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NOTES:

Loose Tongues/Promiscuous Identities: Linguistic Register and Code-switching as Catalysts of Intersectionality in “Pollito Chicken” and *Dominicanish*

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Code-switching is a phenomenon often debated within the field of sociolinguistics, but traditionally sidestepped in literary analysis. While chalked up to the relative lack of works that utilize this linguistic phenomena, literary analysis tends to integrate multiplicity of languages under the rubric of identity formation, rather than considering code-switching independently, and as a discrete category. However, by analyzing the actual events of code-switching in works of literature, it is possible to see how employing and blending two (or more) languages in works of literature creates spaces of intersection, described by Kimberlé Crenshaw as a “way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics” (1296). It is in these interstices of language where one can uncouple identity from fixed, discrete categories, and rather consider the multitude of elements at play in the formation of an individual.

This essay applies and incorporates the concept of intersectionality as described by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her seminal essay “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” to the process of code-switching at play in the short story “Pollito Chicken” written by Ana Lydia Vega in 1977 and *Dominicanish*, a performance text¹ written and performed by Josefina Báez in 2001. While a direct linguistic analysis of these works is necessary, it does not answer the question as to why these two authors incorporate the phenomenon in their texts, and how this phenomenon relates to questions of gender, race, nationality, and identity. It is important to analyze the works in the entirety of their representation, which means looking at more than frequency and types

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of code-switching and considering what is at stake in utilizing this particular linguistic phenomenon. By studying the works through the theoretical lens of intersectionality, the analysis goes beyond questions of Spanish versus English, and considers how language, particularly code-switching, opens possibilities for representation not present in monolingual discourse. Crenshaw points out that identity categories are treated as vestiges of bias or domination, but that the real problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, rather that it conflates or ignores intra-group differences, and ignoring these differences, according to Crenshaw, creates tension among groups (1242).

In both “Pollito Chicken” and *Dominicanish* there are many identity categories at play: gender (both characters are female protagonists), nationality (both are part of their respective diaspora to New York), race (both protagonists are of African descent, although, whereas *Dominicanish* celebrates this heritage, the protagonist of “Pollito Chicken” eschews any representation of blackness), and language (both are bilingual and employ code-switching, although for quite distinct reasons and with distinct motives). This essay argues that code-switching, as represented in both works, highlights characteristics of intersectionality in distinct ways.

I analyze the use of code-switching in literary works because it is a genre counterintuitive to code-switching. Traditionally, code-switching is an operation dependent upon verbal negotiation.² Martha Schaffer notes that in bilingual literature, “no hay oportunidad de arreglar o comprometer, de llegar a un acuerdo y establecer los límites de comprensión bilingüe de los lectores que participan en el texto” (679). Negotiation is integral to the meaning-making processes driven by code-switching. While this assumption may be true on an essential level, verbal enunciation is not necessarily a precondition to meaning making, and processes of meaning making occur when a reader engages with a text.

An element that forces the reader of both texts to negotiate meaning is the apparent clash between the use of code-switching, which is typically associated with informal registers of speech occurring between close family or friends, and the formal register of speech more common in literary genres. The language in “Pollito Chicken” switches between English and Spanish, but the syntax and lexicon of the language is highly formal and stylized. In *Dominicanish*, the register of the narration is relatively informal, coinciding with verbalized enactments of code-switching. However, the transformation undergone by the informal register when enunciated in the space of performance complicates Báez’s work. That is to say, the informality of the discourses conflicts with the highly regulated and normalized space of theater. It is important to consider how register and code-switching create tension for the reader/viewer, and also how the conventions of genre impose a certain formality which code-switching complicates.

A problem arises however, at the moment of analyzing previous research on this particular topic. Much sociolinguist research regarding code-switching focuses either on verbal production or is based on the grammar rules of the two respective languages. There is comparatively less linguistic analysis regarding code-switching in literature. There are, however, two researchers who engage in a linguistic analysis of code-switching in “Pollito Chicken.”

The present essay will glean more from literary-analysis based essays, which still contribute important considerations for analyzing code-switching in both literary texts.

The two extant essays concerning Josefina Báez situate her performance text within the framework of “interstices” as described by Homi Bhabha, “contact zones” as described by Mary Louise Pratt, and “rhizomatic identity” as described by Edouard Glissant, influenced by Deleuze and Guattari.³ The essays “Staging Transculturation: Border Crossings in Josefina Báez’s Performance Texts,” by Liamar Durán Almarza, and “Poética de la relación en *Dominicanish* de Josefina Báez,” by Sofie Maríñez, suggest the importance of code-switching as a way of dismantling the concept of identity as singular and rooted. Although not explicitly mentioned in either article, this dismantling can also extend to the formal conventions of genre. Contrasting these genres with code-switching undermines and challenges in their monolithic structuring of what constitutes a particular work of literature. As I will elaborate, questioning genre allows one to understand the potentiality language has to foment the multiplicity of identities at play in both texts.

