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Translation and the Globalisation of the Novel: Relevance and Limits of a Diffusionist Model

Peter Hill

Introduction

In his two books *Atlas of the European Novel* and *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, Franco Moretti presented models for the ‘distant reading’ of world literature, including that of literary translation.¹ This chapter considers, first, the relevance of Moretti’s approach for understanding translation in the area between the Mediterranean and the Arabian Gulf, and how it fits into a wider global literary system. Secondly, it tests the limits of Moretti’s diffusionist model and considers some variants and alternatives. Elsewhere, I have shown how a relatively ‘close’ reading within a single literary tradition (Arabic) can be combined with a broader framework informed by distant reading, working with Arabic translations of Fénelon’s *Les aventures de Télémaque*.² This microfocus has led me to reflect more abstractly and broadly in the present chapter, surveying literary translations from the seventeenth century to the present. The texts presented are, following Moretti’s initial instance of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, all novels or proto-novels which became popular to varying degrees across the world – including the southwest Asian region, which is the focus of this volume.

My analysis begins from within Moretti’s diffusionist model, presenting the spread in translation of an initial set of novels from a north-west European ‘core’ through a set of ‘semi-peripheries’ and ‘peripheries’. This permits minor modifications of Moretti’s initial model derived from the case of *Don Quixote*, but more importantly, reveals its relevance through showing the regularities across a number of different cases. I then consider some of the difficulties and limitations of the model, principally derived from the fact that it argues from examples of the ‘core’ region, in a period in which a ‘literary system’ of distinct, commensurable, national languages with print literary traditions existed there. But when

these conditions do not apply – as in many ‘peripheral’ areas in the same historical period – the model loses its relevance. Nor is it possible to replace it with a single alternative ‘peripheral’ or ‘premodern’ model, since the languages and literatures in question are highly diverse, from largely oral traditions to ones based on an ancient literate but largely manuscript culture. A further complication is that translations of many of these proto-novels and novels into a given language can be taken as an index of that language’s integration into a Europe-centred modern literary ‘world-system’. Finally, I consider approaches which take account of these difficulties, such as Isabel Hofmeyr’s mid-level generalisations on African versions of Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, or my account of the Arabic transformations of *Télémaque*. But to these I add variants on the diffusionist model taking account of intermediary languages and alternative centres of diffusion.

Core-Periphery: The Diffusionist Model

Beginning within the parameters of Moretti’s original diffusionist model, I examine a set of ‘translingual mass texts’, specifically novels. I scrutinise the first known print translation into a given language, along the lines of Moretti’s treatment of *Don Quixote*,³ in order to test and refine Moretti’s model within its own terms.

My examples include Moretti’s *Don Quixote*, and six others: the Marquis de Fénelon’s *Les aventures de Télémaque*, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Marmontel’s *Bélisaire*, Abbé Barthélemy’s *Le voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce*, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s *Paul et Virginie* and Alexandre Dumas père’s *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*. These mainly French novels are selected as having been famously popular across the world, equally so in languages of the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century.⁴ The data on first known print translations is largely derived from the online database worldcat.org, an aggregator of various library catalogues and bibliographic resources, supplemented where possible by other sources. (For *Don Quixote*, I use Moretti’s data, in his *Atlas*.) This resource facilitates a ‘distant’ reading of translations of a single title into a wide range of different languages.⁵ The data obtained in worldcat probably contains many gaps; it is likely to be fuller and more accurate for languages closer to Moretti’s ‘core’ literary system than for the ‘periphery’, due to uneven coverage of library catalogues; and is no doubt open to criticism and correction on many other points of detail. Readers will decide whether this invalidates the broad conclusions I seek to draw. Better resources would enable a more accurate exercise, but it

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seems worth making the attempt. Chart 1 plots the year of the first print translations (and the original-language edition) against the total number of languages in which each novel existed. A different line of data-points represents each novel: *Don Quixote* (first published 1605), *Télémaque* (1699), *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Bélisaire* (1767), *Anacharsis* and *Paul et Virginie* (both 1788), *Monte Cristo* (1846). For *Don Quixote*, Moretti's data-series stops in 1935; the others continue up to the latest translations recorded in worldcat, the most recent being in 2014. The line formed by the data-points for each novel represents the (changing) rate at which that novel was being translated into new languages.

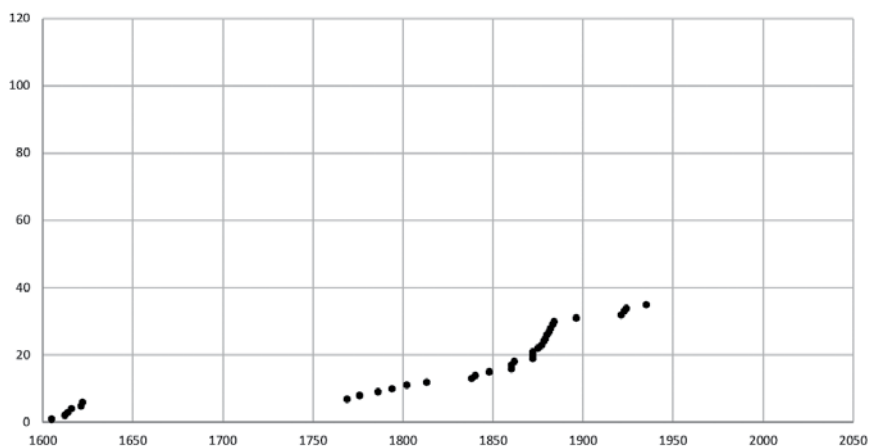


Chart 1 First print translations of *Don Quixote* (to 1935)

