# Intralingual Translation as an Option for Radical Spanglish

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Until I can take pride in my language I cannot take pride in myself... Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate.

(Anzaldúa 81)

Gloria Anzaldúa's well-known declaration of linguistic independence has been taken by many as a statement against having to translate; among them Susana Chávez-Silverman, one of the leading authors in Spanglish, and the author of the source texts that are studied in translation in this paper.

Before I reflect on the role that intralingual translation can play in mitigating some of the power differential present when translating works such as these it is essential to define 1) what Spanglish is, 2) how it fits within the postcolonial and transnational concept of "cultural hybridity," and 3) why authors might resist translating their Spanglish works into English.

# Spanglish and Hybridity

Spanglish can be defined in many different ways, each with a different focus or connotation. Here, I will use Spanglish to refer to the so-called "hybrid" language variety that results from a constant renegotiation of the linguistic borders between English and Spanish. Spanglish includes a range of linguistic features including—but not limited to—codeswitching, calque translations, and the relexifying of vocabulary in one language based on influence from the other. Spanglish "is neither sudden nor new. In one way or another it has been around for decades, even centuries" (Stavans 29). In these areas in which English and Spanish have been in contact the lines between the two languages have been blurring since at least the mid-19th century.<sup>1</sup> Spanglish had been largely confined to dialogue in literature and to the oral sphere until the late 1990s when the emergence of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See Train, Robert W. "Becoming Bilingual, Becoming Ourselves: Archival Memories of Spanglish in Early Californian Epistolary Texts." *Hispania: A Journal Devoted to the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese*, vol. 96, no. 3, 2013, pp. 438-439.

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music and literature in Spanglish marked a turning point as the lect<sup>2</sup> began to appear not only as a nod to Hispanic-American culture in an otherwise English or Spanish text, but as the main lect of the texts, a characteristic that Lourdes Torres refers to as "radical bilingualism" (Torres 86). In this paper Spanglish will be used to refer to this radical bilingualism, rather than the presence of a few Spanish words in a predominantly English text.

Given this duality, it is imperative that we consider how Spanglish fits within the concept of cultural hybridity. First and foremost we must "break with the naive assumption that hybridity is itself a stable concept in post-colonial theory" (Papastergiadis 274). Rather it is understood and defined differently by a range of theorists including Stuart Hall, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Nestor García Canclini to name a few. At its core, and across all post-colonial understandings, is the rejection of the traditional notion that cultures are distinct monoliths that are delineated by clear and rigid geographic and linguistic boundaries beyond which lies the Other(s). Hybridity of language and culture-like its racial counterpart, miscegenation-has traditionally been viewed by Western imperial societies as an aberration; purity—that is to say the continuity of the culture of the ruling class of whichever empire we are discussing-was to be valued above all else (266). The aforementioned post-colonial theorists, however, propose a different understanding of hybridity, one that suggests that any given culture is itself in in a constant state of flux and is defined not by a group conforming to a single pure monolith, but by the interactions that individuals and communities have with Others. Through the stress and discomfort of these interactions the hybrid (or "third space") emerges. Homi Bhabha clarifies that hybridity or the third space should not imply that the two (or more) cultures that have come together are superior over the hybrid, but merely that they existed prior and that the hybrid is but a new incarnation (Rutherford 131). But how does all of this apply to the case of Spanglish literature?

While it could be argued that Spanglish is becoming its own new culture; that does not preclude it from also being a visible and audible manifestation of hybridity. As such it has been highly criticized by traditionalists who see it as inherently inferior (or peripheral) to the imagined monolithic (central) Anglo and Hispanic cultures. Some critics have said the following:

"Spanglish is neither good nor bad, rather it is abominable." - Octavio Paz

"To suppose that a type of Spanish-English lingua franca could exist seems like a fantasy and, of course, does not favour in the least the speakers who may be in the process of acquiring one language and abandoning the other. Let us not pretend; the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>222</sup> The terms *lect, language variety*, and *variety* have been used interchangeably in this paper to refer to Spanglish. My use of the term *intralingual translation* has prompted some scholars to question whether I am suggesting that Spanglish is a fully developed language. This question is best left to theoretical linguists, however as the notion of intralingual translation is firmly established within Translation Studies and dates back to Roman Jackobson's 1959 publication of "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" I see no need to create a new term merely to skirt the debate of whether or not Spanglish is a language in its own right.

