelstorm" where she and other Inuit girls feel they "are stuck in a whiteout, lights out, night out". Partridge herself states that "[i]t's very strange to me how we can live and have two realities.



I come from this place that's vast and open and beautiful, but I live and work in this place that is constricted and full of so many things going on. I love Montreal and I love the city, and [yet] in many ways I feel like an outsider" (Leventhal). It is this sense of alienation, of double-consciousness and of living on the hyphen derived from being an urban Inuk that she documents in this spoken-word piece. She reminds herself and other Inuk girls, who suffer the same identity issues and tensions that "suicide, is not the way to go" (*Sila* Scene 5). She reminds them of their responsibility towards the coming generations. Going through all these tensions and defying all those stereotypes she reminds them that "you're not just surviving/ you're thriving" (*Sila* scene 5). In "Eskimo Chick", Partridge merges the choppy rhymes of her English words with Inuit throat singing. It is as if she is using her lyrical skills to meld her two selves together not in a way that unites them as one self, but in a way that creates a sort of dialogue or an ongoing conversation between them.

Spoken word poetry is a style of performance poetry; it is thus a performance art but is mainly word-based. Hence, it highlights the ability of the performer or the spoken word poet to make use of word play. Glenn North believes that "[b]ecause it is performed, this poetry tends to demonstrate a heavy use of rhythm, improvisation, free association, rhymes, rich poetic phrases, word play and slang. It is more aggressive and "in your face" than more traditional forms of poetry" (1). Hence, spoken word poetry is also known as performance poetry. In spoken word poetry, the poet, who is usually the performer, blends literary skills with eloquence qualities in order to be able to grasp the audience attention. It is a combination of the ability to write and the ability to express what is written using body language or physical movements. Spoken word poetry or performance poetry, which encompasses different forms including hip hop and poetry slam (a competitive form of music), is said to have appeared and flourished among marginalized groups during the 80s in the United States. It was meant to "foster[ing] a countercultural atmosphere and disseminate[ing] poetry in unconventional venues, [.....] to contrast



with exclusive academic conventions” (Somers-Willet 5). Spoken word poetry grants voice to the subaltern enabling them to speak and express forms of inequalities, oppression and marginalization they are exposed to. It affords a space where their cultural identities become accepted and their voice is heard.

In spoken word poetry, a paper does not stand as a barrier between performer and audience. The relationship between both exceeds the passive relationship between a speaker and a passive listener, as they become in a direct interaction during the performance. In his book, *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin differentiates between locutionary and illocutionary speech acts. Austin describes locutionary speech acts as those which are used to indicate the facts or true and false statements, whereas illocutionary speech acts are more active utterances, as their function exceeds the limits of description to that of performing an action (Austin 95-98). This means that, some statements can be described as performative. Being performative they induce people to enter certain social relationships. In being communicative actions that require a change and in being bound by certain time and space, spoken word poetry resembles a performative utterance. In *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Roy A. Rappaport extends the relation between performative speech and rituals based on their communicative nature arguing that rituals imply a kind of performativeness which makes utterance more decisive and clear. Rappaport argues that “[i]f a message concerning the current states of participants is communicated by participation in ritual it will not be vague, and the formality, solemnity and decorum of ritual infuses whatever performatives the ritual incorporates with a gravity that they otherwise might not possess” (116). Hence, this communicative relation between rituals and performative speech establishes a shared understanding of a certain utterance and therefore helps creating a collective identity.

Spoken word poetry can be said to have the same characteristic in establishing this communicative relation, which creates the shared



understanding and therefore the collective identity among the poet and the audience. Indigenous people's experience in North America is a special experience. They owned the land and had their own cultures, languages and epistemologies for thousands of years before the settlers occupied the land and claimed it to be their own. The settlers' occupation exceeded that of usurping the land but started a systematic process to eradicate the cultures, languages and epistemologies of indigenous people and deem them unworthy. Indigenous people encountered forms of discrimination and oppression as well as the stereotypical images imposed on them. Therefore, they had to redefine and reconstruct their cultural identity based on this new input in order to be able to face such challenges. Spoken word poetry has a special nature in that it lies in a liminal position between the written word and live performance. Although Somers-Willet is concerned with Slam Poetry, which is the competitive form of spoken word poetry, her following words seem applicable to spoken word poetry in general, whether competitive or not:

speech, dress, gestures, voice, body, and so on all reflect in some way on the poem at hand, and these various aspects of embodiment convey nuances of cultural difference that the page cannot. With the author's embodiment, members of the audience are instantly privy to the physical and performative markers of identity that consciously or unconsciously inform their understanding of the poem through certain cultural lenses.(18)

