The Arabic Adventures of *Télémaque*: Trajectory of a Global Enlightenment Text in the *Nahḍah*[*]

Peter Hill
University of Oxford
peter.hill@chch.ox.ac.uk

Abstract

The Marquis de Fénelon's internationally popular didactic narrative, *Les aventures de Télémaque*, went through a remarkable number of metamorphoses in the *Nahḍah*, the Arab world's cultural revival movement of the long nineteenth century. This article examines two early manuscript translations by Syrian Christian writers in the 1810s, the rhymed prose version by Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī in the 1860s; its rewriting by Shāhīn ʿAṭiyyah in 1885; and Saʿdallāh al-Bustānī's musical drama of 1869, the basis for performances later in the century by the famous actor Salāmah Ḥijāzī. Placing *Télémaque*'s Arabic trajectory within its global vogue in the Enlightenment suggests ways of reading the *Nahḍah* between theories of world literature and 'transnational mass-texts', and more specific local histories of translation and literary adaptation. The ambiguity of *Télémaque*, its hybrid and transitional form, was important to its success in *milieux* facing analogous kinds of hybridity and transition – among them those of the Arab *Nahḍah*.

Keywords: *Nahḍah*; translation; Enlightenment; Fénelon; adaptation; world literature; Arab theater; Beirut; Cairo

Introduction

In 1815, a rich Syrian merchant of Damietta in Egypt, Bāsīlī Fakhr, completed his Arabic translation of a European didactic narrative. Seeking a phrase to summarise the work's qualities in his preface, he hit on this singular description: "in short, it is a universal physician, to treat the human race." The book translated was *Les aventures de Télémaque, fils d'Ulysse*, by the French Marquis de Fénelon. The translator's description was far from inappropriate. In 1815, the book was the most popular work of fiction in France, and had already been translated into at least sixteen languages since its first publication in 1699. It was a favourite of Enlightenment figures -- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, d'Alembert, William Godwin, Catherine the Great of Russia – and pioneers of Enlightenment writing in languages such as Polish, Hungarian and Serbian. Bāsīlī's 1815 translation was not even its first into Arabic: it had already had a translation three years previously, by another young Syrian Christian living in Istanbul. Over the next hundred years, to 1912, it would appear in Arabic in many guises: a translation into rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) by the famous Egyptian educator Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī, serialized in a newspaper in the 1860s; its rewriting into unrhymed prose in 1885; a musical drama that was a favorite of the Egyptian stage in the 1880s-90s, with the great Salāmah Ḥijāzī in the title-role; and a 1912 translation into metrical verse. Meanwhile, its translation into other languages, European and non-European, continued apace: it was available in at least another seven, including Ottoman Turkish, Persian and Japanese, by the end of the nineteenth century. The universalism of Bāsīlī's description was apposite.

[*] I am grateful to Marilyn Booth, Raphael Cormack and Adam Mestyan for commenting on earlier drafts of this article, and for sending me references and sources. I also benefited greatly from the comments of participants in the "Migrating Texts" workshop at Edinburgh University in December 2015. I would also like to thank the editors and the two anonymous readers of the *Journal of Arabic Literature* for their valuable comments.

This essay tells the story of the nineteenth-century Arabic metamorphoses of Fénelon's work against the larger background of its European and near-global vogue. The literary history of Arabic, particularly that of the nineteenth-century *Nahḍah*, has too often been written in terms of only two spaces – the Arab and the European (often meaning the French). Where it has gone beyond these, it has generally ventured only into the Middle Eastern or Eastern Mediterranean region. A case like *Télémaque*, or those of other "translingual mass text[s]"[1] calls this limitation into question. It invites, instead, the use of a framework such as that suggested by Franco Moretti for the spread of European novels in translation. In this model, literary translation diffused novels first through north-western European "core" languages and then "peripheries," in Europe and beyond, in a series of waves.[2] The first printed translations of *Télémaque*, as I show in detail elsewhere, do indeed share this pattern with those of *Don Quixote* (Moretti's original example), and of many other very popular European narratives such as *Robinson Crusoe* or *Paul et Virginie*.[3] As Moretti says, the literary translation system, looked at in this way, is a rigid one, subjecting even most of Europe to a narrow, north-western European core.[4] Arabic is assigned a particular place in the hierarchy of world literature which this translational system creates: a place above Japanese, but below Armenian. Such a model, though revealing important regularities, has its limits. It cannot take into account the substantial changes made in translation, nor the successive metamorphoses that a single original may undergo in a given language. [5] The latter point is especially evident in the case of the successive adaptations of *Télémaque* into Arabic. In this study, I keep the global, comparative, Eurocentric model offered by Moretti in tension with the literary history of the work's specific trajectory within Arabic. Both levels, global and local, were in play as *Télémaque* passed through successive versions, from manuscript to print to stage.

Viewed in this way, the case of *Télémaque* has implications for how we think about the Arab *Nahḍah*, echoing the suggestions of scholars such as Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, Stephen Sheehi or Orit Bashkin, who have placed this Arab movement within a wider context of world literature and culture. [6] Rather than a wholly Arabic-specific phenomenon or a simple acculturation to Western European intellectual culture, I argue we should see the *Nahḍah* as the unique local variant of a global process of Enlightenment, patriotic awakening, and the propagation of "civilization." Translation and adaptation of works and themes popular in Europe, but also globally encouraged Arab writers and readers to place themselves in new ways: Arabic

---

1 Isabel Hofmeyr's expression: *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of 'The Pilgrim's Progress'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 12–13.

2 *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998), 171-74.

3 I discuss these and other instances in my chapter, "Translation and the Globalisation of the Novel: Relevance and Limits of a Diffusionist Model," in *Migrating Texts: Translation around the Late Ottoman Mediterranean*, edited by Marilyn Booth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).

4 *Atlas of the European Novel*, 187.

5 See Hill, "Translation and the Globalisation of the Novel"; and for other responses to Moretti with respect to Arabic literature: Mohamed-Salah Omri, "Local Narrative Form and Constructions of the Arabic Novel", *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 41, no. 2–3 (Spring/Summer 2008): 244–63; Samah Selim, "Fiction and Colonial Identities: Arsène Lupin in Arabic," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 13, no. 2 (August 2010): 208–10.

