

Orientation

An introduction

I was raised in Piedmont, at the foot of the Alps,¹ between the river Ticino and the lowlands around Novara. If asked, I would have instinctively described myself as a northerner, as an Italian from the north. And yet, when in my mid-twenties I left Piedmont and moved to Munich, in southern Germany, I suddenly became a “Südländer,” a southerner, a native of an indefinite and vast region that embraces the whole Mediterranean basin and that, from a German perspective, begins south of the Brenner Pass—or south of Bolzano from an Austrian viewpoint. I became a man from the south in the eyes of most of the people I came into contact with. To some extent, while I was heading north, I was being translated into the South—into an imaginary South that has very little if nothing to do with the tangled discourse on the Italian north–south divide I was well acquainted with. Crossing the Alps thus became a translation of cardinal points, a negotiation of differences across languages, geographical imaginations, and identitarian ascriptions. A further, though welcome, complication in this translational re-location was that in my “new north,” I found an unhurried and festive society, who paradoxically pitied me for having left warm and joyful Italy, without knowing, however, how foggy, stiff and cold the place I come from could sometimes be.

In my own small way, I experienced how geographical (re)orientation works—a process of de- and reterritorialization that indissolubly links together location, language, and translation. As a literary scholar, I have always been fascinated by the relationship between space and the most immaterial, though most corrupted, of all tools of art: language. Over the past years, investigating, for instance, a Ligurian poet’s sense of place, the hallucinatory landscape of a post-apocalyptic American novel or the cartographic imagination of a Sicilian writer, I invariably came to the conclusion that the spatial imagination contained in a work of literature was the most truthful mirror in which humanity could reflect and examine itself. Inevitably spurred on by my own experience of orientation in space as a form of translation across cultural differences, I started to ask myself how spatial imaginations negotiate geographies not only across epochs, languages, and literary texts but also across media, in particular between the medium of writing and the medium of the map.

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From French, *s'orienter*, and Italian, *orientare*, literally “to face the east” (from Old French *orient*, “east” and Latin *oriens*, “the rising sun, the east, part of the sky where the sun rises,” the present participle of *oriri*, “to rise”), the word “orientation” is not only a complex metaphor in itself, meaning to find one’s way or pointing in a given direction, but is also an “absolute metaphor” (Blumenberg 2010) that opens up a multiplicity of folds, like an endless *mise en abyme*. In his *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, Blumenberg describes absolute metaphors as the “foundational elements of philosophical language,” defining them (following Kant’s symbolic hypotyposis) as “translations,” which “resist being converted back into authenticity and logicity” (Blumenberg 2010: 3). According to him, through their pre-conceptual function such metaphors reveal the sub-structures of thought. Indeed, the metaphorical content contained in the word “orientation”—that is, to face east towards the rising sun in order to find one’s way—goes beyond the simple illustration of a spatial practice and in fact works as a cultural paradigm that determines “a particular attitude or conduct” and “give[s] structure to a world” (Blumenberg 2010: 14).

In his 1786 essay “What is Orientation in Thinking?,” Immanuel Kant, who lectured on geography in Königsberg for forty years, begins his discussion of the notion of orientation with a geographical explanation: “To *orientate* oneself, in the proper sense of the word, means to use a given direction—and we divide the horizon into four of these—in order to find the others, and in particular that of *sunrise*” (Kant 1991: 238). Kant argues—and this is the crucial moment of his geo-cognitive argument—that in order to identify and recognize the cardinal directions of our terrestrial horizon, we must necessarily be able to experience a difference in our own subject, the difference namely “between my right and left hands” (*ibid.*). Feeling a difference, a preliminary, non-cognitive experience of differentiation is what enables orientation in the first place. In what is probably an unorthodox reading of this passage, we might say that orientation is possible only because we are able to recognize and weigh up “differences.” As Kant further argues, “in spite of all the objective data in the sky, I orientate myself *geographically* purely by means of a subjective distinction” (*ibid.*: 239, my emphasis).²

In his illustration of mythical space, Cassirer (1955) asserts that Kant was right in defining the basic perception of a difference as the *conditio sine qua non* of orientation but wrong in locating its origin in the subject-inherent opposition between right and left. For Cassirer the primal distinction which enables orientation is a kind of extrinsic evidence, something that exists outside and precedes the subject: the opposition between night and day, between darkness and light. Starting from this elemental experience of opposition, we begin to spatialize, to conceive the world geographically—and ourselves within it. This is the reason why in mythical thinking the differences between the cardinal directions are not purely quantitative but are also qualitative. “East, west, north, and south are not essentially similar zones which serve for orientation within the world of empirical perception;

each of them has a specific reality and significance of its own, an inherent mythical life” (Cassirer 1955: 98).

