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## SRI LANKAN LITERATURE IN FRENCH: A CASE STUDY ON ROMESH GUNESEKERA'S *REEF/RÉCIFS*

H.S.M.M. Jayawardena

University of Kelaniya  
Kelaniya, University of Kelaniya, Gampala, Sri Lanka, 11600  
samanthi125@gmail.com

In 1994, British Sri Lankan writer Romesh Guneseekara's debut novel *Reef*, was short listed for the Booker Prize. The novel was later translated into many languages including French. *Reef* was translated into French as *Récifs* (Serpent à plumes, Paris) by Marie-Odile Fortier Masek in 1995. The present paper examines the French translation and the strategies used by the translator.

Product-oriented Descriptive Translation Studies are an important area of academic research in Translation Studies. The text chosen for the present study *Récifs* is set in Sri Lanka. The influence of the Sri Lankan culture, Buddhism and the Sinhala language is noteworthy. Sinhala terms are often used by the author in the original: exclamations, terms of address, swear words, food items, religious terms, species of flora and fauna and also terms such as 'men' and 'no?' — the popular question tag used in Sri Lankan English.

The object of this study will be whether the translator preserves the Sinhala terms and/or the English terms typical of Sri Lankan people in the French translation. *Récifs*, similar to the original, does not offer footnotes or a glossary to explain Sinhala terms. Respecting the culture represented by the source text, Fortier Masek does not attempt to translate Sinhala words into French. However, it is worth noting that certain expressions in English are translated. The translation of the question tag 'no?' by using different expressions raises concerns and is discussed in detail. This paper points out that such strategies, along with clarifications and added information found in the translated work, could prevent the reader from 'receiving the foreign as foreign'.

**Key words:** translation, translation strategy, French, Sri Lanka.

### INTRODUCTION

French translations of Sri Lankan literature are few and far between. Sinhala translations of French literature however, are widely available in Sri Lanka. The traffic flows notably one way. Works of French writers are translated directly into Sinhala or at times through English, a translation of a translation. It is understandable that in Sri Lanka, a former colony of the British Empire, the readership in French is rather limited.

The first Sinhala novel to be translated into French and published was none other than renowned twentieth century writer Martin Wickramasingha's *Viragaya* by Venerable Mandawala Pannawansa Thero, under the title *Viragaya ou le non-attachement* in 1995. Since the early 1990s more translations are made available of Sri Lankan fiction in translation, those of the Diaspora writers. Written in English and published in the West, literary works of the writers of Sri Lankan origin such as the Booker Prize winner Michael Ondaatje, Romesh Guneseekera and Shyam Selverdurei are translated into various languages. Among the translated novels, Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, Guneseekera's *Reef* [5], Selverdurei's *Funny Boy* are more significant as they discuss Sri Lanka as a theme.

Romesh Gunesequera's debut novel *Reef*, published in 1994 was short listed for the Booker Prize. The success of the novel prompted translations into many languages. The present paper focuses on the French translation of the novel *Récifs*, which was published in 1995 and translated by Marie-Odile Fortier-Masek [6]. Fortier-Masek translates from English to French, mostly European writers. Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is one of her notable translations. Fortier Masek has already translated in 1991, Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* for Éditions de l'Olivier [8].

*Reef* is Gunesequera's first novel about Sri Lanka. His first book, *Monkfish Moon*, a collection of short stories published in 1992, brings together stories on war and ethnic tension in Sri Lanka. In *Reef*, the story is narrated by Triton, cook/housekeeper of Mister Salgado who immigrates to the United Kingdom with his employer in the seventies amidst social and political unrest in Sri Lanka. Gunesequera's writing, heavily influenced by the Sri Lankan culture, the Sinhala language, and Buddhism, the dominant language and the religion of the island nation, contains many Sinhala terms and expressions of Sri Lankan English. His style highlights the bilingual nature of the Sri Lankan English speaker. Further, references are made to the country's historical and political events. His style of writing presents many challenges to the translator and makes the translation an interesting study. The present paper discusses how the translator overcomes these challenges and the strategies used to translate Sinhala terms. It is doubly interesting, when taking into account that similar to the original, *Récifs* does not rely on footnotes or a glossary.

## METHODOLOGY

In Translation Studies, Product-oriented Descriptive Translated Studies (DTS) are an important area of research. As the term suggests, such a study describes existing translations. First step consists of a 'description of individual translations'; Secondly a 'comparative translation description' is formed [4. P. 176]. Various translations of the same text in single or multiple languages could be used for the comparative analysis. James Holmes explains that «Such individual and comparative descriptions provide the materials for surveys of larger corpuses of translations...» [4. P. 177].