Hence, spoken word poetry is an expression of the self and of the individual identity but in creating this collective experience it becomes an arena of expressing cultural identity, one which, like a ritual, makes performative speech more decisive and clear. The body has a primary function in conveying the message and in creating this shared experience where it "can become a vehicle [...] to add another layer of meaning, of symbolism, paradox, and irony, to the poems" (Ellis 46) . For an Indigenous American, spoken poetry is particularly a special tool of communication; it allows for immediate connections,



which is something that goes back to the tradition of storytelling. The immediate impact on the audience is realized immediately. Using the body, gestures and voice tone gets to the audience to create a channel of communication with both the poet or the performer and the story being told. In communicating social and cultural experiences through connecting on the emotional levels with audience, spoken word poetry paves the way for a collective consciousness that exceeds personal experiences. Spoken word poetry occupies a liminal position; whereas it depends on criticizing and commenting on the policies of the mainstream culture, it is aware that it emerges from the margins. Hence, it does not belong to any of the two cultures. It is the result of the conflict between both.

Sophorl Ngin (Veronica) performs Taqralik Partridge's spoken word poem "Eskimo Chick," in Chantal Bilodeau's play *Sila*, on May 25, 2014 at Central Square Theater. The performance of "Eskimo Chick" in *Sila* features Ngin or Veronica wearing traditional Inuit costume. Bilodeau chooses spoken word poetry because it blends a form of art that is close to indigenous storytelling and throat singing, at the same time it is related to marginalized groups and imposes itself on western and academic forms. Partridge experience resembles that of veronica. In blending throat singing and Standard English, the performer acknowledges but does not unite the two identities. In this sense, spoken word poetry becomes a form of survivance, whereby the performer keeps a tradition and at the same time acknowledges a new hybrid cultural identity.

Spoken poetry is used by Partridge as a means to bridge her two selves. It is a way of self-expression, where there is always a story behind what is said and performed. Suicide in "Eskimo Chick" is an anticipation of what will happen next in *Sila*. Performing this poem is followed by Veronica's son's suicide; this makes the audience realize that what is happening is not just an individual's issue but rather a problem from which a whole community suffers. Bridging the two selves renders a positive view on terms such as 'hyphen' and 'double



consciousness'. Nevertheless, Samuel's suicide prevents the negation of the negative connotations associated with these terms. The climate change crisis, the attempts of Leanna and Veronica to find solutions to defend their community, the tension that arises between them in addition to Veronica's desire to leave seeking better chances for her son's education with Leanna's objection to this idea (Act I scene 6) give rise to what is referred to by Homi Bhabha as a sense of "unhomeliness". According to Lois Tyson "To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak" (421).

Leanna is concerned with writing letters and petitions and she declares "This is our future, Veronica" (Act I scene 6) but the future represented by her grandson Samuel is destroyed with the destruction of place/ identity. Language, memory, culture and places always leave their imprint on one's identity and its relationship with the outside world. Samuel and his generation's identity crisis is the result of the fragmentation of all these elements. The line between the personal and the universal gets blurry and the concepts of place and home become problematic.

The stress on "Eskimo Chick you are it" at the beginning creates a sense of solidarity and assertion. Veronica, like Partridge, tries to defy her sense of alienation as an indigenous woman in the Canadian society. For her, spoken poetry provides a liminal space of negotiation. It is a form of a "third space" which Homi Bhabha defines in *Location of Culture* as initiating "new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the I idea of society itself." (1-2). However, again Samuel's suicide intertwined with the loss of the daughter polar bear comes to assert the fact that it is also a space of resistance, where the Eskimo's identity cannot be effaced. Hence, spoken poetry is a liminal space of negotiation and resistance.



With Samuel's suicide, Veronica loses her ability to speak and to perform. She tries to, but words are meaningless; her voice is mute and the letters both, Latin and Inuktitut, are scattered in a mess. Language is lost and the connection that spoken poetry forms between the text and the stage is torn apart. The promising liminal stage cannot be formed. However, after connecting Veronica's plight to indigenous mythology (Act II scene 11), Veronica regains her voice and performs another spoken word poetry by Taqralik Partridge (Act II scene 13). Unlike the lively bold "Eskimo Chick", "No Sleep for the wicked" is more of a powerful indictment of the effect of residential schools on Inuit children and communities. In scene 13, with this spoken word poem the story of Veronica and Samuel is intertwined with the plight of Mama and daughter polar bears. All the characters become involved as they come to watch Veronica performing. In intertwining this spoken word poem with the story of the polar bears in *Sila*, the indictment that it addresses is taken to a whole new level from the loss of identity due to social and political injustice to the loss of humanity and all forms of life due to environmental injustice. Everything becomes one.