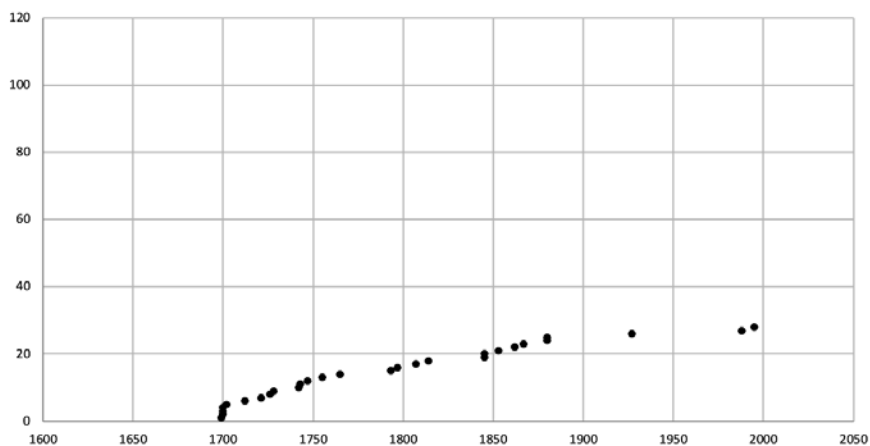


Chart 2 First print translations of *Télémaque*

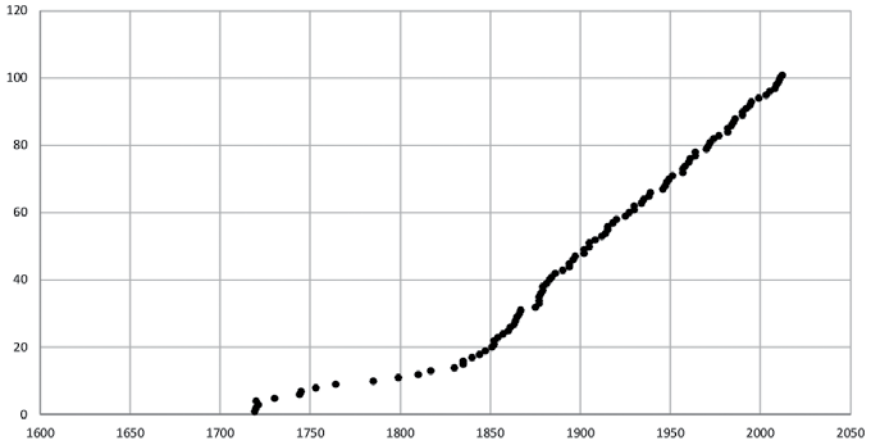


Chart 3 First print translations of *Robinson Crusoe*

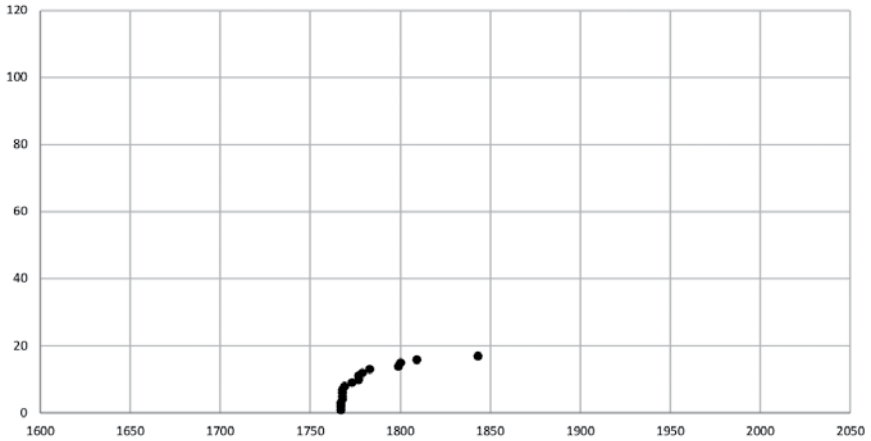


Chart 4 First print translations of *Bélisaire*

Plotting the data in this way enables us to see a number of common ways in which all seven novels ‘behaved’ in the translational world-system. We can divide the process of global translation into a series of fairly clear phases:

- Phase A began just after the novel’s original publication: it was translated rapidly into a narrow ‘inner core’ of mainly north-west European languages.
- Phase B extended from the end of Phase A to some point in the second

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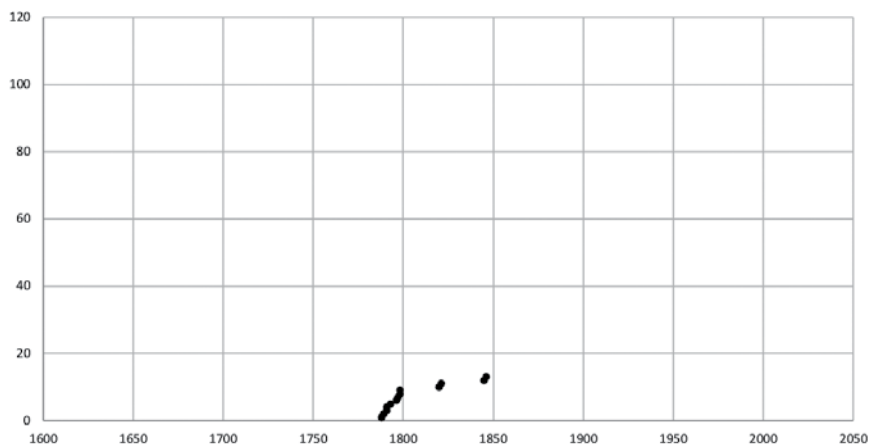


Chart 5 First print translations of *Anacharsis*

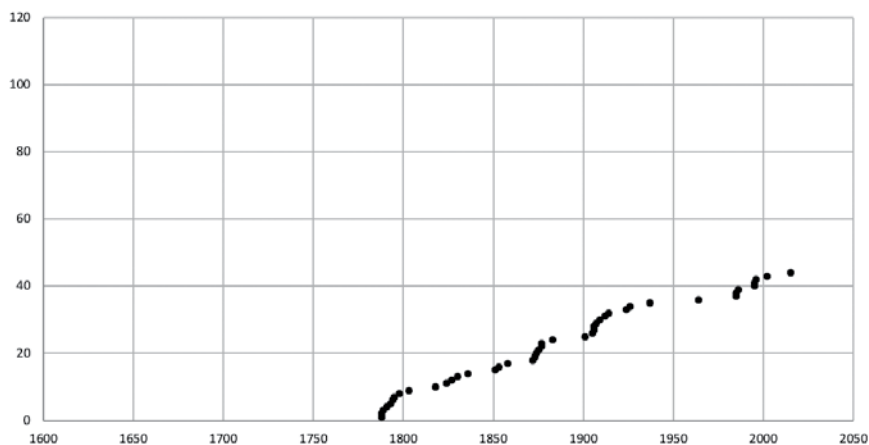


Chart 6 First print translations of *Paul et Virginie*

half of the nineteenth century: this saw a slower set of translations into a larger ‘outer core’ of further-flung European languages, extending gradually across the Mediterranean.

- Phase C began in the second half of the nineteenth century and extended into the 1920s, and saw a resurgence of translation of the novel into new languages, far beyond Europe but also including ‘minor’ or ‘minority’ European languages.
- Phase D, from the 1920s to the 1980s, was a second ‘slack’ period of only occasional translations into new languages.



Chart 7 First print translations of *Monte Cristo*

- Phase E, from the 1980s to the 2010s, saw a less strongly marked but still visible resurgence in translations.

Phase A is best illustrated by the first four novels: *Don Quixote*, *Télémaque*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Bélisaire*. Here, the most clearly marked ‘inner core’ is represented by French, English, German and Dutch: *Télémaque* made it into these four languages over its first two years (1699–1700), and *Robinson Crusoe* did the same over its first three years (1719–21). A century earlier, *Don Quixote*’s ‘core’ had been slightly larger, including, in addition to these four, Italian and of course the original Spanish: but this wave took far longer (six languages in seventeen years, 1605–22). Later in the eighteenth century, *Bélisaire* made it into seven languages over its first two years (1767–8): the previously mentioned four were now joined by Russian, Italian and Danish. The following maps show these ‘core’ languages: Map 1 the ‘inner core’ of French, English, German and Dutch; and Map 2 the ‘outer core’ of Italian, Spanish, Russian and Danish. The placing of the languages on these and succeeding maps is somewhat artificial: it represents not the actual place of publication but where in my judgement (often a guess) the centre of the reading community of that language is likely to have been.

These translations were practically simultaneous with the original publication: the works had an instant literary reputation across a number of languages. There was a tendency over time for the initial wave of translation of a ‘bestseller’ to become more rapid, and to include more languages

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Map 1 Inner core



Map 2 Outer core

(from six languages in seventeen years in the early seventeenth century to seven in two years for works first published in the second half of the eighteenth).