Specifically in *Dominicanish*, Durán notes that particular moves in the text allows “her [Báez] to renegotiate at the same time her ethnic, linguistic and racial identity, navigating away from the official Dominican discourse that denies the African roots of Quisqueyan population” (165). Maríñez signals the importance of Báez’s work in destabilizing the formal categories of genre, noting, “*Dominicanish* transgrede las convenciones tradicionales de identidad nacional al integrar múltiples valores, diferentes sensibilidades, diversas posturas filosóficas y lenguajes, con la intención de armar una subjetividad híbrida, compuesta de elementos dispares y ajena a los límites trazados por la tradición letrada insular dominante” (152, my emphasis). While these two analyses do not specifically focus upon the particular events of code-switching in *Dominicanish*, they do prove an important theoretical framework, the spaces of interstice, dialogic spaces that develop in the contrast between formal and informal registers and the use of code-switching.

Like analyses of *Dominicanish*, many of the essays concerning Vega’s “Pollito Chicken” consider code-switching from the theoretical framework of resistive power to monolithic constructions of unitary identity, and also consider the legacy of colonial rule in Puerto Rico. These literary analyses provide important clues to understanding literary code-switching from a linguistic perspective. Many articles, including “Thematic and Narrative Strategies in Lydia Vega’s ‘Pollito Chicken,’” by Ezra Engling; “The Representation of Puerto Rican Women in Two Short Stories by Ana Lydia Vega: ‘Letra para salsa y tres soneos por encargo’ (1979) and ‘Pollito Chicken’ (1977),” by Mary Green; “El discurso de la mujer colonizada en dos cuentos de Ana Lydia Vega,” by Elias Miguel Muñoz; and “Pollito Chicken: Split Subjectivity, National Identity and the Articulation of Female Sexuality in a Narrative by Ana Lydia Vega,” by Diana Vélez, signal the importance of recognizing the division between the protagonist and the omniscient narrator, the relatively regularized use of code-switching, the subsequent division of the two languages, and the concept of a matrix language.⁴ Regarding the matrix language, Engling notes, “the third-person narration(s) is, in fact, Spanish. Despite appear-

ances, Spanish merely coexists with English. Externally, the two tongues never really merge into a single dialect" (355).

Mary Green also highlights the paradoxical division of language in this code-switching literary text, noting that the narrator "presents her monologue as a parody of a colonised (sic) discourse known to the islanders as 'pitiyanqui.' The colonised discourse illustrates Suzie's inability to express herself fully in either English or Spanish" (134). Like Maríñez's analysis of Báez, Green also demonstrates how the narrative voice is used "to question totalising (sic) definitions of self, both gendered and nationalist, in order to posit a new discourse of identity" (138). Muñoz analyzes the use of Spanish as resistant to English, and by playing the two back and forth, Vega's text "escapa subversivamente al monolingüismo colonizador y se erige como un nuevo código comunicativo" (38). Muñoz signals the fact that the "dualidad del texto no implica subordinación al discurso colonizador," (40) highlighting the resistive potential of code-switching. The power of resistance is important when considering how the inclusion of code-switching in these two works resists the imposed structure of genre through a blending of formal and informal registers. These essays help develop an understanding of the concept rhizomatic identities that exist at the interstices of identity categories.

Two published essays consider the frequency and type of code-switching that occurs in "Pollito Chicken": "El texto literario bilingüe: Un ejemplo puertorriqueño," by Martha E. Schaffer and "El 'code-switching' y el efecto de los elementos funcionales," by Cindy Ducar. Schaffer demonstrates how code-switching informs Suzie's desire for unified subjectivity, stating that "a despecho del anhelo de hacerse gringa -física, espiritual y lingüísticamente- su habla interior, una mezcla de lenguas dentro de la cual predomina el español, resiste el abandono de la lengua materna" (678). In her analysis, Schaffer discovers that the majority of the switches are intersentential, at an occurrence rate of 40% (679). Shaffer signals that "Vega ridiculiza, por medio de las delusiones de Suzie, los extremos de modificación adjetival y adverbial de los ricos angloamericanos estereotipados" (679). While highlighting the phonetic and dialectal characteristics of the characters' dialogue in the short story, she notes that only one, the bartender, can be considered a "coordinated bilingual," meaning he uses English for the more formal setting of the workplace and Spanish with his friends.

Ducar's analysis provides rich statistical data describing the type and occurrences of switches in Vega's narrative. Her analysis hypothesizes that all determinants in the text are realized in the matrix language and language change only affects lexical elements (19). Importantly for this essay, she argues that literature and spoken code-switching are not distinct (19). Like Engling, Ducar determines that the matrix language in "Pollito Chicken" is Spanish (24). These two linguistic analyses provide important information for literary studies to contemplate, especially considering that they provide empirical evidence as to the matrix language of the text, as well as to the structure and rules of code-switching that occur in "Pollito Chicken."

Going beyond essays that specifically focus on *Dominicanish* and "Pollito Chicken," it is important to consider a more general analysis of register. In his chapter on style and register,

Francisco Moreno Fernández notes the division of register as conceptualized by C. Lefebvre, consisting of the basic style or “vernacular” and speech accommodation or “adaptation” (93). However, the division is not so rigid. Fernández notes that register depends upon language use in concrete situations, and that variations depend upon the theme, the mode (written, spoke, etc.) and the tenor (formality) of discourse (94). Furthermore he states that formality is emitted and understood in relation with the speaker, listener, message, channel, and code (97). This non-dualistic conceptualization of register is important when considering *Dominicanish* and “Pollito Chicken,” owing to the fact that both texts present moments of code-switching which occur in more and less formal occasions, as well as in more and less formal registers.

