

Mapping *La Princesse de Clèves*
Events, Public and Courtly Spaces, Landmarks,
and Characters' Movements

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Description of the project:

This project is directly linked to Hélène Bilis's project on social networks in *La Princesse de Clèves* by Madame de Lafayette (see project proposal on Google Drive). I refer the reader to this very detailed and well-contextualized project proposal to better understand the framework of my own proposal. If Hélène B.'s project aims to create graphic displays of the social networks in the novel, my project intends to literally map landmarks, urban and courtly spaces as well as events and characters' movements (in close relation with social networks) by using a new technology such as Neatline that allows connections between maps and narratives, between topographical information and stories, in order to ask this simple question: what does this careful and intentional digital mapping process teach us about the novel?

As we know, *La Princesse de Clèves* is mainly set in Paris and its surroundings (Coulommiers), but the novel also mentions other European cities (such London and Brussels—following the travels of the duc de Nemours). The novel is also based on an opposition between public (the court at the Louvre) and more private locations (such as the *hôtel* of M. and Mme de Clèves; their country house in Coulommiers; the *maison religieuse* at the end of the novel). Each of these locations is divided into various social spaces such as royal apartments, chambre/antichambre, cabinet, jardins, etc. Moreover, major events take place in the novel at certain places, and characters spend their time going to one place to another, removing themselves from the public spaces by taking a social distance, or coming back to the *commerce du monde*.

Our goal is to map the various movements of the characters and the events in their life, as well as major landmarks and spaces mentioned in the novel in order to create a visual and spatial representation of *La Princesse de Clèves*. The aim is to show the correlation between topographical elements and social interactions, the relationships between urban spaces and social spaces. I believe that having a more concrete knowledge of the configuration of Paris and its surroundings in the 16th and 17th centuries and of the interior of the Louvre and/or an *hôtel particulier*, and developing a tool that visualizes the characters' mobility can help students navigate this complex novel and engage them with unfamiliar geographical and/or social spaces of early modern France.

Here are some of the key questions that will guide our work:

- How can we make legible topographical references and visualize the movements of the characters in the novel?
- Why are certain characters seemingly associated only with certain places?
- Which sections of the city does the novel include/exclude?

- How can this digital mapping tool help us to understand the use of public and private spaces in the novel by visualizing the dynamics between them?
- How can we create a digital map that shows the relationship between urban space and social relations? In other words, what relation can we establish between social meaning in the novel and its portrayal of urban space?
- How can a digital map provide new insights about the relationships between social distance and physical distance?
- How can this digital mapping project help students understand the centrality of Paris in the early modern period and the division between Paris and *la province*?

Method:

1. On a Google spreadsheet, we will start by creating a list of the novel's references to locations and landmarks in Europe (London, Brussels, Spain), and particularly in France (in Paris, at the court and in the countryside).
2. On another Google spreadsheet, we will add the name of each of the main characters of the novel and list all the places where each of them goes throughout the whole narration to track their movements.
3. We will georeference these locations and landmarks on various maps of early modern Europe, France, and Paris.
4. We will also follow and map the movements of the main characters in order to place them in a specific spatial context.
5. We will annotate the maps and include any quotations from the novel, as well as images related to a particular event or landmark (for instance, images of an *hôtel particulier*, plan of the Louvre in the 16th century, etc.), audio/video files, and relevant websites related to an exact location or landmark.

→ The idea would be to create an online interactive map for each character and then layer these individual maps to create a coherent and comprehensive map of the novel.

New Technology Tools:

I will explore the possibility of using either:

- **Google Earth** (<https://www.google.com/earth/>), which is free, allows image layers, has a "fly-over feature, and it's relatively easy to use;
- **Neatline** (<http://neatline.org>), which is built as a plugin for **Omeka**, the collection-management framework that we plan to use for the *Princesse de Clèves*' project. "Neatline is a geotemporal exhibit-builder that allows you to create beautiful, complex maps, image annotations, and narrative sequences from **Omeka** collections of "archives and artifacts, and to connect your maps and narratives with timelines that are more-than-usually sensitive to ambiguity and nuance." (<http://neatline.org/about/>).
- A story mapping tool that allows the combinaison of maps with narrative texts. such as **Storymap JS** <https://storymap.knightlab.com> or **Esri Story Maps**: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/>

Timeline:

- Fall 2016: refine project and meet with IT staff; hire a student assistant and secure funding through an internal grant; identify potential students to create a humanities lab around this project for the spring.
- Interterm and spring semester 2017: gather data with the help of a student assistant; learn and become familiar with the technology tools; apply for a “Student-Faculty Working Group for Humanistic Research” at Smith.
- May 2017: run the “Student-Faculty Working Group for Humanistic Research” at Smith over 10 days with a group of 4-5 students; the students and I will finish gathering the data and build the maps.
- Summer 2017: attendance to the “Summer Summit” at Grinnell College; revise the digital maps made by the students in May; evaluate how the final product can be added to Omeka.

Selected References:

- Croxall, Brian, "Building a Map of Mrs. Dalloway." Assignment for a course on *Introduction to Digital Humanities*:

<http://www.briancroxall.net/s15dh/assignments/building-a-map-of-mrs-dalloway/>

- Marcus, Sharon, and Schwartz, Vanessa, “ Teaching *Old Goriot* across the Disciplines: Mapping Social and Urban Spaces”. In *Approaches to Teaching Balzac’s Old Goriot*, ed. Michal Peled Ginsburg. NY: MLA, 2000. 177-187.

- Presner, Todd, Shepard, David, and Kawano, Yoh. “Lexicon: HyperCities, Thick Mapping, Digital Humanities.” In *Hypercities. Thick Mapping in the Digital Humanities*. Cambridge, MA, and London, England: Harvard University Press, metaLABprojects, 2014. 12-21

- Sells, Erin, "Mapping Novels With Google Earth." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. April 6, 2011: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/mapping-novels/32528>