For the present study, a descriptive analysis is made of the chosen individual translation, *Récifs*. Particular attention is given to the translation of the elements of the Sri Lankan culture and also to the expressions in Sinhala and in English, typical of Sri Lankan people. Such terms are identified in the original text *Reef*. The translator's strategies are analyzed and discussed in detail. The chosen examples are categorized into three sections<sup>1</sup>:

1. Sinhala terms
2. English expressions typical of Sri Lankan people
3. Clarifications and conversions

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<sup>1</sup> Examples in English are taken from the Penguin Books (India) edition of *Reef*, published in 1998 and the French translation from *Récifs*, published by Edition serpent à plumes in 1995. See: References for full bibliographic details.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### 1. SINHALA TERMS

Sinhala terms are used most often in *Reef* to address people. Also, exclamations, swear words, culinary, religious terms and names of species of flora and fauna in Sinhala are found throughout the text. Triton, the narrator of the story being a cook, Sri Lankan cuisine gets much importance. The names of typical Sri Lankan dishes remain in Sinhala and the conversation on food, recipes, and ingredients are abundant.

#### 1.1. TERMS OF ADDRESS

In Gunesequera's novel, the characters often choose the Sinhala term when addressing each other, such as *Nona*, *Amma*, *Mahathaya*, *Kolla* and *Machang*. As the examples show, the terms are always marked in italic, to indicate it's a non-English term. A term such as *machang* is informal, used among close friends. The translator respects the use of the Sinhala terms in the original and preserves them in the French translation. An equivalent is not given in French, e.g.:

*Nona* [no: na:]<sup>1</sup>

*Miss Nili became the lady — our nona — of the house, but he never said anything about her, about her position* [5. P. 118]. — *Miss Nili devient la dame de la maison, notre nona, même s'il ne disait jamais rien d'elle, ni de sa situation* [6. P.137].

*Mahathaya* [mahathajA] :

*A year later I convinced him — the young mahathaya — to build a small pond, a tin tank, in a corner of the garden* [5. P. 43]. — *Un an plus tard, je le persuade, lui, le jeune mahathaya, d'installer une petite mare, un réservoir en aluminium, dans un coin du jardin* [6. P. 50].

*Kolla* [kollA]

*You are a smart kolla. Really you should go to school...* [5. P. 52]. — *Tu es un kolla astucieux. Franchement, tu devrais aller à l'école...* [6. P. 60].

*Machang* [matʃʌŋ]

*You should know machang!* [5. P. 159] — *Tu devrais savoir, machang!* [6. P. 186]

What is equally significant is that the terms of address such as Mister Salgado, Mr. Pando, Miss Nilli which could be translated as Monsieur Salgado, M. Pando, and Mademoiselle Nili, are not translated. It is possible that the translator wishes the reader to understand the influence of the English language in Sri Lanka. The translation of Mister Salgado as Monsieur Salgado, would give the impression of a character that is francophone, which Mister Salgado is not:

*Mister Salgado's house was the centre of the universe, and everything in the world took place within its enclosure* [5. P. 27]. — *La maison de Mister Salgado était le centre de l'univers et tout ce qui se passait dans le monde se passait entre ses murs* [6. P. 29].

<sup>1</sup> This is the transliteration of the Sinhala words. The Sinhala script is used neither in the novel nor in the translation. Within brackets phonetic symbols are given to help pronounce the Sinhala words correctly.

## 1.2. EXCLAMATIONS

It is interesting to note that certain exclamations are translated into French while several others remain in Sinhala. Gunesequera makes use of exclamations typical of the local people. For example *appo*, *chi*, *aney*, *sha* are a few that appear repeatedly in the text. As non-English terms, these are given in italic. The context, within which they are used, helps understand what is meant by these exclamations. The translation of exclamations is a classic case of equivalence, which is one of the seven procedures of translation [2. P. 52]. A few examples can be seen in *Récifs*:

**Appo** [ʌppɔ:]. This is an exclamation that often marks pity and surprise. The exclamation mark that accompanies the expression helps the non Sri Lankan reader to guess the meaning. The translator does not make an effort to give a French equivalent, e.g.:

*Pando-mahathaya was tied up in the bath. To see him appo!* [5. P. 30] — *Pando-mahathaya était ligoté dans son bain. Si vous l'aviez vu, appo!* [6. P. 33]

**Chi** [tʃi] or at times **chi**, **chi**, evokes disgust and displeasure, e.g.:

*Jay shook his head disgustedly, 'Chi! This country will end up like a bloody banana republic'* [5. P. 145]. — *Jay secoua la tête, l'air dégouté. «Chi ! Ce pays finira comme un de ces foutues républiques bananières!* [6. P. 169]

**Aney** [ʌne:] is a frequently used exclamation in Sinhala, **aney** conveys regret. It's used in several occasions by the author and in the translation the exclamation is preserved as it is.