communication that is achieved with this instrument [Spanglish] is poor...to believe that these impoverished systems could go very far at all is to have no grasp of reality." – Manuel Alvar, philologist

Only Latinos who are less privileged and uneducated use Spanglish, they are illiterate in both languages. – Roberto González Echevarría, professor

Spanglish marginalizes those who speak it, for example the immigrant without money or culture that attempts to use Spanglish uses it because he doesn't know much English or Spanish... Spanglish is a consequence of ignorance. – Xosé Castro Roig, translator (All in Betti 2011, 43-4)

All of these examples are supported by antiquated beliefs in cultural purity and judgements about the "impure" that the aforementioned post-colonial theorists have shown serve only to perpetuate colonial superiority complexes. In addition to being outdated, such comments also demonstrate a profound ignorance about Spanglish; Spanglish is used by a diverse cross-section of the US Latinx population, independent of socio-economic class.<sup>3</sup> And this polarization of the pure versus the "hybrid" lies at the heart of Anzaldúa's critique about translation.

# **Translating Spanglish**

Authors choose to write in this language variety as an act of resistance to the imposition of hegemonic cultural norms imposed upon literature by North American and Spanish-language publishers. In other words, it is a celebration of hybridity. It is true that literature emerges in English from around the world, and that diverse global Englishes<sup>4</sup> are emerging in publication with varying degrees of influence from other cultures. Still, this is far from the majority, and was even less so when Spanglish literature began to emerge in the 90's. Consequently, rendering the Spanglish voice visible through publication is a highly political act, perhaps especially so given its context as American literature. Translation Studies scholars have long commented on the North American publishing industry, and not only insofar as translations are concerned. Here there is a long history of publishers valuing only that which is written in a "domesticated" neutral North American English—that is to say a use of a "pure" English that cushions readers from confronting anything that could be perceived as other (Venuti 1-30). Publishing in Spanglish in this context can only serve as a rebellion against this norm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See McClure, Erica and Montserrat Mir. "Spanish-English Codeswitching in the Mexican and Spanish Press." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1995, pp. 33-50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Global Englishes refers to local varieties of English that are spoken in areas that have been heavily influenced by the UK and the US, but that differ from the more standard registers of these two countries. This term usually applies in contexts in which English is a second language for the population in question.

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Furthermore, this resistance becomes even more evident when we consider that every author in this vernacular—and there are few indeed who use sustained Spanglish rather than short bursts confined to dialogue—is capable of writing in either English or Spanish. We know this for two reasons: First, they were all educated in either the US educational system or that of a Spanishspeaking country where emphasis on "correct" English or Spanish usage is stressed. And second, they have all been published in at least one of these languages in addition to Spanglish. So why write in Spanglish?

Many speakers of Spanglish would feel it reductionist to identify as "Spanish-English bilinguals"; they reside in a borderland, "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary... a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live [t]here...in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal" (Anzaldúa 25). According to this definition Chicago, Miami, New York, Los Angeles, even the very capital of the country, Washington DC, are all borderlands. Spanglish is the unofficial language of these borderlands and speaking it is a way of saying "I belong to two worlds and can function in either, but I am most at ease when I can shift back and forth from one to the other" (Zentella 54). Authors writing in Spanglish are taking pride in this shifting back and forth, and have decided to give prestige to their marginalized use of language by rebelling against the conventions that are imposed by the larger society by writing and publishing in it. Given this it becomes immediately apparent why Anzaldúa resists translation, but I would argue that her view omits an important consideration, the potential role of translation into English as a tool to increase South-to-South communication.

