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Towards a Spatial Early Modern Translation Studies

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Abstract & Keywords

Keywords:

In recent years there have been a number of attempts to develop synthetic models for medieval and early modern translation and textual transmissions, from David Wallace’s monumental transnational, de-centred literary history of Europe (2016), the book-historical approach proposed by Marie-Alice Belle and Brenda Hosington in their 2017 article, which develops and refines the iconic communications circuit first originated by Darnton, and now the new Canadian SSHRC-funded international project ‘Trajectories of Translation in Early Modern Britain (1473-1660): Routes, Mediations, Networks’. All of these are spatially attuned, inasmuch as they attend to the mobilities and trajectories of transmission and circulation within and across linguistic territories and communities, marked by literary genres, types of knowledge, class, or confessional identities. Despite these important contributions, however, geographical space and the new critical methods of cultural geography have received very little sustained attention in early modern translation studies as yet. It is an uncontroversial given, these days, that translation studies and comparative historicized literary and textual studies will emphasise the mobile, the situated, and the contingent, and to this end data-driven methodologies such as network analysis and geographic information systems (GIS) are producing new and revolutionizing ways of thinking about translation.

In early modern translation studies, scholars explicitly conceptualize translation studies in terms of trajectories, itineraries, and relational dynamics, in the world and on the page. Yet, despite the centrality of place and space to this work, (inasmuch as it is fundamentally concerned with the dynamics of textual objects and textual actors which materially originate in a specific place and move through space), to date there remains a lack of reflexivity regarding questions of space and cultural geography which we do not find, for example, in relation to gender or power.

While the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’ are commonly used in scholarly writing, they are often imprecisely deployed, and so it is important to distinguish them at the outset. A useful definition is given in The People, Place and Space Reader:

Most generally, place is bounded and specific to a location, and is a materialization of social forms and practices as well as affective experience. Space tends to be understood as abstract, unlimited, universalizing, and continuous. The infinite, undefined quality of space makes us think of the cosmos, the ether of flows and travel, or the metaphorical space one needs to think. Places are often more grounded, serve as reference points in our lives, and have distinct qualities that give people a sense of belonging.

This essay will thus argue for a more spatially aware and explicit engagement with place, space and the methods of critical cultural geography, as a first step towards a more coherent ‘spatial’ translation studies of the early modern period which situates itself in dialogue with other related disciplines, and engages with the tools of digital cartography. It will argue for a unified, and more importantly, scaled and multiscalar approach, which can encompass the radically situated space of the page, and that of the text’s agents within their individual and place-specific social spaces, with a distant, macro, overview of translation dynamics and textual trajectories across diverse territories of the early modern world.

In so doing, it aligns itself with recent work across the humanities disciplines, which argue for a synthesis of macro- and micro- approaches, that is, via a combination of case-studies and transnational networks, or what has (in)famously been called distant and close reading.

Early modern translation studies is particularly well-placed to address these questions from an interdisciplinary perspective, as its practitioners come from a range of diverse discipline areas, subject specialisms, and intellectual traditions. This article thus surfaces examples of this burgeoning trend from various fields, in order to argue for a new and coherent approach which will be of use as a model not only to early modern translation, but to the wider discipline of translation studies as a whole.

In recent years, pre-modern translation studies has excelled in work on the micro - the text, and its carrier, the material text-object — as expressive of localized translational practices and wider cultural dynamics, often informed by book-historical approaches. Likewise, macro, quantitative studies of early modern translation, such as those facilitated by the Renaissance Cultural Crossroads database and the Universal Short-Title Catalogue, in recent years have revitalized the discipline by offering the hard data for many new lines of enquiry, enabling us to map both individual translation publishing events and macro, bigger-scale flows and patterns of translation activity, themselves aligned with the broader sociological turn within translation studies. A more positioned and critically aware multiscalar theory of geographical space and translation will allow us to move more easily and explicitly from the extremes of these scale ranges and the points between; to model (and critique) conventional geographies and counter-geographies with more precision; to formulate new ways of conceptualizing linguistic and translational space beyond national languages and the boundaries of the nation-state; and perhaps most practically, to represent more effectively the complexities and specificities of early modern translation dynamics by means of new GIS technologies.

