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Research Report | The Radical Translations Project

Some Challenges in Using Translation as an Approach to Revolutionary History

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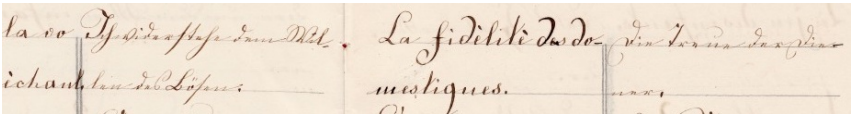
Research Report | The Radical Translations Project

Some Challenges in Using Translation as an Approach to Revolutionary History

Sanja Perovic *

The relation between translation studies and historical research is often one of missed encounters. This article suggests that beyond conceptual differences, this lack of encounter is also due to practical difficulties. My focus is the UK-based project Radical Translations: The Transfer of Revolutionary Culture between Britain, France and Italy (1789-1815*). We are a small team working on a corpus of approximately 500 revolutionary-era translations and a prosopography of some 250 translators to create a significant database. Our aim is to track the mobility of revolutionary language—not only what it says but how it travelled, where it went and what it became. How did translation enable democratic movements to extend radical ideas of liberty and equality into new contexts? And how was a transnational revolutionary idiom adopted, adapted, resisted or rejected in the effort to create locally and culturally specific tools for political action on the ground?*



The relation between translation studies and historical research is often one of missed encounters. As Christopher Rundle has observed, the more historical translation research becomes, the "less obviously enlightening it is for other

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translation scholars who are not familiar with this historiography".[1] By the same token, historians have mostly failed to register the contribution made by translation studies, which is often considered too general to be of interest. This article suggests that beyond conceptual differences, this lack of encounter is also partly due to practical difficulties. Recovering the role of the translator as an historical actor and agent in historical events requires multiple competences, drawn from a variety of fields, including history, translation studies, literature and linguistics, all of which have different frames of reference when it comes to study the past. In what follows, I will discuss some of the challenges that have faced the research team behind the UK-based project "Radical Translations: The Transfer of Revolutionary Culture between Britain, France and Italy (1789-1815). We are a small team of historians and literary scholars who are working together to create a database of approximately 500 revolutionary-era translations and a prosopography of some 250 translators in order to map the circulation of radical ideas in the revolutionary period.[2] Along the way, I will also make a few remarks on the role of digital resources in crossing this methodological divide.

While the dissemination of French revolutionary culture in Europe and across the Atlantic has been the object of sustained study, the specific role of translation remains hidden from view. It is obscured in part by a still prevailing assumption that revolutionary dissemination is a type of foreign propaganda emanating from the French core, over which local political cultures had no control. This project, in contrast, repositions translators not as passive recipients but as key cultural mediators seeking to "spread democracy" into new cultures and different language communities—a contested practice then as now. We de-

[1] Christopher Rundle, "Translation as an Approach to History", *Translation Studies* 5, no. 2 (2012): 232-40, 232.

[2] This UK Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project began in 2019. Although I am writing this article in my capacity as a principal investigator, the ideas discussed express a process of reflection undertaken by the entire research team, notably by the two co-investigators: Professor Erica Joy Mannucci (University of Milan-Bicocca) and Dr. Rosa Mucignat (King's College London). The task of identifying translations and populating the database has largely been carried out by Dr. Brecht Deseure and Dr. Niccolò Valmori as Postdoctoral Research Associates and Dr. Nigel Ritchie as Postdoctoral Research Assistant. Dr. Tazio Morandini was research assistant at Milan-Bicocca, identifying Italian documents and debates. The data-modelling and website design is by King's Digital Lab, in a team led by Dr. Arianna Ciula. For more information see `http://www.radicaltranslations.org/`.

fine as 'radical' any translation that aims to extend democratic and egalitarian ideas into new contexts. This includes both inter-cultural exchange between languages and intra-cultural translation in which texts are adapted to domestic ends, as the revolutionaries sought to cross all sorts of linguistic, geographic, social and cultural boundaries.[1] How did translation enable democratic movements to reach wider publics and cast themselves as part of an international struggle? And how was a transnational revolutionary idiom adopted, adapted, resisted or rejected in the effort to create locally and culturally specific tools for political action on the ground?

Our investigation centres on two main axes of transmission: one connecting Britain and France; another crossing the Alps to Italy. Italy and Britain participated intensely in the experience of revolution in ways that challenge the diffusionist model of communication in contrastive ways. Outside France, Italy was arguably the society most changed by the Revolution and Britain, or so it is often assumed, the least. Yet far from being passive collaborators of the French, the Italian radicals translated the political egalitarianism of the French Jacobins into new contexts and became a key influence on 19th-century international socialism.[2] Britain's political traditions meanwhile served as a vital model for the French revolutionaries[3] and many prominent British radicals spent time in

[1] As Lieven D'hulst observes the relation between inter and intra is "gradual and dynamic, to the extent that they may merge or even switch positions". In terms of our project, this is relevant to plurilingual situations such as 18th-century century Italy when the literate elite could read and write in French. See "(Re) Locating Translation History: From Assumed Translation to Assumed Transfer", *Translation Studies* 5, no. 2 (2012): 139-55, 152.

[2] A classic reference remains Paul Hazard, *La révolution française et les lettres italiennes, 1789-1815* (Paris: Hachette et cie, 1910). Newer generations have countered Hazard's top-down approach, see for instance Luciano Guerci, *Istruire nelle verità repubblicane : la letteratura politica per il popolo nell'Italia in rivoluzione (1796-1799)* (Bologna: Mulino, 1999).

[3] For example, there has been much recent scholarship on the influence of English republicanism on the French Revolution. We have relied chiefly on Rachel Hammersley, *French Revolutionaries and English Republicans: The Cordeliers Club, 1790-1794*(Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2005); Raymonde Monnier, "Les enjeux de la traduction sous la Révolution française. La transmission des textes du républicanisme anglais", *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 12, no. 0 (30 December 2015): 13-46, Marchamont Nedham, *De la souveraineté du peuple, et de l'excellence d'un État libre / par Marchamont Needham; traduit de l'anglais et enrichi de notes par Théophile Mandar; édition présentée et annotée par Raymonde Monnier* (Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2010). See also the special issue edited by François Quastana and Pierre Serna, "Le républicanisme

France.[1] Influential trans-Atlantic and Irish connections, moreover, enabled a polycentric circulation that took translations far from any putative intentions of an original source text or author. Revolutionary translations, in this sense, reflect a continuous process that goes beyond the polarity of source and target culture to include self-translations made by bilingual authors in a plurilingual context, indirect translations, retranslations and even translations back into the original source language.