Johan Heilbron conceives of literature as a world system whereby all literature from the Periphery must pass through the Centre in order to reach others who are, in turn, in the Periphery. He says:

The international translation system is, first and foremost, a hierarchical structure, with central, semi-peripheral and peripheral languages. Using a simple definition of centrality, one can say that a language is more central in the world-system of translation when it has a large share in the total number of translated books worldwide... Distinguishing languages by their degree of centrality not only implies that translations flow more from the core to the periphery than the other way around, but also that the communication between peripheral groups often passes through a centre. What is translated from one peripheral language into the other depends on what is translated from these peripheral languages into the central languages. In other words, the more central a language is in the translation system, the more it has the capacity to function as an intermediary or vehicular language, that is as a means of communication between language groups which are themselves peripheral or semi-peripheral. (Heilbron 309-311)

This proposal is, from a modern social justice perspective, jaw-dropping. To suggest that we must assimilate a literature into the Centre and by so doing make it in the image of those against whom it may be resisting in order for it to communicate its purpose beyond its borders sounds akin to the idea of Manifest Destiny or the benevolent dictator. Nevertheless, from a practical perspective I must concede that it is hard to imagine how many speakers of Hinglish, the "hybrid" Hindi-English variety used in India, might be comfortable enough in Spanglish to translate Chávez-Silverman's crónicas directly. Still, speakers of some linguistic borderland vernaculars may desire to understand the realities, challenges, power dynamics, and celebrations of others. So, from a practical perspective, in the words of Gayatri Spivak, these authors must be "made to speak English" (Spivak 182).

Anzaldúa's wholehearted rejection is called into question when we consider translation to be a means by which this literature may serve to empower the producing community by spreading their message beyond the domestic power struggles and into the larger international sphere thus developing cross-cultural solidarity and exchange of ideas, community building, resilience work, and other types of activism with populations who are experiencing similar struggles. After all, the hesitation to accommodate English speakers fails to account for the fact that globally 2/3 of them are non-native speakers. But, if international movement building is the objective, how one translates can be as important to consider as whether or not to do so.

If one does decide to translate the translator can still choose to undermine hegemonic publishing practices while simultaneously rendering the text accessible to a larger readership. I'll consider two options at the translator's disposal: non-translation and intralingual translation.

## Non-Translation

Non-translation may at first glance seem incompatible with the decision to translate, but Sherry Simon speaks of non-translation as the decision to leave certain *elements* of a source text untranslated in the target text rather than a blanket rejection of translation as the term could be understood to mean. For example, in the Quebec context, she recognizes that expletives frequently are derived from ecclesiastical terminology and, consequently, reference a particular cultural history and the historic power that the Church held in Quebec; this is not the case with English expletives, and so Simon suggests that it is more appropriate to leave these terms untranslated (Simon 466). But non-translation, at least for Simon, seems restricted to untranslatable ideas. And in this way nontranslation of untranslatable ideas is already used by some Latinx<sup>5</sup> authors.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> I use the term Latinx to broaden the more traditional terms Latina/o or Latin@ to include identities and genders beyond the binary imposed by Spanish grammar and that may include hyphenated identities such as Latino-Japanese-American, Latino-Canadian, etc. However, the use of this term has not been widely accepted and its definition is in flux.

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An increasing number of US Latinx authors use Spanish elements within their predominantly English works, many of these are written in Spanish precisely because the authors found the ideas untranslatable into English. Lourdes Torres speaks of a variety of approaches that are common in recent US Latina/o literature. I will not list them out exhaustively here, however of particular interest for this paper are 1) the use, or not, of italics to mark Spanish words as foreign and 2) the use of definitions or translations following a term to clarify the Spanish for non-Spanish speakers (Torres 77-78). An example of the first approach can be seen in Sandra Cisneros' short story Woman Hollering Creek (1992): "But passion in its purest crystalline essence. The kind of books and songs and *telenovelas* describe when one finds, finally, the great love of one's life, and does whatever one can, must do, at whatever the cost" (Cisneros 44). Here "telenovelas" is italicized in the text to mark it as a departure from normative English. Judith Ortiz Cofer is another author who inserts occasional italicized Spanish words into her work to hint at the bilingual world in which her characters live. She clarifies that her language use is a functional rather than political choice (Torres 80).

The second approach is used in tandem with the first approach, by Gloria Anzaldúa: "*Tú* no sirves pa' nada—you're good for nothing. *Eres pura vieja*" (Anzaldúa 105). This text not only marks the Spanish as a departure from the English, but provides the monolingual reader a definition of the phrase "Tú no sirves pa' nada," but does not define "Eres pura vieja." For her part, Esmeralda Santiago in her *When I was Puerto Rican* (1993), like Anzaldúa, uses Spanish words followed by English definitions of these terms to "familiarize the text for the monolingual reader" (Torres 81).