6 Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Stephen Sheehi, "Arabic Literary-Scientific Journals: Precedence for Globalization and the Creation of Modernity," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25, no. 2 (2005), 438–448; Orit Bashkin, "Why Did Baghdadi Jews Stop Writing to their Brethren in Mainz?—Some Comments about the Reading Practices of Iraqi Jews in the Nineteenth Century," in *History of Printing and Publishing in the Languages and Countries of the Middle East*, edited by Philip Sadgrove (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

literature could be seen within world literature or global bourgeois civilisation, and as distinct from and comparable to other literatures, French or Greek or Ottoman. Additionally, *Télémaque*'s pedagogical theme and didactic uses foreground the *Nahḍah* as a movement of the *tahdhīb*, cultivation, of civilised subjects via the inculcation of new practices of reading, listening and behaving, a theme familiar from scholars working in the wake of Timothy Mitchell's *Colonising Egypt* – though we should in my view be wary of viewing these practices as emanations of a single model of colonial modernity. [7] Rather, I propose to see the *Nahḍah* as the product of emerging groups – initially new elites, later new middle classes – in the Arab world itself, who deployed and combined both local and imported discourses and practices, for their own ends, though in a context of increasing European power.

At the same time, the many Arabic versions of *Télémaque*, beginning in the 1810s, suggest we follow the lead of scholars such as Hilary Kilpatrick, Bernard Heyberger and Dana Sajdi in seeing the *Nahḍah* not only as a movement extending from circa 1870 to the early twentieth century, but as a far longer process. [8] As the successive stages of *Télémaque*'s adaptation show, there were many historical variations within this process even over the nineteenth century, with major shifts in the social composition of the movement as well as the politico-economic conditions in which it operated. The early translators of the 1810s faced the issue of how to frame *Télémaque* for an audience unaccustomed to this genre and form, as evidenced by the early prefaces. They also had to decide how to deal with paganism – a problem not unknown to Christian European translators of *Télémaque*. Yet only with al-Ṭahṭāwī in the 1860s do we see a substantial attempt to recast paganism within an Arab and Islamic framework; and this is combined with an attempt to rework the narrative's form and genre, in his use of *saj'*, rhyming prose. Together, these show a heightened awareness both of cultural difference and of the means that may be employed to overcome it. The later rewriting of al-Ṭahṭāwī's version in 1885, minus the *saj'*, reveals changes in taste and notions of readable style, with a preference for simpler, less mannered prose; while the dramatic vogue of the turn of the twentieth century demonstrates both a radically new form – the drama – and a very different kind of audience: the text now had to be made stageable, singable, watchable, rather than readable, and elements of old colloquial folktales were introduced. These variations cannot be flattened into either a unitary model of *Nahḍah* translation or a simple chart of the global spread of the novel.

Télémaque, though it became so widely-read in a variety of languages, guises and adaptations, was originally written for an audience of one. Its author, the Marquis de la Motte-Fénelon, the learned and aristocratic Catholic archbishop of Cambrai, had been appointed tutor to the grandson of France's King, Louis XIV, second in line for the throne. He composed a work

7 Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt*, 1805-1923 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). On literary translation, see Shaden M. Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), and Michael Allan makes a related argument for the relation of Arabic reading practices to "world literature" in his recent *In the Shadow of World Literature: Sites of Reading in Colonial Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). For more substantial comments on this trend and on the *Nahḍah*, see my "Utopia and Civilisation in the Arab Nahda" (University of Oxford D.Phil. diss., 2016), ch. 3 and conclusion.

8 Hilary Kilpatrick, "From *Literatur* to *Adab*: The Literary Renaissance in Aleppo around 1700," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 58, no. 3 (2006), 195–220; Heyberger, "Livres et pratique de la lecture chez les chrétiens (Syrie, Liban) XVIIe - XVIIIe siècles," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 87-88 (1999), 209-223; Dana Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

designed to educate his royal charge on morality and good kingship, in the easily-digestible form of a prose narrative fitting into the well-known story of the *Odyssey*. In the tale, Telemachus, Odysseus's son, sets out from Ithaca in search of his father. Voyaging around the Mediterranean, he encounters similar dangers and adventures to those Odysseus himself faced, but always under the guidance of his tutor, the wise Mentor, who is in fact Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom, in disguise.

A manuscript copy of the narrative was, if we are to believe its author, stolen by a servant, and published without Fénelon's knowledge in Amsterdam. This occurred shortly after another of Fénelon's works, the *Maximes des saints*, had been condemned by both the Pope and the French King as suspiciously unorthodox: *Télémaque* was instantly seized upon by many as a work of opposition to Louis XIV and his absolutist policies. But beyond this immediate politicized reception, it was also widely appreciated as a masterpiece of French writing, and a fine moral book for the instruction of the young. It combined different sorts of cultural capital almost perfectly: French culture, Classical heritage, an accessible if ornate prose style, a moral pedagogical orientation, its author's Christian credentials, and political relevance.[9] One source of its success in the literary and translational market that was constituting itself within and beyond Enlightenment Europe was perhaps its very ambiguity: combining vivid descriptions of pagan rituals with a hidden Christian message;[10] politically moderate enough that it could be appreciated by so-called "Enlightened absolutist" monarchs like Catherine the Great of Russia and Frederick the Great of Prussia – but also radical enough that it could be espoused by the Encyclopedist d'Alembert and, later, Robespierre.[11]

This points, moreover, to a deeper congruity between the work's form and the changing structure of the societies within which it was read. Both in Europe and beyond, aristocratic or 'tributary' orders based on fixed hierarchies of rank and divine rule were being challenged but also enriched by more mobile, individualised, networks of bourgeois commerce and culture. *Télémaque* is a transitional work between the rigid canons of Classicist literature and the emerging, more individualistic genre of the novel. Telemachus sets off on his varied adventures all around the Mediterranean, with the impression that he is making his own way in the world like the hero of a *Bildungsroman*; yet the reader is always reassured that he remains under the watchful eye of Mentor, who is also Minerva, a representative of paternal and divine authority. The narrative, in its many versions across various languages, thus offered a space in which the crucial social tension between hallowed order and emergent desires could be imaginatively negotiated and ultimately reconciled. The young could learn to be ambitious, individualistic, questioning – within the limits of sense, duty and morality. The ambiguity of *Télémaque*, its hybrid and transitional form, was important to its success in *milieux* facing analogous kinds of hybridity and transition – among them, as we shall see, those of the Arab *Nahḍah*.