Yet the specific role of translation in promoting a pan-European radical sphere has remained largely unstudied. This is somewhat surprising given that translation itself has been the focus of recent attention by cultural and literary historians alike. This project intervenes in both translation and revolutionary history. We have so far identified over 500 translations with a radicalising purpose that have never been systematically examined. This includes published translations, self-translations, texts presented as translations, as well as unpublished or projected translations, blocked by rapidly changing political events and recoverable from newspapers, publisher's prospectuses, and personal correspondence. Some translations are mostly literal, 'radicalized' by politicizing prefaces, such as the first Italian translation of Diderot's *La Religieuse* (1797) or Labaume's 1799 French edition of *Robinson Crusoe*; others, such as Fantoni's versions of Chénier's *Hymne à l'Être Suprême*, are new works keeping the original title. Even more complex are cases such as Part I of Paine's *Age of Reason* (1793). This unfinished draft of radical anticlerical sentiment was translated into French by

anglais dans la France des Lumières et de la Révolution: mesure d'une présence", *La Révolution française. Cahiers de l'Institut d'histoire de la Révolution française*, no. 5 (31 December 2013); and the earlier work by Olivier Lutaud, *Des révolutions d"Angleterre à la Révolution française. Le tyrannicide et "Killing No Murder" (Cromwell, Athalie, Bonaparte), Essai de Littérature Politique Comparée* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1973).

[1] See David V Erdman, *Commerce des Lumières: John Oswald and the British in Paris, 1790-1793* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986); Rachel Rogers, "The Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man, 1792-94: British and Irish Radical Conjunctions in Republican Paris", *La Révolution française. Cahiers de l'Institut d'histoire de la Révolution française*, no. 11 (1 December 2016), `https://doi.org/10.4000/lrf.1629`; Rachel Rogers, "Censorship and Creativity: The Case of Sampson Perry, Radical Editor in 1790s Paris and London", *Revue LISA/LISA e-Journal. Littératures, histoire des idées, images, sociétés du monde anglophone—Literature, History of Ideas, Images and Societies of the English-Speaking World* 11, no. 1 (30 May 2013), `https://doi.org/10.4000/lisa.5205`; Rachel Rogers, "Vectors of Revolution: The British Radical Community in Early Republican Paris, 1792-1794" (Dissertation, Toulouse, Université Toulouse-Jean Jaurès, 2012).

Lanthenas a year before the final, toned-down version appeared in both French and English. Finally, an untold number of translations and fragments of translation appeared in newspapers, pamphlets and other ephemeral media, reaching a wider and more diverse readership than book circulation alone. A major challenge of this project is to recover this rich vein of revolutionary translations, often inserted without attribution and not registered in standard library catalogues.

To understand translation as a political act, however, it is also necessary to recover the lives of the translators themselves. It is often noted that prominent Italian revolutionaries such as Salfi or Ranza translated from the French, or that some French revolutionaries were prolific translators (eg. Mirabeau, Lanthenas, Bonneville or Barère), but the broader cultural aims and linguistic strategies of their translations have mostly been overlooked. Our project addresses this gap through our digital prosopography of roughly 250 translators, which ranges from revolutionaries who were well-known translators, to lesser-known radicals, to anonymous or pseudonymous translators whose lives are barely known at all. This prosopography is thus intended as a first step towards exploring in more depth how translation was used to tackle significant asymmetries in political, cultural and material resources faced by those wishing to extend radical ideas of liberty and equality into new contexts.

In its focus on the mobility of revolutionary language, this project contributes to the renewed interest in transnational approaches to the French Revolution.[1] Recent, paradigm-shifting work on the Caribbean[2], as well as new scholarship

[1] Classic authors include C.L.R James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938); R.R Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959); Higonnet, Patrice, *Sister Republics: The Origins of French and American Republicanism* (Harvard, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1988). New scholarship of the last two decades is too numerous to cite here, but for an overview see Sanjay Subrahmanyam and David Armitage, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[2] A non-exhaustive list includes Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Carribean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2004); Marcel Dorigny and Bernard Gainot, *La Société des Amis des Noirs, 1788-1799: Contribution à l'histoire de l'esclavage* (Paris: Éd. Unesco, 1998); Jeremy Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Cheney, Paul, *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism and Slav-*

on the "age of democratic revolutions"[1], "sister republics"[2], the Mediterranean basin[3], and the impact of the French Revolution along the so-called British 'fringe',[4] has sought to replace a Francocentric model of diffusion with multiple *histoires croisées*, no longer circumscribed by the territorial boundaries of pre-established states. This re-orientation has been accompanied, within political history, by a pragmatic turn that has highlighted the role of communication in conditioning the range and variety of context-dependent public interventions that reflect local life-worlds.[5] Challenging established notions of 'centres' and 'peripheries' these new studies have enlarged our understanding of the importance of cultural intermediaries, those go-betweens capable of brokering relations across multiple borders: between states, religions, languages, genders, classes as well as political, cultural or intellectual fields.[6]

ery in French Saint-Dominque (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

[1] Notably by Annie Jourdan, *Nouvelle Histoire de La Révolution* (Paris: Flammarion, 2018); *La Révolution, Une Exception Française?* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004). See also Janet Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

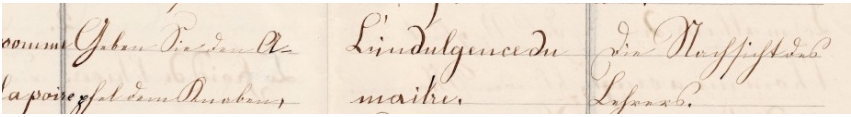
[2] See for instance Pierre Serna, ed., *Républiques soeurs, Le Directoire et la Révolution atlantique* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009); Antonino De Francesco, *1799* (Milano: Guerini e associati, 2004) and the many contributions of Anna-Maria Rao, including, *Esuli: l'emigrazione politica italiana in Francia (1792-1802)* (Napoli: Guida, 1992); "La stampa francese a Napoli negli anni della Rivoluzione", *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* 102, no. 2 (1990): 469-520, "Republicanism in Italy from the Eighteenth Century to the Early Risorgimento", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17, no. 2 (1 March 2012): 149-67.

[3] See for instance Joanna Innes and Mark Philp eds, *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Mediterranean, 1780-1860* (Oxford University Press, 2018); Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou, eds., *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

[4] See "Wales and the French Revolution" an AHRC-funded project and its associated publications, including Mary-Ann Constantine and Dafydd Johnston, eds., *"Footsteps of Liberty and Revolt": Essays on Wales and the French Revolution* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013); Marion Löffler, *Welsh Responses to the French Revolution: Press and Public Discourse 1789-1802* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).

[5] For recent scholarship in the British context see Jon Mee, *Print, Publicity, and Popular Radicalism in the 1790s: The Laurel of Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Mark Philp, *Reforming Ideas in Britain: Politics and Language in the Shadow of the French Revolution 1798-1815* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).For the European context see notably Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, *La communication en Europe. De l'âge classique au Siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Belin, 2014).