Geographic information systems (GIS) are locative digital technologies used to bring together, analyse, and visualize data of many types, and as such can be harnessed for all kinds of historical enquiry across interdisciplinary boundaries. The many affordances of a geocritically inflected translation studies, deploying GIS tools, would be particularly pertinent for our subject as we imagine the places and spaces of the past, since they do not necessarily correspond to the places, or nations, or language communities, or translation practices, of our present day. A multiscalar approach to space will not collapse the inherent interpretative distance between us and the temporally distant objects of our study, but can none the less offer deeper insights into the fundamental role of historic translation practices in place-making and the social construction of languaged identities, on the grand and small scale.
Transits of translation

Taken in their totality, the articles in this special issue themselves exemplify the potential of a spatialized and scaled approach to questions of translation and transmission of knowledge in the long early modern period. The diversity and variety of the texts discussed here, and their transnational trajectories and afterlives, challenge older models of the traditional \textit{translatio studii} and the historical circulation of texts across Europe, revealing instead a system of deeply situated and localized textual productions performed across a geographically extensive area which extends well beyond that which is usually discussed in conventional histories of Italian cultural contacts.\[8\] In concentrating on transit and translation within and between specific territories of Northern Europe and Italy — the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Scotland, and England — the editors take us beyond the confines of subject-identified national languages and the traditional narratives of, say, Anglo-Italian cultural exchange, instead illuminating lesser-discussed trajectories, relationships and networks which, more than they have received much historical attention, and with a perspectival shift, the familiar becomes rather more unfamiliar, the traditional is destabilized, and our conventional ‘centres’ find themselves suddenly more marginal: a valuable act of deterritorialization which draws our attention to the conventional positions in which we often find ourselves.

Italy remains a fundamental point of focus in this collection, but in less usual ways. In traditional histories of early modern translation (which have until relatively recently tended to mean mainly or only literary translation), the Anglo-Italian nexus dominated above all others and acquired a disturbing prominence in the field. But in focusing on territories beyond those of the British Isles (which likewise has historically often meant England, or even just London, in traditional translation histories of the early modern period), the editors have exposed both the limited geographical range of earlier generations’ studies, and their almost complete indifference to England’s other North Sea neighbours beyond France.

Early modern England, as seen from Italy (and thus not approached as the centre of its own solipsistic history), is now merely the lower half of one side of the North Sea quadrant. This maritime space is bounded by Scotland and England to the west, the Low Countries to the south, and Denmark and Norway to the East, opening there at the Skagerrak to Sweden and the Baltic territories beyond. One of the many strengths of this special issue is that it writes these North Sea crossings back into English translation history, showing them not only to be an intrinsic part of the extraordinarily dense and complicated cultural networks which, but also increasingly implicated in ‘English’ cultural politics: as seen, for example, with the cultural links between Denmark and Scotland which followed the marriage of Anna of Denmark to James VI of Scotland in 1589, which facilitated first the meeting between the Danish humanist Christian Barnekow with Giacomo Castelvetro in James’s Edinburgh court, and thence Castelvetro’s visit to Denmark to edit Barnekow’s collection of Italian political writings brought home from his travels in Italy.\[9\] With James VI’s accession to the throne in 1603, the Danish Queen would set up her own Italianate court in Greenwich, taking onto her staff a ‘Reader in Italian and Groom of the Privy Chamber’ in the figure of John Florio, the most famed Anglo-Italian translator of the day.\[10\]

Scholars and noblemen (categories which were sometimes, but not always, coterminous) would travel from the countries which bordered the North Sea and Baltic into continental Europe, congregating in particular in University towns where Protestants were tolerated; within Italy, the Northern Italian university town of Padua was especially important as a destination and point of exchange.\[11\] Extra-territorial Italians are also central to these knowledge networks, with figures such as Giacomo Castelvetro, who recurs in different contexts, for example as a visitor to the Scottish and Danish courts in the 1590s, or as a corresponded of the English printer, John Wolfe in the 1580s;\[12\] others include the Englishman of Italian Protestant heritage John Florio, or indeed the fencing master Salvator Fabris who taught Italian to the King Christian IV of Denmark (a fact we know from the writings of another North Sea traveller, Otto Sperling, the physician to the king).\[13\]