9 Jacques Le Brun, "Les *Aventures de Télémaque* : destins d'un best-seller," *Littératures classiques* 70 (2009): 133–46.

10 Alain Lanavère, "Les deux antiquités dans *Les Aventures de Télémaque*," *Littératures classiques* 70: 43–57.

11 Henk Hillenaar, *Le secret de Télémaque* (Paris: PUF, 1994), 8. Its political uses were very various: see e.g. Béla Köpeczi, "Le *Télémaque* en Europe centrale et orientale," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/ Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 4, no. 1 (1977): 1–18; Andrew Mansfield, "Fénelon's Cuckoo: Andrew Michael Ramsay and the Archbishop Fénelon," in *Fénelon in the Enlightenment: Traditions, Adaptations, and Variations*, edited by Christoph Schmitt-Maaß, Stefanie Stockhorst, and Doohwan Ahn (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014), 77–97.

Télémaque in Manuscript

The first two translations of *Télémaque* into Arabic were made within a few years of each other – one in Istanbul around 1812, and the other in Damietta in 1815. The closeness in date suggests that the translators may have known of each other's efforts, and been spurred on by competition: the Damietta translator certainly had family connections in Istanbul, although there is no direct evidence of a link. Both translations were made by Christian Arabs of Syrian origin, but resident outside Syria in cosmopolitan port cities: Istanbul the Ottoman capital, and Damietta, then the principal port of Egypt. The Istanbul translator, Īlyās ibn Farajallāh Ḍāhir al-Ḥalabī al-Bizānṭī, was a Syrian Catholic Christian from an Aleppine family, and only twenty-one years old. The Damietta translator, Bāsīlī Fakhr, was a wealthy merchant with trading connections across the Mediterranean, and patron of a significant translation project based in his palatial house in Damietta. This Damietta Circle was responsible for the first major wave of Arabic translations of writings of the European Enlightenment.[12]

Télémaque had an obvious place in such a project, alongside works on natural sciences and astronomy, ancient and recent history, and other works of fiction: Marmontel's *Bélisaire*, itself written in emulation of *Télémaque*, and the "Tales of Abū Bakr," a collection related to the *Arabian Nights*, retranslated in Damietta from Greek into Arabic. Neither of these two *Télémaque* translations was ever printed – although Īlyās's seems to have circulated in a number of manuscript copies – and they have been largely overlooked in accounts of the Arab *Nahḍah* or translation movement. Īlyās's is a complete translation of Fénelon's French, though with frequent abridgements and frequent additions. Bāsīlī's covers only half of Fénelon's narrative, and was made from the Italian, with the help of an Italian, "Kansīlīrī al-Sīnyur Juwānī Lāwājītī" (perhaps Giovanni Lavagitti).

Īlyās and Bāsīlī both wrote introductions, which cover many of the same themes. Both open with a conventional, Christian *basmalah*: "In the name of God, the Living and Eternal" (Bāsīlī); "In the name of God, the Everlasting, the Eternal, the Unending, in Whom I trust" (Īlyās). This confirms the impression that both were intended for a Christian audience.[13] Both introduce Fénelon as the author of *Télémaque*, making it clear that he was a bishop – and Bāsīlī adds an account of the book's origin for the use of the French prince, as a continuation of the Iliad and Odyssey. They expand on the virtues of the book, both stressing that it is fit for all classes of people. Thus Bāsīlī:

لانه اما للملوك فهو الارشاد الفطون فى سياستهم شعوبهم * مستمدون منه معرفة كم عليهم من الالتزامات المفروضة من الشرايع لحماية الوطن وسعادة رعاياهم (...) وهكذا الشعوب ايضاً بمطالعتهِ قد تتعلم درجة الخضوع والوقار * والاعتبار الواجب عليهم نحو السيادة الملوكية * سيما عندما تكون مزينة بشعار الشريعة متوطدة على اسّ العدل الذى هو الافتخار الوحيد للملوك *

> For it is astute guidance for kings (*mulūk*) in the government (*siyāsah*) of their peoples (*shuʿūb*), [who may] derive from it the knowledge of how many duties are imposed upon them by the laws (*al-sharāʾiʿ*), for the protection of the homeland (*waṭan*) and the happiness of their subjects (*raʿāyā*) [....] the peoples also, by perusing it, may learn the degree of submission, gravity and respect that is their duty towards the kingly power, especially when it is adorned with the emblem of law (*al-sharīʿah*) and [built]

12 See Peter Hill, "The First Arabic Translations of Enlightenment Literature: The Damietta Circle of the 1800s and 1810s," *Intellectual History Review* 24, no. 2 (2015): 209–33.

13 See ibid., 218-9, for evidence of Christian readership.

solidly upon the foundation of justice, which is the only pride of kings.[14]

He then goes on to explain its specific virtues for farmers, merchants, craftsmen, fathers and mothers, concluding: "The purpose, in brief, is like that of a universal physician, to treat the human race."

And Īlyās thought the text:

كافياً لتثقيف سيرة الشيوخ وتهذيب الشبّان * وتربية الاحداث منذ سنّ الطفولية وضبطهم بعنان ، وانهُ يفيد الملوك والامرا والولاه * ويرشد الاحبار والروسا والقضاه (...) * وبالاختصار اقول * انهُ نموذجٌ مفيدٌ كافٍ مسعفٍ لكل انسان * فى اية حالةٍ ورتبةٍ ومقامٍ كان *

> sufficient for the cultivation (*tathqīf*) of the conduct of old men and the education (*tahdhīb*) of youths, and the upbringing (*tarbiyah*) of the young from the age of childhood and regulating (*ḍabṭ*) them with care; and that it is useful to kings, princes and rulers; and guides the learned, leaders (*ruʿasāʾ*) and judges [...]. In short, I say, it is a useful, sufficient and helpful model (*numūdhaj*) for any person, in whatever condition, rank or station he may be.[15]

Both the political and the pedagogical usefulness of the text is here foregrounded, as well as the – perhaps ambiguous – universality of its appeal. These comments echo those of translators into other languages: a 1733 German translation destines the work for "persons of all conditions," while its first Hungarian translation, while claiming its primary users would be noble courtiers, also recommends it to 'other people, of common or low condition.'[16] Such definitions of the work and its audience can be seen as first attempts to define the text in terms of genre: it is a mirror for both princes and their subjects.