[6] For the concept of brokerage see Delbourgo, James et al., eds., *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820* (Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications, 2009). For its relevance to the history of revolution see the introduction and special issue edited by Maxime



A similar development is evident within translation studies which for several decades now has emphasized the pragmatic function of translation as 'action with a purpose'.[1] Moving away from notions of 'influence', scholarship has stressed how translation activates multiple reception horizons as it travels across space and time[2], thereby revealing the importance of aporias, resistances,[3] 'misreceptions'[4] or even 'untranslatability'[5] for understanding how cultural influence works in practice. By illuminating historical inequalities between languages and cultures, histories of translation have provided precious empirical evidence for how cultural transfer works in practice.[6] They have also drawn attention to translators themselves as important political, ethical or ideological actors. Mona Baker, for instance, has demonstrated how translation

Kaci, Anna Karla, and Aurélien Lignereux, "L'âge des révolutions: rebonds transnationaux", *Annales historiques de la Revolution francaise* n° 397, no. 3 (2 October 2019): 3-11, https://www.cairn.info/revue-annales-historiques-de-la-revolution-francaise-2019-3-page-3.htm.

[1] Notably skopos theory as developed by Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer, *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action: Skopos Theory Explained*, trans. Christine Nord (London: Routledge, 2013); and relevance theory which builds on Grice's relevance maxim, see Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995).

[2] See the two-part essay by László Kontler especially part II, "Translation and Comparison, Translation as Comparison: Aspects of Reception in the History of Ideas", *East Central Europe* 36 (1 September 2009): 171-99.

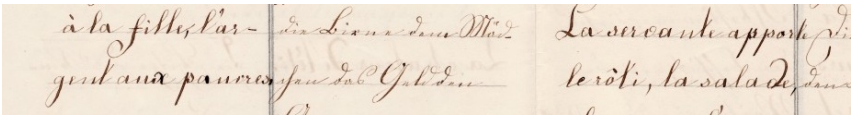
[3] Maria Tymoczko, ed., *Translation, Resistance, Activism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010).

[4] Fania Oz-Salzberger, "The Enlightenment in Translation: Regional and European Aspects", *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 13, no. 3 (1 September 2006). For the use of the term 'misreception' see Fania Oz-Salzberger, "Adam Smith's Early German Readers: Reception, Misreception and Critique", in *The Adam Smith Reader*, ed. Fonna Forman, vol. 9 (London: Routledge, 2017), 201-18.

[5] Barbara Cassin, *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: dictionnaire des intraduisibles* (Seuil, 2004).

[6] See Lieven D'hulst, *Essais d'histoire de la Traduction* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014); Maud Gonne et al., eds., *Transfer Thinking in Translation Studies: Playing with the Black Box of Cultural Transfer* (Leuven University Press, 2020); Michael Schreiber and Lieven D'hulst, "Introduction to the Special Issue: Translation Policies in Western Europe (18th -20th Centuries): Interdisciplinary Perspectives", *Parallèles*, no. 29 (April 2017): 3-4.

enables a local or domestic struggle to position itself globally, as part of a collective movement of social and political change that bypasses traditional representational politics.[1] Maria Tymocko has shown how translation becomes a means of resistance in situations of censorship, coercion or repression.[2]



It remains the case however that little is known historically about translators and their social, political and professional identities, despite a growing number of collaborative projects examining the 18th-century boom in translation.[3] When it comes to revolutionary era translations, these have mostly been examined on a case-by-case basis that often assumes the form of a one-to-one

[1] Mona Baker, *Translation and Conflict. A Narrative Account.* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

[2] Tymocko suggests that both translation and resistance work by similar metonymic process: in both cases a choice needs to be made about what aspect of a dominant power or culture to challenge and what to keep silent, see "Translation, Resistance, Activism: An Overview", in *Translation, Resistance, Activism*(Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 1-22.

[3] Examples include the crowd-sourced project directed by Ann Thomson on translation over the long 18th century (`https://transcultflorence.wordpress.com/meetings/translators-as-historical-actors/`) and *Introduction: Traduire en français, 18e-19e siècle*, a database which focuses on literature: `http://intraduction.huma-num.fr/`. Closer to the revolutionary period, Patrice Bret and Jean-Luc Chappey have considered the institutions and policies of translation. See "Pratiques et enjeux scientifiques, intellectuels et politiques de la traduction (vers 1660-vers 1840)", *Cahiers de l'Institut d'histoire de la Révolution française*, (2017 and 2018); Chappey, "La traduction comme pratique politique chez Antoine-Gilbert Griffet de Labaume (1756-1805)", *La République en voyage, 1770-1830*, ed. Bertrand, Gilles and Serna, Pierre (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013), 225-35; Chappey and Virginie Martin, "À la recherche d'une 'politique de traduction' : traducteurs et traductions dans le projet républicain du Directoire (1795-1799)", *La Révolution française. Cahiers de l'Institut d'histoire de la Révolution française*, no. 12 (15 September 2017); "Politiques de langues et questions nationales sous la Révolution française", *Revue Francaise d"Histoire des Idees Politiques*N° 48, no. 2 (2018): 13-39. The aforementioned AHRC-funded "Wales and the French Revolution" project has resurrected previously neglected Welsh responses to the French Revolution, including a number of translations, but mainly with the aim of breaking down a monolithic view of British rather than European history (`http://frenchrevolution.wales.ac.uk/`).

relation (France and Britain, France and Italy, France and Ireland, France and Wales)[1] or focuses on exceptional individuals.[2] A notable exception is the work of Jonathan Israel, magisterial in its account of the circulation of radical texts in several European languages, but mainly concerned with the transmission of radical ideas rather than the actual practice of translation.[3]

This project, by contrast, puts translation at the centre of revolutionary lives. Translation is understood here not as a container for the transport of culturally prestigious objects but as an *event*, a time-based activity whose agency is revealed through a nuanced understanding of the political chronology against which it unfolds. This has important implications both for translation studies and the history of radicalism. After all, any *histoire croisée* immediately confronts the problem of translation. An English radical is not the same as a French Jacobin or an Italian patriot. An English "Jacobin" was usually branded as such by their enemies, while an Italian "Jacobin" may well be limited to the few revolutionaries loyal to the Constitution of 1793 or connected to the French *neo-Jacobins*, (another debatable term) that remained in government after the defeat of Robespierre.[4] This already suggests that the problem of 'indigenous' or

[1] In addition to the references already cited, we also relied on John Patrick Leech, *Cosmopolitanism, Dissent, and Translation. Translating Radicals in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Bononia University Press, 2020); Sylvie Kleinman, "Translation, the French Language and the United Irishmen (1792-1804)", PhD thesis, Dublin City University, 2005; Michael Schreiber, "Translation Politics in Northern Italian Cities during the Napoleonic Era: The Case of Milan, Genoa and Turin", in *Translating in Town: A History of Local Translation Policies during the European Nineteenth Century*, ed. Lieven d"Hulst and Kaisa Koskinen (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020); Rachel Hammersley, "Harringtonian Republicanism, Democracy and the French Revolution", *La Révolution française. Cahiers de l'Institut d'histoire de La Révolution Française*, no. 5 (31 December 2013); Robert Kahn and Catriona Seth, eds., *La retraduction* (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications des universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2010).