These two approaches contrast drastically with a refusal to mark the Spanish at all, which is Junot Díaz's preferred approach. Of italics in his early works Junot Díaz says "The *New Yorker* forced me to put italics in, but after that I stipulated as part of my contract that if they didn't accept the stories' nonitalics that – they can't publish it" (Ch'ien 207). Rather than mark his work as other every time he used a Spanish word, Díaz instead likens his insertion of Spanish into English to "revenge" for English forcing out his Spanish when he first learned it (209-210). Likewise Susana Chávez-Silverman does not, in any way, mark either the Spanish or English as foreign in her texts through the use of italics.

Torres suggests that marking the Spanish text, or in particular defining it, could render the text more accessible not only for Anglo readers, but also for a Latinx audience that may want to rediscover their heritage despite not speaking Spanish. But, she also cautions that this could perpetuate monolingualism in that it doesn't require the reader to actually approach Spanish, but rather it allows them to remain cushioned from it (81). She says "When reading texts by cultural others mainstream readers expect to gain access to other worlds, not to be made aware of their limitations (82). But if the objective of "radical" Spanglish literature, rather than Spanish elements in English literature, is to focus on the transnational or "hybrid" culture from whence it emerges as resistance to the monolingual English hegemony, it seems that it should, even in translation, remind readers of their limitations. And choosing to not translate that which is untranslatable, contributes to this goal. So too does refusing to mark that which is Spanish as other be it through italics or through

the use of definitions following terms. Furthermore, as we've seen with Díaz, Cisneros, Anzaldúa, Santiago, Ortíz Cofer, and others, the use of Spanish within English texts is slowly increasing in prestige as North American publishers permit this usage more and more; trial and error will show us how far we can push this type of bilingualism before English publishers and/or markets reach their limits.

#### Intralingual Translation

A more radical option available to the translator is intralingual translation, defined as changing one sign for another within the same language (Jakobson 114). There could be a number of reasons for this including simplifying information for a younger readership, writing for a population with a different level of education than the ideal reader of the source text, or restricting the vocabulary to make it easier to understand for those learning the language. Sometimes the lines between intralingual translation and marketing, abridging, or pedagogy can be quite blurry. As applied to Spanglish, intralingual translation can aim to leave the text in Spanglish, but alter the specific words and structure to ensure it is far more accessible to an English-speaking reader.

A very light approach to intralingual translation of Spanglish is to leave vocabulary intact if it could be surmised from the context or if it shares Latinate roots with English. This differs from non-translation in that it is not only applied when the ideas are viewed as untranslatable, but instead serves an aesthetic purpose that seeks to replicate the source language use in the target text. Ellen Jones demonstrates this approach in "All Green Will Endure Chrónicle" [sic], the only translation into English of Chávez-Silverman's prior to my own (Chávez-Silverman "All Green"). The result is a text that is quite transparent about its Spanglish origin, but is still undoubtedly English-dominant. The following is a brief excerpt of Chávez-Silverman's source text (on the left) and Jones' translation (right). I have bolded all Spanish words in both the source and target texts; this should not be interpreted as a marker of othering but merely as a tool to facilitate analysis. Additionally, I have underlined one word that Jones invents in order to replicate what she views as an Anglicism in the source text. Cognates between English and Spanish are not marked and will be addressed shortly.

#### Source Text

Algo totalmente wormhole-ish, "invisible linksy," extraordinario acaba de pasar. Salí al patio a regar. Tuve un weird, uncharacteristic, *muy* un-Aries titubeo: I knew if I got involved watering, lovingly checando mis plantas for new growth, random insect asaltos, etc., it would be too late to have a healthwalk antes de ir a la clase de yoga. Pero

#### **Translation**

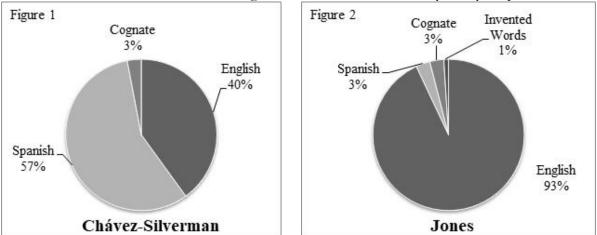
Something totalmente wormhole-ish, "invisible links-y," extraordinario just happened. I went out to the patio to water the plants. I had a weird, uncharacteristic, very un-Aries dither: I knew if I got involved watering, lovingly <u>comprobing</u> my plants for new growth, random attacks from **insectos**, etc., it would be too late to have a healthwalk before going to the yoga

pos ni modo . . . decidí salir. Me puse a barrer los fallen pine needles y stray eucalyptus leaves que se me caen, badgeringly, de los giant trees al otro lado del fence.