Both translators also relate how they encountered the book and decided to translate it. Bāsīlī writes:

من حيث اننى دايماً كنت اسمع من السادات الاوروبيين محبّى الدرس والمطالعة * المدح التام عن مولف تيليماكوس بن اوديسيئوس وانهُ تسليتهم الخصوصية * بل مصباحهم الفريد في كل الاداب الطبيعية *

> I always used to hear from the European gentlemen who were lovers of study and reading, perfect praise for the author of Telemachus the son of Odysseus, and that it was their particular amusement, even their only lamp in all natural morality (*kull al-ādāb al-ṭabīʿiyyah*).[17]

It had already been translated into Italian and Greek,

فالان لكيلا تكون طايفتنا بنى العرب دون باقى الطوايف فاقدة التمتع بهذا الروض العظيم بل الكنز الجسيم * قد تقدمت لترجمتهِ وتصريح عباراته

14 Fénelon, "Muṣādafāt Tīlīmākūs ibn Ūlīsah (What Happened to Telemachus, Son of Ulysse)," trans. Bāsīlī Fakhr (Damietta, 1815), Bibliothèque Orientale, Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut: ms. 1512, 2-3. Cf. footnotes translated from the Italian, on the duties of kings and peoples: ibid., 42–44; Fénelon, *Le avventure di Telemaco*, 1744, 59. In all quotations I have preserved the original orthography and grammatical constructions, which sometimes deviate considerably from those of Modern Standard Arabic.

15 Fénelon, "Qiṣṣat Tīlīmāk ibn Ūlīs al-Ḥakīm (The Story of Télémaque, Son of Ulysse the Wise)," trans. Īlyās ibn Farajallāh Ḍāhir (Istanbul, 1812), Bibliothèque Nationale de France: ms. Arabe 6243, f2v.

16 Köpeczi, "Le *Télémaque* en Europe centrale et orientale," 5 (German), 9 (Hungarian). Ramsay's "Discours sur le poème épique," often included in editions of *Télémaque*, calls it "universel par son utilisation."

17 "Muṣādafāt Tīlīmākūs," 1; Bāsīlī's house in Damietta was a common point of call for European traders, diplomats and other visitors: see Hill, "The First Arabic Translations," 211-212.

> And now, in order that our people (*ṭā'ifah*), the Arabs (*banī al-ʿArab*), should not be below (*dūna*) the other peoples, deprived of the enjoyment of this great garden, or vast treasure, I set out to translate it and make its phrases clear[18]

And Īlyās writes:

فقد اُستخرج الى اللغة اليونانية والايطاليانية والارمنية والبولغارية حتى صار مشتهراً فى كل امةٍ * ومقبولاً ومعتبراً عند كل جنسٍ وملةٍ * فلما تامّلتُ ذلك تحرّكتُ من قبل الغيرة الجنسية لاستخراجهِ الى لغتنا العربيه *

> it was copied (*ustukhrija*) into the Greek, Italian, Armenian and Bulgarian languages, so that it became famous among every nation (*ummah*); and accepted and respected by every race (*jins*) and community (*millah*). And when I contemplated that, I was moved by the zeal of race (*al-ghayrah al-jinsiyyah*) to copy (*istikhrāj*) it into our Arabic language.[19]

In both cases, then, we can see the effects of linguistic (if not proto-national) emulation at work: if other peoples possessed their *Télémaque*, so must we. This operated, for Bāsīlī and Īlyās, within the framework of languages spoken by Christians in the Mediterranean and Ottoman Empire. Again, we find parallels among Eastern European translations of *Télémaque*.[20] The act of translating such an internationally popular work thus placed Arabic – and other languages – within a broader world literature, comprising different national (or proto-national) literatures to be seen as distinct but also comparable.

Both Īlyās and Bāsīlī also go some way towards introducing their readers to the unfamiliar world of Classical mythology – a theme which would be developed much further by al-Ṭahṭāwī. Īlyās, in a second introduction, explains briefly the story of the Odyssey and the place of Telemachus's adventures within it, followed by a table explaining the names of the Greek deities. Īlyās evidently felt a little uneasy, as he was moved (like subsequent Arabic translators) to justify the inclusion of these pagan elements in his introduction:

ويعلم ان الالهة المعبّر عنها عند فلاسفة اليونان لا حقيقة لها اصلاً ولا بيان * (...) كآلهة الحكمة التى رافقت تيليماك (...) فليست هى بالهٍ مستتر ولا بانسانٍ مشتهر * بل هى الحكمة ذاتها

> Be it known that the gods referred to by the Ancient Greek philosophers have absolutely no truth or plainness (*bayān*) to them [...] the Goddess of Wisdom who accompanied Telemachus […] is not a concealed god nor a known man; rather, she is Wisdom herself.[21]

Bāsīlī appears to have felt no particular qualms on this score, but he did supply copious marginal notes and endnotes. These are almost all taken from his Italian original: indeed, they

18 "Muṣādafāt Tīlīmākūs," 3–4.

19 "Qiṣṣat Tīlīmāk," f2v. Bāsīlī Fakhr is referred to as "khalīl al-jins al-ʿArabī" in the introduction to another Damietta translation: see Yūsuf Zaydān, "Makhṭūṭāt ʿaṣr al-Nahḍah al-ʿArabiyyah: Risālah fī al-ʿulum al-ḥadīthah," *al-ʿArabī al-ʿilmī*, no. 1 (n.d.): 42.

20 See the citation from the preface to the first Czech translation, in Köpeczi, "Le *Télémaque* en Europe centrale et orientale," 7; Anna Szyrwińska, "Polish Translations of Fénelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus* in the 18th and Early 19th Century", in Schmitt-Maaß et al. eds., *Fénelon in the Enlightenment*, 267; and the wide range of languages in which *Télémaque* was known to Bulgarian readers before its first translation into Bulgarian: Dimitar Vesselinov, "L'aventure didactique du *Télémaque* de Fénelon en Bulgarie," *Documents pour l'histoire du français langue étrangère ou seconde*, no. 35 (1 December 2005): 27–39.