[2] The Genevan translator Etienne Dumont springs to mind. See Richard Whatmore, "Etienne Dumont, the British Constitution, and the French Revolution", *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 1 (2007): 23-47; Emmanuelle De Champs, *Enlightenment and Utility: Bentham in French, Bentham in France* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[3] In particular the 3-part series, *Radical Enlightenment; Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (2001); *Democratic Enlightenment Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (2013); *The Enlightenment that failed: Ideas, Revolution and Democratic Defeat*, 1748-1830 (2019).

[4] On this problem see Bernard Gainot, *1799, un nouveau Jacobinisme?: la démocratie représentative, une alternative à brumaire* (Paris: Ministère de l'Education nationale, de la recherche et de la technologie, Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2001).

'imported' political identities extends not just to translation but also to chronological framing.[1] If we are to understand how these distinct, but interrelated, radical movements interacted with one another and how they *became changed through this inter-action*, relying on standard national chronologies will not do. Instead, we must understand how different individuals and groups entered and exited the process of revolution at different times contributing jointly to the construction of a shared, if differentiated, experience of revolution.

Translation, it seems to us, is an exceptional resource for just such a study. Not only does any translation belong to at least two chronologies, that of the source and target culture, it also lends itself particularly well to both a diachronic and synchronic analysis. This goes to the heart of our project which seeks to register the reciprocity, asymmetry and even reversibility of revolutionary history as it was experienced by different protagonists at different times. The first challenge of our project, therefore, was to find a way for translations and revolutionary events to be thought together, using several timelines that could be "rearranged against each other".[2] On our project website, we have addressed this problem by providing a set of digital tools that allow each translation or source-text to be mapped onto five political chronologies, covering three linguistic areas (English, French and Italian). These are not standard chronologies,

[1] As Glyn Williams observes, in Britain the first calls for political democracy came during the American crisis in the 1780s. The moment of breakthrough for the British popular movement was not 1789 but the events of August 10, 1792, when a number of French terms also came into use by the London Corresponding Society (p.72). See *Artisans and Sans-Culottes: Popular Movements in France and Britain during the French Revolution* (London: Libris, 1989), 7-12. 72. For the Italian context, by contrast, the Constitution of 1795, which signalled the defeat of a certain kind of radical project in France, marked a new beginning. A spate of translation activity accompanied the Triennio which began in 1796. This included translations of both the 1793 and 1795 Constitutions as Italian democrats sought to adopt the French experience to Italian reality. For more on this problem of "radical time lines" in the Franco-Italian context see Erica Joy Mannucci, "The Democratization of Anti-Religious Thought in Revolutionary Times: A Transnational Perspective", *Comparative Critical Studies*15, no. 2 (1 June 2018): 227-45. We have registered some 50 translations of constitutions, or constitution-related documents in the project database so far, including unattributed Italian translations of the 1793 Constitution, uncovered by Mannucci and Tazio Morandini. For more information see Morandini's blogposts on the project website, Beyond Translation I and II: Adapting Constitutions for Italian Regeneration.

[2] A desideratum noted by Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmerman in their wide-ranging overview of the methodological challenges of *histoire croisée*, "Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity", *History and Theory* 45 (February 2006): 30-50, 50.

taken "off the shelf", but have been carefully constructed to reflect a typology of events that intersect both translation activity and the history of radicalism. These include censorship, war, legislation, state formation, diplomacy and key political or social events—all events that might trigger a renewed interest in translation, whether as a mode of overt communication or as a covert activity through which a translator may 'hide' behind another text or author.[1] As Mona Baker explains, for militant or engaged translators, translation choice can be likened to "an index that activates a narrative."[2] It is a way for the translator to situate themselves within the larger political or social narrative whose outcome they seek to influence or shape.

This brings me to the second challenge of this project: namely the difficulty of identifying what changed as the revolutionary message was communicated across borders of all kinds. Although in this iteration of the project our bibliography only contains *records* of translations and their paratexts, about which I will say more below, it nonetheless foregrounds the role of language in the transfer of any message. As Roman Jakobson famously observed, given grammatical and other constraints of language, any interlingual translation requires either recoding (when a message needs to be conveyed through entirely new words) or explication (when a message needs to be more fully unpacked and explained in the target language, a process which may rely on loanwords, neologisms, semantic shifts or circumlocutions).[3] In terms of the revolutionary period, what Jakobson calls "creative transposition" is apparent whenever there is a metaphorization of language, whether in revolutionary poetry or song or, indeed, other kinds of political language. Explication, by contrast, tends to make the message more concrete. This phenomenon is observable in both the Italian and Greek translations of the Constitution of 1793, in which an otherwise abstract French article on public education is expanded by giving concrete examples as to how it can be adapted to a local reality (education for girls and boys, languages taught, types of schools etc). Translation, in other words, enables us

[1] This typology was devised by Professor Erica J Mannucci, with input from Drs. Brecht Deseure and Niccolò Valmori.

[2] Mona Baker, "Reframing Conflict in Translation", in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 113-29, 119.

[3] Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation"", ed. Reuben Arthur Brower, *On Translation*, 1959.

to track the symbolic dimension built into all languages, the determining factor of possible expressions. It also allows us to recover the ways in which the revolution was experienced as both idea and reality, as translators reflected on how to extend, implement or even reject those aspects of the revolutionary model that failed to express their own reality.

The third challenge we faced was how to articulate the role of the research team in defining the time frame and scale of analysis. A "radicalising translation", after all, is not part of a "buried reality" that can simply be dug up. Rather, it is a quality that we hope can be revealed and better understood through our interpretative tools, notably the corpus and prosopography that we have constructed and the chronological time frames that we have used. As Werner and Zimmerman argue, any *histoire croisée* is more than a history written in the plural because the need to justify the choice of scale and frame raises the question of how the past and the present relate.[1] In other words, it asks the researcher to consider what part of the past still generates meaning.

