

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES FOR CONTEMPORARY
POSTCOLONIAL FICTION: EXCERPT FROM
SMALL ISLAND BY ANDREA LEVY

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1. Introduction

In her fourth novel, *Small Island* (1994), British-Caribbean author Andrea Levy explores both her own roots and, more broadly, considers the effects of Caribbean migration on British identity. *Small Island* won the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2004, was adapted for television in 2009, and has been translated into many different languages. Fatema Ahmed considers that Levy's "greatest achievement in *Small Island* is to convey how English racism was all the more heartbreaking for its colonial victims because it involved the crushing of their ideals" (1). This conflict provides the focal point of my article, which analyses an excerpt from Levy's novel recording a conversation between the two principal female characters, one Jamaican, one English (Levy 227-8, see the Appendix). The conversation explores significant post-colonial issues and also highlights the conflict between the coloniser and the colonised. I analyse specific strategies used by two different translators in their translations of the Source Text (ST)¹ into Spanish. I also examine how the colonial use of Spanish parallels that of English in that the former was the language used by the coloniser and imposed upon the colonised people of Spain's Central and South-American colonies.

There are two main translation strategies available which faithfully render the political conflict which shapes post-colonial writing. By accurately transferring it to a Target Text (TT), translators might decide to "domesticate" the foreign text by assimilating it to target-cultural and target-linguistic values (Robinson 116), so that it is easily understood by TT readers. A second option would be for translators to acknowledge the foreignness of the ST and maintain Source-Language cultural codes in the translated text by "foreignising" it, thus requiring a greater effort on the part of the TT reader in order to understand the translated text. The latter is most powerfully argued by both Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti who suggest that a "good translation always retains some significant trace of the original 'foreign' text" (Robinson 117).

I will focus on particular words and expressions that highlight the sensitive issues which contemporary post-colonial fiction raise, and analyse translation strategies in use, in order to effectively render this colonial conflict as reflected in the translated TT. I

will also examine the issue of transferring terms between the ‘hegemonic’ British English and the ‘minoritised’ Jamaican English. By understanding the term ‘hegemonic,’ defined as “the unconscious rule of ideology in a society, the dominant values and norms as channeled through language” (Robinson 118), I examine the principal translation strategies available to translators, namely, “domestication” or “foreignisation,” and other cultural-specific aspects regarding colonialism such as gender, identity, status and colonial assumptions. I will further analyse strategies which the translator in question employed in rendering an accurate TT. Drawing upon Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial concepts of “third space” and “unhomeliness” (1994) alongside non-linguistic, economic approaches, including Venuti’s comments on translating best-sellers, my examination of these issues will focus on the above-mentioned extract.

I will then proceed to compare two translations of the excerpt: the only official Spanish translation completed by Daniel Najimias Bentolila² in 1996 and published by Anagrama Editorial; and a 2006 translation carried out by Marisol Tolliday,³ who translated the excerpt without referring to Najimias’s translation. Interestingly, the two translations differ due to both the gender and cultural differences between the two translators. The first is a male Spanish (Catalan) translator, whereas the second is a female South-American (Peruvian) translator. Furthermore, cultural differences between the two translators almost mirror the coloniser-colonised relationship; the first translator representing the coloniser from mainland Spain, while the second translator symbolises the colonised from Peru, a former Spanish colony. In the excerpt, this coloniser-colonised relationship reflects the relationship between Britain and Jamaica. These differences which affect the employed translation strategies may, to a certain extent, provide the Spanish reader with the same experience and insight which the English reader gained from the original text. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that this depends on whether one is addressing mainland Spanish or South-American readers, since their expectations differ.

Throughout this article I analyse specific words, idioms and expressions present in the extract which emphasise the pervasive postcolonial conflict, in order to examine the translation strategies used by both translators which accurately render this conflict from the ST into the TT.