Phase B: For each of these novels, the initial very rapid or fairly rapid wave of translations into the first ‘core’ was succeeded by a slack period, in which translations continued at a much-reduced rate, as witnessed by the flattening of the graph line in each case after the initial upward surge. The pattern is clearest in three. For *Télémaque* this phase covered the years 1721–1880; for *Robinson Crusoe*, 1730–1847; for *Bélisaire*, 1769–1843. The languages through which the novels proceeded in this phase belong to what we may call a ‘semi-periphery’, again of European languages. For *Télémaque* and *Robinson Crusoe* this includes Russian, Italian and Danish (which for *Bélisaire* had joined the ‘core’); but all three were also translated in this phase into Armenian, Spanish, Swedish, Polish, Portuguese and Serbian. Two out of the three were also translated into Greek, Hungarian, Romanian and Latin; and one into Welsh, Arabic, Finnish and Czech.

There were variations on this pattern: *Don Quixote* saw a complete hiatus in translations into new languages until the late eighteenth century. Then two waves of gradual translations took place, corresponding to the ‘slack’ period of the other novels: 1769–1802: Russian, Danish, Polish, Portuguese, Swedish; and 1813–63: Romanian, Yiddish, Greek, Ottoman Turkish, and three languages of the Habsburg territories, tentatively identified as Hungarian, Czech and Croatian.⁶

Anacharsis and *Paul et Virginie*, both first published in French in 1788 on the eve of the Revolution, were translated at a steady rate of nearly one language per year over the succeeding decade (by 1798, *Anacharsis* existed in nine languages, *Paul et Virginie* in eight). This initial ten-year ‘core’ looks similar to the ‘core’ plus part of the ‘semi-periphery’ of the other eighteenth-century novels: French, English, German, Italian, Russian (though not Dutch) – and also Swedish and Spanish (for both novels), Polish (*Paul et Virginie*), Greek and Danish (*Anacharsis*). The next maps represent the languages of the ‘semi-periphery’: Map 3 contains those into which over half of these six novels were translated during Phase B (this group overlaps with the ‘outer core’ described above); Map 4 contains those into which between one and three of the six had been translated over the same period.

This hierarchy is then a rigid one, as Moretti suggested of his original example of *Don Quixote*; and it is replicated across novels with original publication dates from 1605 to 1788. First, and very rapidly, the unified translational market of northwestern Europe (English, French,



Map 3 First semi-periphery



Map 4 Second semi-periphery

Dutch and German); less frequently, languages of further north and south (Italian, Spanish, Danish and Russian). Then, far more slowly, a slightly wider set of languages, taking us further north, east and south within Europe: Portuguese, Armenian, Serbian, Polish, Swedish. In fewer cases this wave crosses the Mediterranean, to Ottoman Turkish and Arabic; it also begins to include European ‘minority’ languages (Welsh, Catalan, Yiddish), and those of ‘emerging’ nations (Bulgarian, Hungarian, Norwegian).

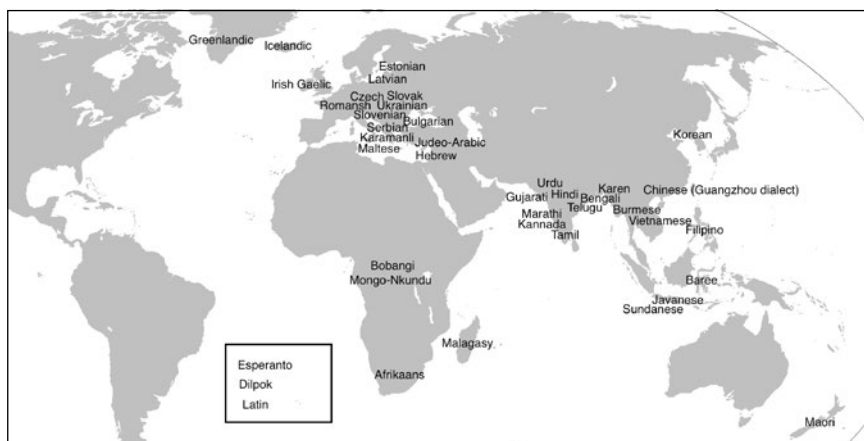
Phase C: Conditions change considerably in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the first place, some popular eighteenth-century novels effectively cease to be translated into new languages: this is the case for *Anacharsis*, *Bélisaire* and (barring a few cases) *Télémaque*. These novels also never made it beyond the Mediterranean, for it is only after 1850 that the truly global translation of novels begins – although of course novels in European languages had long been read in European colonies around the world. The other three novels, on the other hand, saw a renewed vogue: the rate of translation into new languages increased sharply compared with the preceding slack period. *Robinson Crusoe*’s began early, in 1851, and – exceptionally – has continued unabated into the 2010s. *Don Quixote* saw a sustained wave of new translations, 1872–84, followed by a few stragglers to 1935, when Moretti’s data stops. *Paul et Virginie* saw two distinct bursts of translation, 1872–83 and 1901–26. *Monte Cristo*’s original publication and initial burst of translations came just before *Robinson Crusoe*’s resurgence: it made it into six languages in its first two years (1846–7). It then experienced a slack period, apart from one exceptional year (1871) which saw three translations, followed by a sustained wave of new translations, 1897–1929. The next maps show the truly global reach of these novels, through two ‘peripheries’: first, in Map 5, those languages which saw translations of three or four out of the four novels (*Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Paul et Virginie*, *Monte Cristo*) during this phase; then, in Map 6, those which saw only one or two of the four. (For both, I have not shown languages already encountered in the ‘core’ or ‘first semi-periphery’.)

Phases D and E: These phases are less clearly marked than the others, and I will not comment on them in great detail. For *Don Quixote*, this period is not covered by our graph, as Moretti’s data stops in 1935, but worldcat suggests that the novel saw many more translations after this date. For *Paul et Virginie* and *Monte Cristo*, there was a second period (Phase D) of infrequent translations into new languages, extending from the 1930s to the 1980s. For *Robinson Crusoe*, exceptionally, there was no such lull in translations: the narrative’s previous rate of translation

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Map 5 First periphery (three or more out of four novels, 1850–1930)



Map 6 Second periphery (one or two out of four novels, 1850–1930)

into new languages has continued unabated until 2012. For the others, however (and even to some degree for *Télémaque*, largely neglected since the nineteenth century), there was a minor resurgence of translation into new languages, 1980s–2010s (Phase E). The languages in question are, as we might expect, ever more widespread across the world's continents, and include an increasing number of 'minority' European languages, such as Basque, Frisian and Breton.

This analysis vindicates the usefulness of Moretti's model. A 'distant reading' of several novels in translation can reveal common features of the global 'system' of novelistic translation, which would remain invisible

if our analysis were limited to only one text in translation, or to a number of texts in only one language. There remain problems of interpretation. How do we explain the timing of these phases of translation, and the languages involved in the different phases? The explanation for Phase A seems fairly obvious: there was a unified literary market consisting mainly of north-west European languages, which ensured that a popular novel's first vogue in its original language was likely to be propagated into the others. (Note, though, the seven-year delay between the initial publication of *Don Quixote* in Spanish, outside the 'inner core' of this system, and its 'discovery' via translations into the core languages.) Phase B seems to follow clearly from Phase A: once a work's reputation was established in the core languages, translations were likely to follow, but at a more leisurely pace, into a set of semi-peripheral languages which were coming under the literary influence of the 'core'; hence translations into languages located largely further north, east, and south within Europe, and creeping across the Mediterranean. These phases, then, seem to map the limits of the European Enlightenment.