On this point, it is worth noting that this project was initially sparked by the synergy between the academic work of the investigators and the experience some of us had with our students when we tried to translate and perform a radical French revolutionary play into present-day English. The dramaturge who led this project had the idea of inviting contemporary activists whose reactions were incorporated as part of the play.[2] The different responses— ranging from engaged to dismissive—revealed the centrality of translation not only in keeping certain revolutionary keywords alive but in identifying the tensions and contradictions of this language as it moved into new contexts.[3] While this to-

[1] *Histoire croisée* "raises the question of its own historicity through a threefold process of historicization: through the object, the categories of analysis and the relationships between researcher and object. It thus provides a toolbox that, over and beyond the historical sciences, can be applied across a number of other disciplines that combine past and present", Werner and Zimmerman, "Beyond Comparison", 32-33.

[2] For more on this project see `https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/-/projects/performing-utopia`.

[3] Drawing on this experience we have decided to integrate a series of additional collaborative workshops as part of our research method. The idea is that by participating in *acts*of translation, alongside professional translators, students and other civil society activists, we also re-enact part of the experience of revolutionary language itself. This constitutes a feedback loop between our research questions and the "impact strategy" that is a required element of all UK grant applications.

and-fro between past and present, source and target language, occurs with any act of translation, it is especially pronounced in the revolutionary context. This experience prompted us to design a project that would address the following questions:

- How might a focus on radical translation challenge our understandings both of what is 'radical' and what is a 'translation'?
- What happens when a transnational revolutionary idiom has to be translated in specific languages, each equipped with its own historical frames of references?
- How can translation help us understand how some political ideas become assimilated while others are perceived as foreign, untranslatable or displaced?
- How can translation pinpoint the contradictions and tensions of revolutionary language that remain relevant and meaningful even today?

1. Constructing a Corpus: Some Challenges

In terms of a working method, our primary task was to capture the time-sensitive nature of radical translations as actions and interventions in a revolutionary context that itself was changing very quickly. This difficulty was compounded by the fact that there is no pre-existing catalogue of translations undertaken during the revolutionary period, much less anything resembling a 'corpus' of radical translations. We thus have had to construct our own lists, partly by relying on existing repertories and, in a few cases, bibliographies of translations,[1] and partly from gleaning clues from older historiographies that

For more information see the project website.

[1] Particularly useful resources include, inter alia, Joseph-Marie Quérard, emphLa France Littéraire Ou Dictionnaire Bibliographique Des Savants, Historiens et Gens de Lettres de La France, 10 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1827); Gaetano Melzi, *Dizionario di opere anonime e pseudonime di scrittori italiani o come che sia aventi relazione all'Italia* (Milano: coi torchi di Luigi di Giacomo Pirola, 1848); Charles Alfred Rochedieu, *Bibliography of French Translations of English Works, 1700-1800* (University of Chicago Press, 1948); Michaud, Louis-Gabriel, *Biographie Universelle Ancienne et Moderne: Histoire Par Ordre Alphabétique de La Vie Publique et Privée de Tous Les Hommes*, 12 vols (Paris: A.

may mention translation in passing, or from the more recent case-studies established by scholars.[1] Collating a preliminary list was therefore a necessary first step to creating a more restricted corpus that would enable us to answer our research question, namely what makes a translation radical?

Our starting point was a classical definition of radicalism as containing some but not necessarily all of the following elements: egalitarianism (which includes abolitionism and feminism), anti-clericalism, republicanism, democratizing impulses, emphasis on self-determinism. We also had a core set of prominent 'radicals' known to have engaged in translation activity at key points in their life (inter alia, Barère, Salfi, Holcroft, Lanthenas, Bonneville, Ranza, Merry). Additionally, we wanted to include published translations, self-translations, pseudo-translations as well as unpublished or projected translations blocked by rapidly changing political events. A careful analysis of the metadata from library records constituted a first approach. We also analysed publisher's catalogues, important literary journals and records of associations such as the *London Corresponding Society*, the *Circolo costituzionale* in Milan, and the emphCercle Social in France. Political newspapers were another vital resource as they contain many snippets of translations. Some, like Ranza's short-lived *L'amico del popolo* (1798) consisted almost entirely of selected translations.[2] Using these initial assumptions, we set out to identify and collate documents that would enable us to test our working definition, which was left deliberately crude at this early stage.

In addition to the challenge of finding translations, we also had to define criteria for selection in a way that did not predict the outcome. It quickly became clear that we were dealing with two broad categories of texts: a core of self-evidently radical texts or translations and a penumbra of less obvious cases where the translation could be radicalising even in cases where the source text

Thoisnier Desplaces, 1842); J. A. R. Séguin, *French Works in English Translation: 1791-1799* (R. Paxton, 1969); Angela Groppi (ed.), *La Rivoluzione francese (1787-1799). Repertorio delle fonti archivistiche e delle fonti a stampa conservate in Italia e nella Città del Vaticano. II. Fonti a stampa* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali. Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 1991).

[1] We have acknowledged our debt to other scholars through the extensive (and still growing) bibliography on the project website and, crucially, in the notes and annotations that accompany each record entry.

[2] See Niccolò Valmori. "Revolutionary Translators and the Political uses of Translations in Milan during the revolutionary Triennio, 1796-1799". Unpublished article.

may appear to be neutral. In the case of translations which reactivated well-known radical sources (for example the translations made by the Cordeliers club of 17th-century English republican texts), we wanted to see *where* and *when* these translations took place, in order to better understand how they were translated, why and by whom. But we also needed a mechanism that enabled us to 'predict' situations in which translation was an indirect or covert means of radical activity. How might translations of source texts that superficially may not appear radical nonetheless be considered radical within specific contexts of desire and repression?

Such contexts may include macro-events such as censorship or regime change. For instance, the translations of d"Holbach, falsely attributed to Jean-Baptiste Mirabaud, were undertaken by William Hodgson and Charles Pigott while in Newgate Prison. Or they may reflect more general social conditions, such as the position of women, that would have made the direct expression of democratic ideas difficult or impossible. In the latter case, the problem lies not just in identifying historical people and their covert uses of translation. It also calls into question how we, as researchers, approach and locate relevant translations. Novels are a good case in point. Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art*, considered to be a 'Jacobin' novel in France was translated into French three times in 1797, including in a joint translation by Isabelle de Charrière and Isabelle de Gélieu. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's sentimental novel, *Paul et Virginie* (1787), first translated into English in 1788, was retranslated in 1789, 1795 and 1796, including by the well-known radical Helena Maria Williams. These multiple re-translations indicate its growing importance for the abolitionist movement.

In order to capture, therefore, a solid core of radical activity and a larger, more diffuse penumbra, our database needed to cross-reference what were essentially four distinct data-sets: on texts, people, events and places. The tighter the cross-referencing, the more visible the connection between particular procedures of translation (including changes of genre or form, word choice and function) and the transfer of revolutionary ideas and culture more generally, which naturally involves other kinds of texts and not just translations, as well as various linguistic, cultural and political constraints, not all of which are immediately or directly ascertainable. As Lieven d"Hulst has observed cultural "transfer is an opaque process—partly visible, partly mental and therefore only

partly observable".[1] It was therefore important for this project to construct a corpus that drew attention to readily accessible features of translations as well as demarcating less visible, and more inferential kinds of cultural transfer, as I discuss below.