In “Pollito Chicken,” the shock of the formality of the linguistic register of the narrative contrasted with the informal character of code-switching opens a space of representation at the intersections of identity. The multifaceted identity of Suzie, who desperately attempts to represent herself as a subject unified under the banner of “American,”⁵ emerges in the ruptures caused by what I will term language and register breaking, in which Suzie’s carefully constructed narration is interrupted by her xenophobic rants towards Puerto Rico. Language and register breaking refers to moments in the text when the formal register gives way to the informal register within the narrative structure. It represents the internal moments when Suzie loses control over her indirect, fawning, formal register and explicitly expresses her disdain for Puerto Rico. Furthermore, a third person narrator who mocks Suzie throughout recounts many of Suzie’s experiences and surreptitiously provides information regarding Suzie’s intersectional identity.

Conversely, in *Dominicanish*, there is no need for information to “sneak in,” because, unlike Suzie, Báez celebrates intersectional subjectivity. In this performance text, Báez is in control of her narration and takes opportunities afforded by language and register breaking to display the intersectional quality of identity. Language and register breaking in *Dominicanish* has the same function of moving from a higher to a lower register, however, in Báez’s narration, the shift occurs more subtly. This is owing to the fact that the breaks tend to occur lexically, rather than in discursive blocks, as is the case in “Pollito Chicken.” However, in both texts, it is in these moments of breaking that the various identities that form the protagonist’s subjectivities emerge.

Analyzing these two works underscores the intersectional nature of identity, as it emerges through language-breaks occurring in the conflict between register and code-switching. Notably, language breaking occurs in distinct ways in “Pollito Chicken” and *Dominicanish*. In “Pollito Chicken,” language breaking occurs through shifts between formal and informal registers, whereas with *Dominicanish*, language breaking exposes the manipulated and manipulable character of words themselves. This section will analyze each work, highlighting specific moments of language and register breaking, and explicitly relating these moments to Crenshaw’s idea of intersectionality.

“Pollito Chicken” demonstrates how narrative language breaks give the reader more information about the non-unitary identity of the protagonist, as filtered through the voice

of the third person narrator. As Vélez notes, the narrator creates a dialogic text, in which "each utterance opens up a space for a critical or ironic reading of the parodized speech presented" (70). It is important to note that Suzie, as represented in the text, tries desperately to present herself as "Anglo," and negates any heritage other than the one constructed in New York. Despite code-switching throughout the narrative, all of dialogue—with one important exception—is in English. She has even altered her appearance to erase any identity markers that would tie her to the island, and upon arrival in Puerto Rico, she is highly critical of her compatriots. Her desire *not* to identify with Puerto Rico is key to understanding the information provided in the language-breaks. The interjections of the third person narrator dismantle the constructed unitary subject to provide information that reveals the true, multifaceted nature of Suzie Bermúdez.

Vega's short story uses a formal register for description. In the first full paragraph, the narrator describes Suzie's first glance at a poster advertising vacations to Puerto Rico:

Lo que la decidió fue el breathtaking poster de Fomento que vio en la travel agency del lobby de su building. El breathtaking poster mentado representaba una pareja de beautiful people holding hands en el funicular del Hotel Conquistador. Los beautiful people se veían tan deliriously happy y el mar tan strikingly blue y la puesta de sol. (75)

The language in this section is overly descriptive, and uses words that are not typical of informal discourse. As Schaffer notes, "otras tantas frases parecen tener sus orígenes o en folletos turísticos o en fragmentos de conversación entre angloamericanos en los cafés" (679). It is through use of language typical of advertising that, according to Engling, "Suzie insinuates herself into company of target consumers within the dominant culture and fails to recognize the colonial displacement in the advertisement" (343). The colonial displacement at work in this particular scene is the fact that Suzie's native Puerto Rico is being sold to her as a destination, which she approaches as it is constructed and presented to her in the poster.

Beyond integrating what Muñoz describes as the "mythic language" of English into the text, Suzie appropriates an English vocabulary that is too formal, so much that it becomes ridiculous. Muñoz signals that "el discurso de Suzie, transmitido en tercera persona y en voz de narrador dolorosamente irónica, recoge del inglés los símbolos del *status* extranjero" (41). Her attempt to assimilate this discourse results in parody, as transmitted by the narrator. This appropriation has implications for her position as a woman of color. Pierre Bourdieu notes, "women are more disposed to adopt the legitimate language (or the legitimate pronunciation)" (470) and "speakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence" (474). Finding herself doubly on the margin, she appropriates a highly formal discourse and uses it as a weapon to attack ethnicity and nationality.