With Phase C, 1850s–1920s, we seem to enter a new dynamic. Irrespective of the length of time since their original publication, some of these popular narratives (not all) were taken up and translated rather quickly into new languages. And these were not only semi-peripheral European and Mediterranean languages already featuring in our translational history, but new ones. Peripheral or 'minority' languages of Europe were still central to the picture, now increasingly including those which had not had a major elite literary tradition in previous centuries, but had been largely languages of the peasantry (Czech, Norwegian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian). But we see also a strong trend of translations into languages of west, south and east Asia, and occasionally elsewhere: Africa, the Arctic, New Zealand. (We also see invented, artificial languages: Esperanto and Dilpok.) Phase C seems, then, to correspond to a new cultural situation: a phase of growing patriotic and cultural nationalist movements in languages across the world. This period, from the 1850s to the 1920s, was one in which increasing numbers of languages were being 'discovered' and offered as the basis of new nations, with concomitant attempts to elaborate national literatures and heritages. Our evidence suggests that – as with the earlier semi-peripheral phases – the translation of globally popular works of literature was an integral part of this process. New national literatures could be placed alongside and compared to other national literatures, within an overarching 'world literature'. This process was, I would argue, not a secondary one, to be entered into after the national literature had already been formed, but constitutive of the development of national

literature itself, taking place alongside and in dialogue with the formation of a ‘national heritage’ canon. The closeness of some translations in both time and place – the translation of *Robinson Crusoe* into two languages spoken in the Congo in 1927 and 1930, or into Malay in 1875 and both Sundanese and Javanese in 1879 – suggests emulation on a local scale: we will see more detailed examples later.

The absence of the subsequent wave of 1950s–60s national resurgences from our graph is perhaps due to the fact that the cultural-linguistic nationalist phases of these political nationalisms were often significantly older. Hence the first translations of ‘global mass texts’ into languages such as Arabic or Hindi had occurred long since. In the case of Arabic, this period saw an attempt to retranslate classic works of literature in accordance with more recent canons of style: hence new translations of *Télémaque* or the plays of Shakespeare appeared.⁷ These do not, however, register on our graph of first print translations into a given language: instead we see only the lulls in translation of Phase D. Finally, Phase E presumably corresponds to a rising interest in nationalist or ‘minority’-nationalist politics and cultures – for instance in the former USSR or in European regions such as Wales or Galicia – since the 1980s.

Limits of the Diffusionist Model: Télémaque in the Ottoman World

Having seen what Moretti’s diffusionist model can show us, let us consider what it cannot show. This entails narrowing our scope from the ‘distant reading’ hitherto pursued, but not all the way to a traditional ‘close reading’. Rather, I adopt a middling scope, a little narrower but similar in conception to that adopted by Isabel Hofmeyr in her survey of sub-Saharan African translations of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. I will investigate principally the spread of Fénelon’s *Les aventures de Télémaque*, through central and eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Mediterranean, and the Near East, supplemented with occasional examples from elsewhere.

As previously stated, the ‘distant reading’ model I initially adopted is based on plotting onto a graph or a map the *first known print translation into a given language*. Each element of this definition is open to question, as becomes apparent when we proceed to a closer level of analysis. Need we privilege *print* over other kinds of translation? Why should the date of the *first* translation (print or otherwise) be taken as our yardstick, instead of, for instance, number or frequency of different translations, or their likely diffusion within the language? What counts as a *translation*, as distinct from an adaptation, imitation, and so on? How do we define our *given language*,

particularly for a period when ‘national’ languages were themselves works in progress? And finally, how do we deal with divergences in the quality or quantity of data available for different languages or forms of transmission, such as discrepancies between what is ‘known’ to us and the likely reality?

In at least five languages of the Balkans and Near East, *Télémaque* appeared in manuscript versions before it did in print. In some cases, these translations preceded by a significantly long time the first print versions, which have been recorded in the graphs and maps above. In Romanian, a manuscript translation was made in 1772, thirty-five years before the first print version in 1818; in Ottoman Turkish, a manuscript translation existed in the late eighteenth century, well over a half-century before the first print translation in 1862; in Arabic, two manuscript translations were made in the 1810s, about fifty years before the print version in 1861–67; in Persian a manuscript version exists from the eighteenth century, perhaps a century or more before the print version of 1879–80.⁸ (For Serbian, however, the difference is probably fairly small: there is an undated version by a translator who lived 1766–1811; the other translator began work in 1809 and the work was printed in 1814.)⁹ The versions which were later printed may have circulated in manuscript form for some years, as seems to have been the case with Rifa‘a al-Tahtawi’s Arabic version, of which part had been made in the 1840s and approved for publication, long before its actual printing in the 1860s; and as was the case with the first Russian translation, made in 1734 and ordered to be printed by Catherine the Great in 1747.¹⁰ In 1949, a manuscript translation was even made into the liturgical language Syriac, which never saw a print version.¹¹ If manuscript translations – where they could be discovered, as they are harder to trace than print ones – were plotted on our maps and graphs, they might give a significantly different picture. This highlights the fact that literary contact between (for instance) Arabic, Ottoman and Persian preceded by many decades the major print publishing initiatives for non-religious books.

All of the Balkan, Mediterranean and West Asian languages with a print translation of *Télémaque* also had other versions. In fact, the only language of the region into which there was only a *single* translation of the novel was Syriac, the liturgical language: the others all had multiple print translations over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These retranslations involved shifts in genre as well as stylistic differences or abridgement – and, as we shall see, changing norms of what constituted the literary language. Translations into different kinds of verse were especially common across Europe, ‘responding to a need created all across Europe by the reading of *Télémaque* as an epic poem’.¹² Russian saw major competition between *Télémaque* translators in the late eighteenth

century, leading to at least five versions, including one in verse.¹³ Italian saw thirteen different printed translations between 1702 and 1843, three of them into verse (two *ottava rima* and one ‘verso sciolto’, free verse), as well as an opera and a ballet.¹⁴ Arabic saw four print versions from one published 1861–7 to 1912, one into rhyming prose (*saj*^c), one into verse, one a dramatic adaptation, and only one (a rewriting of the *saj*^c translation) in plain, unrhymed prose.¹⁵ Of four Greek print translations 1742–1865, one was in hexameter verse.¹⁶ This already makes it clear that *Télémaque*’s imprint on different literatures varied widely.