2. Texts: A Bibliography of Translation

Following Pym, we decided to include in our corpus as much of the "surface level text as possible", including those elements of paratexts that are "carried over into publisher's catalogues, reviews, or other lists by which they eventually come to us".[2] On one level, this was a pragmatic decision. By the end of the 18th century, the concept of faithfulness to an original was just beginning to predominate as a value, and many translators in our own corpus actively debated the value of adapting translations to local contexts. Within the radical literary sphere in particular, there was a wide range of activity labelled under 'translation', with sometimes only the title remaining of the original text or even the reverse. Moreover, as I have already noted, given the speed of events during the revolutionary period (when wholesale reversals of power relations took place over days and weeks and not years), we were interested in capturing not just published translations, but unpublished or projected translations, recovered from newspapers, government archives, publisher's prospectuses and personal correspondence.

Given that we wanted to correlate bibliographical information about translations and source texts to people, places and events, we were advised to use BIBFRAME, a cataloguing system, based on the Library of Congress, which enables records to be filtered by genre, theme, translator, publisher, date of publication.[3] But translations also repackage source texts in an astonishing variety of ways—abridging, adapting, extending, condensing, extracting, reworking and

[1] D'hulst, Lieven, "(Re) Locating Translation History: From Assumed Translation to Assumed Transfer", 142.

[2] Anthony Pym, *Method in Translation History* (London: Routledge, 1998), 62.

[3] BIBFRAME describes itself as a next generation cataloguing system with the goal of relating bibliographical records with the much larger web of data. See `https://www.loc.gov/bibframe/faqs/` accessed May 1, 2021.

creating new collections of original works. To capture this aspect of radicalizing translations, our data-model incorporates a particularly rich typology of translations, going much further than the book or reception histories that have featured in most studies of the revolutionary period. Each translation record is accordingly given one or several of the following descriptions, adapted from the Library of Congress classification system: abridged, adapted, extended, compiled, simplified, integral, partial, retranslation, new translation, compilation, self-translation, pseudo-translation, indirect translation.[1]

Each entry has also been extensively annotated to make visible the paratextual features of the translations, for example whether it includes a prefaces, dedication, notes, addenda, false or fictitious imprints, revolutionary dating and so forth. We have decided to create separate records for all the paratextual metadata in our corpus in order to enable qualitative as well as quantitative analysis. In literary criticism, paratext is defined as material that surrounds the text.[2] It is here that the translator's voice can be heard and evidence gleaned as it why and how a particular text was translated at a particular time.[3] 'Minor' paratextual elements such as the choice of dedicatee, or a date expressed in the revolutionary calendar, or a printer's motto echoing revolutionary slogans, can become key markers of a radical translation, especially in cases when the source text has no recognizable radical content. Such elements express how texts and ideas themselves travelled or were adapted over time, in this case over a relatively short time frame of convulsive political change.

On a more conceptual level, paratext foregrounds the communicative function of translation as an active strategy of framing.[4] For example, Angelica Baz-

[1] For more detailed definitions of these terms, see the project website.

[2] Genette defines the paratext as a "threshold", both inside and outside the text that "enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, the public." Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane Lewin (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-2. Genette notes translation as a case "whose paratextual relevance to me seems undeniable" and a topic for future research, 405.

[3] As Theo Hermans observes, even within the translated text, the translator's voice can be recovered by paying attention to instances of "performative self-contradiction", when the translator is obliged to "come out of the shadows and directly intervene in the text", 198. "Translator's Voice in Translated Narrative", in *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 195-212.

[4] Baker, *Translation and Conflict. A Narrative Account.*

zoni's 1797 translation of Labène's *De l'éducation dans les grandes républiques* (1794) is dedicated to "Al Popolo Sovrano" and addresses itself to citizen-mothers—a "community-building" paratext if there was one. Joel Barlow's 1792 English translation of Brissot's *New Travels in the United States of America* (1788) is accompanied by a veritable hermeneutical apparatus of footnotes and addenda, referencing the significance of the text for the subsequent events that took place in France. As Kathryn Batchelor has observed, "it may be more intuitive to categorise these types of [translation] paratexts not so much in terms of what they *are*, but what they *do*."[1] To further recover how translators sought to extend radical ideas beyond the intended or imagined readership of a source text, our database classifies paratexts according to the following pragmatic functions, adapted from Nottingham-Martin[2], Kovala[3] and Batchelor[4]:

- Meta-communicative: reflecting on the conditions and constraints of communication and translation
- Community-building: referencing groups of readers (imaginary or actual)
- Hermeneutical: presenting an in-depth commentary and interpretation of the source-text
- Text-activating: removing epistemic obstacles to the reader's understanding, clarifying culture-specific references, reframing text for situated audience

Simple enough for classification, these functions make it possible to analyse patterns that recur across our corpus, even if any given text can fulfil several functions simultaneously.[5] They also serve as heuristic tools that enable provisional answers to questions such as: Was there an increased intensity of certain kinds of translation practices around certain kinds of events? Did these functions coalesce around people or "geo-political" locations? which keywords came

[1] Kathryn Batchelor, *Translation and Paratext* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 155.

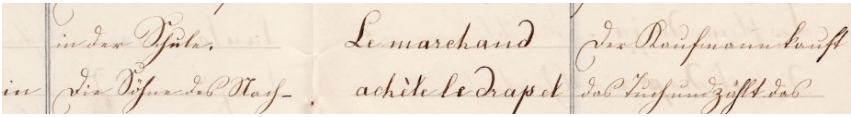
[2] Amy Nottingham-Martin, "Thresholds of Transmedia Storytelling: Applying Gérard Genette's Paratextual Theory to The 39 Clues Series for Young Readers", in *In Examining Paratextual Theory and Its Applications in Digital Culture* (IGI Global, 2014), 287-307.

[3] Urpo Kovala, "Translations, Paratextual Mediation and Ideological Closure", *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies.* 8, no. 1 (1996): 119-47.

[4] Batchelor, *Translation and Paratext,* 155.

[5] Dr. Rosa Mucignat spearheaded the rationale and design of this aspect of our database.

under most scrutiny? When and what kinds of translations required greater or lesser explication in the target language? Were certain genres or subjects considered more or less adaptable for target audiences, if so when and how?