2. An Analysis of the Translation Strategies

Both the above-mentioned translation strategies have provoked fierce debate among certain translation scholars who uphold that domesticated translation “will dull the mind of the Target Language (TL) reader and enforce a hegemonic, mindless blandness that

will be increasingly blocked to cultural difference, whereas a foreignising translation will rouse the TL reader to critical thought and a new appreciation for cultural-difference” (Robinson 110). This is further demonstrated by Venuti’s passionate opposition to domestication on the basis that:

[A] fluent strategy performs a labor of acculturation which domesticates the foreign text, making it intelligible and even familiar to the Target Language reader, providing him or her with the narcissistic experience of recognising his or her own culture in a cultural order, enacting an imperialism that extends the dominion of transparency with other ideological discourse over a different culture. (Ramière 153)

Venuti emphasises that “translation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures” (67), thus turning “domestication” into a dangerous process, since “bad translation shapes towards a foreign culture domestic attitude that is ethnocentric,” whereas “foreignisation” constitutes a “good translation [. . . as it] forces the domestic language and culture to register the foreignness of the foreign text” (81). Venuti believes that domestication remains the dominant translation mode nowadays, at least in Anglophone cultures. There is also a point of contention as to whether or not the “domestication”/“foreignisation” of the binary opposition remains viable in actual translation practice. Perhaps, some form of “cultural” mediation might be more appropriate. For example, Basil Hatim and Ian Mason regard translators as mediators between two cultures and further define mediation as “the extent to which translators intervene in the transfer process, feeding their own knowledge and beliefs into their processing of a text” (147). The two scholars uphold three categories which they describe as minimal, maximum and partial mediation, and they consider the latter as involving “significant discursual shifts . . . between ST and TT throughout the work” (159).

Likewise, the Spanish translation scholar Dora Sales Salvador advocates that “in the contradictory, yet complementary dialectic between exoticising (foreignising) and familiarising (domesticating), the ideal solution would be to find a medium term, an in-between space, respecting otherness but able to transmit and communicate to the target culture” (Rollasen 4).⁴ Inevitably, in practice, any translation will consist of either one or both strategies to improve readability and intelligibility, to appeal to its readers, or to play a role in the translation process, so that a “fluent translation may enable a foreign text to engage a mass readership” (Venuti 12). Furthermore, the translator has to deal with such non-linguistic, economic aspects as selling the TT and satisfying a publisher whose approach to the foreign text is most likely “primarily commercial, even imperialistic” (12). Thus, “a best-selling translation tends to reveal much more about the domestic

culture for which it was produced, than the foreign culture which it is taken to represent” (Venuti 125-6). Turned into an immediately comprehensible text for the TT reader, and also into best-selling fiction, a translated bestseller “depends for its success on the readers’ sympathetic identification with characters who confront contemporary social problems” (125-6), and this can be argued to be the focus for Najimias. The translators’ decision to use whichever strategy they feel to be most appropriate also forms part of the initial “operational norms.” As Gideon Toury suggests, these norms affect the decisions translators which make while performing the translation task, and they further “affect the matrix of the text, i.e. the modes of distributing linguistic material in it, as well as the textual make up and verbal formulation as such” (202).

3. The Source Text

Small Island is set in 1948, at the time when post-war England was witnessing its first wave of immigrants from Jamaica. The extract which I have chosen to discuss records a conversation between the two main female characters, Queenie, the landlady, and Hortense, her tenant. From the point when Hortense takes the opportunity to ask Queenie, “would you perchance have a basin that I might get a use of?,” there follow various cultural-linguistic misunderstandings which I further analyse in section 4.1. Although both characters are women, their statuses are markedly different. Queenie represents the English, white coloniser, while Hortense symbolises the black Jamaican immigrant, the colonised. On another level, the relation between the two characters mirrors inter-racial relations during post-war England when many white English people still had to come to terms with black immigrants and to overcome their racial prejudices. These fundamentally postcolonial differences, namely, race, gender and identity (coloniser/colonised), play essential roles in *Small Island* and, subsequently, they should be properly rendered in translation.