*Aney Missy, I haven't anything in return...* [5. P. 105]. — *Aney Missy, je n'ai rien à vous donner en échange...* [6. P. 123].

However, certain exclamations are translated into French. For example, **oy** [ɔ: ji] is translated in two different ways. In the first example, it is literally translated as 'attention' and in the second, as **ouïe**, e. g.:

- ◆ *Oy, oy mind that bloody cow!* [5. P. 64] — *Attention! Attention! Regarde cette foutue vache!* [6. P. 72].
- ◆ *'Oy! Thank you, thank you, but leave my hair out of this* [5. P. 72]. — *«Ouïe! Merci! Si tu veux bien, laisse mes cheveux en dehors de cette affaire* [6. P. 82].

**Aiow** [ʌjjo:] is another exclamation that is translated as **aïe** and **ouïe** which express pain:

*'Aiow! She mimicked. 'And your first touch was a hard, pointed shoe crunching my poor toes!* [5. P. 79].

— *Aïe! Ouïe! dit-elle en riant. Et votre première touche a été une chaussure dure, pointue qui a écrasé mes pauvres orteils!* [6. P. 90]

Another example that must be examined is the expressions used to mark laughter. These are translated using French equivalents:

*Dias laughed. 'Uh-huh-ha, yes, yes* [5. P. 72]. — *Dias se mit à rire. Hé ! Hé ! Oui, oui* [6. P. 82].

### 1.3. SPECIES OF FLORA AND FAUNA

References are made to several species of flora and fauna commonly seen in Sri Lanka; *selaleena*, *nelum*, *del*, *mora* to name a few. As seen in the examples below, when the Sinhala name is given, the translator does not attempt to translate it, e.g.: *del* [ðɛl]/*salaleena* [sælɔli: nɔ].

The author uses two terms, one in Sinhala and the other in English ‘*del* tree’ to clearly indicate that *del* is ‘a tree’, in fact it means the bread fruit tree in Sinhala. In the translation, it is translated as ‘le *del*’, instead of ‘l’arbre *del*’. On this occasion, the reader could find it difficult to understand what is meant by this particular word in Sinhala. However, as far as the term *salaleena* is concerned, the context helps the reader to identify the object as a bird:

*Even the sun seemed to rise out of the garage and sleep behind the del tree at night. Red-beaked parrots and yellow-eared salaleenas came and sang in the garden* [5. P. 27]. — *Le soleil lui-même semblait se lever du garage et aller se coucher, le soir venu, derrière le del. Des perroquets au bec rouge et des salaleenas aux oreilles jaunes venaient chanter dans le jardin* [6. P. 29].

*Nelum* [nɛlɔm]. In the case of the term *nelum*, an aquatic flower, the translator follows the style of the author and translates as ‘fleur de *nelum*’. Lilies are in fact translated. The author creates a style of writing where he uses both the Sinhala and the English words together in the same sentence, which is also respected by the translator. It is possible that the bilingual nature of the person is highlighted by such a word play:

*Nelum flowers and lilies, some goldfish to look at in the evening* [5. P. 43]. — *Des fleurs de nelum et des nénuphars, des poissons rouges à regarder le soir...* [6. P. 50].

**Temple flower tree.** The use of the term temple flower tree is noteworthy. Though the English names are translated into French, the term temple flower tree is kept as it is without translating. A second example shows that the translator removes the name of the flower entirely. The elimination of terms in Sinhala or English is a strategy practiced by the translator:

- ◆ *The big, brown bed faced the window which opened on to the side garden with its two temple-flower trees* [5. P. 80]. — *Le gros lit marron face à la fenêtre donnait sur le jardin latéral et ses deux temple flowers trees* [6. P. 91].
- ◆ *I set the table in the dining-room for the eight of them and decorated it with temple flowers and some left over Christmas tinsel* [5. P. 89]. — *Je mis le couvert pour huit dans la salle à manger, décorant la table avec des fleurs et les guirlandes de Noël qui restaient* [6. P.102].