The first scene in "Pollito Chicken" is a formal exchange between Suzie and her boss. Upon her return from vacation, she states, "I really had a wonderful time, dijo Suzie Bermúdez a

su jefe tan pronto puso un spike-heel en la oficina. San Juan is wonderful, corroboró el jefe con benévola inflexión, reprimiendo ferozmente el deseo de añadir: *I wonder why you Spiks don't stay home and enjoy it*" (75). The narrative begins with a glaring example of the racism and xenophobia of Suzie's Anglo boss directs at Puerto Ricans. Ironically, throughout the text Suzie will identify with her boss, despite his glaring racism towards her. In fact, Suzie perpetuates her boss's racism by stating:

A pesar de que no pasaba por el Barrio a pie ni bajo amenaza de ejecución por la Mafia, a pesar de que prefería mil veces perder un fabulous job antes que poner Puerto Rican en las applications de trabajo y morir de hambre por no coger el Welfare o los food stamps como todos esos lazy, dirty, no-good bums que eran sus compatriotas, Suzie Bermiúdez, repito, sacó todos sus ahorros de secretaria de housing project de negros —que no eran mejores que los New York Puerto Ricans pero por lo menos no eran New York Puerto Ricans. (75)

She scathingly denigrates not only Puerto Ricans but also Blacks. A moment of language-break demonstrates Suzie's misguided self-construct of identity. It is through the narrator's voice that the reader becomes privy to her boss's racism, as well as to Suzie's racism against non-whites. As the story progresses, however, the narrator reveals Suzie's afro-descendent heritage. Upon her arrival, debating whether she should stay with her grandmother, she remembers that:

Ya había hecho reservations en el Conquistador y que Grandma bastante bitchy que había sido after all con ella y Mother diez años ago. Por eso Dad nunca había querido—además de que Grandma no podía verlo ni en pintura porque tenía el pelo kinky—casarse con Mother, por no cargar con la cruz de Grandma, siempre enferma con headaches y espasmos y athlete's foot y rheumatic fever y golondrinos all over y mil other dolamas. (76)

The use adjective "kinky" denotes the African heritage of her father, and subsequently of herself. Although Suzie continually negates her non-Anglo identities, it is through the interjections of the narrator that one can conceptualize Suzie as a subject constituted by and through intersectionality. Crenshaw notes, "experiences of women of color are products of intersecting patters of racism and sexism and...these experiences tend not to be represented with in discourses of either feminism or antiracism...Women of color are marginalized by both" (1243). Adopting the stance of her Anglo boss, Suzie negates her position as multi-cultural, but her idealization of Anglo men and her denigration of Puerto Rican women also problematizes her relationship to her own femininity. She stereotypically describes the women of the island:

Pensó con cierto amusement en lo que hubiese sido de ella si a Mother no se le ocurre la brilliant idea de emigrar. Se hubiera casado con algún drunken bastard de billar, de esos

que nacen con la caneca incrustada en la mano y encierran a la fat ugly housewife en la casa con diez screaming kids entre los cellulitic muslos mientras ellos hacen pretty-body y le aplanan la calle a cualquier shameless bitch. No, thanks. (76)

Suzie inscribes the Puerto Rican woman within an inescapable patriarchy, doomed to be *with a philandering, no-good husband. Furthermore, Suzie re-inscribes the female as either subservient or as a "shameless bitch,"—the Madonna/whore dichotomy—as articulated by colonial discourse.*

It is possible to extend the Madonna/whore dichotomy to notions of purity in language, in which the Madonna of language is represented in the text by monolingual English—the reader will remember that Suzie scorns her compatriots for not speaking “good English”—and Spanglish or code-switching occupies the role of the whore, representing impurity, willingness to “play around,” and existing outside the laws of pure language. Notably, this dichotomy extends even further to the protagonist, who, within the text, utilizes the formal register to present herself as morally superior to her fellow Puerto Ricans, both on and off the island. She even positions herself in the role of ‘savior,’ by suggesting, however haughtily and tinged with racism, the possibilities for ‘advancement’ garnered by learning good English. However, it cannot be ignored that at the end of the text, Suzie too plays against her own self-constructed law of purity, by sleeping with the bartender. Here I argue that Suzie becomes liberated from the rigid formality of the monolingual English to which she clings. When considering the entirety of text, the question of purity is challenged from the first sentence, as code-switching occupies the overarching narrative.

After a rant that denigrates the people of Puerto Rico, the narrator describes Suzie’s ideal husband, who, incidentally, shares characteristics with her boss. She states that “maybe se casaría para pagar menos income tax—sería con un straight All American, Republican, church-going, Wall-Street businessman, como su jefe Mister Bumper porque ésos sí que son good husbands y tratan a sus mujeres como real ladies criadas con el manual de Amy Vanderbilt y todo” (76-77). After describing her ideal husband, Suzie reflects upon economic development in Puerto Rico, and makes a glaring statement regarding progress. The text states:

Por el camino observó nevertheless la transformación de Puerto Rico. Le pareció very encouraging aquella proliferación de urbanizaciones, fábricas, condominios, carreteras y shopping centers. Y todavía esos filthy, no-good Communist terrorists se atrevían a hablar de independencia. A ella sí que no le iban hacer swallow esa crap. Con lo atrasada y underdeveloped que ella había dejado esa isla diez años ago. Aprender a hablar good English, a recoger el trash que tiraban como savages en las calles y a comportarse como decent people era lo que tenían que hacer y dejarse de tanto fuss. (77)

This moment marks a language-break in which Suzie starts her discourse very carefully, however, once she begins commenting on the independence movement, one can see how

her register shifts into a less formal range, utilizing phrases such as “swallow esa crap,” and “dejarse de tanto fuss.”