This extract highlights a constant overlapping of boundaries and an ironic reversal of roles during the conversation between Queenie and Hortense. The latter is an educated, black immigrant teacher, whereas the former is an uneducated, white sweet shop assistant. Their conversation demonstrates not only this reversal of roles, but also the coloniser/colonised conflict, through constant linguistic and cultural misunderstandings. Queenie assumes the role of the English language teacher, whereas Hortense becomes the foreign language student, much to her own annoyance as she indignantly claims that “[she] can speak and understand very well the English language, thank you.” The dialogue abounds in ironies as Hortense tries to assert herself via

language, but each time she inevitably surrenders to her pre-ordained condition of the colonised as brought about by her social, linguistic and cultural environment.

The co-existence or linguistic continuum between Standard Jamaican English and Jamaican Creole (Patois) highlights “a clear social class marker” and also that there is “strong prejudice” between such speakers (Wardhaugh 84-5). According to Martin Montgomery, “the main difference between the Jamaican Creole and Standard English – apart from *matters of pronunciation* – lies in the way in which distinctions of time, duration, number and person are indicated” (83) and also in that the use of the standard dialect indicates a “sign of deference and respect” (86). In its insistence upon cultural and linguistic differences, the extract demonstrates how issues of pronunciation, including stress and intonation patterns, mark the difference from Standard English by highlighting significant linguistic misunderstandings between the two women. Indeed, from the beginning of their conversation, the colonial anxieties of the colonised, coupled with the prejudices and assumptions of the coloniser, are perfectly illustrated through the simple misunderstanding of the word “basin” (section 4).

Richard Wardhaugh quotes David DeCamp who argues that “the Creole is inseparably associated with poverty, ignorance and lack of moral character. There is a strong social prejudice against the Creole, a prejudice which inhibits even the middle class, many of whom, like Hortense, speak the superior Standard Jamaican English, “lead lives of desperate linguistic anxiety, loudly proclaiming the superiority of their own ‘standard’ English while nursing inward doubts about whether their English is really sufficiently standard” (85). I would argue that Queenie and Hortense’s conversation clearly illustrates this series of prejudices. Furthermore, Hortense, who has always been so proud of her excellent standard English, remains frustrated by the fact that this ordinary English woman rarely understands her spoken English.

4. Translation Strategies and the Postcolonial

Several aspects of this extract immediately highlight the coloniser-colonised conflict and, more broadly, how the writer and the translators effectively problematise or translate certain postcolonial issues. I have placed these under the following titles, identity, status and colonial assumptions. In particular, regarding the word “basin,” from which the linguistic confusion of the extract arises, two idioms, the level of formality between the characters, and the words “bucket” and “potty” each shed significant light on issues of translation, pronunciation and interpretation. Furthermore, the chosen examples, which relate to the domestic space, illustrate how this colonial conflict affects not only the

public life of the individuals concerned, but also the private sphere, hence the emphasis on the above-mentioned trivial household items.

4.1 Hortense's opening question regarding the word "basin" immediately illuminates this colonial conflict and, despite the term being repeated four times in the conversation, Queenie fails to understand it. Although both translators use the same word "palangana," denominating "a recipient used especially for washing the hands and face,"⁵ unlike "barreño," which is the standard equivalent used in mainland Spain, defined as "a washing-up basin for domestic uses,"⁶ Tolliday used "palangana" as it is commonly employed in South America, whereas Najimias adopted the initial term and thereby "foreignised" it.

The main reason Queenie misunderstands the term "basin" lies in Hortense's Jamaican English pronunciation, which Hortense does not grasp. Further, the ST highlights the cultural challenge when Queenie asks, "A bee . . .," without realising that the vowel sounds differently in the Source Language (SL), namely, "bee" rather than "ba." In his choice of the term, Najimias fails to address this issue and thus uses domesticating strategies by simply repeating the word, although in the opening question he partially attempts to clarify the type of basin required by his addition of "for wash . . . [washing]." Strangely enough, later in the novel, Najimias changes this term and translates "basin" to "barreño," without providing any explanation for the change of word choice.

However, Tolliday directly confronts this issue and provides the additional comment: "[she] did not understand my pronunciation thus [I] repeated it," which effectively clarifies the actual socio-linguistic issue to the Spanish reader. However, Najimias clearly renders both the "translator's visibility" (Venuti 1995) and deliberate intervention as he "foreignises" the Spanish translation. Additionally, Tolliday comments that such a misunderstanding would not occur in the Target Language (TL), because Spanish is a phonetical language, but, like Najimias, she acknowledges that here it is necessary to interfere in order to clarify linguistic issues.

