

DISCURSIVE BOUNDARIES: CODE-SWITCHING AS REPRESENTATIVE OF GIBALTARIAN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN M.G. SANCHEZ' *ROCK BLACK*

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Abstract

The British overseas territory of Gibraltar situated on the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula has a population of 30 000 people with a variety of ethnic origins, languages, history, and political affiliations. The recent upsurge in Gibraltarian literature has served not only to draw attention to the dynamic and multifaceted nature of their identity but also to help in the task of identity construction on the part of the Gibraltarians themselves; there is an observable push and pull of affiliation not only in Gibraltar's cultural artifacts, but also in its language. This article identifies the ways in which code-switching in M.G. Sanchez' *Rock Black* represents the Spanish-British conflict, and views language choice as a tool in the construction of group-identity among contemporary Gibraltarians.

Keywords: Gibraltar, M.G. Sanchez, code-switching, Llanito, identity.

Resumen

El territorio británico de Gibraltar, con una población civil de 30 000 habitantes y situado en el sur de la península Ibérica, se compone de una comunidad de personas con diversos orígenes étnicos, idiomas, historias y afiliaciones políticas. El reciente incremento de la literatura Gibraltareña ha constituido una herramienta

importante, no solo porque la literatura refleja una identidad dinámica y poliédrica, sino también porque sirve como un instrumento sociológico vital para la construcción de la identidad de los propios gibraltareños; se observa un elemento de incentivación y disuasión de afiliación no solo en los artefactos culturales de Gibraltar, sino también en el propio lenguaje. El presente artículo identifica las formas en que la alternancia de código en *Rock Black* de M.G. Sanchez representa un conflicto de identidad, y considera que la variación lingüística es una herramienta en la construcción de la identidad colectiva de los gibraltareños contemporáneos.

Palabras clave: Gibraltar, M.G. Sanchez, alternancia de código, Llanito, identidad.

1. Introduction

We seldom realize, for example that our most private thoughts and emotions are not actually our own. For we think in terms of language and images which we did not invent, but which were given to us by our society.

Alan W. Watts

The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are (1989: 53-54)

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Gibraltarian identity has been as much an internal struggle as a Spanish-English one. The language mixture spoken on this outpost is not only representative of the political conflict, but it also participates in the construction of a particular identity and world vision. Language, from this perspective, becomes part and parcel of identity forging. As Watts (1989) suggests, the way we think is directly connected to the society to which we belong; it is a complicated system of language and images that yields our thoughts. The understanding of this can open floodgates of insight about the language of a people, and how they use language to talk about their lives. The notion of reciprocity between a language and its users is ever-present in the 30,000-inhabitant community of Gibraltar, a British territory located on the southern end of the Iberian Peninsula, sharing its northern border with Spain. Gibraltar's contact and subsequent history with Spain, along with its relatively small size, has developed a polycultural as well as a polylingual community reflecting the diverse ethnic origin of its inhabitants (including Spanish, British, Genoese, Maltese, Moroccan, and Portuguese, among others). As with any such group, Gibraltar finds itself dealing with a system of linguistic structures influenced by contact-zones, which results in a dynamic structure of social meaning construction and group-identity-building. The list of languages used in Gibraltar includes English, Spanish (predominant languages), Genoese, Ladino, Maltese and Moroccan-Arabic (Domínguez, Saussy and Villanueva 2014: 105), and also Gibraltar's particular dialect of Yanito—in linguistic topology—or Llanito—as the users call it (see Levey 2008: 1)—, which is a unique use of code-switching that yields its own classification.

Llanito describes both the language and the language users themselves; it is the product of a type of in-between community —neither British nor Spanish, but something entirely different. What the Gibraltarian identity represents, essentially, is a congruence that is influenced by contact-zones and colonialism, but that in the end rejects nationalistic pigeonholing and outsider classifications of selfhood.

Llanito is present not only in everyday conversation, but also has a presence in Gibraltarian literature. Very little creative literary writing has been published in Gibraltar, in any language, and as Stotesbury remarks, “[g]iven the small population size [...] it was considered unlikely that a ‘national’ literary culture could form” (2015: 123). Despite this, he says, the Gibraltarian writers that have emerged in the latter part of the 20th Century have published a notable amount of literary fiction, and consequently have established a recognized Gibraltarian literary identity (2015: 123). Among this fiction are the writings of M.G. Sanchez, including novels (*The Escape Artist* 2013; *Solitude House* 2015), short stories (*Diary of a Victorian Colonial and Other Tales* 2008; *Rock Black* 2008), and even non-fiction (*Past: a Memoir* 2016), primarily written in English, but peppered with a Llanito-style code-switching that is characteristic of his work. Through his language, Sanchez places his characters in a typified Gibraltarian world, and exemplifies the struggle of coming to terms with an identity that goes with a ‘no-man’s land’ reality. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this equates to the dynamic and ever-changing negotiation of meaning-making and group-membership that occurs at the point of emblematic association. Blommaert and Varis state that “[w]e speak of identity practices as discursive orientations towards a set of emblematic resources. The reason is that, empirically, when talking about identity or acting within an identify category, people ‘point towards’ a wide variety of objects that characterize their identities” (2011: 4). And, as Weston states, “local identity and language are dependent as much on the territory’s relationship with Spain as with the United Kingdom” (2011: 338), so I claim that the negotiation of meaning and ‘markedness’ of emblematic social leanings, as well as evidence of relationship ‘dependency’ in M.G. Sanchez’ writing is precisely what allows for a repossession of self-identity. The aim of this paper is to identify the ways in which code-switching in Sanchez’ writings is not only representative of a conflict of identity, but is also a tool in identity construction among contemporary Gibraltarians. I claim that this identity is a re-taking of power by the —at times— powerless community in its middle-space of two nations, paying particular attention to the short stories in *Rock Black* and reiterating the assertion that the code-switching itself is the key to understanding that the Gibraltarians hold a strong identity that is neither Spanish, nor British, but entirely something else. The identity-building that will be described in this article can be understood through a historical, literary, and linguistic analysis of the author’s novel, his language use, and his community as a whole.