Orientation in mythical space is, therefore, a negotiation between the empirical perception of the world we live in and the “inherent mythical life” of a cardinal direction. As the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has brilliantly shown, in everyday life we are immersed in a holistic, mythical way of thinking most of the time (Tuan 1977: 86–100). Thus, Cassirer’s observations on mythical space are in no way the exclusive intellectual property of paleoanthropologists or classical philologists. On the contrary: every time that we think about places that we believe to know perfectly—the beach from our childhood, a particular corner of our neighborhood, the micro-cosmos surrounding our favorite bench in the park, or the way back home—at this moment we are orientating ourselves in a mythical dimension, conceiving of a mythical space and constructing geographies, “imaginative geographies” (Said 2003: 55). Here the main questions of my book arise: how do literary texts translate such “imaginative geographies”? And is it, in the first place, possible to translate the “inherent mythical life” of a cardinal point?

From Homi K. Bhabha’s conceptualization of the “third space” (2005 [1994]), through Emily Apter’s monograph *The Translation Zone* (2006), to Sherry Simon’s *Cities in Translation* (2013), the paradigm of space has been experiencing a boom within translation studies. While Bhabha’s argument on the performativity of translation as the “staging of cultural difference” (Bhabha 2005: 325)³ still manipulates the concept of “space” as a mere metaphor, Apter’s view introduces the notion of “zone” as the “intellectual topography” of global translation (Apter 2006: 5), referencing in particular actual war zones as problematic, conflictive spaces of translation (ibid.: 129). In her investigation, Apter repeatedly underscores the importance of a spatial awareness when discussing translation. In particular, she reworks the postcolonial concept of location in order to understand world literature today and to define what she calls “a location-conscious translational transnationalism” (ibid.: 87). Even more concretely, Sherry Simon’s latest work on the intersections of language and memory (2013) focuses on (urban) space as an integral part of the translation process. Examining linguistically divided cities such as Calcutta, Trieste, Barcelona, and her hometown, Montreal, Simon demonstrates how each city, each one a precise kind of anthropic environment, “imposes its own patterns of interaction” (ibid.: 2), shaping and modulating the negotiation among languages.

However, these are just three prominent positions among many others which indicate the increasing attention paid by translation scholars towards a spatial understanding of translation. This “spatial turn” within the recent flourishing of the “translational turn” is not merely another academic trend but probably the most consistent attempt to overcome the almost positivistic view of translation based on the illusion of linguistic equivalence in the transfer of meaning. As Michaela Wolf, starting from an ethnographical perspective, has distinctly pointed out, translation is not only a matter of

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transfer between cultures but “a *place* where cultures merge and create *new spaces*” (Wolf 2002: 186, my emphasis). In short, a new perspective is making itself conspicuous within translation studies today, one we might refer to as the geography of translation, or what Lawrence Venuti defined as the “ethics of location” in translation studies (1998: 186–7); that is, the question of “where” translation happens.

What I try to do in this book runs along the same epistemic furrow, although it does so in the opposite direction. The geography of translation is not the subject of my research. Rather, I am interested in the translation of geographies; that is, a negotiation of cultural differences between constructions of worlds and spatial imaginations. Consequently, the questions raised in my book primarily concern how and to what extent Western spatial imaginations, in particular those constructed by literary works, have been translated across languages, media, and epochs.

As far as I am aware, there is currently no monograph that deals explicitly with this question and which offers a synthesis of the spatial and translational turn. In 2011, Alvstad, Helgesson, and Watson edited the collection of essays *Literature, Geography, Translation: Studies in World Writing*, the title of which might suggest an affinity with my project. On the one hand, this volume does in fact highlight the importance of geography in contemporary literary studies, showing how urgent it is for translation studies to deal with geographical issues as constituent parts of its research horizon. On the other hand, this volume does not advance beyond the locative approach (the geography of translation and the “ethics of location”) nor does it ever broach a discussion concerning the “translation of geographies,” which is central to my book. Only the third and last part of the book focuses on the spatial imagination, but it does so with reference to concepts of transnationalism rather than processes of translation.