The variety of translations or versions of this one novel in so many different languages raises the issue of what actually constitutes a translation – and hence a data-point to be entered upon our graphs and maps. This is not a question answerable through a ‘distant reading’ alone, as it requires detailed study of the versions in question. It may well not be evident that a given work is in fact based on the novel – as with the performance of the dramatic version of *Télémaque* in Arabic, billed as *The Passion of the Ancients and the Love of Parents for their Children*.¹⁷ When, as is the case with this play, the versions involved major cuts and additions with no basis in Fénelon’s original, are we dealing with something we can even record as a ‘translation’? How do we account for the vogue for imitations or responses to a popular text? Many imitations were made of *Télémaque*, not just in the original French but also, for instance, in Dutch; while in Polish the novel is credited with spawning a whole genre of ‘adventure’ stories.¹⁸ An Ottoman Turkish writer was moved to write a ‘refutation’ of *Télémaque*, in which he offered traditional Islamic morals as an antidote to the European fashions propagated, as he saw it, by the novel.¹⁹ In Spanish, eighteenth-century versions of *Télémaque* became bound up with the rediscovery of *Don Quixote* as a Spanish classic, and debates around both the nature of epic and Spanish literature.²⁰ The *rayonnement* of the novel in each of these languages was remarkable, but also unpredictable. These varied local receptions could not be read off from the sort of graph-map combination I offered previously – any more than the diverse receptions of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* Hofmeyr reveals in different African languages could be read off from her tables of translations and dates.²¹

There are also difficulties in defining the parameters of a ‘language’: many of these translations were made while the process of constituting a modern, national literary language was still underway – and themselves formed important parts of that process. For *Télémaque*, we find translations into both classical and modern versions of Armenian and of Greek; and Romanian translations in both Roman and Cyrillic script. Alongside these we may place three Chinese translations of *Robinson*

Crusoe, into ‘Guangzhou dialect’, ‘Chinese’ and ‘Chinese (romanised)’; or one into Hindi and one into Urdu; or translations of *Monte Cristo* into both Ottoman Turkish (1871) and Karamanli (1882); or into Arabic (Cairo, 1871) and Judeo-Arabic (Tunis, 1889); or two into Norwegian, one of which (Kristiania, 1897) is listed as in literary ‘Bokmal’, the other (Chicago, 1891) not. In which cases do we count these as translations into distinct languages? I decided to count them as separate languages for the purposes of the graphs and maps, but this was an arbitrary choice.

Associated with this question of defining a language is that of attaching it to a particular territory. On the maps above I have generally placed each language roughly where a conventional relationship between a ‘nation’ and its ‘national’ language would dictate, or where (as far as I could judge or guess) the major community of speakers was located at the time. But while useful for establishing a basic relationship of core-periphery, along the lines of Moretti’s original map of *Don Quixote* in his *Atlas*, this does not necessarily represent very well the actual modes of book publication and circulation in the periods we are concerned with. Not only did translations in European languages circulate in the colonies;²² publishing and educated readerships were also highly diasporic, perhaps particularly – though not exclusively – for ‘new’ national languages still in the process of being constituted. Many of *Télémaque*’s early French editions were, we may remember, printed outside France; and some were printed inside France but with false imprints – Brussels, the Hague, and so on – since they were banned by Louis XIV.²³ On Map 7 I have indicated the translations of *Télémaque* into languages of the Balkans and central-eastern Mediterranean, up to the 1870s (I have not counted reprints of existing translations, of which there were also many). It gives some idea of the diasporic nature of publishing in these languages.

The dozen Italian translations, apparently all different, were published not only in the different Italian regional centres but also in France, Germany and the Netherlands: the first was in Leiden. Serbian, Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian and Persian all received their first translations in centres of the diaspora: Venice and the Habsburg centres of Vienna and Buda(-Pest) were, it seems, especially important for publishing in Balkan languages (as also for other languages of central and eastern Europe).²⁴ The imperial capital Istanbul was also important. Only later do we see new translations issued in Greek and Romanian within their ‘national’ territories. Arabic was more centred on the Arabic-speaking world itself, with all the editions in this period appearing in Beirut – although the first, al-Tahtawi’s, had actually been made in Cairo and the Sudan. We might also recall the first Arabic translation of *Robinson Crusoe*, the product of a missionary



Map 7 Print translations of *Téliemaque* into languages of the Balkans, Mediterranean and Near East, to 1880

press in Malta.²⁵ The Armenian translations were especially far-flung, as we might expect from a famously diasporic community: the first in New Nakhichevan (the Armenian suburb of Rostov-on-Don), the second and third in Venice, the fourth (with a parallel French text) in Paris. (The first Armenian translation of *Bélisaire*, in 1809, was printed in Madras.) Yet institutionally they were dominated by the Armenian churches, and especially the Catholic Mekhitarist Fathers, responsible not only for the Venice versions of *Téliemaque* but also the Paris one; the Rostov translation, on the other hand, was printed in an Armenian Apostolic (Orthodox), rather than a Catholic, monastery.

This diasporic picture, like the difficulty in distinguishing the borders of a ‘language’, serves to complicate the initial impression offered above of an orderly procession through a series of national languages linked to national territories. A further complication is offered by the fact the novel was sometimes translated via an intermediary language rather than directly from its original French. The first Romanian version and one of the Arabic manuscript ones were translated from the Italian; one Czech translation was made from the German.²⁶ Similar cases are recorded for

some of the other novels we have examined: the 1851 Bulgarian *Paul et Virginie*, translated from the Greek; the 1860 Hindi *Robinson Crusoe*, from the Bengali; the 1879 Javanese *Robinson Crusoe*, from the Malay (1875), which in turn was translated from the Dutch. In another way, though, this diasporic picture reinforces the diffusionist pattern we have seen: the expatriate publishing centres tended to be closer to the north-western European ‘core’ than the putatively ‘national’ territories.

What knowledge I have of (mainly Arabic) translations of four of the other novels mapped above – *Bélisaire*, *Anacharsis*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Paul et Virginie* – suggests that behind the data on first print translations there are similarly complex histories of multiple, many-formed translation and adaptation. *Robinson Crusoe* was first translated into Arabic in manuscript by the orientalist John Lewis Burckhardt in 1815 in Damascus; an abridged translation was published by Church of England missionaries in Malta in 1835; and Butrus al-Bustani published his version, *al-Tuhfa al-Bustaniyya fi l-asfar al-Kuruziyya*, with some significant additions, in Beirut in 1861.²⁷ *Bélisaire* – though never printed in Arabic – was translated in manuscript from the Greek by the Damietta Circle, who made one of the two manuscript Arabic *Télémaque* translations, in the 1810s.²⁸ Though *Anacharsis* was again never printed in Arabic, a translation seems to have been at least begun by members of Mehmed Ali’s translation project (one of whose luminaries, al-Tahtawi, was responsible for the first published Arabic *Télémaque* translation).²⁹ *Paul et Virginie* was translated four times, once in what seems a fairly literal version by Salim Sa‘b (*Riwayat Bul wa-Firjini*, Beirut, 1864); then into Egyptian dialect by Muhammad ‘Uthman Jalal (*al-Amani wa-l-minna fi hadith Qabul wa-Ward Janna*, Cairo, 1873); in a free adaptation by Muhammad al-Manfaluti, who famously knew no French and relied on an Arabic version supplied by someone else (*al-Fadila aw Bul wa-Firjini*, Cairo, 1923); and again by Ilyas Abu Shabaka (Beirut, 1933). These versions might then spawn further ones in other languages: the Indonesian translation of *Paul et Virginie* (2002) is of Manfaluti’s Arabic. Joachim Heinrich Campe’s rewriting of Defoe, *Robinson der Jüngere* (1779–80), was extremely popular in translation: a few of the *Robinsons* recorded in the data used above may turn out, on closer examination, to be derived from Campe.