2. Historical overview

Maybe your country is only a place you make up in your own mind. Something you dream about and sing about. Maybe it's not a place on the map at all, but a story full of people you meet and places you visit, full of books and films you've been to.

Hugo Hamilton

The Speckled People: A Memoir of a Half-Irish Childhood (2003/2004: 87)

In the abovementioned extract, Hugo Hamilton analogizes the experience of immigrants who find themselves outsiders in their own home. In the case of colonial communities, the conflict that comes with subjugated identities is that identity formation does not belong to a place or boundaries, but rather to *experience*, and forms part of the constant self-definition of the territory's members. Sociolinguists agree that identity is polymorphic and is negotiated through social interaction. In fact, much like the advances in identity-construction in discourse analysis by scholars such as Teun van Dijk (1996, 2006, 2014), or Norman Fairclough (1989, 2010) (who posit that identities necessarily make use of cognitive components which require the negotiation of social structures), sociolinguists also assert that negotiation of group-identity attaches to signs, settings, background knowledge, or social schemata, and cannot be singular by nature (Blom and Gumperz 2000: 120). Culture and identity, therefore, are in constant flux of terms and negotiation. The late/postmodern conceptions of culture and identity attempt to re-conceptualize the notions of power, conflict and identity-building in terms more congruent with the postcolonial perspectives that culture is not homogeneous. This view tends to focus on what culture (and identity) does, rather than what it is, and states that these cultural affiliations are used to define and categorize. That is, culture creates an 'us' and 'them' taxonomy of people (Gray 2006: 48). However, the categorization is not always one-to-one, nor black and white. It is dynamic, plural, and changing. Furthermore, this categorization is essential to the construction of identity, and active meaning-making through representation, articulation, and consumption creates an ideological dimension of meaning (2006: 48). This view of cultural identity understands the group in conflict as seeking to increase a sense of collective-self by using symbolic forms, such as language, to differentiate one from another and thus define and impose a sense of sameness and otherness. This tactic of categorization imposes boundaries of class, ethnicity and territory, and essentially forms a social identity by means of delineation (2006: 44). Again, identity is something that someone does, rather than has, is *interactive* and is an active process directly connected to a group's identity or culture.

In the case of Gibraltar, a convenient contemporary outlet for a centuries-old conflict between Great Britain and Spain, the people of 'the Rock' are victims of

an ebb and flow from the competing nations, and also play a part in their own conflict of affiliation. Gibraltarians are assigned identity primarily by their Spanish or British affiliation but also make choices in their own cultural and national affiliations: the choice to remain sentimentally attached either to Britain, to Spain, to neither, or to both, is an aspect that forms their own individual and group-identity. Gibraltar is a community made up of people who have found themselves in an in-between, whether in relative political rest, or not. It is a place that is filled with both Spanish and British cultural artifacts, and for the non-Gibraltarian, it may be hard to perceive what comes from which culture, and what is 'simply Gibraltarian'. In their description of the ever-changing realities of nation-building processes, especially in terms of the role that language plays in that process, Blommaert and Verschueren (1992) describe the problematic dogma that, although controversial, seeps into today's national ideologies.

[T]he ideal model of society is mono-lingual, mono-ethnic, mono-religious, mono-ideological. Nationalism, interpreted as the struggle to keep groups 'pure' and homogeneous as possible, is considered to be a positive attitude within the dogma of homogeneity. Pluri-ethnic or pluri-lingual societies are seen as problem-prone, because they require forms of state organization that run counter to the 'natural' characteristics of groupings of people. (1992: 362)

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Their point is that 'monoism' in the conceptual "systematicity with which the norm of homogeneity turns language itself into an interethnic battlefield" and in turn encroaches in national policy and dominates politics (1992: 362). And in corroboration, as is seen in the case of communities of the 'in-between', or what has been described as "hyphenated identities", the identity of cultures in contact highlights the inadequacy of common assumptions that culture and identity are "self-contained" (Caglar 1997: 169). Instead, Gibraltarians, like other similar communities, reject 'monoism' in the face of diversity, and a multifaceted selfhood surges forth.

Since 1704, Spanish and British relations have been tumultuous. That date marks the initial British conquest of the territory, which later, in 1713, was ceded to Great Britain in the treaty of Utrecht (Fawcett 1967: 238). Since then, there has been a constant struggle on both sides to claim, reclaim, and renegotiate the political rights to the territory. Spain, as a tactic, has limited free movement between Spain and Gibraltar and continues to do so until this day (Lipski 1986: 415). One of the worst periods of conflict was during the Franco regime following the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) when there was an influx of Spanish citizens fleeing to British territory as refugees (many of them remained). This had two important effects: one is that the linguistic landscape of the territory changed drastically with the inflow of Spanish speakers (and subsequent culture) to the

territory; and secondly, it fueled a distrust between the Spanish and the British (Weston 2013: 4). Later, the civilian evacuation during WWII to make way for British soldiers further influenced the linguistic realities of the Rock, perhaps even more so (Sawchuck 1992: 88). Renegotiations continued, and Spain never gave up her claim on the territory. David Lambert in “Solid as a Rock?” (2005) explains that the issues of Gibraltar’s ‘decolonization’, brought to the United Nations in the 1960s, led the Franco Government to press its claims on the territory by means of a total closure of the border from 1969 to 1985, in attempts to isolate the community. Yet, he claims, “this only hardened local opposition to negotiations with Spain on the colony’s future”, and, referencing Gold (1994), emphasizes that “the border closure remains embedded in public memory and continues to feed Gibraltarian suspicion towards Spain” (Lambert 2005: 204). Furthermore, Gibraltarians express the paradoxical situation of calling a place home that they know is not theirs, or rather, that may be taken away from them at any moment.

We boast of being free people but we live on land which does not belong to us. We elect our own representatives but the Governor is allowed to keep his reserve powers. We talk of Our Rock, Our Town, Our Gibraltar, but at any time Britain can decide, without consulting us, to enter into negotiations about these things. (Social Action Committee of Gibraltar 1968, in Lambert 2005: 213)

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That is, the whole foundation of their home-land ties is a) in constant flux, and b) beyond their control. Gibraltarians align to a place that is both theirs, and not theirs at the same time.