However, there are many books which have approached the relationship between geography and translation tangentially, indicating possible ways for getting to the core of the issue. Since his seminal monograph on travel writing, language, and translation, *Across the Lines* (2000), in which narratives of space, and in particular of movement in space, were coherently considered through the looking-glass of linguistic transfer for the first time, Michael Cronin’s books have laid the essential groundwork for a bridge between the praxis-oriented cosmos of translation and interpreting studies, on the one hand, and culture-oriented, literary studies, on the other. In *Translation and Globalization* (2003), Cronin examines the status of translation as an indispensable cultural practice in the era of globalization and rejects the idea that translations and translators are becoming superfluous. On the contrary, he states that translation plays an important role in the survival of cultural differences in a world dominated by globalizing processes that produce homogenization. Moreover, his analyses of translation processes frequently focus on their spatial coordinates and the relationship between language and geography (see especially the chapter “Globalization and the new geography

of translation”). In *Translation and Identity* (2006), he describes translation as a “negentropic” process (a term I will expand on later) that creates newness out of precarious processes of communication. His main goal is to show how translation practices shape the construction of identity. This aspect is crucial to my present book too, since I also strongly believe that we are continuously imagining and building new worlds through negotiating our own identity constructions.⁴ Cronin’s approach to translation has also proved constructive in the discussion of translation in the era of the Internet. In *Translation in the Digital Age*, Cronin “locates” translation in the digital sphere, showing that translation processes “reveal again and again [...] the world as network” (Cronin 2013: 33). In my opinion, this digital perspective on translation also urges us to read translation geographically as a process that not only connects spaces but which also creates them.

As for literary studies, many works over the last twenty years have shown how crucial it is for the humanities to bring together philology and cartography in order to explain how geography shapes our minds, pervading the medium of (literary) writing through the spatializing device of the map. I refer here to the works of Conley (1996), Padrón (2004), Scafi (2006), Stockhammer (2007), Smith (2008) and, more recently, Dünne (2011). All of these books deal more or less with the issue of geographical and cartographic imagination in literature and, although they seem unrelated to the issue of translation, they frequently implement notions such as “re-writing,” “reconfiguration,” and “negotiation” across media (especially between maps and written texts) to examine the interconnections between literature, geographical imaginations, and maps. Dealing with Western literatures in particular, these works discuss the way geographical and cartographic imaginations shape literary texts and how maps can be transposed into texts and vice versa. However, they never explicitly examine this process as a translational phenomenon—which is precisely the step I will take in the following pages.

My translational approach to investigating the relationship between literature and geography carries with it at least two problematic dimensions. First, it characterizes the process of translation as (cultural) negotiation; that is, as something closer to a trade rather than a transfer (see in particular Chapter 3). Second, it spatializes the concept of translation; that is, it transposes a notion commonly used for linguistic transfer into a context of knowledge/power relations, that of geography, which obviously transcends the mere linguistic-verbal horizon. These two dimensions need separate elucidation in order to understand how the concept of translating geographies will eventually function.

Translation as negentropy

As Michaela Wolf (2002) states—speaking from within an epistemological analysis of translation in the ethnographic discourse and beyond—translation is a place where cultures merge and new spaces are created. Now, what are

those spaces? For Homi K. Bhabha, those spaces are metaphorical, the fictional products of encounters across cultures: they are interstitial spaces created by performative negotiations between “differential identities” (2005: 313), where “the subject of cultural difference” becomes what Walter Benjamin has described as “the irresolution, or liminality, of translation” (ibid.: 321). Thus, translation for Bhabha does not just happen somewhere in-between: translation *is* this space in-between, a space which is continually and contingently “regulate[d]” and “negotiate[d],” a place “where difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between*” (ibid.: 313). It is on the basis of this argumentation that, at the core of his essay, Bhabha can point out that “translation is the performative nature of cultural communication. It is language *in actu* (enunciation, positionality), rather than language *in situ* (*énoncé*, propositionality)” (ibid.: 326).