This volume also foregrounds a specifically Scots internationally-oriented cultural politics, which is not always visible in Anglophone studies of translation, as exemplified in Donatella Montini’s study of the \textit{Basilikon Doron} and its transnational translation and media history. The transnational ‘prehistory’ of King James (that is, his textual life before his accession to the English throne, and entrance into English translation history), is thoroughly embedded in these intertextual contexts and transnational currents: we know that the \textit{Basilikon Doron}\[14\] materially traversed the North Sea to formalize diplomatic relations between Edinburgh and Oslo when he travelled to collect his bride. The ‘foreign-ness’ of his Danish Queen Anna has now been anglicized to the very English Queen Anne, but we should not forget that her Italianate tastes and foreign-born origins were highly prominent attributes in the language-learing text authored for her by John Florio, \textit{Queen Anna’s New World of Words} (1611).\[15\] And indeed, Montini shows how the few texts on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s \textit{Basilikon Doron} is one of the very few writings on which James’s A transnational circulation of literary artefacts—whether described in a particular context as ‘texts’ or ‘books’ or ‘works’—involved ‘translations’ of various kinds: the physical movement of books, the transfer of a text from one language to another, the transfer of a whole text (as a ‘work’) or part of a text from one language to another. One or more of these kinds of transfer might apply in any given instance. [...] So the circulation in question might concretely be a matter of: the publication of an edition in one state or city (e.g.,
to avoid censorship) that was principally intended for dissemination in other states or cities; the movement of individual copies and bundles of copies of an edition across borders—licitly or illicitly—via the book trade, social networks, and educational or diplomatic travel; the publication of identical or revised editions in the same language as the source work in different locations across or beyond Europe, whether through commercial partnerships, pirated editions (which contravened a privilege held in another country), or editions issued by commercial rivals (in locations where no privilege protects the work); the translation, adaptation and publication of the work in new languages—including multilingual editions—in different locations, whether, again, through commercial arrangements or otherwise.[18]

The complex mobilities of people and things outlined here show that it is near-impossible to conceive of an exclusively bounded opposition between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ within the early modern textual ecosystem.[19] Instead, we see a situation in which nationally-identified ‘Italianate’ (or other aspirational) scholarly practices and cultural tastes are produced and circulate independently of their supposed originating context: a system of flows or transfers between data points (comprising geographically distanced places, certainly, but also people, or texts, or the material artefacts), in which the reception of the transited object is itself a localized production. In this decentred and deterritorialized model, as espoused in this collection, there can therefore no longer be a ‘correct’, or single conventional vector of transmission.

There are, of course, dominant directions of travel, along the established trade and transmission routes, but the articles in this volume show just as clearly counter-trajectories and reversals, each contingent on the individual textual agents who undertake socially governed operations in their respective contexts.[20] We need only look at the English fortunes of Italian querelle texts discussed by Brenda Hosington, or the three different case-studies of Machiavelli’s translational fortunes included in this special issue to illustrate this point. In each of the latter, Machiavelli’s writings are radically resituated in their specific production locales: first, Paolo Marelli shows how the long-prohibited *Principe* was first translated into Swedish only in the mid-eighteenth century, and published there in a printed edition dedicated to the Crown Prince in a joint publication with his uncle Frederick the Great of Prussia’s critique of that text, the *Anti-Machiavel*. Meanwhile Anna Maria Segala and Francesca Terrenato both reflect on Machiavelli’s misogynist tale *Belfagor* in, respectively, Danish and Dutch translation. These two seventeenth-century translations testify to the wide readerly interest in the notorious Machiavelli and his controversial works across Europe throughout the early modern period, and exemplify the ways in which he is ‘geo-located’ to the concerns of his text-producers and their intended audiences.

Likewise (and this should be obvious, but bears repeating), early modern translation is not simply, or even primarily, enacted on and in ‘literary’ texts: literature is one privileged category of literary exchange, privileged in its historic context by the fact that it was often undertaken by elite literate practitioners, and privileged now by the fact that most of the scholars working on early modern translation are literary scholars in languages departments, and do not identify primarily as, say, historians. The very valuable essays here by Leen Spruit and Iolanda Plescia on the transmission of scientific knowledges between Italy, England, and the Dutch Republic make a major contribution to rectifying what is often a very partial representation of the situation.[21]

In the Dutch case, unlike the more conventional directionality of the traditional *translatio studii*, we see scientific writing circulating in a counter-direction to the usual one, with the publication of Italian-language renderings of the scientific writings of the Dutch natural philosophers Willem ’s Gravesande and Pieter van Musschenbroek in the eighteenth century. In subject matter and language of transfer, these Dutch texts represent a kind of transit which is very different from that of just a century or so earlier, when the British scientists of the Royal Society sought to access continental scientific advances via the translation of Italian works and correspondence. Interestingly, Plescia notes that, while the types of Italian texts translated into English evolve over time, from literary and political genres to scientific writing, Italy none the less remains a privileged source of knowledge to import: the geographical coordinates and vectors remain the same, even while the time variable changes.