4.2 The idiom "it's perishing today" is translated by both translators by using its direct TL equivalent, "hace un frío que pela" (i.e. "it is a cold that peels"). Both the Spanish and English expressions are colloquial as "prose abounds in images . . . which derive in part from the vernacular. Most convey a meaning or experience that readily finds a parallel image [or] expression . . . in other languages" (Berman 295). Although Berman upholds that it "is evident even if the meaning is identical, replacing an idiom by its equivalent is an ethnocentrism," he maintains that "to play with equivalence is to attack the discourse of the foreign work [and] to translate is not to search for equivalence"

(295). Both translators have no qualms about using the phrase's direct equivalent, thus "domesticating" it. This effectively renders its informal and colloquial tone and accurately corresponds to Queenie's 'low-class' speech as a more literal translation, such as in the case of "it's bitterly cold" which does not capture these undertones and characteristics. It is not surprising that Hortense fails to understand this idiom, supposedly due to the tropical climate in Jamaica where she would never have experienced an English winter or, indeed, "coldness" at all. Furthermore, the "right level of idiomaticity greatly enhances readability of translation" (Baker 78), hence the domestication strategy employed here.

4.3 The idiom "cat got your tongue" is a restricted "collocation which cannot normally be understood from the literal meaning of the words which make [it] up" (Carter 65). This requires careful handling by translators as "the ability to recognise and interpret . . . correctly . . . is much more pronounced in the case of idioms" (Baker 65). Mona Baker warns that SL idioms "may have a very close counterpart in the 'Target Language'" and that they are "similar on the surface but have totally or partially different meaning(s)" (66). She provides the example of this idiomatic question "has the cat got your tongue" which "is used in English to urge someone to answer a question or contribute to a conversation, particularly when their failure to do so becomes annoying" (67). Baker notes that "a similar expression is used in French with a totally different meaning . . . to give up . . . when asked a riddle" (67). However, this idiom is effectively translated into Spanish by its direct equivalent, "has the cat *eaten* your tongue?,"⁷ thus domesticating it and rendering the same meaning to the TT reader.

Although both translators use the same TL expression and effectively domesticate it, Tolliday comments that this "presented [her] with a difficulty, as this particular version was not familiar to [her] in Spanish and [she] could not find it whilst researching it, but she still used it as it was the only way to continue translation."⁸ Although the motivations behind choosing the use of this TL expression remains unclear, the idiom seems to be currently used informally, but not frequently. Tolliday believes that she has "foreignised" the phrase, making it appear strange to her but acceptable both to Najimias and to other Spanish speakers who may argue that this idiom is effectively domesticated.⁹

4.4 Hortense's English is formal, almost archaic, which typically reflects colonised English. This is wonderfully illustrated in her opening question, "would you perchance have a basin that I might get a use of?" Both translators faithfully render this archaic structure, Najimias by "por ventura" (i.e. "by chance") and Tolliday by "por acaso" (i.e. "by chance"), although Najimias's sounds definitely more archaic and more formal; both

domesticate this expression which effectively transmits this difference. This sets the tone for the conversation and accordingly establishes the complex relationship of the power imbalance between the coloniser and the colonised.

Tolliday comments that some of Hortense's misunderstandings arise from her scholarly and old-fashioned English speech which she effectively translates by favouring South-American words.¹⁰ Furthermore, she reiterates that since Spanish is a phonetical language, unlike English, the misunderstandings caused by pronunciation revealed in the excerpt in English would not necessarily cause similar misunderstandings between a South American (ex-colonised) and a mainland Spaniard (coloniser). However, the way in which South Americans generally employ archaic words and expressions in everyday speech emphasises their similarity to the colonised Hortense and highlights their differences with the speech of mainland Spaniards and Queenie.