It is obvious to the reader that Gunsekera uses a mélange of English and Sinhala terms. From the examples seen above, it is clear, that the translator translates the English terms while preserving the Sinhala terms, but with exception such as *the temple flower tree*. There are however, several translations which appear problematic. Wood-apple which is a fruit found in South Asia is translated as *pommes sauvages* meaning ‘wild apples’:

*I offered him everything — even wood-apple cream...* [5. P. 169]. — *J’essayai tout, lui proposant même de la mousse aux pommes sauvages...* [6. P. 197].

Another is the translation of the jam tree as *le cerisier* or *the cherry tree*. Further, in the same example, it's clearly seen that instead of the temple trees, the translator has chosen *les arbres de Judée* which in English is called *the Judas tree*:

*I spent most of the rest of the day out in the garden close to our trees. The old white flame tree, the temple trees, the jam tree* [5. P. 179]. — Je passai presque tout le reste de la journée dans le jardin près de nos arbres — le vieux flamboyant blanc, *les arbres de Judée, le cerisier...* [6. P. 208].

In either case, the reader could be misled. *Wood apple* and *wild apples* are not the same. The choice of *cerisier*, and *l'arbre de Judée* could be explained by the use of the procedure known as **adaptation**. **Adaptation** is an extreme case of translation, described as «a special kind of equivalence, a situational equivalence» [2. P. 53]. The author refers to trees known to the local people and grown in the country whereas the trees mentioned in the translation are better known in Europe and not native to Sri Lanka. The translator uses a strategy where what is unfamiliar or foreign to the target culture is replaced with something familiar.

#### 1.4. CULINARY TERMS

*Reef* contains several conversations about food, and paragraphs dedicated to describe methods of cooking. They are mostly based on traditional Sri Lankan dishes. However the narrator's experiments with European dishes such as lasagna and the Christmas turkey are also described in detail.

**String hoppers**. In translating *string hoppers* into French, the translator makes an interesting choice. Instead of translating it or using the English term as it is, the translator borrows the Sinhala term *idiyapan* to refer to the popular Sri Lankan dish. This is the only occasion where the translator borrows the Sinhala term even when the author has not used it:

*I said I was preparing string-hoppers for their dinner* [5. P. 59]. — Je lui répondis que je préparais des *idiyapans* pour le dîner [6. P. 67].

**Sambol** [sambɔl] is another culinary item that is often prepared by Triton is *symbol*, a typical and a popular Sri Lankan spicy dish; *seeni sambol, pol sambol, katta sambol et chili sambol*. The term *sambol* is borrowed by the translator. In the following sentence, the translator not just keeps *katta sambol* but also the term *poddak*, meaning 'a little bit':

*But you have some katta sambol or something? Green chili? Bring some. Poddak huh? Just for the taste only* [5. P. 100]. — Dis-moi, tu as du *katta sambol* ou quelque chose du genre ? Du chili vert ? Apportes-en ? *Poddak, hein?* [6. P. 116]

**Kevum** [kævʊm]. At times, Guneseekera when using the Sinhala term, adds an explanation in order to give an idea to the non Sri Lankan reader about the particular dish. For example, *kevum*, a traditional Sri Lankan sweet meat is explained as 'little coconut cakes'. Similarly, the translator keeps the Sinhala term and offers the explanation in French:

*I made everything: little coconut cakes — kevum-patties, egg sandwiches, ham sandwiches, cucumber sandwiches, even love-cake...* [5. P. 74]. — Je fis tout moi-même: des petits gâteaux à la noix de coco- *kevum*, des bouchées, des sandwiches au concombre, et même un gâteau d'amour [6. P. 84].

## 1.5. RELIGIOUS TERMS

Sri Lanka being predominantly a Buddhist country, its influence can be seen in the novel. In *Reef*, Gunesequera includes terms such as **hamudurova**, **vesak**, **vesak kudu**, **poya**, **bo-tree** and **deviya**. In the translation, these terms are kept unchanged by the translator. The contexts in which these terms are used help the reader understand the meaning.