3. Prosopographical Data-set

If our corpus is constituted in a conceptually "top-down" manner, our prosopography of translators attempts to refine our understanding of the role of translation in political activity from the "bottom up", in relation to people, their networks, the organisations to which they belonged or patterns of exile. Prosopography can be defined as the investigation of the common characteristics of a group of people whose individual biographies may be largely untraceable or only indirectly known. It can also be used as an "indirect means of research" to understand: a) the shape of ideas (philosophical, scientific, political or other) that do not always have an identifiable 'source' but nonetheless contribute to the emergence and success of major cultural movements (Enlightenment, humanism are commonly cited examples) and b) the activities and motivations of historical actors, especially when it comes to their behaviour and motivation as part of a group.[1] As Armando and Belhoste observe, it is particularly useful for registering the complexity of a "pluralist movement"[2] in which the challenge is to capture both a committed core of known agents and a penumbra of less

[1] Koenraad Verboven, Myriam Carlier, and Jan Dumolyn, "A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography", in *Prosopography Approaches and Applications. A Handbook*, ed. K. S. B Keats-Riohan (Oxford: Occasional Publications of the Unit for Prosopographical Research, 2007), 35-70.

[2] David Armando and Bruno Belhoste, "Mesmerism between the End of the Old Regime and the Revolutions: Social Dynamics and Political Issues", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 391, no. 1 (2018): 3-26, 15.

obvious people who were sporadically involved and/or could be considered adherents in certain contexts.

In our database we use prosopography primarily as an "indirect means" to understand not so much individuals *en soi* but their translation activities. Some have well-documented lives. Others are far less documented and exist only as traces in certain archival sources. When we find a name or mention of a translator who moved in radical circles but whose works do not yet feature in our bibliography, this prompts us to look for other works. This is especially important for identifying the many translations published in newspapers and ephemeral print media. Linking translators to printers or other networks, for example through such tools as the CERL thesaurus, sheds light on anonymous, pseudonymous or uncertain attributions. It also allows us to make some inferences about motivations for translation activities. To what extent can a translator's voice, or even his or her lexical choices, reflect the language or choices shared by a group?

Traditional prosopographies tend to rely on an extant register or some other historical document as the basis for establishing a social group that is typically assumed to be well-defined. Our database on the contrary aims to highlight translation as a social and political *activity* that criss-crosses multiple social or political groups. Such networks provide evidence of how translators might be seen as belonging to an *informal social group*—a set of multiple individuals who share characteristics in common. Such a group does not necessarily align with a pre-existing network or adherence to an organisation. Moreover, given the convulsive historical events of revolution, we are interested in recovering an embryonic or even truncated social identity, that can be made visible from the ways a given translator might employ his or her contribution against unfolding events. For instance, even if the Italian translator of Thomas Paine may not have known Lanthenas, Paine's French translator, he may have shared similar networks, which can be empirically uncovered or researched. Additionally, or in cases where such information is absent, his translation can be placed alongside other translations of Paine and analysed formally, narratively and lexically to see whether and how it may have addressed itself to a similar reading public or positioned itself as part of the same or different 'imagined community'.

That said, organisations play an important role in our database as places where the bibliographical and prosopographical side of our project makes con-

tact. Examples include political associations that promoted the publication of certain translations, or newspapers that served as a political organ. Place is another important point of contact. As translation, by definition, is an activity that criss-crosses at least two cultures and social or political groups it serves as a vital resource for reconstructing the transnational movement of *people* as well as *texts*, important given that a number our translators may also be exiles, diplomats, refugees, or even prisoners in the same cities at certain points in their life.

This last point is crucial. The ambition of our database is to highlight the role played by translation within revolutionary lives, even to highlight how translators, taken in their ensemble, might provide us with a glimpse of what happens 'behind the scenes' in any moment of revolutionary upheaval. But such a focus also has a distorting effect if lives are taken out of context. One way to correct this bias would be to cross-reference each prosopographical record with chronological events, whether in the protagonist's own life or macro-events that may have spurred a pause or increase in translation activity, for example a flight into exile, imprisonment etc. As we have not yet been able to do this, we have compensated by including longer discursive biographies for key figures in our database as well as thumbnail sketches that feature in a project blog as a 'lives in translation' series.

These discursive biographies also go some way towards overcoming the inherent limitations of creating machine-readable records. For extensively documented individuals with highly eventful lives and shifting allegiances, we had to decide which events to privilege. For people for whom we have very little information, the challenge was to find a way to record and acknowledge the scraps of information that functioned as circumstantial evidence in our prosopography.[1] In the end we kept our records simple in order to build them incrementally, as new knowledge was unearthed. Each record therefore includes static attributes such as dates and places of birth and whether the individual was born noble. Also included are the following acquired attributes or life-events: languages spoken, date and place of death, main place of residence and other important

[1] To account for this extreme diversity, we were advised to use the FOAF system for establishing contact histories for our translators because it is generic, compatible with BIBFRAME and allows for a modular approach.

places of residence, the organisations or associations to which they belonged, as well as the other authors, publishers, editors, translators or journalists in our database that translator knew. Additionally, we provided a link to VIAF (virtual international authority file) where it exists for this person. Key obstacles to overcome here included dealing with multiple spellings of names, especially across French and Italian. There is also a problem of pseudonyms (who was "A Kentish Bowman" who translated a French republican drama in 1792?) and pennames (which range from the obvious Voltaire to the more mysterious M.R.D.W, who pseudo-translated from the English a violent attack on the duke of Orléans in 1789[1]).

4. Time: Chronological Aspect

Investigating the multiple temporalities of radical experience in a transnational context has been one of the driving interests of this project since its inception. Translations, it seems to us, are ideal objects with which to investigate how a text might be published in response to the opening and closing of political opportunity across national or regional boundaries. I"ve already noted how any translation reflects, and also contains a reflection, on at least two chronologies: the language and culture of the source text and the target language and culture of the translation. It must be emphasised again, however, that our chronologies are not general political chronologies but contain events that have been deliberately selected to be "both operationalizable and interpretative". In Digital Humanities parlance, they can be considered "eventful events" relevant for both translation history and the history of radicalism, that is to say, "events that make a difference".[2] To properly visualize this time-aspect, our database enables users to correlate any given translation with respect to 5 chronologies in three different linguistic contexts. These timelines not only provide immediate contextualising information; they also enable users to make inferences about how

[1] Attributed to Pelleport by Robert Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water or the Art of Slander from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 351. My thanks to Brecht Deseure for this reference.