Present-day Gibraltar still holds on to the historical conflict, and questions of identity, independently of territorial claims, continually arise. Anti-British as well as anti-Spanish sentiments manifest themselves in a double-edged, and correlative, black legend—a historical racism that has lasted down to contemporary Gibraltar. The mutual fear between the Spanish and the British has kept its place on the Rock. The meeting place for these fears is to be found at the border, a place where the Spanish can exercise control. It is a physical place that allows the longstanding conflict to continue, and it is still just as real as it was in its inception. What stems from this conflict is a ‘national’ identity that is charged by experience rather than by sovereignty or border issues, a notion explored in M.G. Sanchez’ writing, and particularly addressed in *Rock Black* through characters who exude the every-day Gibraltarian experience. In “Dago Droppings”, a title which introduces the racist term, he attempts to highlight the absurdity of the bias by deconstructing its origins. A *dago*, as understood in synonymous racist terms is “[a] wop, a greaser, a filthy, backstabbing, lazy little Spaniard” (2008: 2). Furthermore, through his narrative, Sanchez points out the irony in its origins, and uses this as a metaphor to devalue its modern use.

‘You may be shocked to hear this,’ I said, swallowing even harder, ‘but the word “dago” traces its origins to the reign of Mary I —when a Spaniard by the name of Diego (or “Dago,” as his name came to be mispronounced) allegedly defecated on the high altar at Saint Paul’s Cathedral. The incident is mentioned in a play by Thomas Dekker and also in one written collaboratively by Dekker and John Webster. Although, if you ask me, I believe that the story in question is... well... sort of a bit... well... apocryphal... if you know what I mean... you know what I mean, don’t you?’ (2008: 2)

The term itself stems from a legend, a story that most likely never happened, and is in itself a mispronunciation, a misunderstanding. The absurdity of the term, both in its mythology and in its representation of phonetic unfamiliarity to its users, highlights the anti-racist argument that weaves its way through Sanchez’ collection. The racism goes both ways and is formulated in terms of physical appearance towards the Spanish as well as the British. An attempt to tell an Englishman and a Gibraltarian apart would probably concentrate on the fact that an Englishman had much less tolerance of the Spanish sun. For example, “[m]ost definitely English. You could tell from the whisky-bags under his eyes and the crumpled orange tan that stretched like an ill-fitting pair of nylon tights around his head” (2008: 4), or in the skin of “lobster-pink Englishmen” (2008: 31). In terms of language, a Gibraltarian’s degree of *Britishness* is measured in their speech: “Can’t you wogs speak any English? Don’t you realize you’re in a British colony now or what?” (2008: 65). Along with a perceived linguistic inability, Gibraltarians’ loyalty is often questioned: “Aren’t you British Gibraltarian like the rest of them? Or do you by chance regard yourself as a piece of filthy dago scum?” (2008: 4).

The degree of *Gibraltarianness* is also called into question on the other side of the border. In “Harry Pozo and the Brazilian Prostitute”, a group of Gibraltarians cross over to Spanish territory and find themselves confronting a ‘welcome’ sign at the city limits of San Roque: “*Bienvenidos a San Roque, donde reside la de Gibraltar*”, translated in the text as “*Welcome to San Roque... where the real Gibraltar resides*” (2008: 29). In “The Line and Limit of Britishness: The Construction of Gibraltarian Identity in M.G. Sanchez’ Writing” (2017), Manzanás Calvo remarks on this passage and asserts that:

The sign points to another dichotomy, not between British and Gibraltarian [...] but between real and fake Gibraltarians. Ever since Franco’s dictatorship, the writer claims that the Spaniards have argued there is no such thing as a Gibraltarian because the real ones left the Rock in 1704, with the British takeover. This division between former and alleged legitimate inhabitants and contemporary and illegitimate ones promotes the vision that Gibraltarians are merely a removable population, just like they were for the British when they were evacuated during the Second World War. (2017: 36)

More than 300 years after the takeover, this sign serves as a marker of lost territory, and represents the stabs of animosity that are still present. The sign welcomes almost everyone but the Gibraltarians, or at least serves to remind them of their place: “*We are the real Gibraltarians*, they’re telling the world, *not those bastards across the border*” (2008: 29). The characters of *Rock Black*, and the Gibraltarians themselves, cannot escape the othering process, whether or not they are in Gibraltar, in Britain, or in Spain. A taxonomy of who Gibraltarians are constantly confronts them and almost always comes with the further confrontation of who they are not, and where they do not belong.

Gibraltar is not only assigned group affiliation, but also a perceived level of danger for the rest of the world. Even as their colony, Gibraltar is conceived as a dangerous place for the British. When the Royal Navy ships dock in Gibraltar, they are on high alert and resort to British intelligence to calculate the degree of risk involved, even to the point of arresting Gibraltarians for seeming too idle and causing suspicion, ““Do you know,’ Taffy rasped out as soon as we sat down, ‘three weeks ago we’d have been arrested just for being here’” (2008: 55). Colonial borders and military would seem to be in place not only to protect the territory, but also the British who reside inside the borders. However, the navy are just as afraid of the Gibraltarians as they are of the terrorists they are protecting themselves against. A warning code is in place to inform the British of the level of security risk: “Rock Red —which means maximum alert, Rock Yellow —which means a state of increased vigilance, and Rock Black —which means the same old shit as always” (2008: 56).

What resounds in *Rock Black* is the quest for a self-description of ‘Gibraltar’, one in which Gibraltarians themselves decide who they are, even if that description is overly-ideal.

Is this really the Gibraltar I know? The one where everyone is known for his friendliness and generosity? Where Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Christians all live harmoniously together in an area not much larger than twenty football pitches? Where no murders or rapes are ever committed and where tourists are always welcomed with open arms? (2008: 69-70)

The colonial subject is at odds with the nation to which his politics, his assumed loyalty, and partial history belong, and with the reality of border contact, of history, of family, and of experience. The Gibraltarian does not want to be described, but seeks to describe himself. Despite the lack of a canonical literature, to hold the collective memory of a people, the past narratives of Gibraltar are present in historical (and contemporary) realities embedded in physical and cultural artifacts. Sanchez’ writing carves out Hamilton’s notion that “maybe your country is only a place you make up in your mind” (2003: 295), and rather, it is comprised of

experience, of self-awareness, self-description, and, in the case of a colonized territory, the ability to say ‘we are not you, we are not them, we are us’. Furthermore, the Gibraltarian identity disrupts the apparent otherness assigned by both counterparts that is seemingly inevitable in the ‘contact-zone’ that is Gibraltar, both a political and de facto contact of history, people, and language.