Up to this point, I agree with Bhabha’s view on (cultural) translation. Furthermore, I find the way in which he intersects the dimensions of time and space in his definition of translation not only very plausible but even inescapable (see also Chapter 5). In fact, if translation, intended as a performative negotiation between cultural differences, creates spaces—be it the metaphorical, Bhabhian third space or the geographical fictional spaces that I will examine—it is evidently necessary that the process of this creation must have a progression in time: the time of its own movement, the time that language needs to operate and unfold itself, that temporal dimension which is unavoidable for any practice of communication. Thus, every reflection on the translation of spaces and geographies should consequently be a reflection on a precise temporal dimension. There is no space without time. In this sense, the researcher of spaces in translation should internalize Fredric Jameson’s motto positioned at the start of his *Political Unconscious*: “Always historicize!” (Jameson 2002: ix). As Sathya Rao rightly argues, commenting on Bhabha, “translation is neither repetition of the same original authority nor the relativist equalization of different linguistic communities,” being instead “the performative process of ‘negotiating’ time and space within the disjunction” and consisting “in relocating the performance of translation within the future tense of enunciation and the spatial experience of displacement” (Rao 2006: 89, my emphasis). In this sense, Bhabha’s “newness” is the product of a re-location, a negotiation of time and space—and, as with every sort of negotiation process, it is a performative one.

Now, the problem with Bhabha is that he is seeking to individuate and explain the process of cultural translation but, honestly, we would scrutinize his work in vain in search of the step in the argument between so-called translation proper—or “interlingual translation” as Jakobson described it (1960)—and the concept of cultural translation.⁵ Even though he is completely absorbed in trying to move beyond the pure linguistic moment of translation, Bhabha provides no decisive argument for the extra-linguistic aspects of cultural translation—unfortunately, this is precisely the missing ingredient, the step in the argumentation we need.

Without abandoning the furrow carved by Benjamin, Derrida, and Bhabha, Boris Buden and Stephan Nowotny have tried to recalibrate and implement the deconstructionist perspective on cultural translation by providing the extra-linguistic argument for it. Going back to Saussure and Jakobson, they argue that “the ‘cultural’ dimension has always already been included in concepts of translation that emerged from general reflections on language or linguistics” (Buden and Nowotny 2009: 203). Their arguments are based on the Saussurean hypothesis of a “contractual sociality of linguistic unities” which should pre-exist “the actual putting into practice of language.” “[E]vidently,” so they consequently state, this is “an extralinguistic assumption” (ibid.: 202–3). The Saussurean hypothesis also reverberates in Jakobson’s theoretical framework, in his “Saussurean heritage.” In fact, Jakobson, as much as the Swiss linguist, believed that sign systems function because they inhabit “some sort of ‘contractual’ foundation” (ibid.: 203).

In a certain way, Buden and Nowotny “rescue” the opaque, Bhabbian definition of cultural translation not by avoiding a confrontation with the hardest principles of linguistics but by digging deeper in the theoretical foundations of Saussure’s and Jakobson’s oeuvres. Their intervention presents “cultural translation” not as an epistemic operational paradigm which should enlarge the narrowness of “translation proper” but as the natural path of translation studies, since the linguistic field is inseparable from the cultural dimension. This renewed claim for a “cultural turn” within translation studies provided by Buden and Nowotny (Wolf 2002; Sturge 2008) somehow mirrors the “negentropic translational perspective” proposed by Michael Cronin who, though he has rooted it in different arguments, comes to a similar conclusion:

it is because so much cannot be translated that much more remains to be translated. Pointing to the impossibility of translation should then be accounted not as further evidence of the entropic, of translation as fundamentally a practice of imitative or even transformative loss, but as a proof of the *negentropic function of translation in culture*. By this we mean both in what translation tells us about cultures and what cultures tell us about translation we can discern a practice that not only counters cultural apocalypticism and the recurrent End-of-Diversity trope but challenges the repeated devaluation of translation as a particular kind of cultural activity.

Cronin 2006: 130, my emphasis

Translation as a negentropic process, as the “emergence of the new” (ibid.: 129)—that is, as a process that produces “newness” out of precarious negotiations, out of ties of impossibility—is, in this sense, simply a “cultural activity.” Thus, translation is always already a “cultural translation” because “so much cannot be translated” and, simultaneously, much more emerges as “newness” (ibid.: 130). Paradoxically, it is the intrinsic untranslatability

of language that makes every translation a cultural activity, a performative negotiation of cultural differences.