Once again, performing spoken word poetry becomes a communal activity and the boundary between the text and the stage is effaced while the liminal stage is created forming a state of heterogeneity and subversion. The way Anaana and Paniapik are there throughout the performance of the poem sheds light on the relationship between all living beings and their role in the process of identification. Their appearance and voices through the lines allow the audience to see how the performer is capable of using the stage as a medium which confer a meaning to their shared memories and experiences as she closes the play. Thus, the personal struggle is placed within the sociopolitical context of the performance to formulate collective experience. This blend contributes to the process of identity formation as it transforms a personal story into a collective one breaking the spectators' familiarization with different topics



allowing multiple readings for one poem in order to convey the discursive process which adds an extra dimension in cultural identity formation.

Spoken word poetry is a means to voice a redefinition of the indigenous identity. It acts as a powerful agent in the articulation of the identity of Veronica as an indigenous-Canadian woman, mother, friend and activist. In other words, performance poetry helps her challenge dominant society's constructs of indigenous identity. It is through her enunciation and body language that she determines and highlights certain instances in both poems. In "No Sleep for the wicked", the poet mixes species, race with gender in order to stress her multifaceted identity as an indigenous-Canadian woman and together with the interference of Anaana and Paniapik which adds another dimension by parallelizing the two mothers' roles to intensify the Polar bear's loss.

In addition to the aesthetic aspects of spoken word poetry, which make it a hybrid between western written forms and indigenous oratory of story telling, the performance of spoken word poetry within the performance of *Sila* adds several dimensions to the concept of identity. Spoken word poetry is a kind of social protest since it is usually performed by marginalized and oppressed groups. It is a way of expressing their experiences of abuse, injustice and inequality aiming at making a difference and altering their social and political oppressed statuses. Spoken word poetry is an outlet that releases "voices and experiences out of obscurity and foster[s] awareness" (Fisher 122). For Fisher, the genre of spoken word poetry is a means of finding voice for oppressed groups, it is a means to develop their social and critical consciousness as well as their literacy skills. Fisher is particularly concerned with African-American students in order to emphasize the impact of spoken word poetry as an empowering tool. Patrick Camangian in his article "Untempered tongues" propagates the effectiveness of spoken word poetry and pinpoints its therapeutic impact on students and believes in its ability "to channel our students' energy with their own and struggle against the conditions that



undermine their dignity as ethnic peoples” (53). Shanee Stepakoff also stresses the same point which involves the therapeutic effect as well as the liberating effect of poetry as she argues that “[s]elf-directed expressive poetry therapy can be viewed essentially, as a form of ‘auto-poetic healing’. This term refers to processes whereby a trauma survivor utilizes written or oral poem-making as part of a spontaneous process of self repair” (108). Thus, all these critics stress the way spoken word poetry is used as a tool of resistance as well as surviving.

Spoken word poetry in *Sila* acts as an essential means for Veronica to achieve consciousness, empowerment and liberation. In “Eskimo Chick” Veronica asserts her indigenous identity. It is an empowering performance that aims at raising awareness towards the capabilities of Indigenous women. Whereas “No Sleep for the wicked” acts as liberating and therapeutic means of expression through which both Anaana and Veronica are liberated. “No Sleep for the wicked” becomes an act of solidarity as all the characters in the performance make an appearance while Veronica performs it. It is as if they share the same breath. For the audience watching *Sila*, these two spoken word poems open up a range of possibilities that challenge social norms and dominant discourses. Spoken word poetry is an anti-oppressive tool on two levels; as poetry it “allows for issues of race, class, gender and sexuality to be freely questioned and affirmed” (Stovall 65) and as performance it acts as a counter force that opposes performativity. These two poems reveal how the body becomes a social construction through a discursive mechanism that establishes a stereotypical image of the indigenous people and attributes it to their natural biology. This image has been propagated both by cultural means (photos, stories, movies) and coercive means (residential schools). In acting outside the social norms boundaries these poems reveal how the identity revealed in performativity is primarily a social and cultural construction.

Vocal performance in *Sila* is intended to provoke a dialogue through shared experiences. Both throat singing and spoken poetry



are counter posed to the single-thought discourse enforced by the colonial discourse. They undermine the monological colonial discourse which has been systematically constructed from the Western perspective in order to exclude indigenous voices. This shared breath is an act of survivance as it not only nourishes the indigenous epistemologies, aesthetics and conceptions, but also allows for a range of voices that belong to different times, species and genders to be heard.



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