3. Code-switching in Gibraltar

The job of the linguist, like that of the biologist or the botanist, is not to tell us how nature should behave, or what its creations should look like, but to describe those creations in all their messy glory and try to figure out what they can teach us about life, the world, and especially in the case of linguistics, the workings of the human mind.

Arika Okrent
In the Land of Invented Languages (2009: 5)

As Arika Okrent states in the quotation above, analyzing language entails describing the creation of natural meaning-making, in all its “messy glory”, and striving to understand what linguistic chaos can tell us of the language users themselves. In the case of Gibraltar, ‘chaotic’ code-switching is an observable negotiation process, and the posit that Gibraltarians are *not British, nor Spanish, but something else*, is represented in the language; which becomes a tangible representation of meaning-making structures of the community members. That is, Gibraltarian code-switching can be examined empirically—something that is a bit more difficult in other areas of their ‘something else-ness’—and reveals various *less-perceivable* aspects of their identity. This section will examine Llanito as a language (and as a people), and how the code-switching in Sanchez’ writing is both a mirror of society and also a tool for constructing that same society in contemporary terms.

Classic forms of code-switching follow a combination of L_1 and L_2 in which speakers move from one language to another, either within an utterance or between utterances (Weston 2013: 3). For the balanced bilingual, code-switching occurs at points in discourse where juxtaposition of L_1 and L_2 elements do not violate a surface syntactic rule of either language (Poplack 1980: 581). That is, the speakers are able to unconsciously (also consciously) move back and forth between two or more languages at grammatical and semantic points of mutual compatibility. This yields some sort of *other* language which is spontaneously created to meet the needs of speakers in any given linguistic or social situation. Llanito, as mentioned in the introduction, is the Gibraltarian form of code-switching between English and Spanish. The question of which is the L_1 and which is the L_2 in bilingual communities like Gibraltar is somewhat problematic. Gibraltar’s official language

is English, as it is a British territory. However, its proximity to Spain, along with its history and the interchange of Spanish and British inhabitants, results in a community with Spanish being just as present as English, although, at times, in different social contexts.

Various empirical analyses have shed light on different aspects of Gibraltarian code-switching, including conversation strategies (Moyer 2013), language preferences, phonological phenomena, morphological changes (Levey 2008), lexical variation and choice (Weston 2013) and other sociolinguistic aspects (Lipski 1986). Llanito consists of various patterns of code-switching with a proportionately small lexical substratum from Italian, Hebrew, Arabic and a local vernacular. The most frequent speech modes, however, are English or Spanish or variations of the two combined (Moyer 2013: 216). As Gibraltar's community consists of speakers with high-bilingual proficiency, an equal opportunity for using English or Spanish as the primary language exists, despite the fact that much of the media is in English, and that Spanish is taught as a secondary subject in schools (Lipski 1986: 416). That is, each speaker may choose to speak majority Spanish, majority English, or a true and balanced mix of both without linguistic barriers, value-conflict, or other extra-linguistic factors at the point of reception (Levey 2008; Moyer 2009, 2013; Weston 2013). Gibraltar's code-switching variation is unique in its social configuration. In many multilingual situations, where members of the community do not share the same linguistic competence and attitudes, conflicts tend to arise between the groups. Moyer gives the examples of Belgium, Canada and Catalonia, and explains that these groups are at odds not only with the dominant language of their territories, but with each other as well, due to a constant evaluation and negotiation of appropriate switching at the point of speech (2013: 217). In contrast to these examples, Gibraltar's code-switching seems to bring the group together; the constant reality of code-switching is an overarching unifier.

When Gibraltarians are asked about their own code-switching, they provide examples of attitudes and practices indicating choices are very often tied to age, upbringing, or family tendencies: "There are some families where all they speak is English at home: for example my sister speaks to her sons in Spanish; *le contestan en inglés* (... they answer in English)" (Weston 2013: 9).

Or, as another speaker from Weston's study states, "Cada casa tiene su *language*" ("Each house has its own language") (2013: 17). Although there are sociolinguistic aspects that determine the frequency of switching, main language choice, and context, code-switching is the result of personal identity as well as a reflection of individual situations, and/or mere stylistic choice.

The empirical studies mentioned above point to the fact that code-switching contributes to the construction of Gibraltarian identity. In terms of language

contact, Gibraltar's is both circumstantial and chosen. As for Sanchez, his use of code-switching is, of course, his own, but is also a result of a code-switching community's sociolinguistic and situational determinants. Here it is essential to remind the reader that this analysis is not an empirical study of human subjects, nor of natural speech, but rather of the code-switching that occurs in a work of fiction. It should be borne in mind as the dynamics of an empirical analysis change altogether when confronted with the fact that, while literature indeed contains evidence of the social realities in which the author is influenced and which he himself influences, the nature of literature is distinct from that of conversation analysis as there is now a less-studied receptor of the code-switching, namely the reader. Sebba et al. (2012) point out that it is difficult to analyze code-switching in literature as there is no recognized body of theory that deals with it. They state that the issue of whether code-switching in literature is 'authentic' or 'artificial' is a strongly debated topic (2012: 183). However, there are at least two conditions that researchers agree upon for literary code-switching to be deemed mimetic of reality: one is that the characters must represent members of a real speech community, and two, that the author must be from that speech community as well. If these two conditions are met, it can at least be determined that a "socio-pragmatic approach can enable a cohesive analysis of code-switching in literature", that it is not a "marginal or arbitrary phenomenon" but instead, is a viable technique that may play a crucial role in literature (2012: 184). As Sanchez is indeed from the code-switching community of his fiction, as well as are his characters, it can be determined that the code-switching in *Rock Black* is 'authentic' and therefore may be analyzed as an artifact of the Gibraltarian identity-building system and representative of true social schemata.