21 "Qiṣṣat Tīlīmāk," f1r–2v.

permit us to identify it with some confidence, as he preserves the numbering of the footnotes of the 1744 Venice edition. Based largely on an earlier French edition, these notes not only gloss Classical personalities and places, but also offer a "key" to Fénelon's story in terms of seventeenth-century European politics: King Sesostris of Egypt is Philip IV of Spain, Pygmalion is Oliver Cromwell.[22] Bāsīlī adds his own elucidatory mythological references, and alters an Italian note to identify Fénelon's Pelusio as his own home-town of Damietta.[23] This reminds us that while Arabic readers may initially have found the world of Classical myth more foreign than their European contemporaries, this world was in another sense strikingly local to audiences located in the Eastern Mediterranean. Arabic translations could relocalise it in this region: in addition to their "keys" in European history, figures like Sesostris and ancient cities such as Tyre could call to mind contemporary Egyptian rulers or Syrian towns.

Télémaque in Print

These two early translations remained in manuscript and were not, as far as we can tell, read beyond a select circle of Christian Syrians. It was with the publication of al-Ṭahṭāwī's translation, serially in a Beiruti newspaper, from 1861-67 (and in 1867 also in book form) that Fénelon's work became widely known in Arabic. The translator, Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī', was one of the great figures of the Arab *Nahḍah*, author of the famous travel-narrative *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* and holder of many high-ranking posts in the Egyptian educational bureaucracy.[24]

Al-Ṭahṭāwī's translation was begun or at least conceived during the first flourishing of his career, as head of the Egyptian Languages School under Egypt's ruler Mehmed Ali in the 1840s – at least, a 'first volume' of the *Télémaque* translation appears in a list of books approved for printing on the state press at Bulaq, of this period.[25] But in 1850 Mehmed Ali died and was succeeded by his grandson ʿAbbas: al-Ṭahṭāwī fell from favour and was exiled to Khartoum in the Sudan, where he continued to work on his translation. In his introduction to the translation he expressed his horror at the "tedium" and unhealthiness of "that hellish region," where his only enjoyment was in translating *Télémaque*.[26] Recalled and restored to high office in 1854, al-Ṭahṭāwī perhaps recast the translation a final time before its ultimate publication between 1861 and 1867 under the title *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk fī waqāʾiʿ Tilīmāk*, as a serial in the Beiruti newspaper *Ḥadīqat al-akhbār* ("The Garden of News"), which was then pioneering the publication of French novels in Arabic translation under the editorship of the poet and novelist Khalīl al-Khūrī.[27]

---

22 For the French source of the notes, see Jean-Félicissime Adry, introduction to Fénelon, *Les aventures de Télémaque* (Paris: Louis Duprat-Duverger, 1811), 1: lxxxiv–lxxxvii.

23 "Muṣādafāt Tīlīmākūs," 18, 180, 66, 192, 168, 297; 64 (Pelusio); Fénelon, *Le avventure di Telemaco*, 73.

24 See Rifāʿah al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric, 1826-1831*, trans. Daniel Newman (London: Saqi, 2004), 29-68; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 68-83.

25 *İşbu fihrist mahruse-i Mısır'da mahkeme civarında kâin kütübhanede mevcud olan kitabların adedi ile isim ve şöhretlerini ve her birinin fiatını beyan eder* (Bulaq, n.d. [1845?]), 10. My thanks to Johann Strauss for helping translate this catalogue.

26 *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk fī waqāʾiʿ Tilīmāk*, Facsimile reprint of Beirut 1867 edition (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub wa-l-Wathāʾiq al-Qawmiyyah, 2002), 4.

27 Al-Sayyid Sāliḥ Majdī, *Ḥilyat al-zaman bi-manāqib khādim al-waṭan: sīrat Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī*, edited by Jamāl al-Dīn Shayyāl (Cairo: Maktabat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1958), 42–43. Basiliyus Bawardi, "First Steps in Writing Arabic Narrative Fiction: The Case of *Hadīqat Al-Akhbār*," *Die Welt des Islams* 48, no. 2 (July

This mixed genesis of *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, between loyal service to Egypt's rulers and exile and disgrace, echoes the ambiguous reception of Fénelon's work in Europe, between supporters of "Enlightened despotism" and revolutionary opponents of all absolutists. Some scholars have built on the Sudan episode a suggestion that al-Ṭahṭāwī's translation was a quasi-oppositional political act.[28] He clearly felt considerable resentment at his exile; a translation of a text condemning despotic rulers could be read as a form of revenge. As Shaden Tageldin has suggested, he may have seen the good king Sesostris of Egypt as a metaphor for Mehmed Ali, and his incompetent son as a metaphor for ʿAbbas.[29] Still, there was nothing overtly oppositional about publishing a translation of *Télémaque* in itself: not only was al-Ṭahṭāwī's project approved for printing by the Egyptian state in the 1840s, but *Ḥadīqat al-Akhbār* received a hefty subsidy from the reigning Egyptian Khedive, Ismail, midway through its serialisation of *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk* in the 1860s.[30] Al-Ṭahṭāwī's introduction in fact dedicates the translation to Ismail, and praises him in fulsome terms – recalling the many dedications to princes in translations of *Télémaque* in Eastern Europe.[31] It includes several poems (some entitled *waṭaniyyāt*) in praise of the Egyptian nation, the ruler, and his army;[32] and passages comparing Ismail favourably to the kings of ancient Egypt as well as the early Caliphs, and Ulysses and Telemachus.[33] It is worth recalling that critiques of despotic government could be accommodated, in this period, within entirely loyalist attitudes to the Egyptian or the Ottoman state: just rule was, after all, traditionally enjoined upon governors, and this constituted one major area of common ground between a European work such as *Télémaque* and mirrors for princes in older Arabic traditions.[34] Like the earlier translators, al-Ṭahṭāwī refers to the work's usefulness for both governors and subjects: it "contains fine notions (*maʿānī*), such as advice to rulers and kings; as well as improvement of conduct (*sulūk*) for all people."[35] All the same, ambiguities could persist, regardless of al-Ṭahṭāwī's intentions: the text might well be read by some as critical of Khedivial or Sultanic government, just as it had been in Europe.