**Thinking through the spaces of early modern translation**

How, then, can all this relate to space and a multiscale approach to transit and translation in early modern Europe? One way to approach this question might be to take a map — let us say, Willem Blaeu’s 1644 map of Europe — and reflect on its strategies of territorial representation and their implications.[22] The Blaeu map shows the nationally bounded territories of Europe, seen from an imagined position high above the Earth, a physical location which would be impossible to achieve until more than three centuries later.[23] Yet the distance that the picture plane of this map implies, at this scale, imposes great generalization on the places below (for example, in presenting a unified, geographically bounded Italy, or Germany, with the implication that this represents a unified political nation-state, such as their neighbour France). It serves very well as a single (over)view of the basic distances and relative locatedness between territories, whilst also being a beautifully designed information object which advances a visual argument for a shared culture, politics, and geography of Europe as a single, idealized, coherent entity, an urgent requirement when defining the extra-European other in the voyages of conquest. But we need to read further into the map to see how it can also be useful conceptually as a representation of the spaces of translation, beyond its capacity as a background (that is, a materialized, two-dimensional physical space for single pushpin data points).
At the margins of the map image, Blaeu’s map offers other scales for the viewer’s engagement, which take us further into these territories. The map is a carte à figures, an illustrated map which contains both views of major trade and cultural centres, arrayed along the horizontal upper frame, and anthropological representations of some of its inhabitants in their typical national dress in the verticals at left and right.[24] The picture plane as a whole therefore offers a multiplicity of perspectives: for the places, three different kinds of view, pictorial (Amsterdam, Prague, Toledo, and Lisbon), axonometric (the bird’s-eye view of the cities’ layout in a naturalistic perspective, of Constantinople, Venice, and Rome), and ichnographic (in the two direct overhead views which promote the street-plan view of the cities of London and Paris). The figures of the European people, meanwhile, appear in long-shot, standing on neutral ground with no background, implying a curatorial, informational gaze. Taken in its entirety, the image suggests a coextensive whole (the territory of Europa out to its edges in the North West Atlantic, North Africa, the Levant, and Asia); which is shown to contain a dense constellation of named places, nine of the most important of which are represented at the top (with Rome in the central elevated position); and at the smallest scale, a diversity of people, each identified with a particular territory and with their own visualized subjectivities. Within the confines of the affordances of seventeenth-century printing technology, the carte à figures thus offers a multiscalar mechanism to facilitate a meditation on diversity and geography from macro to micro, just as our contemporary dynamic electronic maps allow us to move between different map layers at different scales, from the distant overhead view, through the streetplan, and down to the human-scale street view in 360-degree perspective.[25]

The problem of the spatialized conceptualization of historicized literary space has been deftly addressed by David Wallace, in his recent Europe: A Literary History, 1348-1418 (2016). In his General Introduction, Wallace argues forcefully for ‘an expanded view of Europe’, one which is explicitly ‘not […] an agglomeration of national literary histories […], but rather […] itineraries, places drawn together through links of travel, trade, religious practice, language, and literary exchange’. [26] Conceptualized in this way, his medieval Europe becomes an account of sequences of specific locales, a ‘place-based literary history’, where mobile texts and mobile people come together at specific points in time to produce localized textual artefacts, which may then go forth and circulate within the wider network. Place, as well as space, is the essential coordinate for this model, which in turn means it is able to attend to both micro, local, considerations, and the macro dimension of a vastly complex trans-continental system, without detaining itself with anachronistic back-projections of unified nation-state space. Literary history is thus reframed away from the conventional narratives of the translatio studii, towards a richer, more contingent, and more situated exploration of relationships.

Wallace summarizes this shift from nation-state to experiential journey through a comparison of cartographic media devices: the itinerarium, which orders points of interest on the journey in a linear form; the medieval and premodern map, in which geographic representations share the space with ‘illustrative, decorative and discursive visual matter’ (as exemplified by the Blaeu map of Europe, discussed above); the nineteenth-century map, and finally, the twenty-first century GPS device.[27]

Conventional literary history, structured by nineteenth-century understandings of nation state space, seems rather to share the aspirations of nineteenth-century cartography: to view a territory from a single, superhuman point of elevation as if it were an empty space, with its lateral plane devoid of discursive and figurative
matter; the literary work analogously decouples itself from any particular locale, assuming national representative importance. Curiously, however, our contemporary experience of Global Positioning Systems is returning to us aspects of the pre-modern cartographic; for we now once again move laterally through generously mapped and illustrated ground with abundant commentary — in the form, now, of a personalizable voice.[28]