(Chávez-Silverman "Todo verdor")

class. But, eh, what the heck... I decided to go out. I started to sweep up the pine needles and stray eucalyptus leaves that had fallen, badgeringly, from the giant trees on the other side of the fence.

(Chávez-Silverman "All Green")



If we look at a quantitative analysis of this segment of Jones' translation and compare it to Chávez-Silverman's source text we can see the degree to which the so-called "hybridity" is preserved.

From these charts we can very clearly see that the degree of "hybridity" in the target text, while still present, is a substantial departure from that of the source text. Jones, it would seem, has prioritized a semantic equivalence in order to afford the monolingual reader complete access to the meaning of the texts. She has done so at the expense of an equivalence that would seek to preserve the "hybridity" of the source text. This is one valid approach, however, how might a translator establish criteria that prioritize an equivalence based on the "hybrid" poetics of the source rather than a semantic equivalence as Jones has prioritized, and thus more fully realize an intralingual translation? What might such a translation look like? And finally, might such an approach create a text that resides between Gloria Anzaldúa's rejection of translation and the possibilities that arise when this literature is made available to a new public through translation?

If we take a moment to consider a fairly average US monolingual English-speaking reader we can determine some criteria by which a more radical intralingual translation could be attempted. In the US context it is fairly safe to assume that many, though certainly not all, Anglos would have likely taken a first-year Spanish course and would have encountered other Spanish terms in their daily lives. If we use this as our guide we can expand the lexicon available for intralingual translation well beyond what Jones has proposed and include a range of vocabulary including many conjunctions, prepositions, frequent nouns, and present tense verbs. For example, the syllabus of an average first-year Spanish course gives substantial emphasis to building a student's vocabulary to enable them to express concrete ideas and actions that they are likely to encounter on a regular basis.

Consequently, it is probable that a student at that level would have been introduced to basic vocabulary from the following categories:

- Family relationships (madre, mamá, hermano, tío, abuela, etc),
- Words describing the human condition (hombre, mujer, niño, joven, etc.),
- Jobs (doctor, profesora, abogado, trabajar, etc.),
- Places (escuela, mercado, iglesia, tienda, playa, etc.), and
- Food (cocinar, comer, beber, plátano, arroz, pollo, etc.).

In addition, as Spanish becomes an ever more global language, it is safe to assume that many US English speakers would have encountered Spanish from time to time outside of the classroom setting, be it through visits to Latin American restaurants (empanadas, baño, cerveza, chile con carne, etc.) or through advertising, television or signage in their local community, especially as American retail chains increasingly post their departments signs (caballeros, damas, niños, electrodomésticos, etc.) bilingually to cater to the growing Spanish-speaking market. By expanding the Spanglish lexicon used for intralingual translation to include all of this vocabulary it forces the monolingual reader to dig a bit deeper and try a bit harder to understand the text, while not going so far as to require them to rely on a dictionary.

Applying these criteria to my translation of another of Chávez-Silverman's crónicas, *Mini* Barrio Norte crónica yields the following result—this text has also been annotated as in the first example, proper names will be considered as cognates:

### Source Text

**3 julio 2001** Buenos Aires Para Ana María Shua

Overcome with happiness mientras atravieso the intersection of Agüero & Charcas, absolutamente sobrecargada de júbilo. Joy in myself por haberme atrevido a solicitar la beca NEH y chingao, de ganármela y poder así be here, walking en Buenos Aires a un mes de mi despedida. De mi despedida también de mí misma y no quiero: I am in denial. Creo que no podré survive esta (desped)ida... se