Also like the earlier translators Bāsīlī and Īlyās, al-Ṭahṭāwī in his introduction situates *Télémaque* within a wider context of world literature: it has been translated into "many languages" and become current in "many lands."[36] The most relevant ones for al-Ṭahṭāwī, though, are not those of the Christian Mediterranean and Balkans, but the more Islamic

2008): 170–95. The translation was then printed in book form (Beirut, 1867).

28 Daniel Newman, introduction to Rifāʿah al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 54; Matti Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO and London: Three Continents Press, 1997), 6.

29 Shaden M. Tageldin, "Fénelon's Gods, Al-Ṭahṭāwī's Jinn: Trans-Mediterranean Fictionalities," *Philological Encounters* 2, no. 1-2 (2017): 139-158.

30 Order dated 18 November 1864, cited in Adam Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism: The Ideology and Culture of Power in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 166.

31 *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, 2–3, 6–7. Bela Köpeczi, "Le *Télémaque* en Europe centrale et orientale," 17; cf. René Faille, "L'influence du *Télémaque* en Hollande sur l'éducation des Princes," in *Fénelon: mystique et politique, 1699-1999 : Actes du colloque international de Strasbourg pour le troisième centenaire de la publication du* Télémaque *et de la condamnation des* Maximes des saints, edited by François-Xavier Cuche and Jacques Le Brun (Paris: Champion, 2004), 481–96

32 Ibid., 7–22.

33 Ibid., 2–3.

34 For attempts by al-Ṭahṭāwī and others to reconcile constitutionalist ideas with firm centralised rule, see Peter Hill, "Ottoman Despotism and Islamic Constitutionalism in Mehmed Ali's Egypt," *Past & Present* 236, no. 2 (November 2017); Hussein Omar, "The Rule of Strangers: Political Thought in Khedival Egypt, 1882-1919" (University of Oxford D.Phil. dissertation, 2017).

35 *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, 29.

36 Ibid., 29.

Ottoman Turkish and Arabic: he writes that he has not seen a previous Turkish or Arabic translation of the work, but has heard of the Turkish translation by the Ottoman statesman Yusuf Kamil Pasha.[37] Al-Ṭahṭāwī's two introductions maintain a striking, sustained interest in Greek mythology within an Arab-Islamic context.[38] Al-Ṭahṭāwī references the sheer strangeness of the matter he is translating at the start of his first introduction, in the conventional *ḥamdalah*:

الحمد لله الذي اظهر عجائب المخلوقات (...) وابدى غرائب الموجودات

> Praise be to God who has demonstrated the marvels (*ʿajā'ib*) of created things […] and made clear the strange things (*gharā'ib*) of existing beings[39]

And with his second introduction it is clear what he is referring to: the elements of pagan Greek mythology contained in Fénelon's narrative. This introduction is largely devoted to explaining these elements, and arguing for the permissibility of translating them. This is accomplished largely by a form of syncretism, which explains Greek pagan myths within a wider frame of reference that also includes Islamic beliefs. Al-Ṭahṭāwī often argues elsewhere in favour of the compatibility or identity of Islamic ideas and practices with European ones;[40] the novelty here is that he extends the remit of his syncretism to encompass Greek paganism, albeit refracted through a European prism. Thus the multiplicity of gods or spirits in Greek myth is related to the multiplicity of the *jinn* and *ʿafārīt*. Demi-gods, born of unions between gods and humans, are compared to those born of unions between *jinn* and humans (here he cites al-Damīrī's *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*, and its explanation of Quranic references to creatures such as Hārūt and Mārūt). On this basis he argues that the Greeks' Hercules and the Arabs' Alexander/Dhū al-Qarnayn were one and the same: they were both the offspring of a human and a *jinnī* or spirit, and both are said to have opened the Straits of Gibraltar.[41]

Some aspects of Greek *mīthulūjiyā*, as he calls it, are thus given Islamic sanction. Al-Ṭahṭāwī points out, though, where the Greeks went wrong: in their considering such spiritual beings, or great human individuals, or heavenly bodies, to be *gods*.[42] This led to idol-worship – which is explained not as a specifically Greek or European heresy, but an almost universal practice: the ancients learned it from the founder of Nineveh, but it was also present among the natives of America when the Europeans "discovered" them.[43] He then argues that the Greek *mīthulūjiyā* has "outer and inner senses" (*ẓawāhir* and *bawāṭin*), and can thus be taken as simply "indications and symbols" (*ishārāt* and *rumūz*).[44] Thus he can defend his own strategy of translating pagan elements without extrapolating their meaning (*takhrīji-hā*) or emending them (*taʿdīli-hā*), by insisting on their insignificance: "the meagre light of their candle" is too feeble to need extinguishing. These pagan elements are merely an introduction

37 Ibid., 6. For Yusuf Kamil's translation, made in 1859 and published in 1862, see Arzu Meral, "The Ottoman Reception of Fénelon's *Télémaque*," in Schmitt-Maaß et al. eds., *Fénelon in the Enlightenment*, 215.

38 For a more detailed analysis of these interactions between Islam and Greek mythology, see Tageldin, "Fénelon's Gods, Al-Ṭahṭāwī's Jinn."

39 *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, 2. In Īlyās and Bāsīlī, the *ḥamdalah* had been in terms of Wisdom (*al-Ḥikmah*) and Reason (*al-ʿAql*) respectively - perhaps alluding to the central role of Minerva.

40 See Youssef Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State* (London: Routledge, 2003), 5.

41 *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, 24–25. Again he cites an Arabic authority, Ibn Iyās's *Nashq al-azhār fī ʿaja'ib al-aqṭār*. He later likens Télémaque's relationship to Mentor to that between Moses and Khiḍr: 28. Cf. his discussion of Alexander and Dhū al-Qarnayn: *An Imam in Paris*, 133–4.

42 *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, 25.