[2] Stuart Dunn and Marieke Schumacher, *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (2016). I thank Arianna Ciula for this reference.

translations may respond to the opening or closing of political opportunity. Through this kind of temporal indexing, users can engage in a "narrative-based discovery".[1]

More crucially, it shows how translation history can be used to nuance our understanding of revolutionary events as they were experienced by concrete historical actors operating within a rapidly changing political climate or *Stimmung*. These granular chronologies, which can also mapped against each other, not only make possible the discovery of new case-studies but also provide a method for reading translation. By enabling users to apply a short time-frame onto translations acts, this project has the potential to reveal the sudden conceptual shifts that take place when a certain kind of revolutionary language, say of civic republicanism, moves from one context to another. These nuanced chronologies, we hope, will also yield insight into how ideas travel and come to be considered, by the historical actors themselves, as 'displaced' or even 'misplaced', relative to their own understanding of their local context. As the theorist Elias Paltí has observed, "a history of the 'ideas about misplaced ideas'" implies a "historical treatment of political languages and the modes of their social articulation, circulation and re-appropriation".[2] This process, Paltí notes, is essentially about translation because "political languages" consist of terms whose meaning can only even be debated and never fully resolved.[3] To re-cast this point in the terms of this project, one can say that such a language can only ever be re-translated.

5. Place: Mapping Movement of People

If translation can be used to trace the movement of texts, so too it can be used to map the movement of people. Many of the protagonists in our database

[1] Neil Jefferies, Gerjan Filarski, and Thomas Stäcker, "Events", in *Reassembling the Republic of Letters in the Digital Age: Standards, Systems, Scholarshp*, ed. Howard Hotson and Thomas Wallnig (Göttingen: University Press, 2019), 159-70, 169.

[2] Elías José Palti, "The Problem of Misplaced Ideas Revisited: Beyond the *History of Ideas* in Latin America", *History and Theory* 67, no. 1 (2006): 149-79, 178.

[3] Elías José Palti, "The Theoretical Revolution in Intellectual History: From the History of Ideas to the History of Political Languages", *History and Theory* 53, no. 3 (2014): 387-405, 398.

moved around considerably, whether as exiles or refugees, as part of the French army or in an official capacity as administrators or diplomats. As noted above, we have not yet provided a time-based analysis of people's movements (i.e. *when* they moved where), so our mapping is inferred from other data-sets. Nevertheless, the sheer variety of places involved, particularly in the Italian context, provides a corrective, we hope, to the 'circulation'-based modelling that constitutes a great deal of book history and tends to focus on major publishing centres. To an important extent, the 'city' and not the nation is our primary focus of analysis as we seek to chart how informal and semi-official acts of translation mediated between cosmopolitan and more local contexts.[1]

6. Concluding Remarks

By focusing on translation, this project aims to provide both a synchronic and diachronic perspective on the circulation, translation and adaptation of radical texts into new contexts. It also aims to redefine how radicalism was experienced and communicated in *practice* by recovering where revolutionary language went, how it travelled and what it became. Although it builds on a rich and growing textual and historiographical scholarship, this project also differs from existing approaches insofar as it seeks to operationalize aspects of our own interpretation. This includes how we have identified translation forms and paratext functions, the genres and subject-matter of source-texts, the professional and political roles of our protagonists and the chronologies that we use. By drawing out unnoticed or unseen patterns of a mostly submerged activity, we also hope to direct attention to some of the basic assumptions of revolutionary historiography, in particular its use of established (mostly national) chronologies as time frames and its preference for studying the 'meaning' of "source texts" rather than the mobility of revolutionary language.

But digital humanities projects also have a tendency to unfold according to their own logic, reflecting the constraints of machine-language and standard-

[1] For the importance of the city as a critical lens of analysis for understanding the relations between multi and monolingualism, see Lieven D'hulst and Kaisa Koskinen eds, *Translating in Town: Local Translation Policies During the European 19th Century* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

ization as well as the vagaries of any collaboration that involves the coordination of multiple individuals, each with their own perspective on the problem. On the one hand, the ability to link to other databases, whether through the VIAF system or to full-text digitized publications where they exist, has resulted in a highly relational website that, we hope, will contextualize a process that remains relatively little known to the scholarly community. Through the application of quantitative methods to paratext functions, we also hope to uncover patterns, or at least clues for how to map similarities as well as differences across our three target languages as well to the individual and social identities of people. At the same time, the attempt to construct a *histoire croisée* of this extremely tumultuous revolutionary period has foregrounded a key challenge of any database: namely how to make visible the interpretative decisions that make up any so-called 'corpus' and how to strike a balance between public users whose concerns and needs are unknown to us and our own research questions which have framed the entire process of collection. In contrast to big data projects, our database is small-scale and does not rely on pre-existing datasets. Additionally, there is the problem of constructing a multilingual database given the predominance of anglophone terms within the digital humanities.

We have tried to resolve some of these conundrums by 'embroidering' our website—either by including longer discursive biographies for our key players or by making extensive use of the blogpost on the project website to draw attention to problems of method, the work of other scholars in the field or, indeed, some of our discoveries. By making visible the circumstantial evidence that we have used to construct our database, we also hope to alert users to the importance of any frame in deciding who or what belongs in a collection, even if their own questions and needs take them elsewhere. Finally, our descriptions of the paratextual forms and functions of each translation should increase the visibility of 'translated' works within revolutionary culture as a whole. In the end, it may well be that only detailed case-studies will fully demonstrate the value of our database for our research question. In the meanwhile, we hope that the densely relational and detailed annotations of our records may also aid other scholars in formulating their own questions, while remaining cognizant of the limitations and inherent subjectivity of any corpus.

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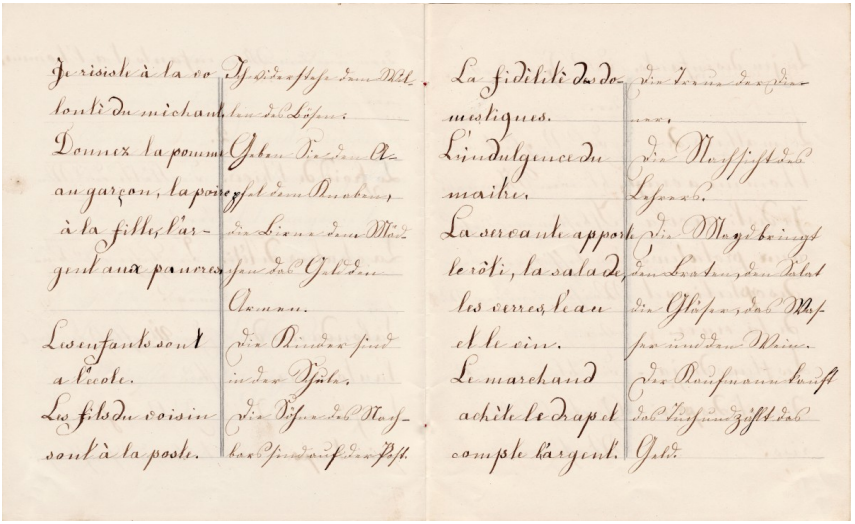

"La fidelité des domestiques / Die Treue der Diener", 19th-Century French-German Translation Exercise (`https://pxhere.com/en/photo/1404934`).