Geographical imagination and cartographic writing

In his book on the crisis of “cartographic reason,” the Italian geographer Franco Farinelli commences with a short pedagogical provocation. Many geography teachers—says Farinelli—believing they are saying something intelligent, tell their pupils that geography is neither a catalogue of capital cities nor a list of the correct tributaries of the river Po. “It depends” says Farinelli. “It is true and not true at the same time and, anyway, it is true not in the sense in which we commonly think” (Farinelli 2009: 3). Every representation, staging, or concealment of the “simple” data of physical geography belongs to a complex discursive enterprise that depends on constructions of power/knowledge (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 192). Therefore, even a list of tributaries is a genuine part of that discourse. Geography as a discourse is a mighty construction of world(s). Our “geographical consciousness” (Besse 2003: 7–8) is the way in which we orientate ourselves, the way we read, interpret and negotiate our location in the world—and the way that we invent the Other through processes of demarcation and differentiation. Drawing on Edward Said’s famous concept of “imaginative geographies,” Derek Gregory states that our imaginative geographies “are global as well as local,” since they do not simply articulate the differences between places, “inscribing different images of here and there, but they also shape the ways in which, from our particular perspectives, we conceive of connections and separation between them” (Gregory 1994: 203–4). What we already surmise from this brief quote is the performative character of the geographical imagination: “Geography,” argues Gregory “produces the effects it names” (2004: 183). Since geography produces spaces by naming them, it is, to some extent, a poetical activity that reads and constructs the world at the same time. It is in this sense that we can speak of a semiotic and rhetorical dimension to geography, of a geographical textuality—and ultimately of “geo-poetics.”

In his paper on postcolonial insularities, Balasopoulos points out two “independent but insistently cross-pollinating strands of enquiry” within the terrain of what he calls “geopoetics”: the textuality of geography and the geography of text (2008: 9). To Balasopoulos, “geopoetics” is a hybrid epistemological approach in which the diachronic perspective of geography as text and the synchronic perspective of the geography of texts—that is, the approach that analyzes the spatial distribution and reception of texts—coincide and challenge “the frequently inert and undialectical divisions of subject and object, of representation and referent, on which traditional understandings of *geography* and in some cases, *poetics* have rested” (ibid.). Nevertheless, though valid in itself, this geopoetic approach risks—as do many postcolonial perspectives—reducing the “poetics” of geo-“poetics” to a minor feature of the geo-“political” delineations of the discourse.⁶ I, therefore, prefer to consider geopoetics not as an epistemic approach but rather as

an operative category of analysis. Geopoetic features are coded representations of the earth that cannot be hived off from the mediality and aesthetic conventions (and ruptures) that make their emergence possible—and eventually determine the degree of their intelligibility. It is on the basis of this premise that we should understand geopoetics as the result of a negotiation between a certain geographical imagination and the territorial, geographical discourse of a certain epoch (see Italiano 2009: 15–28). Thus, considered in its textuality, in its poetical/poetical tension, geography is not only the *translandum* but is translation per se, the process of translation in which the imagined (and imaginative) earth—the prefix “geo” (ibid.: 24–7), with all its complexities and possible affixes—becomes textual, the process by which we fix our “imaginative” constructions of the world we live in.

On the basis of these premises, it should now be clear in what ways and to what extent the intentions of this book differ radically from the “literary geography” of Franco Moretti (1998, 2005) and Barbara Piatti (2008). In their research, Moretti and Piatti attempt, with more or less diagrammatic precision, to map the literary spaces of Western literature. Their aim is to create a geographical representation of literature and to establish a sort of geography of literature as a discipline. In my book I expressly distance myself from this research perspective. First, I consider both Moretti’s as well as Piatti’s intention to map literature as a relapse into a positivistic understanding of geographical or topographical cartography. It is an approach that runs the systematic risk of generating essentialist statements. Second, my book does not at all seek to produce an atlas or diagrammatic representation of literature, showing instead how geographical and cartographic imaginations are themselves translated and transposed across different epochs and media.

In this sense, *Translation and Geography* is oriented towards approaches that analyze the affinity between cartographic writing and maps as a (performative) negotiation across media (see in particular Chapters 2, 3, 6, and 7).⁷ By “cartographic writing” I mean a historically and discursively determined, transmedial practice of writing that negotiates between the medium of the map and the medium of writing, and which recodes maps textually (i.e. in alphabetic script). This kind of broad definition of the phenomenon also includes Robert Stockhammer’s “carticity of the literary description”; that is, the “affinity or distance” between texts and “cartographical processes of representation” (2007: 68).⁸ The affinities or detachments that a literary text develops when thematizing maps point to a process of negotiation; that is, to a performative negotiation between literary and cartographical processes (of representation) that I term transmediation (see in particular Chapter 2).