The Interdependence of National and World Literature: Télémaque polyglotte

The interaction between translation into individual languages and a kind of comparative ‘world literature’ is most visibly performed in the editions

of *Télémaque polyglotte*. They might be compared to similar celebrations of a text's translational reach, such as the missionary reports, periodicals and exhibitions in which translations of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (and other Protestant literature, including Scripture) were proudly quantified.³⁰ There were at least three attempts during the nineteenth century: in 1812 Fleury de Lécuse, a pupil of the great orientalist Silvestre de Sacy, published a prospectus and appeal for subscriptions for a proposed edition. An octavo version would contain the French, Greek, Italian, Spanish, English and German; a quarto version would contain, in addition, Dutch, Portuguese, Russian, Polish and 'Illyrien' (probably Croatian), along with an 'Asiatic language', Armenian. The attempt may have been inspired by the edition of *Télémaque* issued the previous year, with Jean-Félicissime Adry's prefatory essay detailing and celebrating its many translations into the world's languages, on which I have drawn for data.³¹ In addition to Fleury's own polyglot abilities and connections, this project was enabled by two of his pupils in Paris, who were to provide the Polish and 'Illyrian' versions. A sample of a single passage printed in these languages (plus Latin and Classical Greek verses), on a fold-out table, was included with the prospectus, but apparently Fleury never got his required 200 subscribers, for the full editions were never published.³²

Instead, in 1830 a Lille bookseller issued an edition with parallel texts in French, Latin, English and Dutch, and in 1837, an edition in 'the most commonly used European languages', French, English, German, Italian and Portuguese, in parallel columns, was produced by the Paris bookseller Baudry.³³ These probably reproduced previous translations and seem to have been speculative ventures by men who knew the book market. There were also more homespun versions of the same practice, like the manuscript album Abdolonyme Ubcini was shown by a Russian diplomat in Istanbul in the 1840s or 1850s, with translations of *Télémaque*'s opening passage into 'seventeen or eighteen languages', of which he lists fourteen: Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Armenian, Kurdish, Georgian, Russian, Tatar, 'valaque' (Romanian?), Bulgarian, Albanian, 'syrienne' (Syriac?), Chaldean.³⁴ Translators' prefaces reference the range of other languages, especially neighbouring ones, into which *Télémaque* had been translated.³⁵ These examples demonstrate that the emergence of individual 'national' literary languages on the one hand, and of the notion of comparability and translation between languages within a kind of 'world literature' on the other, were not separate phenomena: rather they should be seen as intimately joined, each the conditions of the other's existence.

Alternative Patterns: Translations of Jurji Zaydan and Qasim Amin

The models hitherto presented have been Eurocentric ones. But this may be to a large extent a result of our starting-points, which are after all novels originally published in languages of northwestern Europe. In this section I apply a similar diffusionist model to two sets of texts originally published in Arabic, in Egypt, around the turn of the twentieth century.

Qasim Amin's two famous feminist works, *Tahrir al-mar'a* (1899) and *al-Mar'a al-jadida* (1900) had an initial vogue in languages of the Islamic world. Their initial wave of translations, from 1900 to 1908, takes in Persian (both books, 1900 and 1901), Urdu (*Tahrir al-mar'a*, 1903), Ottoman Turkish (*Tahrir al-mar'a*, 1908), and Tatar (both books, 1908). Straggling slightly came a Russian translation of *al-Mar'a al-jadida* (1912) and a second Ottoman translation of *Tahrir al-mar'a* (1913–14), then German and Malay translations of *Tahrir al-mar'a* (1928, ?1930). The picture is clearly dominated by the five languages of mainly Muslim countries, with only two European ones. The texts had then to wait until the 1990s–2000s for a revival, with English translations of *al-Mar'a al-jadida* (1995) and *Tahrir al-mar'a* (2000), a Spanish translation of *al-Mar'a al-jadida* (2000) and an Indonesian one of the same text (2003). All translations of either text are plotted onto Chart 8 and Map 8.³⁶

Zaydan's twenty-two historical novels were originally published in Arabic from 1891 to 1914: all their translations for which we have secure dates are plotted onto Chart 9.³⁷ Their initial vogue in translation, from 1903 to 1917, was again dominated by languages of the Muslim world, with either eight or eleven translations into Persian and three into Azeri Turkish in this period.³⁸ French and German are also present, but with only one translation each (1912, 1917), and another French one in 1924. Ottoman saw its first translation in 1911, but its vogue was really postwar, with three in the 1920s. Urdu also saw its first translation in 1923. Subsequently, Persian translations continued at an exceptionally high rate, with only slight lulls in the 1920s and 1970s, right up to 2008, bringing the total to fifty separate translations (ten are undated). There was a more general vogue of translations from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s: Spanish saw two translations in the 1940s, Modern Turkish three 1944–51, Portuguese one in 1951, Malay four 1949–67, Javanese three 1953–65, Urdu a further three 1955–67, Indonesian no less than ten 1955–65, Kurdish one in 1957. There was something of a lull in the 1970s, though Russian saw one translation in 1970 and Ukrainian one in 1974; but this was followed by a resurgence from the 1980s, continuing to

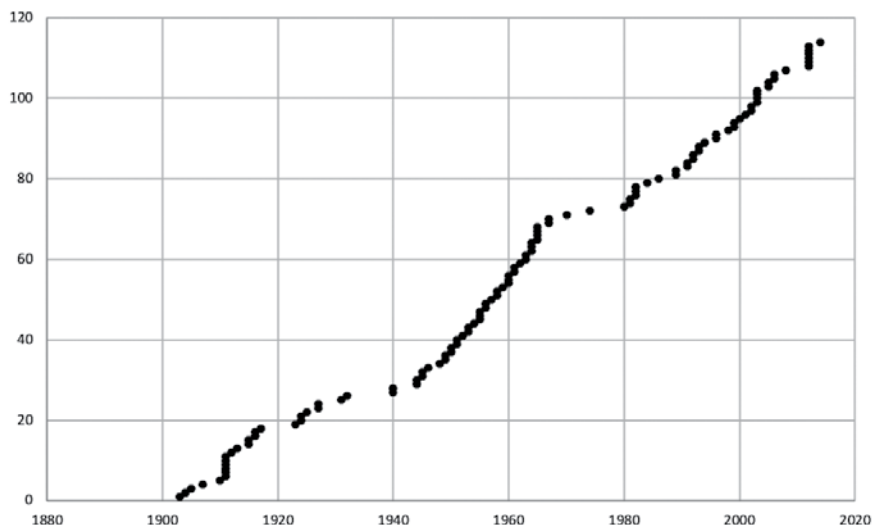


Chart 8 Translations of Qasim Amin's *Tahrir al-mar'a* and *al-Mar'a al-jadida*



Map 8 Translations of Qasim Amin's *Tahrir al-mar'a* and *al-Mar'a al-jadida*

the present: Uighur saw a wave of seven translations 1982–2000, Chinese six 1980–91, Malay two further translations in 1981 and 1982, Urdu a further translation in 1989, French a further two in the 2000s and Azeri and Kurdish each a further one, Turkish three 2001–14, Uzbek one in 2005 (plus a possible second) and English six in 2012 (a set sponsored by the Zaidan Foundation). Again, the picture is dominated by languages of

