Introduction

"In some quarters, ethnography has come to be seen as specifically concerned, no longer with the disingenuous description of other cultures, but with their "translation" into a form comprehensible to ourselves. As explicit "translation" of an alien society's customs, rites, and beliefs is no longer mistaken for the "real" thing, it is a version or account of another culture familiarized for us through the agency of a translator/ethnographer."

John Sturrock

In many ways our perception of the practice of translation has changed profoundly in the last decade or so. What is now acknowledged is the translation process by which we tentatively and precariously arrive at meanings of one cultural context and re-inscribe them, however inadequately, in another. The process entails issues of "representation, power, and historicity." The anxiety of loss in translation has now given place to recognition of asymmetries and gaps which make resistance possible. The 'visibility' of the translator, the discursive and subversive practices made possible through the act of translation, the movement from translation as 'simulacrum' to translation as 'rewriting' -- have made translation a fertile part of linguistic-cultural-political discourse. It is ironic that while the post-structuralist and deconstructionist approaches call into question the certainty of the 'original' text, translation as process and text is all too alive. Traditionally, translation was perceived as a pragmatic activity of turning one language into another. This narrow view of translation led to many hackneyed discussions on whether or not one should translate, whether one should resign oneself to the 'loss' in
translation, and whether one would 'gain' from the dissemination of knowledge. There is now a movement away from those essentialist questions, and translation is beginning to be perceived as a crucial site of intercultural understanding, as a discourse with social and political underpinnings. While it seems obvious today that translation from one language into another has never been a completely apolitical activity, it has only been in recent times that theoreticians have begun to see it as something more than a humanistic tool for 'bringing literatures together.' This transition in the understanding of translation is discussed elsewhere in the thesis.

At this point, it needs to be said that a range of meanings is now considered under the rubric of translation. To begin with the term "translation" has come to serve as a metaphor to discuss relations between objects other than languages. There is sometimes talk of 'translating one culture into terms intelligible to another.' Secondly the postcolonial writings of Eric Cheyfitz and Tejaswini Niranjana employ the metaphor of translation for understanding inequalities and slippages in colonial relationships. Homi Bhabha and Salman Rushdie, on the other hand, seek to articulate hybrid intercultural spaces and identities through the term 'translation'. Rushdie refers to his tribe as 'translated men.' This broadening of the term translation makes it important for me to clarify how it is used in the context of this study. This thesis is centred on the production of translations -- the combinations of academic-cultural, socio-historical, economic-material contexts that produce texts in translation. Nuanced theories of translation and methodological concerns regarding the activity have figured in this thesis only inasmuch as they affect the actual production of texts. In brief, this thesis is focussed on the
cultural-material aspect and concerns itself with the industry of translation and what goes into feeding it. The stress in this study is not on the act of translating but on the practice and the conditions under which it gains momentum. Within that broad concern, this study looks at literary translations of texts in Indian languages into English.

The activity of translation into English in India was sporadic and insignificant until the 1970s. However, after the mid-eighties, and especially in the nineties, it has come to acquire centre stage. My interest as a student and involvement as a translator led me to some observations that ultimately provided the impetus for this study: India is going through a particularly vibrant phase of translation into English today. Translation activity in India has, almost suddenly acquired high visibility and glamour. The production of literary translations from Indian languages into English in the last ten years has been astonishing and the last decade has also witnessed an institutionalization of ILET (Indian Literature in English Translation). This has occurred through translation courses offered in universities, workshops and seminars organized and, of course awards instituted for translations. The energies of theoretical formulations centering on this activity in academia, the glossy productions of translated texts, the coverage translations get in book-promoting journals have all been major contributory factors. Formerly, only government bodies like the Sahitya Akademi and the National Book Trust carried the ideological burden of 'national integration through translation.' Now there are publishing houses completely and exclusively geared towards the production of translated texts. So what has happened? How has this activity become respectable for the translator, economically viable for the publisher and a "global glory" for the writer? I followed up
my observations with inquiries. The delineation of contexts underlying the changed
scene of translation today forms the theme of my study here. I also realized that academic
studies on translation so far had focussed upon methodological concerns -- linguistic and
cultural significations ------- and more recently, on the political nature of the process.
However, the actual production of texts and the factors operating on this have hardly
been touched upon in academic studies of translation. This study is a modest attempt to
explore that uncharted terrain.