On the book: interstices and connections

In contrast to Sherry Simon’s brilliant monograph on *Cities in Translation* (2013), which is, at the present time, the work that comes closest to the research horizon and subject matter of my book, my approach does not

survey the relationship between geography and translation in a geo-centric manner. By “geo-centric” I mean an approach that begins by focusing on a particular segment of geographical space, be it a town or other kind of geographical entity such as a river or a region, and moves out from there looking for linguistic clues, textual traces, or translation processes that could represent and explain that place as best as possible. Although she takes the precaution of warning her readers by stating that “the stories” she tells “highlight moments revealing of the cultural dynamic at work” and should not be considered as “systematic or exhaustive portraits of each city” (2013: 18), Sherry Simon’s depiction of divided cities as translational spaces seems to me to be affected by the same epistemic problem that was encountered by Bertrand Westphal’s “géocritique” (2007) and its geo-centered literary analysis of geographical spaces: the corpus question. Which texts, which authors, which translators can or should one consider in order to produce a relatively fair depiction of the place in question? And, how can we avoid partiality or distorting bias?

I have tried to follow another path, one which sets out from the texts themselves and asks them in which direction my reading should go—and that too is a question of orientation. In this book I investigate seven exemplary cases of what I call the translation of geographies. Starting from one of the key texts of the Middle Ages, the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, which did more than any other to shape Western spatial imagination, I chose texts and translations which belong to the major languages of the Romance world and which occupy a significant, if not decisive, position within their individual literary tradition. In chronological succession, I opted for literary works in which the geographical and/or cartographic imagination was not only one aspect among others but an ineluctable, structuring component of the work. On the one hand, I singled out texts that are strongly linked to each other by thematic threads and, in at least three cases, by evident intertextual ties as well. On the other hand, I selected a corpus that is capable of giving both a holistic panorama of my subject and, at the same time, a differentiated view of heterogeneous literary genres and styles—from epic poetry to travel accounts, and from novels to short stories and poetry.

In order to examine the core question of this book, which is the translation of Western spatial imaginations, I will look at different spatial practices and representations as much as I consider different kinds of translation. Besides the notion of orientation and the relationship between literature and cartography, which will be an issue in every chapter of this book, I will also examine different delineations of the *translatio imperii* (see in particular Chapters 3 and 5), which is a concept that is profoundly related to the symbolic texture of the cardinal directions and to the practice of orientation in space. As Dilek Dizdar rightly claims, today’s theories of translation have the idea of a *translatio imperii* to thank for the history of their foundation, as well as for the modern norm of delimiting the meaning of “translation” to linguistic transfer (Dizdar 2006: 25–6) (see Chapter 5). Even more indebted to the

medieval concept of *translatio* are those cultural theories that see translation as a process of appropriation, acquisition and, ultimately, colonization (Cheyfitz 1997; Robinson 1997) (see in particular Chapter 3). In addition, I believe that the debate between literary convention and the theory of the *translatio imperii* is an urgent task within the humanities, especially from the perspective of transdisciplinary globalization studies.⁹ In fact, the relationship that exists between the concept of a translational dynamic (such as *translatio*) and a political, geographical and cultural category (such as *imperium*) allows paradigmatic aspects involved in processes of globalization—for example heterogeneity, heterolinguality, transculturality and de- and reterritorialization, and so on—to come to the fore and forces us to conceptualize and analyze globalization as a translation process (Cronin 2003, 2006; Italiano and Rössner 2012).

Also closely related to both the notion of globalization and the concept of *translatio imperii* is the paradigmatic connection between navigation and translation. In particular, I investigate how navigation as a spatial practice has been translated into (literary) texts and maps. Among others, I discuss the translation of the highly symbolic, west-oriented *Navigatio* into a more profane Venetian, east-oriented sea voyage (Chapter 1); the ship-based transfer of knowledge and power between Spain and the New World (Chapter 3); the alternating interconnections between ships and writings in the pseudotranslation of an eighteenth-century travel account (Chapter 4); and, the submarine navigation and re-writing of Odysseus' sea travels into the submarine world of Captain Nemo (Chapter 5).