Also, both translators use "usted/tu" as a form for "you." Notably, Hortense employs the term "usted," which is considered to be more formal and respectful, as opposed to Queenie's "tu," which seems to be more familiar and personal. This highlights the class difference between the two characters. In turn, the use of "usted" indicates Hortense's colonial assumption more clearly than the SL use of the simple "you" structure, as the ST has to rely more heavily on intonation, stress and pronunciation. Since these linguistic features are often impossible to render in Spanish translation, by using the "usted/tu" structure in the TL, the translator effectively deals with issues of difference, identity and (post)colonial discourse.

4.5 Both translators have used similar words for "bucket" and "potty" (small chamber-pot/chamber-pot), namely "palangana," which Tolliday upholds as commonly used in South America, whereas the words "cubo" and "orinal," respectively, commonly occur in mainland Spain.

This implies that both translators have employed "foreignising" strategies. They have used South-American words (colonised) which emphasise the colonial relationship and the direct analogy between South America and Spain on the one hand, and Britain and Jamaica, on the other hand. The parallel effectively reflects postcolonial relationships and acts as a sensible and appropriate textual strategy which attempts to provide the TT reader with an experience similar to that of the Source Language reader. This highlights feelings of strangeness and "unhomeliness" (Bhabha 1994).

5. Identity

There are various examples of issues relating to colonial identity which I will discuss in this section. As stated above, the characters seem to linguistically reverse their roles and

this is why, when they are brought together, constant misunderstandings ensue. Queenie takes on the role of an English language teacher and underlines her coloniser identity by using expressions such as “we say its perishing cold . . . in English . . . it means you’ll soon get used to our language.” She duly asserts her colonial superiority which effectively reverses her true status and further reinforces Hortense’s perceived inferior and foreign colonised status.

5.1 Hortense ironically refers to Queenie as “this Englishwoman . . . this woman’s eyes . . . this woman . . .” This lexical repetition of the demonstrative pronoun and impersonal noun linguistically dehumanises Queenie. Conversely, Hortense never refers to Queenie by her forename despite the fact that Queenie insists that she does so, which demonstrates how Hortense disassociates herself from her coloniser. Although Hortense desperately clings to her identity, she inevitably surrenders to the coloniser culture and its linguistic norms, thus unconsciously acknowledging Queenie’s status as “coloniser” and her own status as “colonised.” This is evidenced by Hortense’s pitiful claim concerning her English linguistic ability, “I can speak and understand the English language very well.” This phrase only serves to emphasise her linguistic fragility. Unlike previous instances when she had been terribly proud of her ability to speak perfect English and had won English-speaking prizes in Jamaica as a child, now her self-doubt becomes overtly apparent.

The two versions of the text also differ in their translation of ‘language.’ For instance, Najimias uses “lengua,” which refers to isolated words and expressions, thus rendering the term in a more “domesticated” version. Conversely, Tolliday uses “idioma,” which refers to language as a social entity and is typically used in South American Spanish. Indeed, Tolliday’s choice of translation actually foreignises the term for the mainland Spanish speaker.

5.2 Several idioms, phrases and terms in use illustrate Hortense’s inner-questioning and indignation, including “[a]n educated woman such as I,” “the impression I received that she was talking to me as if I was an imbecile,” and “as if I might have lost my hearing.” Each of these phrases reinforces her self-justification and increasing bewilderment as she begins to question her identity within a colonial context as a colonised subject. Hortense struggles to fit into her new home as she feels that she does not belong to this environment. As a result, she is caught between two cultures and she occupies what Bhabha terms “the in-between” or “third space” (1994). Instead, she painfully experiences an immense feeling of “unhomeliness” which constitutes “the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations” (9). As her unhomeliness is both physical and psychological, she starts to feel rejected, insecure and disappointed with the

coloniser's culture and language. This contrasts with Bhabha's statement that the "third space" is an opportunity to reconcile the opposed culture and to focus not on the conflict but on the culture's "hybridity" through the "diversity of cultures" (1994). In this new context, Hortense feels insecure, homeless and oppressed, not only due to her 'race,' class and gender, but also given the linguistic difficulties which she faces. Despite being Queenie's tenant, Hortense remains indignant and almost outraged when Queenie invites her to sit down, as she stubbornly clings to her fading identity, saying "but this was my home." This is because suddenly "this room" which has become her whole world has now been invaded by Queenie, the coloniser, who invites Hortense, the colonised, to sit down with her in her own room.