While Wallace’s argument refers to the complexities of positioning premodern transnational literary histories beyond the nation state, it can be extended equally well to early modern translation studies as a subset of the larger question. The essays in this volume have shown this abundantly, with their individual studies of translational activity as instances of particular material and social practices enacted in specific locations. Translation, despite the spatial implications of its etymology as a physical ‘carrying-over’, is decidedly geographically placed, and our spatialized conceptual models need to take account as much of that as they do of the social theory-inflected models of macro systems which are currently influential in translation studies.[29]

Geography, geocriticism and the spatial turn

Space, and its multiple interpretive dimensions, has become one of the dominant paradigms of critical theory across the humanities, with the now-canonical studies by Gaston Bachelard, Michel Foucault, and Henri Lefebvre firmly embedded into the post-structuralist critical canon. These now-settled spatial paradigms have infused the humanities with a deeply debated and highly granular critical framework, which extends into all the disciplines. In a recent summary of the state of the art, Marko Juvan outlines the genealogy of the spatial turn and its application to literary studies, noting that:

‘In contrast to the teleological closure of the narrative model, the renovated notion of space is open, inconclusive, relational, heterarchical, multi-temporal, ontologically heterogeneous (physical, mental, virtual, actual, etc.), simple geographical location, whose effectiveness as a category can be inferred through the interplay with social practices, mental mappings, and multi-directional flows on information, resources, goods, people, and capital.’[30]

More pithily, as the feminist geographer Doreen Massey has it, space is ‘open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming.’[31] The appositeness of this formulation to early modern translation studies is self-evident. How, then, can we best translate this into a model which serves for the hugely complex networks and flows of translation? Is there a way to formally relate geographical space and the interpretation of early modern texts in such a way as to add value to our study of translational phenomena? As Juvan notes, the potential of geographical methods and approaches to literary studies has long been recognized, and has given rise to the emerging field of ‘geocriticism’, the main proponent of which is Bernard Westphal. For Juvan, Westphal’s geocriticism can be best understood as ‘the study of how the multi-faceted experiences of a singular place/region are, in the course of history, represented through layers of various textual perspectives’. [32] Cartographical maps and mapping, as exemplified by the work of scholars such as Franco Moretti, are thus of less relevance to this conceptualization of geocriticism than the layering of representations of geospaces around and upon single geolocated points.[33]

If Westphal’s geocriticism can be considered to be fundamentally temporally vertical in its conceptualization (i.e., centring on one place through time), other proponents of literary geographies have pursued instead dynamic models which favour a ‘horizontal’, geographical extensiveness and the relatedness of phenomena within spatially conceived territories (as does Wallace, for example). Approaching textual phenomena spatially, rather than linguistically or nationalistically (or via the historically-persistent unconscious conflation of the two), allows for a more nuanced and flexible position which can handle complex historical real-world situations of multilingualism, multiplicity, and mobility, which the traditional national- or monolingual-identified model excludes or omits.[34] It is for this reason that some recent early modern transnational projects have formally adopted a network model, to privilege relationality and connectedness, in contrast to the simple geographical location, whose effectiveness as a category can be inferred through the interplay with social practices, mental mappings, and multi-directional flows on information, resources, goods, people, and capital.[35]

The large-scale analysis of network data, therefore, can give a tremendously powerful insight into trends and phenomena across an extensive geographical terrain; but we should likewise note that, however granular the detail and sophisticated the methodology, big data analytics do not allow for the kind of qualitative, subjective and relational spatial perspectives, especially the ‘intimately tiny’ ones which we have seen in the examples above.

It is self-evident, then, that we need to find a way of not just working at scale (both at the macro level and as micro-histories), but also moving through scales, for a more flexible and supple mode of enquiry into early modern translation textual cultures, which are at once radically situated and subjective, and representative of wider trends and events. We need a formal, place-based model which acknowledges the heterogeneity of space(s) and individuals’ subjective experiences of it, allied to a macro model directed towards the modelling of movement, dynamics, and interactions. Can new GIS tools and technologies therefore be harnessed by early modern textual scholars in such a way as to help facilitate a properly multi-scalar mode of enquiry, while maintaining the ‘power of the particular’?[36] The potential that spatial mapping holds for early modern translation in particular has recently been highlighted by several scholars. In the conclusion to his 2015 article, Marko Juvan signals that:

“One of the most urgent future tasks of literary scholars using GIS is comparative and transnational research of the following issues: cultural transfer and literary translation; the diffusion and interaction of literary forms, genres, styles, and themes; their interdiscursive circulation over different linguistic territories; and the international social networking of writers.”[38]

While the GIS specialist Juvan highlights translation studies research as one urgent area for enquiry, translation scholars too have been reflecting on the necessity for visualization of textual circulation and connections. In looking forward from their 2017 model for the study of translations in early modern Britain, Marie-Alice Belle and Brenda Hosington “could envisage an even more decentralized approach, in which the data recovered through our model could be used to post-process the digitized maps and print networks of Belle and print networks of Belle’s contemporaries to the study of how this might be achieved in a forthcoming article.”[39] But with this exception, mapping still remains something that should or could be done; translation scholars themselves have to date been somewhat reluctant to move into this domain.[40] It is certainly true that GIS tools and technologies require a high initial investment, of time and substantial intellectual effort on the part of the researcher to master new and unfamiliar technical approaches, and of potentially considerable financial resource to make appropriate datasets and analyse them; it is perhaps for this reason
that GIS is still very underused within early modern literary studies, even while digital cartographic apps are one of our most commonly used everyday technologies. But a multiscalar mindset deriving from the affordances of digital technologies does not necessarily require an actual digital mapping resource to be built up-front; a primary, and achievable, goal of this paper is to engage in an immersed engagement with what diverse spatial theories and the methods of cultural geography, and thereby an awareness of the potential of a place-based, multiscalar early modern translation studies. Such an approach could only enrich the field, by opening ourselves up to territories (both historical and intellectual) outside of our own specialized areas of expertise — as do the papers in this volume, of course. Indeed, one of the exemplary spatially-extensive projects already mentioned in this essay — News Networks in Early Modern Europe — does this very successfully without much recourse to GIS mapping, and serves to stand as a model of what might be done within the field of early modern translation studies. [41]

That said, the very particular affordances of digital cartography and GIS tools lend themselves to some immediately interesting possibilities in relation to early modern textual transits. As locative, data-agnostic technologies, geographic information systems can be very powerful, enabling much more than the simple plotting of georeferenced data points on a map. As Bodenhammer et al note, '[t]he power of GIS for the humanities lies in its ability to integrate information from a common location, regardless of format, and to visualize the results in combinations of transparent layers on a map of the geography shared by the data'. [42]

It is the presence of layers as the fundamental structural element which makes GIS such a promising tool for literary-textual enquiry: base maps of geographical territories can be created at different scales, allowing the viewer a sense of vertical movement through a multiscalar space on a single place, while layers can be time-enabled and animated in such a way as to show dynamic developments and trajectories over time. GIS data combined with computer-assisted modelling tools now permit walk-through reconstructions of historic spaces and buildings; while images and audio texts deriving from the historic cityscape can even be superimposed on the real-world environment using smartphone apps, allowing the user an embodied and kinesthetic experience of the historic research object. [43] As we saw earlier, a premodern printed map provides a single, static, view imposed by the author-function on the viewer in its picture plane. A web map, by contrast, can continue to develop its content by adding further data points; it is rendered on the fly in the browser, and can be expanded and altered by the viewer, permitting new perspectives to be added from enriched data points and via reorientation of perspective. With interactive mapping, the modifiable web map privileges mobility over fixity; textual and individual trajectories can be mapped, and show themselves to be both mobile and situated, produced by and always contingent on the viewer, just as we have learned to do for our analogue textual objects and their spaces.

Conclusion: towards a multiscalar early modern translation

If we are serious about developing a more positioned view of translation interactions, a formal multiscalar approach, possibly via the use of GIS tools and technologies, means we can construct both more intimate, positioned, contextualized, subjective views of the dynamics of translation activities, and more powerful and dynamic visualizations of macro trends. What, then, would this new spatialized geography of early modern translation look like? What forms could its enquiries take? In the first instance, it would effect a decoupling of language-exchange activity from nationally-conceived spaces, alongside a reaffirmation of translation’s radically situated status as locally-produced and place-specific; it would attend to questions of place-making through discourse, for example, in the many instances of cosmopolitan, Italianate culture created textually in the Northern centres discussed in this special issue. We could embark on a programme of ever-richer mapping of the data points at our disposal in terms of textual actors, their travels, and their networks; we are all aware of the contact zones and especially favoured sites through which books and people pass and transact, but much more granularity is needed, and very much more could be done even in terms of basic layering and the visualization of geolocated information. A spatially attuned translation studies could undertake radically situated object histories, charting the transits and interactions of a single copy of a book through times and spaces (as does Cristina Dondi’s 15cBOOKTRADE project); [44] locate the printshops and booksellers of our period and layer onto them the texts which they produced and their individual trajectories, or the houses of their clients, proximity to other language-learning and/or polygot spaces such as schools, schools, churches, courts, and so on.