43 Ibid., 26.

44 Ibid., 26–27.

(*madkhaliyyah*) to the literary or moral material (*al-adabiyyāt*): readers should not feel any anxiety (*hamm*) or sorrow (*ḥuzn*) at them, any more than they do at the poetry of the Arab *jāhiliyyah* (elsewhere, he refers to Ancient Greek myths as "the *jāhiliyyah* of the Greeks").[45]

For all that, al-Ṭahṭāwī – unlike Bāsīlī and Īlyās – does not generally go as far as using the term "god" (*ilāh*) for the French *dieu*. Instead, he draws on the vocabularies of Islamic philosophy and Sufism to describe Calypso, in the introduction:

كالبسه الشهيرة بانها من الجواهر الروحانيه وانها من العقول الاناثى وانها جنية او هاروتيه معدودة عند اليونان من الربات المدبرات ومن العقول العلويات

> Calypso, famous as one of the spiritual essences (*al-jawāhir al-rūḥāniyyah*), the female intelligences (*al-ʿuqūl al-anāthā*), a female *jinnī* or *Hārutī*, reckoned by the Greeks as one of the female commanding lords (*al-rabbāt al-mudabbirāt*), and spiritual intelligences (*al-ʿuqūl al-ʿalawiyyāt*)[46]

It seems that al-Ṭahṭāwī was both fascinated by and rather suspicious of the strangeness of Greek pagan myth – and he was not alone, for Īlyās had offered a defence of the pagan references in similar terms (as symbols or metaphors). This reaction of mingled curiosity and unease was not confined to the Arab world. As Alfred Lombard has argued, Fénelon's imagination tended to "carry him beyond the limits of Christian orthodoxy": his work can be seen as opening "the way to a poetic reconciliation of all religions in a common adoration of divinity and nature."[47] *Télémaque* in particular – doubtless against the intentions of its author, a devout Catholic bishop – could be read in a way that encouraged religious questionings and doubts. Fénelon's former patron, Bossuet, saw the danger: he feared that "the brilliant fictions that the mythology of the ancients has transmitted [...] more often served, in youth, to lead the imagination astray, and to open the heart to the seduction of the passions, than to inspire […] grand ideas."[48] The warning would be repeated by the French Catholic writer Jean-Joseph Gaume, in his attempt to ban the teaching of pagan classics in Church schools in the mid-nineteenth century;[49] while the Anglo-Spanish writer Blanco White recorded that *Télémaque*, with its vivid descriptions of pagan sacrifices, gave rise to his "first doubt of the truth of Christianity," as a child of eight.[50] Al-Ṭahṭāwī had perhaps felt, and resisted, the pull of similar ideas. As he had pointed out earlier in his famous travel-narrative: "one who wishes to delve into the language of the French, which includes something of philosophy" must "acquire a solid grasp of the Book [Quran] and the Sunna, so that he will not be deluded by this [study of French], nor slacken in his belief – otherwise his certainty will be lost (*ḍāʿa yaqīnuhu*)."[51]

---

45 Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ Bārīz*, 1st ed. (Būlāq: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Khudaywiyyah, 1834), 154; idem., *al-Taʿrībāt al-shāfiyah li-murīd al-jughrāfiyā* (Bulaq: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Khudaywiyyah, 1834), 2: 48.

46 *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, 28. (The inconsistent use of *tāʾ marbūṭah* in this passage reproduces the original.) See also the gathering of the gods on Olympus, 249ff.

47 Alfred Lombard, *Fénelon et le retour à l'antique au XVIIIe siècle*, (Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l'Université, 1954), 5.

48 Louis François de Bausset, *Histoire de J.-B. Bossuet: évêque de Meaux, composée sur les manuscrits originaux* (J. A. Lebel, 1814), 2: 353–4.

49 Jean-Joseph Gaume, *Lettres à Monseigneur Dupanloup, évêque d'Orléans, sur le paganisme dans l'éducation* (Paris: Gaume frères, 1852), 181; idem., *La Révolution, recherches historiques sur l'origine et la propagation du mal en Europe, depuis la Renaissance jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Gaume et J. Duprey, 1856), 12: 160–1.

50 *The Life of the Rev. Joseph Blanco White: Written by Himself; with Portions of His Correspondence* (J. Chapman, 1845), 1: 18.

51 *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz*, 122; translation adapted from Tageldin, *Disarming Words*, 117.

The most remarkable aspect of the text of al-Ṭahṭāwī's translation is his sustained transformation of the whole of Fénelon's text into *sajʿ*, rhyming prose. This was not the translator's first or most obvious choice: he had considered, he says in his introduction, a rather freer form, with the addition of "suitable bits of poetry," "maxims and proverbs."[52] In the end, though, he retained a strange fidelity to the French: he changed very little of substance, and neither added nor omitted entire sections: usually he translated one of Fénélon's phrases rather faithfully, then added another of similar meaning after it, for the rhyme. Sasson Somekh has argued that the use of *sajʿ*, alongside al-Ṭahṭāwī's use of synonymous pairs and parallelism, and removal of the distinctive features of Fénelon's dialogues, amount to a general rendering of the text into "the basic norms of late Classical Arabic prose."[53] Yet while *sajʿ* titles and introductions were obligatory for most literary genres in Arabic, the systematic use of rhymed prose throughout the entire work was far less common: largely restricted, in fact, to the Quran itself and the *maqāmah*. How do we explain this choice?

Some of the reasons for this unusual choice may be found within the wider difficulties that translators and readers had in categorising *Télémaque* in terms of genre, and thus on finding a form for their translation. The work is often, now, regarded as a novel, but this was still a new, suspect, "low" genre to many in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: for Bossuet, *Télémaque* was a mere "Roman": "peu sérieux et peu digne d'un prêtre."[54] In France, debate about the text's generic nature continued through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, into recent times.[55] Meanwhile, Volker Kapp has suggested that *Télémaque* was a success in Germany in part because it was high-minded and serious enough to avoid the general condemnation of novels as frivolous.[56] *Télémaque*'s defenders, like the Chevalier de Ramsay in his *Discours sur le poème épique*, often cast it not as a novel but a prose epic, a worthy successor to the Odyssey and the Aeneid. For translators across Europe, this view of *Télémaque* required them to translate it, not into prose but into verse: "trying to fit the work into the rules of the epic, defined by poetics as a work in verse."[57] Al-Ṭahṭāwī was engaged in a similar quandary over placing *Télémaque* between high and low literature: in his introduction, he puts it in a category of "devised" or "invented things," alongside "the Ḥarīrian *maqāmāt*" – but differentiates these sharply from popular tales such as those of *Alf laylah wa-laylah* or Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan, whose subjects are "defective."[58] We may see al-Ṭahṭāwī's choice, not of verse but of *sajʿ*, as part of a wider pattern of translators wishing to cast *Télémaque* as high literature: the point of reference in his case being, not verse epic, but the Ḥarīrian *maqāmah*, written entirely in *sajʿ*.