Interestingly, the translators use different verbs for "to be" in the Spanish text. Najimias uses "estar" or "estaba en mi casa" which normally implies a temporal state or condition. Perhaps his reasoning behind this choice was that Hortense is only temporarily renting a room in Queenie's house, whereas Tolliday uses "ser" or "era en mi casa," implying permanence, as perhaps she feels that Hortense is trying to fit into this "third space." Also, this highlights the cultural differences between Spaniards and South Americans. It may further indicate that for a South American, the concept of being at home, irrespective of whether it is rented or owned, represents a much more fixed space, whereas a Spaniard would argue that a tenant's status is never permanent.

5.3 Hortense's final question, "maybe this is how the English do things when they are in England?," appears to confirm her gradual acceptance of the fact that she will have to change and accept English culture. While it could be argued that she is actively reconciling opposing contexts, Hortense is ultimately surrendering to the coloniser culture and its norms.

While Najimias domesticates the final question, "how the English behave in England," Tolliday foreignises it to the more literal "how they do things in England," which she justifies on the basis of conveying all ST information. In turn, this literal translation upholds the illusion of "strangeness" to the Spanish reader and also enhances the foreignness of the ST.

6. Colonial Assumptions

Both linguistic markers and configurations of space emphasise colonial assumptions of national and cultural identity and show how the text parodies specific colonial discourse, such as in oral and gestural communication.

6.1 One assumption of the colonial discourse is expressed when Queenie remarks, “I bet you wished you never left *somewhere nice and hot.*”¹¹ She knows that Hortense comes from Jamaica, but the fact that she fails to use the word Jamaica may seek to devalue Hortense’s home country. Both adjectives – “nice and hot” – are condescending as Najimias translates this context as “a place so pretty and warm” (domestication), while Tolliday translates it as “a place pretty and hot,” which results in a more literal version (foreignisation). This gives rise to different connotations for both English and Spanish readers. For ST readers such a description of place could evoke the positive reaction of ‘exoticism’ or the negative implication of ‘uncivilised, undeveloped colonies.’ The latter strategy is more in keeping with the ‘strangeness’ and ‘otherness’ of the ST and provides further evidence of Hortense losing both her country and cultural roots, and becoming, as Bhabha would term it, “unhomed” (13-14).

6.2 There are several examples of Queenie manifesting herself as imperialistic through her patronising attitudes towards Hortense. This is achieved through linguistic and visual means, such as when she keeps repeating “cold today” which makes Hortense think that she is being treated like a deaf person. She is made to feel like “an imbecile” – which Najimias also translates as “imbecile” – which carries harsher connotations than merely demonstrating stupidity. Tolliday uses “simpleton or silly” which have softer, more affectionate and almost childlike connotations, probably in keeping with Queenie’s true attitude. Although she is presented as domineering and racist, Queenie, in her own misguided manner, thinks she is being kind and helpful to Hortense. Unlike Najimias’s domestication, by using words which are more acceptable in South America, Tolliday has foreignised this concept. These examples indicate that Hortense’s self-worthiness is progressively being eradicated as she starts to feel inferior and powerless before Queenie. Furthermore, Queenie repeats the misunderstood word to which Najimias adds the word “slowly” in order to emphasise what a TT reader would do. This word choice opposes Tolliday’s translation and thus reveals how Najimias seeks to domesticate the language, so that it corresponds to the norms and expectations of Spanish readers.

6.3 The “cat got your tongue” idiom also reflects Queenie’s attitude as a coloniser. It is often used for shy children and, due to its repetition throughout the extract, it illustrates how Queenie constantly treats Hortense as a child. This is another indication of the characters’ role reversal and the teacher-student relationship re-emerges, this time with the former as the primary school teacher and the latter as her pupil. Although the inner-questioning of Hortense regarding the “cat” is humorous to both English and Spanish readers, this total miscomprehension accurately reflects her inner self-confusion.