The thesis has four chapters. The first three are arranged in terms of the multiple contexts
underpinning Indian literature in English translation. Chapter 1 outlines the ideologies
and uses of translation in colonial India. Discussing the contexts that produced various
texts and the reception that has sustained them over the years, I show how English
translation activity in the hands of the British was meant to perform specific tasks.
Translation in the hands of the British became one of the tools for creating "hegemonic
versions of the non-Western other." 7 That is how the activity first originated. I then move
on to translations by Indians, and how they sometimes supported and sometimes
countered the 'versions' perpetuated by British texts. In the process, the activity of
translation itself moved from Sanskrit and Persian to the bhashas. By identifying crucial
junctures and texts in English translation, my attempt has been to map the historical
terrain and show its relationship with the present. The works discussed in this chapter are
taken largely from the colonial period, with the exception of A.K.Ramanujan. Ramanujan
appeared in postcolonial India in the seventies, and I have focussed upon him and his role
in translation rather than on his texts.
In chapters 2 and 3, my main focus is English translation over the past fifteen years. The prominence that ILET has acquired today in terms of sheer numbers of titles produced and its place in education policies and institutions seems have something to do with a whole cluster of social-political-economic-academic determinants. What are these determinants and what relationship do they have with the industry of translation? Do these determinants affect the marketability of texts in translation? Chapters 2 and 3 aim at forging connections between the production of texts and the multiple contexts of academia, English-language readerships, and the English-language publishing industry.

The fourth and final chapter is a case study of English translations of Gujarati works. The factors studied in the first three chapters operate at a macro level, that is, on the entire body of Indian Literature in English Translation. When we move from the general to the particular and look at individual language-literatures, many micro factors come into play. There are more translations from some languages than from some others. Such differences have to do with the official and cultural positioning of a language at the 'national' level. The perception of the English language and translation into English, within a given linguistic community, also plays an important role. Equally important are socio-economic conditions within states since these affect literacy and education. All these factors have been studied in the fourth chapter in relation to English translation activity in Gujarat.

Since this thesis is an attempt to map a hitherto unexplored terrain, I have had to employ methods drawn from disciplines other than the literary. Various methods and sources are
interwoven in this study. My analysis is not a literary one; there has been no attempt to 'evaluate' translations as literary texts. Rather, the study is grounded in cultural materialism, an approach that enables us to see that literary products, like all other products, are tethered to material reality. In fact, I have tried to contextualize the very desirability of literary forms, in this case ILET, now gaining a boost as well as sanction from various quarters. In the process I have relied heavily upon personal interviews, the repertoire of reviews and upon material available on the Internet.

General interviews with people involved in translation activity (through theory and/or practice) such as Harish Trivedi and G.N.Devy, specific ones with personnel from the publishing industry; and a few scholars from Gujarat, figure in this thesis. Full transcripts of my interviews with publishers have been provided in Appendix 2. A questionnaire that prepared the ground for the interview was provided to each publishing house before the actual interview. The questions were related to the nature of the publishing industry, the perception of the English-language market and the role of government policies. At the same time, a set of questions adapted to the specific nature of each publishing house and its programmes was appended to the general questionnaire. These sets are contained in Appendix I.
Notes

1 John Sturrock, "Writing Between the Lines: The Language of Translation." New Literary History 21 (1990) : 993-1013

2 Lakshmi Holmstrom, "New Maps for the Old" Indian Review of Books (1997) Mar-April, 4-5


4 Lawrence Venuti in Rethinking Translation: Discourse Subjectivity Ideology (London and New York: Routledge 1992) refers to a "Platonic metaphysics of text, distinguishing between the authorized copy and the simulacrum that deviates from the author." (3) This romantic conception, asserts Venuti, has led to a cultural and economic exploitation of translation activity. Translation as 'rewriting' refers to the title of Andre Lefevere's Translation as Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame (London and New York: Routledge, 1992)


7 Niranjana 4