Understanding the concept of cultural translation as an umbrella term that encompasses different processes of translation, this book will focus on at least four of them. In the first place, I deal with aspects related to so-called “translation proper,” or “interlinguistic translation” (Jakobson), which is a type of translational process that, to varying degrees, will turn up in almost every chapter of the book. Second, I define and explore a particular kind of translation between media, a process that I call with Elleström (2014) “transmediation.” Contrary to Jakobson’s “intersemiotic translation,” in which the source medium vanishes into the target medium, in a process of transmediation the inherent logic and the semiotic characteristics of the source medium do not disappear completely but remain perceivable, continuing to work within the target medium (see in particular Chapter 2). Third, I delve into translation as a fictional or mimetic device. Here, I consider the figure of the interpreter as a representation of translation processes at the story level (Chapter 3), analyze a classic case of pseudotranslation (Chapter 4), and discuss “translational mimesis” (Sternberg 1981) as part of the fictional world (Chapter 6). Finally, I consider exemplary cases of literary re-writing as a form of translation and self-translation (see in particular Chapters 5 and 7). While all these translation processes differ from one another, they are not entirely separate phenomena. On the contrary, they form an interwoven continuum of translational functions, in which the

function that enacts one process—quasi recursively—activates the function of another.

Chapter 1 discusses the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* and its Venetian translation, *La Navigazione di San Brandano*. A tenth-century, Christian narrative by an anonymous Irish monk, the *Navigatio* is the tale of a pilgrimage embarked on out of love for God (a so-called *peregrinatio pro Dei amore*), a journey across the Atlantic Ocean in search for the island of Paradise, the *terra repromissionis sanctorum* (the Promised Land of the Saints). In this opening chapter, I show, first, to what extent this devotional and hagiographic text should be considered as a cultural translation on its own; that is, a translation of Mediterranean, anchoritic practice into the Hiberno-Atlantic world. Second, I examine its Venetian version (early fourteenth century) as a counter-translation of geographies; namely, as the reinscription of a west-oriented, Atlantic geopoetics into an east-oriented, Mediterranean one.

In Chapter 2, I look at the chivalric epic poem *Orlando Furioso* (1516–32) by Ludovico Ariosto, which was one of the most influential texts of the Renaissance. Beginning with a more general discussion of early modern cartographic knowledge and practice, I show that not only is Ariosto's poem based on a precise understanding of the most advanced, up-to-date cartography of his epoch, but that it should be read—at least crucial parts of it—as a transmediation of maps into poetry, as displayed by the journeys around the globe of the knights Ruggiero and Astolfo. Flying on the back of the legendary Hippogryph—a true hybrid vehicle, half eagle and half horse—Ariosto's paladins fly over the earth as if they were gliding over a map. Moreover, I shall argue that by translating the map into poetry, Ariosto performs a new geopoetics that turns away from the symbolic dominance of the East (or “Ent-Ostung,” as Peter Sloterdijk has usefully called it) and offers us one of the first poetic versions of modern globalization.

Chapter 3 explores one of the most popular travel accounts of the early modern period, the *Naufragios* (1555 [1542]) by Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. First and foremost a story of shipwreck and imprisonment, the *Naufragios* is also considered to be one of the first, if not the first, modern ethnographic descriptions of North America. From a spatial and translational perspective, I examine the *Naufragios* as a paradigmatic expression of the Habsburg *translatio imperii* and, in this sense, as a translation of geographies that transposes the medieval itineraries of the Old World's saints into the New (Atlantic) World, reterritorializing the colonial aim as an evangelical aim but also inscribing a hitherto unknown territory with an imperial Christian topography. Furthermore, I focus on the translational figure of Cabeza de Vaca as a trader and stranger among the natives and on the role of Estebanico, a slave from the Moroccan Atlantic coastal town of Azemmour, who became the interpreter between the Spaniards and the American natives. Finally, I explore the interconnection between ships and writing as the medial scene that made the printing of *Naufragios* possible in the first place and the way that Cabeza de Vaca's account was

transmediated into one of the most important maps of the sixteenth century, Sancho Gutiérrez's hand-drawn world map (1551).