Furthermore, code-switching and non-translation in literature have been both criticized and praised in academic circles. The practice in literature has been said to be "aggressively exclusive of monolingual participants, or those with a different set of languages at their disposal" (Myers-Scotton 2006, in Lakhtikova 2017: 1), and thus limiting the author's reader-base. However, code-switching and non-translation in literary texts are often praised for their function as political commentary and promoting identity-building, and have been regarded as active choices that reveal discursive realities within bilingual communities. Similarly, Sanchez' choices in his writings are both politically active and indicative of the realities of a people; the fragmentation of his language represents a fragmented identity leading to a constructive space for forming group-identity. Sanchez joins the myriad of bilingual writers and corroborates their efforts to politicize and de-politicize language. Although it seems that Sanchez' language use is exclusive, it can be argued that it is rather a tool precisely in the identity-building that I claim is constructed through the language, and an invitation to the reader to observe it.

As Sanchez himself narrates, “[e]very man, they say, carries a book of memory within him” (2008: 106). And every book of memory informs the rest of one’s experience and discursive reality. The words on Sanchez’ pages are his, but are also representative of the society(-ies) in which he resides. The language used is a product of social activity, “activity on the part of one individual to make himself understood by another, and activity on the part of the other to understand what is in the mind of the first” (Jespersen 1965/2007: 17). In other words, Sanchez’ code-switching describes both the language and the speaker, and the interrelationship between the two.

As mentioned above, the term Llanito not only refers to the language of Gibraltar, but is also used to describe the people themselves. Sanchez reflects on the term ‘Llanito’ and states:

I think the word ‘llanito’ is first and foremost to describe who is and who isn’t Gibraltarian; in other words, it is a marker of selfhood. Plenty of times I have heard people say —“Pero ese/esa, ¿qué es, llanito/llanita, o no?” [*That man/woman, is he/she ‘Llanito’ or not?*] when asking if someone is Gibraltarian. Sure, ‘Llanito’ also refers to the form of ‘Spanglish’ (for want of a better term) that people speak on the Rock, but more often than not it is a word used to describe the experience of being Gibraltarian. [...] What I am trying to say, I suppose, is that the word ‘llanito’ is both a way of speaking and a state of being. (Personal correspondence, 26 June 2017)

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This *experience* of being Gibraltarian, the *state of being* that Sanchez describes is reflective of identity. It is the separation of ‘us’ and ‘them’ —them being either the Spanish or the British— and is both a state of mind and a way of speaking; both of which contribute to the construction of the other. The identity behind what Llanito is is also what informs language choice, and language choice also informs identity. The ‘us’ that Llanito describes, however, is at constant odds with the other; Gibraltarians have a recurrent battle of distancing themselves from ‘them’ in order to determine who ‘we’ are. This conflict is clearly seen in Sanchez’ writing and manifests itself both through his narrative and in his linguistic choices; code-switching is not the only marker. Sanchez’ writing also goes a step further and invites the reader into the Gibraltarian world, paradoxically, by limiting linguistic information. That is, the fact that he very rarely translates Spanish words or phrases, and that there is no glossary at the end of the volume, demonstrates a choice to delineate who is a member of the linguistic community, and who is not. He invites the reader into his world but inadvertently reminds them of the fact that they are not a part of it. Llanito, in many ways, serves as a code-language to answer the question: is he/she Llanito or not?

As discussed above, code-switching in literature has been described as difficult to pinpoint and classify, as it does not always follow the same patterns as in spoken

discourse. Consequently, it is essential to recognize the differences between the alteration that occurs in natural speech, and that which is found in literature. Furthermore, in defining code-switching we encounter several possibilities in terms of the psychological motivation behind the switch as well as the form, meaning, and grammatical patterns. The types of code-switching present in Sanchez' writing vary, and are not *radical* according to Torres' definition —a code-switching text only accessible to the bilingual reader (Torres 2007, in Casielles-Suárez 2013: 477)— but rather are what Casielles-Suárez describes as “radical hybridism” (2013: 477). Here, I claim that Casielles-Suárez' definition holds true in *Rock Black*, in that the text,

[r]ather than including whole paragraphs in Spanish, which the monolingual reader would simply skip, or offer a neat kind of code alteration [...] where the switch occurs at phrase boundaries, the quantity and quality of the Spanish words and phrases which are consistently inserted in English sentences create hybrid phrases with the result that rather than alternating with English, Spanish becomes part of English. (2013: 477)

Although Casielles-Suárez remarks that this is often done without the use of italics, Sanchez' italicizes text, I claim, not to gratify the reader, but as a visual representation of a change of mindset, or as he calls it, “experience” (personal correspondence, 26 June 2017). In this way, the ‘radical hybridism’ invites the reader —bilingual or not— into the Gibraltarian identity construction process of the ‘us’ and ‘them’, and the constant struggle of self-identification.

This hybridism can be seen in various examples, including one-word inserts at the end of sentences —usually expletives and/or terms of endearment (translations mine, unless otherwise indicated), “Fancy a drink, *compadre*” [literally ‘godfather’ but also a traditional term of reverence and friendship] (2008: 79), or emphatic clauses, “Just pack your bags and come with us, *por el amor de Dios*” [for the love of God] (2008: 23). They can be isolated sentences, “Qué te dijo el puñetero mierda medico?” [What did the damn doctor tell you?] (2008: 18), or they can be whole thoughts inserted into framed English sentences, “... you would get descriptive rhapsodies about the way *la Paula*'s hair smelt as you held its strands in your hands —*tan dulce y tan fragrant, como si la palma de tu mano hubiera sido empolvada en canela*” [so sweet, and so fragrant, as if the palm of your hand was covered in cinnamon] (2008: 17), or even bilingual transactions, ““Thank you, doctor’ ‘*No hay de que*” [You're welcome] (2008: 187). Sanchez also presents bilingual plays where Spanish and English are contained within one word or phrase, for example, one character's nickname ““Georgie Polli’ —a bilingual pun that celebrated his famously oversized and overworked privates”, where an English diminutive modifies the

Spanish root (2008: 26), or “Pete-ito” (2008: 114), where the Spanish diminutive is chosen over an English one.