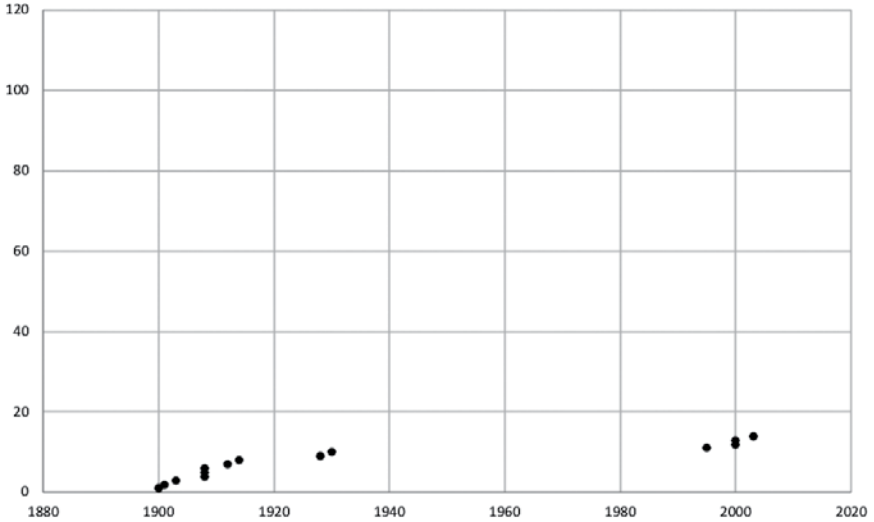


Chart 9 Translations of Jurji Zaydan's historical novels (excluding reprints)



Map 9 Translations of Jurji Zaydan's historical novels

mainly Muslim countries, above all Persian. All translations are listed by language under notional locations on Map 9.

As is clear from the maps, this indicates a rather different kind of translational diffusion, in which European languages played a part, but one overshadowed by languages of a certain 'Muslim world'. This 'world' was, from the late nineteenth century onwards, constituted as a new kind of entity – as

Cemil Aydin has argued – by modern communications and media, travelling intellectuals and, as these examples make clear, translation.³⁹ Writings such as Jurji Zaydan’s and Qasim Amin’s were of interest to some Europeans, like the orientalists Oskar Rescher and Ignaty Krachkovsky (who made the German and Russian translations of Qasim Amin). The presence of Europe in this history reminds us that this ‘Muslim world’ existed within a wider world dominated in many ways by European capital, power and culture. But, as works offering a fictionalised account of Islamic civilisation (Zaydan’s novels) and a paternalist feminism adapted to Muslim society (Amin’s tracts), they clearly appealed far more to publics in Islamic countries undergoing revivalist and reformist movements similar to those in their land of origin, Egypt. The ‘Muslim world’ incarnated by these exchanges then gives a rather different picture of translational diffusion to that offered by the spread of western European novels. With only these two rather dissimilar examples, it is harder to draw as firm conclusions about the way this translational system functioned as was possible for the Eurocentric system. But the data on Charts 8 and 9 suggest that both sets of writings shared an initial vogue between 1900 and 1917, something of a revival in the 1920s–30s, and another (not unlike the revival of many European novels) in the 1980s–2000s. Only Zaydan’s novels, however, enjoyed a really sustained vogue in the 1940s–60s, and then mainly in Persian.

Conclusion

This study has firstly demonstrated the relevance and usefulness of the ‘distant reading’ method pioneered by Franco Moretti for the study of literary translation. By forgoing a close reading of texts, stripping out much other important data, and simply plotting out the dates and languages of first known print translations of ‘translingual mass texts’, it is possible to see significant regularities in the way the literary translation system worked, for novels originating in northwestern Europe. The method can also be applied to a rather different translational system centred on a ‘Muslim world’, albeit with substantial European involvement: it is not a Eurocentric method *per se*, though it is probably best adapted to examining phenomena and data within Eurocentric systems. A somewhat closer analysis of one ‘mass-text’, *Télémaque*, in the Ottoman world broadly conceived – the Balkans, eastern Mediterranean and Near East – reveals some of the things that the initial method cannot account for. By drawing on a range of secondary literature on translations and adaptations, it becomes clear that behind the initial set of data-points lies a messy variety of different literary and linguistic situations, with languages and nations in

the process of formation, diasporic publishing, competing versions of the same text, and so on. This does not, I think, invalidate the insights derived from the more abstract initial model, but it does help to qualify them and to suggest further questions to ask of similar sets of data.

It remains to be seen to what extent the patterns revealed for these European novels, or for and Zaydan's and Amin's writing, are reproduced for other comparable sets of texts. Does the model hold up even for different examples of European novels over the same time-period? Does the pattern change somewhat (as the example of *Monte Cristo* tends to suggest) for works published from the mid-nineteenth century onwards? Analysis might also be pushed further back in time. If we are seeking the very first mass-texts to be printed in translation on a truly European or a global scale, we should probably look not at novels but at religious literature: both sacred writings and the tracts, devotional works, and prayer-books (as well as works like *The Pilgrim's Progress*) that make up Strauss's 'Christian "canon"' of works popular across Christian languages of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁰ They should probably be divided, in fact, into separate Catholic and Protestant – and very probably Orthodox – canons, with substantial overlap. These works might in fact be easier to trace than novels because – unlike most of the texts dealt with here – their translations tended to be produced by a small number of centrally organised missionary and church organisations: the Propaganda Fide of Rome, the Mekhitarist order, the British and US Protestant missionary societies. These institutions, as well as state-run projects like Mehmed Ali's, offer the additional advantage of relatively good information on the sizes of print runs. This may give us at least some sense of the relative sizes of readerships, an element which I have not even attempted to factor in here due to the almost total lack of data.

As for further examples originally published in non-European languages, and taken up within largely non-Eurocentric translational systems, these represent perhaps the most interesting cases for study. Along with studies of the circulation of people and of course of manuscript writings, they could help us to define more precisely the contours of the 'Muslim world' of reforming or revivalist intellectuals, and obtain some sense of relative synchronicities, and of pathways and nodes. Were Cairo and Tabriz more tightly connected, for instance, than Jakarta and Bombay? Did links connecting them tend to run through particular mediating centres, such as the imperial capital Istanbul? Some kind of quantitative survey, of translations and if possible other connections, would go a long way towards answering these questions. The precise modalities of connection or disconnection, on the other hand, could only be revealed by detailed study of the texts and the milieus in which they moved.