But, as many have noted, for GIS to properly serve humanistic enquiry, a mechanistic and selective use of GIS is not enough. As I have outlined here, it is only by conceptualizing our research in spatial, scaled terms and finding the points of intersection with related fields and new technologies will we truly reap the benefits of this new paradigm. [45]

Whether we materialize these notions of space in electronic spatial technologies, or locate them intellectually in the knowledge objects of the past, such as maps and books, or in our representations and reconstructions of past translational practices, the necessity of a multiscalar, geographically mobile conception of the spaces and places of translation is essential.

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References


**Digital resources:**

- Renaissance Cultural Crossroads <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/rec/> [accessed 30 September 2018]
- Universal Short-Title Catalogue <https://www.ustc.ac.uk> [accessed 30 September 2018]
- 15cBOOKTRADE <http://15cbooktrade.ox.ac.uk/project/> [accessed 17 October 2018]

**Notes**

1. Wallace (2016); Belle and Hosington (2017). The ‘Trajectories of Translation’ project is directed by Marie-Alice Belle (PI) and Brenda Hosington (CI) with a team of international collaborators including myself, and aims ‘to map early modern routes and trends of linguistics, material, and cultural exchange and to a certain extent, out of’ Britain, as represented by the production and circulation of British printed translations in the period’. Note that the mapping in this project is primarily network analysis, rather than GIS, although Marie-Alice Belle has successfully explored elements of the geolocation of translations using Stanfords’s Palladio platform in a case-study included in her forthcoming book chapter.

2. Cultural geography has been defined as ‘the study of the relationship between culture and place. [It] examines the cultural values, practices, discursive and material expressions and artefacts of people, the cultural diversity and plurality of society, and how cultures are distributed over space, how places and identity are produced, how people make sense of places and build senses of place, and how space is used and communicated and how meaning’. Castree, Kitchin and Rogers 2013.


4. The digital humanities have been particularly prominent in advancing arguments for a deliberately multiscalar approach, as scholars debate how best to work with datamassive electronic resources, as noted in a recent study in the spatial humanities: Taylor, Gregory and Donaldson (2018). Taylor et al note in particular Matthew Jockers’s book *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods and Literary History* (Jockers 2013) as an exemplary proponent of a combined micro- and macro- approach. On this see also Clement (2013). Other recent studies arguing for a similarly nuanced and scaled approach include Raymond and Moxham (2016), especially their introductory chapter (pp. 1-16), and Gerritsen and Riello (2016). All of these studies have an investment in the models of transmission and circulation, and I will return to them later in this essay. Beyond the spatial humanities, the term ‘multiscalar’ is increasingly deployed in research on the sociology of migration, while the contours of ‘world’ and comparative literature are currently the subject of much debate, most recently in the *Comparative Literature Launch Issue* of the open-access online journal *Modern Languages Open*, 19.1 (2018). <https://www.modernlanguagesopen.org/collections/special/comparative-literature-section-launch-issue/> [accessed 30 September 2018]. Especially relevant to this discussion of a spatialized translation studies is the forthcoming article by Karima Lachir, Sara Marzagora and Francesca Orsini, ‘Multilingual Locals and Significant Geographies: For a Ground-up and Located Approach to World Literature’, *Modern Languages Open*, 19.1 (2019).

5. Many examples of these are discussed in Belle and Hosington (2017).

6. The Renaissance Cultural Crossroads searchable database of translations is archived at <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/rec/>. The USTC is at https://www.ustc.ac.uk. On the paradigm-shifting importance of the USTC as a research tool, see Bouchier (2015: 367-369).

7. For an introduction to spatial humanities and the affordances and application of GIS technologies, see the foundational volume Bodenhammer, Corrigan and Harris (2010); for a useful definition and discussion of the challenges of spatial humanities, see their ‘Introduction’, pp. vii-xv, (pp. vii-viii).