A tendency arises in Suzie’s speech that aligns formal registers with United States, and the informal, more colloquial register with criticisms of Puerto Rico. The irony in this section of text is that Suzie chides her compatriots for not speaking “good English,” when her entire thought process occurs between English and Spanish. Engling astutely notes that, despite her obvious multiculturalism, “Suzie’s dilemma is that she tries to deny this inherent duality as she attempts a cultural make-over” (354). To expand this assertion, I argue that she tries to deny more than a duality, considering the multiplicity of identities at play that go beyond language. Furthermore, it is indispensable to signal that not only is there a dual discourse in terms of languages used, but also the inclusion of the narrator’s overarching presence creates a “double voiced discourse” in which it is “Suzie...whose voice speaks the text. But the parodized speech is also that of the narrator” (Vélez, 71). The narrative voice gives the reader access to the information regarding Suzie’s identity that she herself tries to deny. As such, according to Green, using a narrative voice of indeterminate gender allows Vega to “question a totalising (sic) definition of self, both gendered and nationalist, in order to posit a new discourse of identity” (138). The presence of a double voice allows for ruptures in the narrative process.

In her study of narrative analysis, Alexandra Georgakopoulou demonstrates that there is a “guiding assumption...that the telling of stories allows the teller to bring the coordinates of time, space, and personhood into a unitary frame” and that “self and narrative are thus typically brought together in ways that emphasize the ideas of autonomy, integration, and coherence over those of a fragmentary, relational self” (402-03). She rightly argues that narrative practices are highly collaborative and that fragmentary selves are those that, “being self-discursively constructed as different things on different occasions that can neither be automatically reduced to a singular and coherent identity, nor easily abstracted from local contexts” (403). This analysis is key to understanding the intersectional relationship that develops amongst not only Suzie’s various identities, but also amongst the multiplicity of voices that narrate who she is. This multiperspectival narration dismantles Suzie’s self-constructed denial of non-Anglo identity markers and reveals the intersectional quality of her subjectivity.

Another important element in the narrative is the particular codes that specifically target either the U.S. or Puerto Rican audience. For example, the narrator notes that Suzie’s grandmother lives in Lares, which was, as Vélez notes “the locus of Puerto Rico’s aborted attempt to get national independence in 1868 and is now the symbol of the national independence movement” (70-71). Furthermore, when Suzie is outside by the pool, the narrator states that she drinks a piña colada, “que la sorprendió very positively. Ella pertenecía a la generación del mavi y el guarapo que no eran precisamente what she would call sus typical drinks favoritos,” (77). This statement reveals to the informed reader that in Puerto Rico, mavi and guarapo are “drinks which are coded for rural, agricultural” (Vélez 73). These references, while not totally indecipherable to a U.S. reading audience, have particular resonance with readers

from or in Puerto Rico. This narrative sleight of hand is another example of how the double voiced narrative serves to undermine Suzie's feigned unitary identity.

A final important moment in "Pollito Chicken" is Suzie's encounter with the bartender at the hotel Conquistador. In a post-piña colada state, "Suzie no tuvo más remedio que comenzar a inspeccionar los native specimens con el rabo del ojo. Y—sería seguramente porque el poolside no era air-conditioned—fue así que nuestra heroína realized que los looks del bartender calentaban más que el sol de las three o'clock sobre un techo de zinc" (78). After some flirting back and forth, and apparently ashamed at her desire for a "native specimen," the narrator notes that "tan confused quedó la blushing young lady tras este discovery que, recogiendo su Coppertone suntan oil, su beach towel y su terry-cloth bata, huyó desperately hacia el de luxe suite y se cobijó bajo los refreshing mauve bedsheets de su cama queen size" (78). Her desire, however, leads her to make a call:

Y con su mejor falsetto de executive secretary y la cabeza girándole como desbocado merry-go-round, dijo:

— This is Miss Bermiúdez, room 306. Could you give me the bar, please?

— May I help you?

inquirió una virile baritone voz con acento digno de Comisionado Residente en Washington. (79)

This phone call marks an important moment in the text regarding formal registers. In the dialogic exchange between Suzie and the bartender there is no code-switching, and the formality of the discourse, at least for this brief moment in the text, makes sense given the context. However, the text highlights Suzie's affected use of English versus the more contextually appropriate use of English by the bartender. Suzie *adopts* her "mejor falsetto de executive secretary," while the bartender just *has* a "viril baritone voz con acento digno de Comisionado Residente en Washington." Furthermore, both use the formal register in the context of a business transaction, with the ulterior motive of a sexual encounter. Once again, the revelation of this double discourse owes to the multiplicity of narration in the text. Importantly, right after the phone call, the narration fast-forwards to the post-coital moment in which the bartender drives the narration. The text notes, "Entonces el admirado mamitólogo narró cómo, en el preciso instante en que las platinum-frosted fingernails se incrustaban passionately en su afro, desde los skyscrapers inalcanzables de un intra-uterine orgasm, los half-opened lips de Suzie Bermiúdez producían el sonoro mugido ancestral de:—"¡VIVA PUELTO RICO LIBREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!" (79).