**Hamudurova** [ha: mʊðʊrʊvʊ]. The term in Sinhala means ‘Buddhist monk’. However, in the following example, it could be misinterpreted as ‘the monk’s robe’:

*A monk’s robe is the perfect disguise. You see, in your hamudurova robe you can hide even a bazooka and stand there [5. P. 145]. — Un habit de moine, un hamudurova, est le déguisement idéal. Vous voyez, dans un hamudurova vous pouvez dissimuler un bazooka et rester planqué là, sans qu’on n’en sache rien [6. P. 170].*

**Vesak** [vɛsʌk]/**vesak kudu** [vɛsʌk ku: du] is the most important festival celebrated by the Buddhists. It marks the birth, enlightenment and demise of Lord Buddha. In the term **vesak kudu** lanterns, **kudu** and lantern are equivalents given in Sinhala and in English. The words structure is respected in the translation. The translator writes **lanterns de vesak-kudu** translating only the English word:

*I wanted to make the biggest cluster of vesak-kudu lanterns ever seen in our irregular lane [5. P. 171]. — Je voulais préparer la plus grosse grappe de lanternes de vesak-kudu qu’on ait jamais vue dans notre allée raboteuse [6. P. 200].*

## 2. TYPICAL SRI LANKAN EXPRESSIONS IN ENGLISH

The second section of the analysis discusses the translation of English expressions typical of the Sri Lankan people. The influence of the variety of English spoken in the island is visible in conversations in *Reef*. The use of the popular question tag ‘no?’, the term ‘men’ and also repetition of words such as **hot, hot; sit, sit** are a few characteristics examined below. Further, the translation of several swear words into French will be examined in brief.

### 2.1. THE QUESTION TAG ‘NO?’

The word **no** is often added at the end of a sentence in order to transform it into the interrogative form. One of Gunesequera’s characters in *Reef*, Mr. Dias has the habit of using the tag quite often. The question tag is translated into French. The translator makes an effort to offer a better translation than the direct translation ‘**non?**’ Thus in *Récif*, we find several possible ways of translating the tag, which in English means ‘not true?’ ‘you don’t think so?’, ‘isn’t it?’ and ‘don’t you?’:

- ◆ Some of these fish are something else, **no?** [5. P. 57] — Certains poissons sont super, tu **ne** trouves **pas**? [6. P. 64]
- ◆ *That’ll make this millimeter here and there all cock-eyed, no?* [5. P. 72] — *Ça faussera bien un millimètre par-ci par-là, pas vrai?* [6. P. 82]
- ◆ A real chef, **no?** [6. P. 103] — Un vrai chef, **n’est-ce pas?** [6. P. 120]
- ◆ *...but I find this ocean is very big, no?* [5. P. 71] — *...disons que je trouve cet océan très grand, pas vous?* [6. P. 81]

- ◆ *Triton you made this Savoy style, no?* [5. P. 99] — *Dis-moi Triton, on se croirait au Savoy, non?* [6. P. 115]

The lack of consistency in translating the term ‘**no?**’ fails to stress the use of the same as a characteristic typical of Sri Lankan English. Further, the single word question tag is found in colloquial language and is not acceptable in the standard usage. The strategy used by the translator to translate the question tag raises concern as it appears not to respect the use as well as the informal nature of its usage.

## 2.2. ‘MEN’

Another characteristic that is notable in *Reef*, is the use of the term ‘men’ as an interjection. In the translation, the term remains without translating. However, as the term repeats, the translator at times translate it into French as ‘les gars’, an informal term which means ‘boys’. Also, the term has been removed several times.

- ◆ *I say, it was in the face, men* [5. P. 146]. — *J’ai dit que c’était dans la figure, men* [6. P. 170].
- ◆ *So, how men? Feeling good?* [5. P. 154] — *Alors, les gars ? On se sent en forme?* [6. P. 179]
- ◆ *What, men? what?* [5. P. 144] — *Quoi ? Comment ?* [6. P. 168] — without ‘men’.

## 2.3. REPETITION OF WORDS

Certain words such as *sit*, *hot* and *how* are repeated in order to insist the meaning. The translated text follows this particular characteristic very closely, even though in the target language, the translation may not be acceptable in the standard usage:

- ◆ *Nice and hot-hot, Missy* [5. P. 77]. — *Jolie à croquer et chaudes chaudes Missy* [6. P. 88].
- ◆ ‘*Sit, sit,*’ he said to everyone. ‘*Carve, carve.*’ Dias urged [5. P. 97]. — ‘*Asseyez-vous, asseyez-vous,*’ dit-il à ses invités. ‘*Découpe, découpe,*’ suppliait Dias [6. P. 112].