Sanchez’ language alteration comes in various forms and is not always code-switching. At times, he attempts to convey that the Spanish itself is its own variation. Although Gibraltar’s proximity to Andalusian Spain would suggest the people there speak “exactly like they do in La Línea across the border” (2008: 6), that is not the case according to Sanchez. Whether Andalusian Spanish can be deemed a substratum for the Gibraltarian dialect or not, Sanchez’ narrative indicates a symbolic repertoire that Blom and Gumperz describe as serving “to symbolize the differing social identities which members may assume” (2000: 123). They state that there is no “simple one-to-one relationship between specific speech varieties and specific social identities”, and that the speaker makes linguistic choices that determine finite social significance (2000: 123). This significance, however, is entirely dependent on the speakers’ attitudes towards the variation. Sanchez’ statements, as well as his characters’, reflect an internal notion that the dialect is indeed unique to Gibraltar, and that the speakers are free to declare this. In fact, one of Sanchez’ characters explains that “ask anyone from Andalusia and they’ll tell you it’s totally different. “*Joder*”, they’d say, that’s not like Spanish at all” (2008: 6). Instead, Gibraltarian Spanish, at least the pronunciation, is described as distinct from Andalusian and more similar sounding to “Uruguayan” (2008: 6), although not Uruguayan at all. What is also interesting about Gibraltar is its unique variation of standard Spanish pronunciation, despite its proximity. It should be noted, too, that the English there does not sound quite British, either:

... where are you from?’
 ‘Manchester. And you?’
 ‘I’m local.’
 ‘You don’t sound it.’
 ‘That’s because I lived in England for about a year,’ I said. (2008: 72)

Or, “*Habeis escuchado?* [...] A British gentleman *con accento Andaluz?*!” [Did you guys hear that? A British man with an Andalusian accent] (2008: 176). Sanchez’ character attempts to describe this phenomenon, “You see, Tommy-Boy, in bilingual societies people sometimes undergo what is known as a process of linguistic compartmentalisation” (2008: 7). Unfortunately, this character’s eager attempt to explain why speaking English or Spanish with a non-standard accent should be considered undesirable is quickly cut off. The way in which the Gibraltarians speak—in either English, Spanish, or both—is their own. In fact, Sanchez overtly signals this aspect of his writing in a note at the beginning of *Rock Black*: “The Spanish that people speak in Gibraltar is very different from that spoken in mainland Spain. I have endeavored to reflect this on the odd occasions

that I have used Spanish in the text” (2008: i). Sanchez demonstrates this variation, and more than “on the odd occasion” by inserting indicators of aspiration, where an “s” would be pronounced (a voiceless glottal fricative, /h/, that is, debuccalization). For example, “*Qué clase de cachondeo eh ehleh*” (2008: 175). However, there are instances of eye dialect as well—the use of nonstandard spelling that implies a pronunciation that is in fact standard of a given word, and where the written indication is not actually necessary—“*andah* Pete-ito” (2008: 114). As stated before, although some of these features are indeed similar to those of the neighboring Andalusian dialect, these insertions play out to a visual relationship between the social and the linguistic interplay.

As previously mentioned, Sanchez almost never translates his Spanish variations in-text, and this aspect is particularly important as it indicates a strategic marker of the non-Gibraltarian. The one case in *Rock Black* that Spanish is directly translated actually corroborates this strategy and furthers the notion that the Spanish in Gibraltar does not belong to Spain. In the episode in which a few characters from “Harry Pozo and the Brazilian Prostitute” cross over to Spain in a car, the characters are nervous about possibly being denied border crossing, and a recent situation is remembered:

A week earlier the British foreign secretary had made some unguarded remark about Britain never handing Gibraltar back to Spain against the democratically expressed wishes of the Gibraltarians, and Madrid had responded in the only way it knew—by slowing down traffic and harassing Gibraltarians on their way into Spain. It was the same old rubbish as usual. If you wore glasses and didn’t have a spare pair with you—a mandatory requirement, it suddenly transpired, according to some obscure, half-forgotten Spanish law—they’d drag you out of your vehicle and fine you 25,000 pesetas. Similarly, if an ‘essential item’ like a pair of scissors was missing from your first-aid kit, they’d turn you around and send you promptly back into Gibraltar. *Lo siento, caballero, pero usted se va a tener que dar la vuelta y regresar a Gibraltar si no lleva unas tijeras en el botiquín de primeros auxilios.* (‘I’m sorry, sir, but you’re going to have to turn around and drive back to Gibraltar if you’re not carrying a pair of scissors inside your first aid-kit.’) Not the best way to go about promoting friendly relations between two neighbouring peoples, that’s for sure. (2008: 25)

This anecdote is packed with meaning potential and contributes to two arguments of this article. It demonstrates the political conflict with Spain and is an example of the powerless situation in which Gibraltarians find themselves if at any point they want to access their neighboring country. And in what seems to be a backlash to the British commentary on territorial rights, it is the Spanish who punish the Gibraltarians for the British remarks. It exemplifies the control Spain has over the people, as well as Spain’s ability to exercise her territorial power. It transforms what should be a seamless passage, almost a banal act, into a power-

play where, once again, it is the Gibraltarians who suffer the consequences, a proverbial *whipping boy* for the British. Secondly, the fact that this is the only direct translation in the text (there are some cases in which meaning is conveyed in both Spanish and English, but not directly translated) is a powerful tool the author wields in his efforts to highlight the fact that the translated Spanish was uttered by a Spaniard, not a Gibraltarian. It is not the ‘same language’ as that of the Llanito people. Although lexically, grammatically, and linguistically virtually the same, Sanchez translates it as if it were German, French, or any language that was not Spanish or English; as if he *needs* to translate the text so that the reader would understand. Remember that his use of language variation has set up an ‘us’ and ‘them’ scenario. What is inside the Gibraltarian world needs no translation. It is not only physical spaces, objects, or tangible manifestations that construct the community, it is also in the linguistic spaces (see Gerke 2015) that power is lost, maintained, and retaken and where the community is built. If there is any evidence of the ‘otherness’ of Spanish I find in Sanchez’ writings, this translation located in the habitually non-translated text is the strongest corroboration of my claim.