## Translation

# 3 julio 2001

Buenos Aires Para Ana María Shua

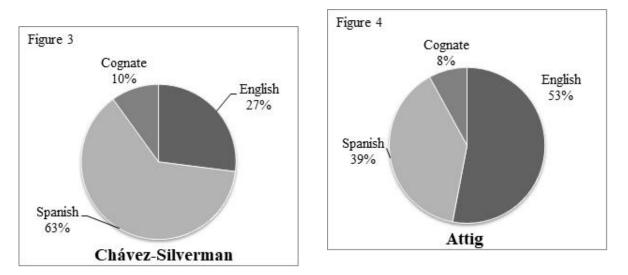
Overcome with happiness while I cross la intersección de Agüero y Charcas, absolutamente overwhelmed de joy. Joy en mí por having dared to solicitar the NEH grant y fuck, to get it y to be here, walking en Buenos Aires a un mes from mi bon voyage. From mi bon voyage de myself too y I don't want it: Estoy en de nilo.<sup>6</sup> I don't think I will be able to sobrevivir this (bon voy)either<sup>7</sup>... Mi boca is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The reader may wonder of my choice of the words "de nilo" to translate "denial". This is intended as an inside joke for the bilingual reader, as both a reference to the stereotypical impression that Anglos often perpetuate that adding an –o to the end of a work automatically makes it Spanish, but also that the Spanish word for the Nile river, a homophone with the second syllable of the word "denial" is el Nilo.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The play on words that results from the placement of the parenthesis in (desped)ida doesn't translate directly into English. Instead, I took "bon voyage," my chosen translation for "despedida," as a known, but not English term, and interrupted it, as the source text does with the word "despedida". I attempted to

me arriman a la boca all the dumb things you say when you're going to say goodbye to someone, or (en mi caso) a un lugar: no quiero dejarte, I'll never be the same, you know, todo eso... (Chávez-Silverman *Killer* 127-129) filling up **de todas las** dumb things you say when you're going to say **adiós** to someone, o (**en mi situación**) **a un** place: no **quiero** leave you, I'll never be the same, you know, **todo eso**...<sup>8</sup>

Here the end result is a Spanglish source text that has been translated into a Spanglish target text, but one that can be read by a different public, as a quantitative analysis confirms:



It is evident that, while the ratios are not identical, the resulting translation is still, without a doubt, a more fully "hybrid" text than was Jones' and in this regard more closely mimics the poetics of the source. Here, in translating the text, I have prioritized an equivalence that seeks to preserve the "hybridity" of the source rather than giving priority to the meaning of the text. Still, I hope that my translation strategy has opened this to a new readership and not merely provided different barriers than in the source. Reception studies of translations are as complicated and methodologically shaky as they are for literature; after all, no two people read a work in the same way, be it a translation or original composition. Consequently it's very difficult to draw strong conclusions about the degree to which I have succeeded in my approach. However, in the final editing of the translation I asked for feedback from some readers who had the type of exposure to Spanish that I described above. Their preliminary observations concluded that, while both texts were challenging, the translation was far more accessible without the use of a dictionary than was the source text.

Unlike non-translation in Latinx literature or Jones' very light application of intralingual translation, however, it seems that a more radical intralingual translation has yet to be published—at least not in a Spanglish context. For my part, I would be surprised to find a trade publisher willing to gamble on this type of a project for a mass market. Still, since very few translations of Spanglish

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reproduce the phonetic value of "ida" by adding "either" for (bon voy)either. The play of words in the translation retains a play on words that fits the context.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The complete text of this translation has not yet been published.

works have been commissioned for an English-speaking readership, this approach could provide some inspiration moving forward and, if this strategy is used more widely significant market data would emerge to shed light on public reception of such translations.

In conclusion, translation from Spanglish into English is rejected and resisted by many of those who advocate for its recognition as a legitimate form of expression. That resistance, however, is predicated on an understanding of translation as inherently domesticated—or, to use a term that is less Translation-Studies-specific—whitewashed. In this context, then, translation of Spanglish into English is often mimesis of taming the wild tongue, as Anzaldúa states "anglo con cara de inocente [que] nos arrancó la lengua. Wild tongues can't be tamed, they can only be cut out" (Anzaldúa 54). But Translation Studies has long sought options that reject a singular approach to translation, seeking instead to address power imbalances inherent in any translation process. I have suggested two approaches to resist the simplistic notion of translation. These are inspired by Anzaldúa's call to action, using Spanglish to express Latinx history, to mitigate ignorance, and to show the Anglos that they "are not helping us but following our lead" (Anzaldúa 85).

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