Notes

1. Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900* (London: Verso, 1998); Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005).
2. Peter Hill, 'The Arabic adventures of *Télémaque*: Trajectory of a global Enlightenment text in the *Nahḍah*', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 49: 3 (2018): 171–203.
3. Moretti, *Atlas*, 171–4.
4. Johann Strauss, 'Who read what in the Ottoman Empire (19th–20th Centuries)?', *Middle Eastern Literatures* 6: 1 (2003): 39–76.
5. The data was collected April–July 2016, and checked in October 2017: as worldcat is constantly being updated, further relevant data may since have been added. Other sources used were Strauss, 'Who read what'; for *Télémaque*, those cited below and Alexandra Sfoini, 'Transfert des idées par la voie de la traduction pendant l'ère révolutionnaire grecque (1797–1832)', *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 12 (2015): 47–74; for *Robinson Crusoe*, Hermann Ullrich, *Defoes Robinson Crusoe. Die Geschichte Eines Weltbuchs* (Reisland, 1924); Philip Babcock Gove, *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction: A History of Its Criticism and a Guide for Its Study, with an Annotated Check List of 215 Imaginary Voyages from 1700 to 1800* (London: Holland Press, 1961); W. S. Lloyd, *Catalogue of Various Editions of Robinson Crusoe and Other Books by and Referring to Defoe* (Philadelphia, 1915); Nathan van Patten, 'An Eskimo Translation of Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe". Godthaab, Greenland, 1862–1865', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 36: 1 (1942): 56–8; for *Paul et Virginie*, Joseph Marie Quérard, *La France littéraire, ou Dictionnaire bibliographique des savants, historiens et gens de lettres de la France, ainsi que des littérateurs étrangers qui ont écrit en français, plus particulièrement pendant les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, 12 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1827–64), 8 (1836): 366–7; Francesca Orsini, *The History of the Book in South Asia* (Routledge, 2016).
6. The uncertainty is due to difficulty identifying which languages are represented by the position of dates on Moretti's map in the *Atlas*.
7. Hill, 'The Arabic adventures', 201; Margaret Litvin, *Hamlet's Arab Journey: Shakespeare's Prince and Nasser's Ghost* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 75–85.
8. Béla Köpeczi, 'Le *Télémaque* en Europe centrale et orientale', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 4: 1 (1 January 1977): 1–18; 12–13 (Romanian); Arzu Meral, 'The Ottoman reception of Fénelon's *Télémaque*', in Christoph Schmitt-Maaß, Stefanie Stockhorst and Doohwan Ahn (eds), *Fénelon in the Enlightenment: Traditions, Adaptations, and Variations* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014), 211–36 (Ottoman, Persian); Hill, 'The Arabic adventures', 176–81.

9. Biljana Stikić, 'La réception et l'utilisation des *Aventures de Télémaque* en Serbie', *Documents pour l'histoire du français langue étrangère ou seconde* 31 (1 December 2003): 65–76.
10. Jean-Félicissime Adry, 'Liste des principales éditions', in François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon, *Les aventures de Télémaque*, vol. 1 (Paris: L. Duprat-Duverger, 1811), lxxvii–cxvii, cxcvi.
11. Adam Carter McCollum, 'In Syriac: Les Aventures de Télémaque', *Hmmlorientalia* (blog), 20 March 2013, <https://hmmlorientalia.wordpress.com/2013/03/20/in-syriac-les-aventures-de-telemaque/>, accessed 1 November 2017.
12. Volker Kapp, 'Fénelon en Allemagne', in Henk Hillenaar (ed.), *Nouvel état présent des travaux sur Fénelon*, vol. 36 (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 137.
13. Köpeczi, 'Le *Télémaque*', 16; Jean Breuillard, 'Масонство и русская литература XVIII – начала XIX вв., édité par V. I. Saxarov', *Revue des études slaves* 74: 4 (2002): 900–4; 902.
14. Adry, 'Liste des principales éditions'; [Augustin-Pierre-Paul Caron and Jean-Edmé-Auguste Gosselin], *Recherches bibliographiques sur le Télémaque: les Oraisons funèbres de Bossuet et le Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, 2nd edn, revised (Paris and Lyon: Librairie classique de Perisse frères, 1840); *Giornale de'letterati*, vol. 91 (Pisa: Gaetano Mugnani, 1793), 286.
15. Hill, 'The Arabic adventures', 182–200.
16. Köpeczi, 'Le *Télémaque*'; Dimitar Vesselinov, 'L'aventure didactique du *Télémaque* de Fénelon en Bulgarie', *Documents pour l'histoire du français langue étrangère ou seconde* 35 (1 December 2005): 27–39; 2–3.
17. Hill, 'The Arabic adventures', 199.
18. Köpeczi, 'Le *Télémaque*', 15; Waldemar Janiec, 'Les *Aventures de Télémaque* de Fénelon au XVIIIe siècle en Pologne', *Kwartalnik neofilologiczny* 31: 2 (1984): 149–59; 158–9; Compare the Ladino and Ottoman 'imitations' of *Monte Cristo*: Strauss, 'Who read what', 51, 62.
19. Meral, 'The Ottoman reception', 221.
20. Juan Francisco García Bascañana, '*Télémaque* en Espagne (1699–1799). Réception, traductions, malentendus', *Documents pour l'histoire du français langue étrangère ou seconde* 31 (1 December 2003): 4, <https://dhfiles.revues.org/1362> (accessed 31 July 2018).
21. Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of 'The Pilgrim's Progress'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 240–3.
22. See, for instance, Patricia A. Ward, 'Fénelon and classical America', in Christoph Schmitt-Maaß, Stefanie Stockhorst and Doohwan Ahn (eds), *Fénelon in the Enlightenment: Traditions, Adaptations, and Variations* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 171–91; Márcia Abreu, 'The Adventures of Telemachus in the Luso-Brazilian world', in Christoph Schmitt-Maaß, Stefanie Stockhorst and Doohwan Ahn (eds), *Fénelon in the Enlightenment: Traditions, adaptations, and variations* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 193–209.

23. Jacques Le Brun, 'Les Aventures de Télémaque: destins d'un best-seller', *Littératures classiques* 70: 3 (1 December 2009): 133–46.
24. Köpeczi, 'Le Télémaque'.
25. Peter Hill, 'Early translations of English fiction into Arabic: The Pilgrim's Progress and Robinson Crusoe', *Journal of Semitic Studies* LX: 1 (2015): 177–212.
26. Köpeczi, 'Le Télémaque', 7, 13; Hill, 'The Arabic Adventures', 177–8.
27. Hill, 'Early translations', 195–208.
28. Peter Hill, 'The first Arabic translations of Enlightenment literature: The Damietta circle of the 1800s and 1810s', *Intellectual History Review* 24: 2 (2015): 209–33.
29. See Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, *Tarikh al-tarjama wa-l-haraka al-thaqafiyya fi 'asr Muhammad 'Ali* (History of translation and the cultural movement in the age of Muhammad Ali) (Cairo: Dar al-fikr al-°Arabi, 1951), appendix 3, 49 (no. 78); appendix 4, 52.
30. Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan*, 65.
31. Adry, 'Liste des principales éditions'.
32. Fleury de Lécuse, *Essai d'un Télémaque polyglotte, ou Les aventures du fils d'Ulysse* (Paris: Eberhart, 1812).
33. F.-J. Vandenbossche, *Télémaque polyglotte, français, latin, anglais, hollandais, avec les traductions en regard, suivi de morceaux originaux de chacune des quatre langues ci-dessus, aussi avec les traductions en regard, et d'autres morceaux non traduits, par F.-J. Vandenbossche, . . .* (Lille: Bronner-Bauwens, 1830); Fénelon, *Télémaque polyglotte, contenant le français, l'anglais, l'allemand, l'italien, l'espagnol, et le portugais* (Paris: Casimir, 1837).
34. Abdolonyme Ubicini, *La Turquie actuelle* (Paris: L'Hachette, 1855), 457; Meral, 'The Ottoman reception', 211.
35. Hill, 'The Arabic adventures', 177–80, 184; Köpeczi, 'Le Télémaque', 414 (Bulgarian translation).
36. Data from worldcat, plus Hafiz Zakariya, 'Sayyid Shaykh Aḥmad Al-Hādī's contributions to Islamic Reformism in Malaya', in Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk and Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim (eds), *The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia: Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 203–23.
37. Data from the bibliography to Thomas Philipp, *Jurji Zaidan and the Foundations of Arab Nationalism: A Study* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 420–26; supplemented from worldcat.
38. The uncertainty is due to the ambiguity of some dates between Hijri and Shamsi.
39. Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).
40. Strauss, 'Who read what', 47.