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The decision to translate or not, to code-switch or not, is in fact a (social) action; just as is the choice to speak or not at all remain silent. Silence is a powerful tool “prescribed *by* professional torturers the world over as the best tool for dislocating common fantasies of immortality” (2008: 3). The silence that fills *Rock Black* (the term *silence* is mentioned 17 times), the *lack* of language altogether, seems to remind speakers of a humanness but also seems to be a key in group building. Although relationships are formed through language interactions, a more bare-bones aspect of membership may reside in what happens in silence. Social relationships among members are paramount in defining a group. When people are connected by relationships, they form interdependence, they can influence one another’s thoughts, actions, beliefs and emotions. A social relationship suggests that this interdependence is not caused by proximity to another, or an origin common to both, but rather the “actual imagined or implied presence of other human beings” (Allport 1985: 3). The silence in *Rock Black* may actually be the only language aspect that is overtly inclusive, silence is the invitation to deconstruct a divide. In “Timeshare” Gilbert is frustrated with the German tourist for his silence and confronts him. The German responds:

‘I just wanted to spend some moments in silence with you’ the German replied calmly, ‘that’s all.’[...] ‘Have you never walked into a room before and felt that someone needed your company? That something drew you towards them? Made you want to get closer to them? Kind of like an invisible magnet, something that you could not explain?’ (2008: 92)

It is in silence that people —now including non-Gibraltarians— are connected and disconnected: “I remember feeling a peculiarly empty sensation as the four of us trudged on in silence at the back of the queue, a kind of physical hollowness if that makes any sense, almost as if my insides had become detached and were floating freely within me” (2008: 127). And it is also in silence that relationships are made “The German placed his hand on Gilbert’s shoulder and smiled again. For a second Gilbert looked up at him in silence, overwhelmed by the simple goodness that radiated out of the man” (2008: 94).

The language variation in *Rock Black* —code-switching, dialectical markers, language play, the choice to translate, or not— is indicative of speaker ability to move —relatively free of restrictions— within and around a language community, and it also helps distinguish who exactly is a part of that community and who is not. When lines of Gibraltarian identity are blurred —are they ‘more’ English or Spanish?— and when the voice of Gibraltar seems to be ignored as the UK and Spain get enmeshed in the process of *assigning* identity through political control, the people of Gibraltar are left with the only thing they have control over: language choice. The choice a speaker makes is a conduit for identity-building, and in the case of Gibraltar, a communal identity is reflected through the language variation itself, along with the strategic moves and choices of individual speakers. This, in many ways, gives the speaker a great deal of control, though and identity that is hard to read.

4. Gatekeeping

One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, ‘Good fences make good neighbors’

Robert Frost
Mending Wall (1914/2016: 51-52)

In Robert Frost’s “Mending Wall”, the speaker spends the duration of the poem attempting to convince his neighbor that a wall separating each of their properties is unnecessary; that the concept of ‘walls for the sake of walls’ is outdated and illogical. There is no reason for the wall to be kept, as there are no cows to be contained, and his apples will not harm his neighbor’s pines; they have a natural separation that is provided by the nature of their harvest. His neighbor will not be swayed, and continues to repeat the adage of an outdated era: ‘Good fences

make good neighbors'. It may be human nature to seek a delineation of our groups, to define and protect what is ours, and to do so by defining what we are not in terms of the social. That is, *social identity* is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel 1974: 93). In order to accomplish this, delineation of perceived differences is required. The sociological need to separate and protect with a physical border is questioned, however, when the need overrides a logic that is tied to the nature of what is being separated, when there is no need to define who is and who is not, and when there is 'no risk of apples harming pines'. The 'wall' that separates Spain and Gibraltar acts as a physical manifestation of the age-old conflict between Spain and Britain; if Gibraltarians are the human outlet for an outdated hate, the Spanish-Gibraltarian border, *la verja*, or 'the gate', over which the Spanish exercise their control is the way in which the Spanish maintain a distinction rooted in historical conflict, but that as a modern contrivance is virtually redundant.

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In *Rock Black*, Sanchez approaches the history of the territory in a surprisingly humanistic way, highlighting the absurdity of territorialism in historical anecdotes, and the ways in which this conflict affects the people of the present. Walls of the present and the past are contemplated: Peter, one of the characters who weaves throughout the collection, considers a wall jutting through the edge of the cemetery built in the 16th century, whose physical purpose is lost, and whose human connection can only be imagined:

Five hundred years ago some Castilian architect must have stood on a spot nearby trying to figure out how to erect a wall on the rocky promontory before him. I could almost visualise him —loosening his ruff and shaking his head, wondering what on earth he must have done to be sent to such a remote and inhospitable outpost of the Hapsburg Empire. 'What's the world coming to?' he must have thought. 'Why am I stuck here in this hole of holes?' (2008: 62)

Peter questions the efficacy of boundaries and walls; at the time, the wall was intended to protect those in Gibraltar against piracy, and probably served its purpose. However, the wall remains as a reminder that artifacts of territorialism, protection, and claim on land are still present in Gibraltar, and that both the Spanish and the British who attempted to claim the land for themselves and protect its future paved a way for, what may have been unforeseeable to them, a never-ending potential source of unrest; one that has nothing and everything to do with lines drawn in the sand and that directly affects day-to-day life in Gibraltar. In turn, the Gibraltarian experience rests not only on delineations, but on a chance to choose which history should be extended to the present.

Lines are already blurred for Gibraltarian identity, and in terms of power relations, the Gibraltarians have little control over their physical borders and positions of power. Inside Gibraltar, the perceived level of danger is coded by colors, degrees of dangerous otherness assigned by the British; during Rock Red, a Gibraltarian could be arrested just for appearing to be too idle (2008: 55). At the border, the Spanish are in control of the Gibraltarians, and use inconsistency and intimidation as a means of power. The Gibraltarians, however, have one tool that is exclusively theirs to control and manifests itself in speech.