In the preface to his (pseudo)translation *Les voyages du capitaine Robert Lade* (1744), the celebrated author of the eighteenth-century bestseller *Manon Lescaut* (1731), Abbé Prévost d'Exiles, presents the account of a sea voyage undertaken by a (proto-capitalist) English hero as an edifying example for his French readership. In Chapter 4, I will explore the fiction of translation performed by Prévost's *Robert Lade* through its different strata and show to what extent its "nautical writing" translates the pragmatic and logbook-centric English maritime culture exalted in literature into French navigational discourse, which was more abstract, was explicitly militarized, and was dominated by Cartesian geometric principles. Furthermore, I will discuss Prévost's pseudotranslation not only as a powerful device of cultural translation but also as a translational performance by means of which the author is able to introduce himself as a mediator, and make a plea for literary innovation and social change.

Jules Verne's *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers* (1869–70) poses the captivating question of whether and how literature offers insights into phenomena of global interconnection. Given the enduring popularity of Verne's submarine novel and the unique presence of its geographical imagination in twenty-first-century media, I consider it of great importance for the scope of my book to analyze the translation of geographies that this novel enacts. In Chapter 5, I will show, first, how Verne's underwater fiction should be read as a translation of the insular, Mediterranean narrative of the *Odyssey* into the oceanic reign of Captain Nemo, whose name encapsulates the key to deciphering his story as a "transfer of power." Beginning with a historical overview of the concept of *translatio imperii et studii*, I explain to what extent I call Nemo's "transfer of power" a *translatio maris*. In order to do so, I investigate the relationship between scientific and literary writing in Verne's novel and, in particular, the various concealed translations from Matthew Fontaine Maury's *The Physical Geography of the Sea* (1858). Second, I discuss how Verne also depicts this *translatio maris* by transposing an imaginative submarine geography into the spatial code of Western cultural practices. In particular, I examine both the very human and very terrestrial episode of an underwater burial and the scene in which Verne translates one of the paradigmatic urban spatial practices of his time, *flânerie*, into the mobile contemplation of the submarine world made possible by the *Nautilus*.

In Chapter 6, which examines Tabucchi's fiction and in particular the collection of short stories and prose texts *Donna di Porto Pim e altre storie* (1983), I show to what extent "translational mimesis" (Sternberg 1981) participates in negotiating geographical imaginations and how this process operates at different levels, such as heterolingualism, poetic diction, and transmediation. I will then discuss the carticity enacted by Tabucchi's book and assess to what extent this carticity is based on translational mimesis.

Moreover, I show that the collage-like structure of Tabucchi's collection activates a cartographic perspective that translates the text into a fractal, archipelagic structure. In my opinion, what makes Tabucchi's book so exemplary is, in fact, the way that the author transposes the archipelagic geography of his fiction into his narrative by means of translational mimesis—or, in other words, how he transmediates the cartography of the Azores archipelago into textual form. In this sense, I argue that Tabucchi's cartographic writing not only stages the idea of the archipelago but also works as an archipelago.

In Chapter 7, I will discuss the relationship between poetry, (self-)translation and cartography, focusing on the “Jewish period” of the Argentine poet Juan Gelman and, in particular, on his bilingual (Ladino and Castellano) poetry collection *Dibaxu*, which was published in Buenos Aires in 1994 but written during his Parisian exile between 1983 and 1985. Translated into Argentine Castellano by the author himself, *Dibaxu* undoubtedly represents one of the most exemplary works of contemporary bilingual and exophonic writing. In my reading, I examine the relationship between Gelman's exilic perspective and the diasporic dimension of Ladino. Concentrating on the relationship between language, translation, and geographical imagination, I argue that while, for Gelman, writing in Ladino represents an act of self-exile into the “deepest” and “most exiled” roots of his own tongue, his self-translation should, in turn, be considered as redressing the lacerating displacement of exile. In order to illustrate this thesis, I delve first into some decisive aspects that concern both the question of Ladino as a written and spoken language in general and, more specifically, the way that Juan Gelman employs Ladino as a literary language. Second, I explain Gelman's spatial imagination of medieval Spain and the Sephardic diaspora through a cartographic exploration of *Composiciones* (1986), a book written by Gelman at a very similar time to *Dibaxu*. In this quite unique collection of poetry, in which Gelman translated and “com/posed” various poems taken mostly from Hebrew sources, ranging from biblical texts through to Andalusian Hebrew poetry to Sephardic Renaissance poetry, the Argentine poet “com/poses,” I argue, a translational map of the Sepharad.