This moment is key, because while it seems that the third person narrator who describes Suzie's adventures through the text relinquishes control to the bartender, this is not necessarily the case. Again, the reader is presented with a multi-level discourse in which the third person narrator narrates the narration of the bartender. As such, even until the end of the text, there is no single narrator. The deeper implications of this final narration, however, are those that

resonate with Suzie “accepting” her pro-Puerto-Rican-independence identity. However, the careful reader will remember that the text starts with Suzie describing her vacation to her boss, back in New York. As such, it is not evident that she has accepted this new side of her identity. While I will agree with Vélez’s assertion that the repressed other appears at the end, but only through the mediated voice of bartender, this does not necessarily indicate that the emergence of this repressed other, or better, others, causes any permanent shift in Suzie’s conception of herself as an intersectional subject. However, the fact that Suzie does not directly acknowledge her position as an intersectional subject does not mean that the narration has failed to show to the reader the breaks through which traces of this identity begin to emerge. It is through a multi-layered, multi-voiced narrative that the reader becomes aware of the elements that make Suzie Bermúdez. Furthermore, the language-breaks that occur between formal and informal registers throughout the code-switching text create fissures that allow Suzie’s identities to flow through. The paradoxical relationship between the two texts analyzed in this essay is that, while Suzie refuses a subjectivity based on an intersectionality that cannot be covered up, Josefina Báez embraces an intersectional identity and deploys it to articulate new forms of diaspora subjecthood that dismantle traditional articulations of what it means to be Dominican.

Despite the oppositional character of Báez and the protagonist Suzie Bermúdez, many elements in Báez’s performance text are similar to those employed by Ana Lydia Vega. The first and perhaps most important similarity is the use of code-switching. However, unlike Vega’s text, the matrix language in *Dominicanish* is English. Like “Pollito Chicken,” *Dominicanish* includes coded references that are directed at specific populations, mainly those of a U.S., Dominican, and Indian reader/viewership. Báez directly includes a third national culture, which is distinct from Vega’s consideration of the U.S./Puerto Rican dynamic. An important element that is not present in “Pollito Chicken” is the duality of the work as a text *and* as a performance. As such, there are facets of the text that are not read in the performance, and likewise, facets of the performance not visible in the text.

Code-switching is a generative force that foment a performative enactment of identity. Performativity, according to Judith Butler, “must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act,’ but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (2). Butler expands this definition to include considerations of the generative power or discourse, noting that performativity must be considered “as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that regulates and constrains it” (2). As such, code-switching is a reiterative and citational practice, drawing on two language codes and producing a new discourse that uses and transforms existing language structures, at the same time that it creates a new set of linguistic norms. In this manner, “Pollito Chicken” and *Dominicanish* are texts replete with notions of performativity. However, unlike *Dominicanish*, “Pollito Chicken” is never *performed* on stage. This distinction has important consequences regarding visibility, physical enactment of language, and notions of genre. When analyzing the text/performance dynamic in *Dominicanish*, highlighting code-switching reveals how

specific moments in the performance text mark instances of language-break, which allows for the perceptibility of intersectionality in the subject's construction of the self.

Dominicanish narrates and performs the experience of migrating to the United States at a young age from the Dominican Republic. The performance text questions the acquiring of language and culture, the marking of the body as black, and negotiating the identities that make a subject. All of these themes are examined through the use of language, as it is performed and written. The performance text begins with the words "every sin' is vegetable/ vegetable vegetable/Refrigorator frigorifactor fridge/Comfortable comfortable comfortable/ Wednesday sursdei zersdeis" (21). This marks an important dynamic between the text and the performance, in which code-switching becomes a mode at times not visually perceptible but discernible through voice. As Sofie Maríñez notes,

En el performance oral de este texto, las palabras pierden su fijeza y unicidad significativa a través de distintas formas de pronunciación que acarrear distintas evocaciones. De esta manera, 'vegetable' pierde su significado original al pronunciarse de tres maneras distintas: 'véchtebal', 'veye-table' y 'veye-tébol'. 'Refrigorator' se convierte en 'refriyiréitor', 'refriyirátor'. 'Comfortable' se convierte en 'con-for-ta-ble', 'con-for-téi-bol' y 'cónfortebal'. (154)

The first words in the text are written in English, but pronounced with Spanish and English phonology. This destabilizing moment demonstrates the importance of oral discourse to the reader/viewer's comprehension of the text as one that is bilingual. The first actual switch between Spanish and English occurs in the context of learning grammar rules: "Once in a while everi sin'/Son sin' something sin'/ Past perfect perfect past/ Regular irregular/ ING very very very good/Ando cantando/ING singing/Di Ar er ir/A as in Michael/ M as in apple" (21). This section eloquently demonstrates the desire to create a one-to-one comparison between languages, which, like culture, is no simple act of transfer. As the text demonstrates, one to one transfers are jumbled, as in the last two verses. This comparison harkens back to the title "Pollito Chicken," which was a nursery rhyme taught to Puerto Rican children, which assumed a one to one relationship between the Spanish and English languages.