## 2.4. SWEAR WORDS

Gunesequera’s use of swear words are a mix of Sinhala and English reflecting his style throughout the novel. Among them are terms that could be understood by any Anglophone such as *bumpkin* and there are also terms such as *bathala poker* or *gonbass*. The Sinhala terms *gonbass* [gɔnbɑ: s] and *bathala* [bʌθʌlʌ] are both kept without translating leaving a non-Sinhala reader to guess the meaning. As the first two examples show, the swear words in English are translated into French. The expression *lazy cow* is translated interestingly as *sale couleuvre* which literally means ‘filthy grass snake’. In the French idiomatic expression *être paresseux comme une couleuvre*, laziness is associated with the grass snake. Hence, the choice of *couleuvre* (‘grass snake’), that takes the place of the cow in English:

- ◆ *Stupid idiot, you chicken-head bumpkin, you pumpkin-face* [5. P. 19]. — *Espèce d’idiot, de crétin, d’abruti, tu ne peux...* [6. P. 20].
- ◆ ‘*Get up you lazy cow, take the tea!*’ [5. P. 22] — *Allons, lève-toi, sale couleuvre, porte-lui son thé!* [6. P. 23]



- ◆ *I'll give you the lots, you bathala poker* [5. P. 30]. — *Tu vas voir ça si j'te mettrai pas en chaleur, espèce de bathala-bite!* [6. P. 33]
- ◆ *After all those papers and all, and the letter you wrote that gonbass minister* [5. P. 58]. — *Après toutes ces communications et tout et tout, après la lettre que tu as envoyé à ce gonbass ministre* [6. P. 65].

Apart from the translation of terms discussed above, another example that merits attention is the translation of *Pettah* repeatedly as *Perth*. It is as incomprehensible as it's misleading. *Pettah* is an area situated in Colombo, east of the fort. *Perth* which is an English name, reminds the reader of the Australian city by the same name:

*'Where did you go?' I heard him ask. — 'Pettah, Sir.'* [5. P. 50]. — *'Où es-tu allé? l'entendis-je demander. — 'À Perth, monsieur.'* [6. P. 57].

As in the case of *wood apple, and jam tree*, on this occasion too, the translation is questionable. A Sri Lankan reader would vehemently object to such translations that distort the source text and question the translator's knowledge or the lack of it regarding the country and the language in which the story is placed.

In the translation of *Reef*, Fortier-Masek resorts to several strategies. As of examples above, the translation of terms, not just in Sinhala but also in English used by the Sri Lankans, present challenges. As far as the translation of cultural elements is concerned, the strategies used by Fortier-Masek could be divided into these categories, but with some exceptions:

1. Not translating the Sinhala terms found in the source text.
2. Translating the English terms and expressions typical of Sri Lankans.
3. Omitting Sinhala and English terms.
4. Replacing Sinhala or English term (or object) by a French equivalent

Gunasekera's intention of exposing the reader to the Sinhala language and English expressions of the Sri Lankans, is respected in the translations. The reader discovers a language, culture, species of flora and fauna and cuisine, new and even exotic.

### 3. CLARIFICATIONS AND CONVERSIONS

Apart from the strategies used to translate English and Sinhala terms, this paper focuses on two other which are clarification and conversion. Although *Récifs* does not rely on a glossary to explain the Sinhala and the English terms, the translation contains a single footnote to clarify '*Tigres*' or *Tigers* in English. In *Reef*, Gunasekera writes '*a battle zone of army camps and Tigers*' [5. P.12]. Written with a capital letter, *Tigers* is the only indication of the rebel group that is identified by the same name. The translation carries a footnote which clarifies this fact: '*Liberation Tigers of Tamoul Eelam, mouvement séparatiste tamoul*'<sup>1</sup> [6. P. 13].

The necessity and the intention of the footnote for the clarification are a matter to be debated. On one hand, the translator could feel the need to inform the public, especially given the fact that the translation was published in 1995 at time when the terrorist group was at war against the Sri Lankan government. On the other hand, in the

<sup>1</sup> Tamil separatist movement (lit.).

translation, when the translator has successfully avoided footnotes, and when the author offers none, is it truly necessary to explain this particular term? In the Sri Lankan context, it is a sensitive term that draws attention.

The translator has decided to clarify several other terms. In the following examples, the translator adds information that was not given by the author:

*The entrance was narrow, dark doorway plastered with subversive slogans and posters celebrating the **land of the lion** [5. P. 127]. — On y accédait par un étroit tapisserie d'affiches et de slogans subversifs à la gloire de **Ceylan, la Terre du Lion** [6. P. 148].*

So, the translator clarifies the term 'land of the lion', the lion representing the country used to be known as Ceylon.

*After all what about **SWRD** ? Old **Bandaranaike**? [5. P. 145] — Après tout, que penser de **SWRD**? **Bandaranaike**, le Premier ministre? [6. P. 169].*

**SWRD Bandaranaike** was Sri Lanka's fourth Prime Minister assassinated in 1959. In the novel, the conversation about the assassination of Mr. Bandaranaike reveals that he was a Prime Minister. However, the translator decides to include the information to help identify the person concerned.