La verja that separates Spain and Gibraltar, not unlike other political borders, has to be mended and maintained. Metaphorically, the space between the bricks must be filled with mortar to fortify the strength of the wall. Ironically, at times, what fills the space, the gaps inside *la verja*, is what connects, and not what separates. During the Franco era, in the times of the strictest enforcement of border control, families were forced to call across the gate to talk with their relatives who lived on the Spanish side. They would have to yell across, mainly small talk, since it was quite public, and the speakers were too far from each other to have a serious conversation (Sanchez 2016: 47). However ‘small’ the talk, howbeit, their voices filled the void of space, and acted as a connector of the two sides. If the people could not physically cross over to embrace their loved ones, and say *we are not others, we are family, we are us*, their words and voices could.

What I claim is that language shifts the power that tangible spaces hold—the maintenance of physical boundaries—to reside in an intangible linguistic space, and that language can be, at times, what transfers the power to a seemingly powerless group (see Gerke 2015). Power relations in language have been developed, in part, by Teun van Dijk and Norman Fairclough, who both attach great importance to language as (social) action. Van Dijk states that language interaction is situated in social space, and it is the action at communication level that informs the knowledge/power tandem (1997: 10). Discourse, he describes, takes place and is accomplished in a social situation and therefore demands that language holds a physical space (1997: 11). The knowledge/power relationship is often what allows the powerful enactor to gain and maintain control over the powerless, and this is done by allowing or denying access to knowledge through discursive power-plays. Concepts of language and power rest on the notion that preferential access to public discourse is a vital power resource, and this access is managed in sometimes subtle ways that go beyond ‘ownership’ over language or access to it. Norman Fairclough calls these power-holders “Gatekeepers”: those with power have control over the flux of knowledge and access to discourse (1989: 47).

If Gibraltarians are denied access to *la verja*, or the gate, but control the passage of knowledge, and therefore power, through language use, the power has then been transferred from a political entity to the group it attempts to control. The Gibraltarians have become their own metaphorical *Gatekeepers* and insist on a self-definition. This group-constructed discourse reframes the entire dialogue from one that views the group as politically, and therefore, socially oppressed, to one of transfer-of-power and the ability to self-define and/or construct. That is, self-definition, through language use, challenges the knowledge validation process that results in an externally-defined membership. Sanchez' language choice, and its part in identity construction, as seen in the previous section, leads to the observation made on code-switching and non-translation as a strategic exclusion of the non-Gibraltarian, and in turn, delineates who or what Llanito is.

5. Conclusion

Llanito describes the language and the language users, and the Gibraltarian *experience* is the interchange between the two. It is a reflection of choices a group makes of themselves, and about themselves. The experience of being Gibraltarian, as described by Sanchez, is in a constant state of construction and deconstruction. M.G. Sanchez forms part of a small collective of authors who are making strides in reclaiming their own representation and lashing back at outside attempts to tell the Gibraltarian story: "if we don't start writing about ourselves, we run the risk of being presented to the world solely through the prism of others' perceptions" (Sanchez 2015). Sanchez' linguistic choice is reflective of a growing contemporary identity through its own emerging literature.

This article has reflected upon three areas of interest. The first pinpoints the historical struggle of a colonized community, affronted with the realities of a politicised border situation. As Manzanás Calvo reflects, borders are "sites where political systems fortify the notions of nationality and national identity", and borders "speak volumes about the country's or the continent's values. British attitudes towards Gibraltarians are revealing of the limits of Britishness as an imaginary community. By the same token, it is possible to argue that in closing the gate and strangling Gibraltar, Spain strangles itself" (2017: 42). The historical and contemporary political realities of Gibraltar lead to the second area of interest: that amid the external conflict and assigning of identity, Gibraltarians themselves are the ones who decide 'who they are'. The code-switching in M.G. Sanchez' *Rock Black* is not only representative of a conflict of affiliation, but it is also the tool that enables the construction of the dynamic and multifaceted identity of contemporary Gibraltarians that is neither British, nor Spanish, but

entirely their own. The code-switching in *Rock Black* is a literary manifestation of an observable negotiation process between those inside and those outside the borders of the community. It is representative of a people's ideological system in that it reflects real language users (albeit in a fictionalized language situation), and at the same time it moulds society in that it is an authentic artefact of actual culture and necessarily contributes to the contemporary literary canon of its people. Despite the apparently discordant effect of an oscillation between dominant language, cultural affiliations, family tendencies, social determinants, and/or attitudes, Gibraltar's code-switching seems to unify the community in that it is the key marker of selfhood that simultaneously marks differences and similitudes of both the language and its users. And it is precisely this delineation that represents and builds the Gibraltarian identity.

This very identity-building process leads to the third aspect of interest: up against the political realities of both Britain and Spain, and the actualities they encounter at the border, the seemingly 'powerless' group in fact take back their power by acting as their own *Gatekeepers*. That is, M.G. Sanchez' writing highlights the absurdity of a conflictive past that permeates the present-day reality of Gibraltar, and takes back ownership of his community's 'processural becoming'. Gibraltarians have little control over their tangible and intangible borders, and their position of power is somewhat blurred in affiliation. However, through their code-switching, Gibraltarians have created a new, self-defined, linguistic space that reframes and transfers the power to those who allow or deny access to this space: the code-switchers themselves. Self-definition, through linguistic agency, results in an internal construct that turns the 'powerless' into the powerful.

Sanchez invites the reader into the Gibraltarian experience by presenting language choice that plays a part in contemporary identity-building through the narrative of historical realities of conflict between Britain and Spain, the contemporary consequences of political power struggles, and the ever-present forms of racism that still exist. The language variation in Sanchez' writing does more than just set apart who is Gibraltarian, and who is not. It does more than give a sense of the Gibraltarian reality. It goes beyond group-identity-building. It is the key to the metaphorical *verja* of the Gibraltarian experience. The stories in *Rock Black* are tales of ordinary people; they are stories of romance, sickness, of racism, of the gaining and the loss of power, they are stories of every-day Gibraltarians who, in essence, just want to be left alone to be who they are and lead their lives without a no-good "*entremetío*" (2008: 93) assigning them any sort of identity. As they see it, every day is *Rock Black*: "same old shit as always" (2008: 56).

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