From the first few verses of the performance text, Báez begins to break down monolithic conceptions of language, both on the page and the stage. By narrating her acculturation in the United States, specifically Washington Heights, she begins to realize how U.S. society has positioned her as a black female, an identity not as discretely imposed in the Dominican Republic. The text notes "Aquí los discos traen un cancionero/Discos del alma con afro. Con afro black is/beautiful. Black is a color. Black is my color/ *My cat is black*" (26). This is the first moment that exposes the reader to the intersectional quality of Báez's identity. The first matrix introduced was that of language, and now the reader adds the level of ethnic positioning. In order to solidify her identification with African-American culture, Báez describes, in contrast to the implicit teachers who taught her the grammar rules of English versus Spanish verbs, how

popular music groups were her real teachers. The text states, “Los hermanos Tonga Isley/Los hermanos Isley/The Isley Brothers/Repeat after them/my teachers the Isley Brothers/*Repeated a whisper*/whispered a little louder/sing a song sang a song/sang a whisper...” (emphasis in original, 27). One can observe a moment of intersectionality as Báez “translates” the name of the Isley Brothers from Spanish to English. In agreement with Durán, Báez utilizes this intersectionality as a borderline, which “...offer[s] the possibility of new conceptualizations of official discourses on nationality, ethnicity, and culture” (161).

From the beginning, the viewer of the performance is confronted with the presence of a black female on stage who engages in a highly stylized and ritualized Indian dance. These movements force the audience to be aware of their expectations when viewing a body of color on the stage. Like code-switching in the written text, the integration of the highly culturally coded movements of Indian dance challenges the audience’s perception of how a black, female, Dominican-American body should move and be read on the stage. It is a literal embodiment of code-switching. Furthermore, Báez integrates Indian culture as her subjectivity, and this element is palpable linguistically. The text states:

Take take take off every safety pin in your way/unleash this starched sari/let its prints and colors play/*wild ragas*/foreplaying to the juiciest kalankhan/foreplaying in the juiciest dulce de leche/and yet/Thanks to the Ganga gracias al ganjes los/tigres de Bengala no enchinchan la sed/el salto del tígere hace rato que no es tántrico/thanks to the ganga bengali tigers don’t/move me long gone tantric attacks. (emphasis in original, 37-38)

Maríñez signals the importance of the word “ganga” as it relates to English, Spanish, and Hindi: “Ganga es el nombre del Ganges en sánscrito, y también la forma en spanglish de la palabra inglesa ‘gang’, nombre con que se identifican las pandillas juveniles en Estados Unidos. Aquí, Báez relaciona tres palabras con sonidos distintos (Ganga, Ganges, ganga) pero que contiene distintos significados” (156). Furthermore, the allusion to “el salto del tígere,” is situated in a Dominican context; it is an idiomatic expression “utilizado entre dominicanos para referirse a cierta acrobacia sexual” (Maríñez, 156).

While this moment in the text denotes a type of phonetic bilingualism along with code-switching, there are also examples of Spanglish, something seen only once in “Pollito Chicken,” when the narrator refers to the bartender’s friends as “hanguadores” (79). The text demonstrates not only the blending of Spanish and English into a hybrid code, but includes references to national and racial identity: “Me chulié en el hall/metí mano en el rufo/Craqueo chicle como Shameka Brown/Hablo como Boricua/y me peino como Morena/La viejita de abajo no e’ viejita ná/El super se está tirando a la culona del 5to piso/Jangueo con el pájaro del barrio/Me junto con la muchacha que salió preñá/Salgo con mi ex/Hablo con el muchacho que estaba preso/Garabatí paredes y trenes/City/I pulled the emergency cord” (43). Not only does this quotation demonstrate a unique blending of Spanglish with Spanish, it also utilizes phonetic representations of speech (no e’ viejito ná, for example) that are not used in the

English parts of the text. Here, the phonetic representations demonstrate the breach between formal and informal registers. This is a phenomenon represented both in the text, through spelling, and in the performance, through pronunciation, which reveals the multiplicity of identities at play in Báez's text/performance.

The last line of the text returns to the essential dichotomy between English and Spanish presented at the beginning of the text. Báez concludes her performance text with the lines "*Here I am chewing English/and spitting Spanish*" (emphasis in original, 49). This line highlights the title of the work, *Dominicanish*, which can be read as "kind of Dominican," indicated by the suffix "-ish," meaning "kind of," as a blending of the words "Spanish" and "Dominican," or as a blending of the words "English" and "Dominican," amongst many other possibilities. What is important about the title and the performance text as a whole is the relative difficulty of classification. The genre itself is a "textual and visual 'pastiche,' a hybrid that illustrates more accurately the fragmented lives of migrant communities" (Durán, 164). Just as the multiplicity of narrative positions in "Pollito Chicken" creates a space where identities collide, the various forms of genre, blended with intertextual references, creates a space that integrates of all facets of identity represented in the text/performance. Durán, quoting Silvio Torres-Saillant, eloquently notes "performance 'offers an open ontological frame' where everything that is present in the life of migrant communities can be constituted to take part in the formation of Dominican nationhood in and outside the island" (169).