Apart from clarifications and added information, another aspect that must be discussed is the metric conversion. The author uses *miles, pounds, inches* and *feet* which are imperial units. For the translation, it is interesting to note that the units are converted to metric — *kilograms, meters, and centimeters*, which is the system of measurement used in France:

- ◆ *As for the terrific rain they tell us about — imagine **twenty inches** in a night — it can only be monsoon [5. P. 93]. — Quant à ces pluies torrentielles dont on nous parle — pensez donc: **trente centimètres** en une nuit! — ce ne peut être que la mousson [6. P.107].*
- ◆ *The bird weighed **sixteen pounds** — one hundred rupees' worth, the bill was tied to its claw [5. P. 87]. — Elle pesait **sept kilos** et il y en avait pour cent roupies [6. P.100].*
- ◆ *After about **a quarter a mile** I came to where the boats were drawn up [5. P. 123]. — Au bout d'environ **quatre cents mètres**, j'arrivai à l'endroit où l'on ramenait les bateaux [6. P. 144].*

Further the time written using the twelve hour clock in the original is changed into **twenty four hour clock** in the translation:

*He would roar out in his car **at eight-thirty** and return only **at about quarter to one**; I would feed him; he would disappear into his room for a nap and then, usually **sometime after two**, set off back to the office [5. P. 61]. — Il s'en allait, moteur vrombissant, **à huit heures trente** et ne rentrait que **vers treize heures quarante-cinq**. Je lui servais son déjeuner, puis il allait faire la sieste dans sa chambre. En générale, **peu après quatorze heures**, il retournerait à son bureau [6. P. 68].*

The measuring units and the time are presented in the translation using the standard method practiced in the target culture. The translator attempts to create a familiar environment by changing the manner in which these facts are presented by the author in the

original. Two further examples from the translation are worth examining. Triton the narrator, tells his employer that he could read and write; he has studied up to fifth standard. In the translation, this has been changed to class seven or 'en septième'. The second example deals with money. The amounts are given in the local currency which is the Sri Lankan rupee. A Christmas gift of *hundred rupees* becomes *three hundred* in the French translation. *A hundred rupees*, though it is a small amount, should not have been made *three hundred* to increase the generosity of the giver.

These strategies such as added information, clarifications and conversions are made for the benefit of the reader. For translators, who face the question of what to translate and how to translate, they could decide between two strategies. Friedrich Schleiermacher [9] describes the two in the following manner, «Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him. Or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible and moves the author towards him» [9. P. 149]. In a translation where changes are made in accordance with the values and the norms of the target culture, the author is brought towards the reader.

In a foreign novel that has been chosen to be translated, what is unfamiliar or foreign could be neutralized in order to be more acceptable to the dominant target culture values. Antoine Berman [1] states that «The properly *ethical* aim of the translation act' is receiving "the foreign as foreign"» [1. P. 285]. Berman's major theoretical work *L'épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique* (1984) discusses the challenges or trials faced by the translator. The article is translated into English by Lawrence Venuti as *Translation and the trials of the foreign*. A. Berman identifies twelve deforming tendencies such as **rationalization, clarification, expansion, ennoblement** and **qualitative impoverishment** which could prevent the foreign elements filtering through to the translation [1. P. 288].

Such strategies could negate the foreignness of the original. The aspects examined above fall into the categories defined as deforming tendencies by Berman. According to Berman the negative effect of clarification is that it 'aims to render clear what does not wish to be clear in the original' [1. P.289]. Expansion is another deforming tendency. Berman explains 'rationalizing and clarifying require expansion, an *unfolding* of what, in the original is "folded" [1. P.290]. Hence a translation most often becomes lengthier than the original, which is true of *Récifs*. *Reef* the original which contains 190 pages, is extended to 221 in the French translation.

## CONCLUSION

The translation of Romesh Gunesequera's *Reef* exposes Sri Lankan literature to a new audience. Translations such as *Récifs* are essential as only a few Sri Lankan novels are translated into French and a translation naturally enlarges the readership. The effort made by the translator not to rely on footnotes is a significant achievement. The German translation of *Reef* however carries a glossary for the benefit of the German public. Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* which was translated into French as *Drôle de garçon*, also contains a glossary where terms such as *akka* is described as elder sister, *thatha* as father and includes long descriptions to explain string hoppers and *pittu*. But it was

Selvadurei himself who offered a glossary in the original. The French translation of *Viragaya* relies on several footnotes to clarify to Sinhala and Buddhist terms. For example, the *Bo*-tree is explained as 'l'arbre sacré sous lequel le Bouddha a atteint l'Eveil'<sup>1</sup> [11. P. 84].