Hortense starts to experience such profound feelings of self-doubt that she realises that she is not the “master” of her language or culture. Through this self-recognition, she comprehends that she is socially inferior to Queenie, the white English coloniser.

6.4 The adjectival addition of “good manners” used by Tolliday further reinforces Queenie’s scorn, sarcasm and self-righteousness directed towards the supposedly ‘uncivilised’ non-English. According to Queenie, non-English subjects are perceived as savages from that “place nice and hot” and need to be re-educated in order to comply with colonial culture and its norms. In this version of the translation, Queenie’s view also reinforces the Spanish perception of the exaggerated politeness of the English and demonstrates how South-American Spanish is often more formal and deferential than mainland Spanish, thus foreignising this expression.

6.5 When Queenie says “you are not saying much,” Najimias uses the word “laconic” thus domesticating it. Conversely, Tolliday foreignises it with a more literal translation by preferring “you do not want to speak much.” This corresponds to Queenie’s low-class English and re-iterates the assumption that Hortense would not know what “laconic” meant.

6.6 Finally, Hortense’s sentence containing the modal verb “surely I *could* teach this woman something was my thought”¹² represents her final act of opposition as she makes another bid for self-assertion. Strangely, Najimias has completely omitted this sentence. Perhaps, he considered it unnecessary to include this phrase as, by this stage, Hortense has practically accepted her role as the suppressed and colonised. In agreement to Tolliday, I consider that its inclusion stresses the tension of this increasing conflict and faithfully renders the emotions experienced by the ST reader to the TT reader.

7. Conclusion

Although “the bulk of translation traffic today goes from English into other languages” (Simon 153), translation scholars of European and non-European languages, such as Gayatri Spivak, who translates Bengali texts and “indeed gives voice and body to the figure of the postcolonial (feminist) translator” (155), are now advocating the translation of English texts into their mother-tongue languages such as Bengali or Hindi. Likewise, they advance the debate over postcolonialism by highlighting those sensibilities which problematise postcolonial writing in translation.

All the words, idioms and expressions analysed in the above sections highlight the problematic coloniser/colonised relationship. Both Najimias and Tolliday employ a mixture of “domestication” and “foreignisation” strategies for this particular excerpt, which convey and translate the coloniser-colonised conflict. Furthermore, Venuti’s

claim of “pure foreignisation” can only be adhered to as a matter of principle. In reality, a middle-way is needed such as Basil Hatim and Ian Mason’s partial mediation or Dora Sales’s “in-between space” whereby it “respect[s] otherness [in a manner suitable] to transmit and communicate to the target culture” (4). Irrespective of ideological stances, in practice, translation has to combine both strategies in order to faithfully render the issues and conflicts set out in the ST to the TT reader without stripping the original text of its “foreignness.”

Tolliday maintains that she used “foreignising” strategies which relied both on her knowledge of South-American language and culture, in order to re-create the feeling of strangeness towards one’s own language and the “unhomely” “third space.” However, the translator resorted to a mixture of strategies as translation “demand[s] maximum reflection from the translator [when] translating novels” (Berman 296). This may include the domestication of the translated terms. Thus, compared to Tolliday’s translation, Najimias’s version relies on the process of domestication and primarily addresses a mainland Spanish TL readership. However, it should be stressed that Najimias, unlike Tolliday, considered external and commercial factors, such as satisfying publishers’ demands, in order to sell the book and meet Spanish readers’ cultural expectations. Such marketing strategies seek to emphasise that non-linguistic aspects often interfere with the translation process in postcolonial contexts.