I argue that in *Dominicanish*, the space of textual representation also affords this ontological frame. By intentionally engaging with various languages, registers, alternative spellings, onomatopoeia, coded references, and narrative structure, Báez constructs a non-linear space that fits Crenshaw's conceptualization of intersectionality. Crenshaw notes that marginalized subjects do have the ability to create discourse through processes of naming, stating

"one need only think about the historical subversion of the category 'Black' or the current transformation of 'queer' to understand that categorization is not a one-way street. Clearly, there is unequal power, but there is nonetheless some degree of agency that people can and do exert in the politics of naming." (1297).

The textual pastiche of *Dominicanish* demonstrates Bakhtin's concept of the "refracted word," where "discourse [is] aimed at an object but is everywhere refracted by the intentions, the 'readings' of others as well as division...of our own socially constructed selves" (cited in Vélez, 68-69). Notably, however, the concept of the refracted word is also applicable to the performance text itself. The work fractures language, which allows Báez to utilize a multiplicity of identity categories to construct a non-traditional narrative/performance that responds to her personal reality as a black, female, Dominican-American actress, writer, and educator.

An analysis of both "Pollito Chicken" and *Dominicanish* demonstrates, despite the opposing subject positions of the protagonists, the ways in which language-breaks in register, as enacted through code-switching, open a space where identities can be considered through

the concept of intersectionality. In “Pollito Chicken,” the narrator’s description of Suzie’s perceptions of the United States reveals intersectional identity through breaks between formal and informal registers. The shock between the overarching uses of formal register in the context of a narration enacted entirely in code-switch becomes less jarring when the reader recognizes the moments when the narrator parodically articulates Suzie’s rants against her compatriots. Furthermore, the insertion of the viewpoint of the third person narrator who articulates Suzie’s prejudices allows for a voice that will undermine Suzie’s attempts at creating a unified, Anglo-identified subject. It is through shifting register and multiple narrative perspectives that the reader gains insight into Suzie’s intersectional identity, even if she tries, as she does, to hide it throughout the text.

Dominicanish, presents the reader with the opposite situation, experiencing a narrator/performer who embraces an intersectional identity as a possibility of defining the self as unbound by the traditional division between identity categories. Despite the opposition between the two texts, Báez uses similar strategies as Vega, including code-switching and articulations that demonstrate the multiplicity of identities at play. Both texts deploy linguistic elements to articulate identities that are on the borderlines of representation. It is through code-switching, register shifts, multi-narrative perspectives, pastiche, intertextuality, and culturally coded language that both Báez and Vega highlight the character of intersectionality present in their works. Opening this space of representation allows both authors to question monolithic conceptions of race, gender, class, and nationality, and to create a space for subjects of the island who are, for whatever reason, not *on* the island.

NOTES

¹ The term performance text is a classification made by Josefina Báez and described in the introduction to *Dominicanish*. Within this essay, the term is used to denote the genre of the work.

² For example, in her analysis of authenticating discourse amongst young Mexican-American bilinguals, Petra Scott Shenk signals, “authenticating discourse is not novel to these speakers. They clearly exhibit awareness of the discourse routine, the rules of engagement, and their discursively constructed identity positions as authentic or inauthentic. At the interactional level, authentication as ethnic identity construction is enacted by co-participants taking stances towards one’s own and the other’s claims to ethnic group membership based on shared socio-cultural knowledge and belief systems that in this case foreground biology, nationality, and culture as cornerstones of authenticity” (214).

³ Sofie Maríñez analyzes *Dominicanish* utilizing Édouard Glissant’s reinterpretation of “rhizomatic identity,” which defines “la identidad-rizoma por su oposición a la ‘identidad de raíz-única,’ esta última identificada con el territorio del Uno-un Uno jerárquicamente superior, y que en términos culturales se traduce con la creencia en superioridad de un territorio, un Dios, una ley y una cultura sobre la otra” (152). Liamar Durán Almarza analyzes *Dominicanish* through the concept of “inter-

stices” and relates this concept to that of “contact zones.” Durán notes, “Homi K. Bhabha states in his celebrated collection *The Location of Culture* that in the process of translation between cultural systems there emerge “interstitial spaces” where those practices resist acculturation exist. It is in those “contact zones,” borrowing Mary Louise Pratt’s terminology, that hybrid patters of cultural identity and signification occur, and where cultural difference is constructed and negotiated” (161).

⁴ Myers-Scotton’s Matrix Language Frame Model defines the matrix language as “the main language in codeswitching utterances...[It is the language that specifies] the morpheme order and supplies the syntactically relevant morphemes in constituents consisting of morphemes from both participating languages” (Dussias, 90).

⁵ American, as articulated in this short story, is identified as White Anglo-Saxon protestant.

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