The inclusion of the Sinhala terms and certain English expressions helps the translation preserve the local flavor created in the original. As discussed in the paper, the translation of certain expressions may not earn the approval of the Sri Lankan reader. Sujith Mukherjee who writes about the translations of Indian literary works states, «...the basic equipment for translator of literary works is a secure hold upon the two languages involved, supported by a good measure of familiarity with the culture represented by each language...» [7. P. 39]. Unfamiliarity of the culture represented by the source text could lead to a mediocre translation. An example that proves again this point and distorts the image of Sri Lankan cuisine is the translation of *hoppers*, a traditional food item made of flour called *appa* in Sinhala. The French translation of Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, *Un air de famille* has the term *hoppers* translated as *souterelle*, meaning 'grass hoppers'! The translator misinterprets the term *hoppers* as *grass hopper*.

In an interview, Romesh Gunesequera was asked about the use of a glossary to explain the non-English terms in his novel *Reef*. Gunesequera agrees that some publishers feel inclined to use footnotes or give a glossary, «I mean, some publishers would find that important and they know their readership, I suppose, but to me, I think books don't really need a lot of explanation, I think they need to work on themselves... I would suspect that if you can read it in English and not know what some these words mean but actually make up an idea of what it must mean, even if it's wrong or right, it doesn't actually matter. It's a mixture of sound and you build up your meaning for words, it makes you use imagination in a certain way» [3].

As Gunesequera emphasizes the reader must encounter the unknown and should be given the freedom to understand by him or herself. A translation opens door to novelty, it's a discovery of the unknown, a journey that takes the reader beyond what is familiar. Though the readability of a translation is essential, in the process of translation, it is equally important to let the 'foreignness' come through.

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<sup>1</sup> The sacred tree under which the Lord Buddha attained Enlightenment.

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## **ЛИТЕРАТУРА НА ФРАНЦУЗСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ В ШРИ ЛАНКЕ: НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ РОМАНА РОМЕША ГУНЕСЕКЕРА «REEF» И ЕГО ПЕРЕВОДА НА ФРАНЦУЗСКИЙ ЯЗЫК**

**Х.С.М.М. Джайавардена**

Университет Келанийя

*Келанийя, Университет Келанийя, Гампала, Шри Ланка, 11600*

*samanthi125@gmail.com*

В 1994 г. англоязычный ланкийский писатель Ромеш Гунесекара дебютировал с романом «Reef» и стал номинантом в шортлисте премии Букера. Позднее роман был переведен на многие языки, в том числе и на французский. Его название по-французски — «Récif» (издательство Serpent à plumes, Paris) в переводе Marie-Odile Fortier Masek 1995 г. В данной статье рассматривается перевод романа на французский язык и анализируются стратегии переводчика.

Описательные исследования переводов, ориентированные на конечный результат, являются важной сферой научных изысканий в сфере теории и практики перевода. Текст романа «Récif», отобранный для нашего анализа, известен в Шри Ланке. Влияние культуры Шри Ланки, буддизма и сингальского языка безусловны. Сингальские слова часто используются самим автором в оригинале: восклицания, обращения, бранные слова, названия пищи, религиозные термины, разновидности флоры и фауны, как и такие: 'men' и 'no?' — распространенный вопрос-подтверждение в ланкийском варианте английского языка.

Объект исследования — это стратегии сохранения во французском переводе сингальских и/или английских именовании, типичных для населения Шри Ланки. «Récif», подобно оригиналу романа, не предлагает ссылок или глоссария, объясняющих сингальскую лексику. Отдавая дань уважения национальной культуре, отраженной в тексте оригинала, переводчик М.-О. Фортьер Мазек и не пытается перевести сингальские слова на французский язык. Однако необходимо заметить, что отдельные устойчивые выражения на английском языке переведены, например, для перевода вопроса-подтверждения использованы различные средства и способы, что вызывает необходимость детального обсуждения перевода. Эта статья показывает, что использованные переводческие стратегии в сочетании с опущениями и добавлениями информации в тексте перевода могут привести к тому, что читатель перестанет «различать родное и иноязычное».

**Ключевые слова:** перевод, переводческие стратегии, французский язык, Шри Ланка.