Even Venuti appears to be moving towards appropriating hybridised translation strategies as he concedes that “since the domestic in developing countries tends to be a hybrid of global and local trends, translation can revise hegemonic values even when it seems to employ the most conservatively domesticating strategies” (Venuti 189). Accordingly, Venuti states that “colonial and postcolonial situations show that translating is best done with a critical resourcefulness attuned to the linguistic and cultural differences that comprise the local scene. Only these differences offer the means of registering the foreignness of foreign cultures in translation” (189). Therefore, the translator has a social duty to balance and respect the interests and perspectives of both the ST author and of the TT reader. Unlike Najimias, Tolliday is able to be more “foreignising” and to more successfully render the concept of “unhomeliness,” trace the gradual identity shifts and to convey Queenie’s colonial and suppressing attitudes towards the colonised. Thus, Tolliday fully exploits the South-American vocabulary and language, which parallels Hortense’s use of Standard Jamaican English. However, both translation strategies allow the coloniser/colonised binary to be rendered in the TT, since the two translators focus on the feelings of “strangeness” and “unhomeliness” which the two main characters experience.

Notwithstanding the above, and despite the linguistic and commercial restrictions placed upon translators, there is room for further research into the translation of postcolonial fiction from English into other languages and vice versa. Such research would not only enhance the quality of postcolonial translation, but also make both translators and their TT readers aware of the harsh inequities which the postcolonial conflict created.

Appendix

Source Text Extract from *Small Island* by Andrea Levy
(Chapter 22, Hortense, pp. 227-8)

“Excuse me,” I said, “but would you perchance have a basin that I might get a use of?”

“A what?”

“A basin,” I repeated.

“Sorry.”

“A basin to put at the sink.”

“A bee – to put what?”

“A basin.”

“I’m sorry but I don’t understand what you’re saying.”

I thought to say it again but then remembered an alternative that would work as well.

“A bucket,” I said.

“A what?” she started again.

It was useless. Was I not speaking English? I had nothing but the potty to point at instead. But she would surely misunderstand that. And who knows where that confusion could take us? So I hushed my mouth.

“It’s perishing today. I bet you wished you never left somewhere nice and hot?,” when I made no reply she looked to me and mouthed the words, “cold today” as if I might have lost my hearing. “When it’s cold,” she went on, “we say it’s “perishing.” Perishing cold. It’s a saying, “like the cat got your tongue.”

“What cat was she talking of?” Don’t tell me there was a cat that must also live with us in this room . . . The impression I received was that she was talking to me as if I was an imbecile. An educated woman such as I. So I replied, “Have you lost your cat?” And this woman’s eyes rolled as if this was a question I had asked of her several times before. “No” she told me too forcefully. “In English it means that you’re not saying very much. She turned back to the hand-warming while telling me, “you’ll soon get used to our language.” I told this Englishwoman, “I can speak and understand the English language very well, thank you.”

And she said, “No need to thank me.” “But I had not meant it to sound grateful . . . She sat down on a chair and invited me to come and sit with her. But this was my home, it was for me to tell her when to sit, when to come, when to warm her hands. I could surely teach this woman something, was my thought. Manners! But then I questioned, maybe this is how the English do things when they are in England? So I sat.

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Notes

¹ The Source Text refers to the original novel written in English and the Target Text refers to the Spanish translated versions.

² Daniel Najimias Bentolila is a Barcelona-based translator who won the Translation Prize of Spain's Goethe Foundation 2002 (Premio de Traducción, Fundación Goethe España).

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⁴ Original: ". . . en la contradictoria y al tiempo complementaria dialéctica entre exotizar (extranjerizar) y familiarizar (domesticar), lo ideal sería hallar el término medio, un espacio a medio camino, respetuoso con las alteridades pero capaz de transmitir y comunicar a la cultura receptora" (Sales Salvador 246).

⁵ In Spanish, the term is defined as "recipiente ancho y poco profundo usado en especial para lavarse las manos y la cara" (Larousse. *Gran Diccionario Usual de la Lengua Española*. Barcelona: Larousse, 1998).

⁶ In Spanish it is defined as "recipiente, más ancho en la boca que en la base, para usos domésticos" (Larousse. *Gran Diccionario Usual de la Lengua Española*. Barcelona: Larousse, 1998).

⁷ My emphasis.

⁸ Tolliday, telephone interview, 25 November 2006.

⁹ Furthermore, this idiom reflects colonial assumptions discussed later in subsection 6.4.

¹⁰ Tolliday, telephone interview, 25 November 2006.

¹¹ My emphasis.

¹² My emphasis.