8. The problems of the term ‘transnational’ when applied to the early modern period (and none the less its inevitability as the best, if imperfect, descriptor for the phenomenon), is discussed in Bouchier (2015: 353-356).

9. On this see Anna Maria Segala’s article in this issue.


11. On the movements of Danish scholars in particular, see Toftgaard in this issue.

12. The intercultural traffic was, of course, two-way, mobile, and multi-centred: before his visits to London and Edinburgh, Castelvetro was an Italy-based point of contact for Italophile Englishmen abroad, recorded as travelling with the English Italian student John North during his time in Italy in 1575-77, for example: Gallagher (2017: 94).

13. See Toftgaard in this volume. Gallacher has shown that fencing schools were important spaces of Italian cultural encounter and language contact outside Italy: John North is recorded as making payments to a fencing school in London after his trip to Italy, and in fact recruited the servant (presumably Italian) who accompanied him there at one: Gallacher (2017: 114-15).


15. Queen Anna’s new world of words, or dictionarie of the Italian and English tongues, collected, and newly much augmented by John Florio, reader of the Italian into the Soueraigne Majestie of Anna, crowned Queene of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, &c. And one of the gentlemen of hir Royall Privie Chamber. Whereunto are added certaine necessarie rules and short observations for the Italian tongue (London: printed by Melch. Bradwood [and William Stansby], for Edw. Blount and William Barret, Anno 1611); STC 11099.

16. For a useful study of the modern multilingual urban cityspace, which suggests many parallels with these early modern places, see Simon (2012).

17. See Prandoni in this issue.
A number of scholars have explicitly engaged with the spatial turn in translation studies. In a seminal article addressing notions of ‘space’ in translation, Maria Tymoczko (2003) dismantles the notion of the ‘between-ness’ in translation and the status of the translator as ‘in-between’. Tymoczko is in agreement for an approach which argues for the radical situatedness, and non-liminal status of translation and the translator. The article also contains a useful overview of spatial metaphors in TS, see 219-21. Other important recent treatments include Simon (2012); Kershaw and Saldanha (2013), and the discussion in Italiano (2016, esp. 3-8). Finally, in his recent book Eco-Translation: Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene Michael Cronin reflects on how the current conceptualization of the image of the globe as an icon of a shared global ‘citizenship’ may actually distance the subject from their particular and local experience; he therefore proposes instead the notion of the ‘denizen’, deriving from an explicitly place-based notion of belonging, instead of traditional political, ethnic and/or national identities (Cronin 2017: 124-126, esp. 125).

A zoomable online image of the map is available at <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/40/1644_Europa_Recens_Blaeu.jpg> [accessed 30 September 2018].

Of the 37 chapters within the News Network volume, only one formally uses GIS technologies to represent the use of the basic spatial tools used by other humanities disciplines such as history, geography, centrality of space, in comparative literature in particular and in literary studies in general, scholars appear to be removed from the use of the basic spatial tools used by other humanities disciplines such as history, geography, sociology, ethnography, anthropology, and linguistics’ (Domínguez 2011: 221-222).

For an introduction to Blaeu’s monumental mapping project and wider reflections on the visual representation of ethnographic difference see Traub (2000); Sutton (2009).

A zoomable online image of the map is available at <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/40/1644_Europa_Recens_Blaeu.jpg> [accessed 30 September 2018].
disciplinary definition, but it is notable that of the 36 contributors to the interdisciplinary News Network volume, only a handful hold posts in departments of languages or translation studies; and arguably, with the exception of Hosington and Belle’s various projects, early modern translation studies has not yet fully embraced the digital turn.


[43] There are countless examples of important GIS projects in historical and literary studies; see, for example, Marco Juvan’s *Space of Slovenian Literary Culture*, discussed in his article (Juvan 2015: 90-93), and the spatial humanities case-studies included in Estill, Jakacki and Ullyot (2016), especially Nevola (2016: 259-282) for the last example.

[44] [http://15cbooktrade.ox.ac.uk/project/](http://15cbooktrade.ox.ac.uk/project/) [accessed 17 October 2018]

[45] This is a point made by the editors of the *Spatial Humanities* volume: ‘It will not be sufficient for the humanities to draw piecemeal from the vocabulary of spatial analysis redolent in GIS or simply to adapt the current state of GIS technology to specific research. Rather, genuine advancement of scholarly investigation of space in the humanities will derive from investigators’ successes in effecting a profound blend of research languages and in organizing sustained collaborative experimentation with spatially aware interpretation’: Bodenhammer et al (2010: ix-x).