This choice of *sajʿ* does not seem to have been universally popular – for in 1885 a reworked

52 *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, 23.

53 Sasson Somekh, "The Emergence of Two Sets of Stylistic Norms in the Early Literary Translation into Modern Arabic Prose," *Poetics Today* 2, no. 4 (1981): 197.

54 Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, ed. Claude Lequeux, *Oeuvres de messire Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet* (Paris : Antoine Boudet, 1788), 15: 527.

55 See Emmanuel Bury, "Situation du *Télémaque* : du projet pédagogique à la fortune littéraire," in Cuche and Le Brun eds., *Fénelon: mystique et politique*, 533–48; Philippe Sellier, "La résistance à l'épopée : *Les Aventures de Télémaque*," *Littératures classiques* 70: 33-41.

56 Volker Kapp, "Fénelon en Allemagne," in *Nouvel état présent des travaux sur Fénelon*, edited by Henk Hillenaar (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 135.

57 Kapp, "Fénelon en Allemagne," 137.

58 *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, 28–29. This classification and valuation of *Télémaque* was repeated later by Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyyah wa-ghayru-hā," in *al-Aʿmāl al-kāmila li-l-Imam Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAmarah, vol. 3 (Beirut: al-Muʾassasah al-ʿArabiyyah li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, 1972), 49–51.

version of al-Ṭahṭāwī's translation appeared in Beirut, under the title *Waqā'iʿ Tilīmāk*, by the Syrian Christian writer and teacher Shāhīn ʿAṭiyyah.[59] As Arzu Meral has noted, his translation, although it nowhere acknowledges its predecessor, simply abridges al-Ṭahṭāwī's version – but in a singular way, for his main object was to eliminate *sajʿ* as zealously as al-Ṭahṭāwī sought to introduce it. This produces a text which often reads as more "faithful" to the French than al-Ṭahṭāwī's version, with its added rhyming phrases. ʿAṭiyyah strips out al-Ṭahṭāwī's embellishments, to give a text in simple unrhymed prose.

But fidelity to the French was not ʿAṭiyyah's aim, for he excises from al-Ṭahṭāwī 's version words that had quite closely translated Fénelon's original, and fails to put back others which al-Ṭahṭāwī had omitted;[60] while he also removes whole sections which are present in the French, but which he apparently judged repetitive.[61] Stylistic norms were changing: the readable style of the 1880s was smoother and less ostentatious than al-Ṭahṭāwī's *sajʿ*. This points the way to the early twentieth century, when a modernist like Jurjī Zaydān would denounce *sajʿ* and parallelisms as outmoded, and recommend a stripped-down style in imitation of Abbasid writers like Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. [62]

Télémaque on Stage

But we are getting a little ahead of ourselves, for the next major event after the appearance of al-Ṭahṭāwī's translation occurred much earlier than ʿAṭiyyah's translation. In July 1869, the first Arabic dramatic version of *Télémaque* was performed in Beirut. The script had been adapted from Fénelon's work by Saʿdallāh al-Bustānī, a scion of the famous Bustānī family, and the play was performed by pupils at the Madrasah Waṭaniyyah, founded by Buṭrus al-Bustānī in 1863.[63] The play would later go on to great success on the Egyptian stage from the 1880s to the 1900s, entering the repertoire of famous Syrian troupes like those of Sulaymān al-Qardāḥī and Salāmah Ḥijāzī.[64]

Télémaque was moving into a new genre of Arabic writing for stage performance, and encountering new kinds of audience: this required more radical changes than any made in the print or manuscript translations. Many were similar to those made in other dramatic adaptations: Saʿdallāh's published version, *Riwāyat Tilīmāk* ("The Play [or Tale] of Télémaque"), cuts Fénelon's narrative considerably to fit into five scenes, beginning with *Télémaque*'s dalliance with Calypso, similarly the main focus of many dramatic adaptations in other languages.[65] Many of Saʿdallāh's other alterations clearly answered the demands of the

59 On ʿAṭiyyah (not to be confused with his son, Jurjī Shāhīn ʿAṭiyyah), see ʿUmar Rizā Kahhālah, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn: tarājim muṣannifī al-kutub al-ʿArabiyyah* (Beirut, 1957), 4: 293, and his obituary in *al-Niʿmah*, March 1913, 788-792.

60 For instance, compare Fénelon, *Les avantures de Telemaque, fils d'Ulysse* (Amsterdam: Wetsteins, 1725), 55; *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, 87; Shāhīn ʿAṭiyyah, *Waqāʾiʿ Tilīmāk*, (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Lubnāniyyah, 1885), 35–6.

61 For instance, *Mawāqiʿ al-aflāk*, 51–53; *Waqāʾiʿ Tilīmāk*, 19. ʿAṭiyyah's translation totals only 439 pages, as against al-Ṭahṭāwī's 792.

62 Jurjī Zaydān, *Tārīkh ādāb al-lughah al-ʿArabiyyah*, vol. 4: *al-Nahḍah al-akhīrah* (Cairo: Dār al-hilāl, 1914), 269.

63 Cf. Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, *Al-Masraḥiyyah fī al-adab al-ʿArabī al-ḥadīth 1847-1914* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt, 1956), 52. For what little is known about Saʿdallāh, see Kahhālah, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn*, 4: 216. He appears in a photograph of "literary men of Beirut in 1871," in Zaydān, *Tārīkh ādāb*, 4: 81.

64 The play was printed as *Riwāyat Tilīmāk* (Beirut: Maṭbaʿat al-maʿārif, 1870); another edition (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Hindīh, 1897), is identical except for the use of Persian letters in Greek characters' names: my thanks to Marilyn Booth for lending me a copy.

65 Bruno Forment, "Fénelon's Operatic Novel: Audiovisual Topoi in *Télémaque* and Their Representation in

stage: Jupiter's voice speaks from behind the scenery, and Télémaque and Mentor have a long melodramatic parting scene. In many of these respects Saʿdallāh was probably dealing with challenges faced by other adaptors of *Télémaque* for the stage, and in similar ways.

But in other aspects of his treatment (and selection) of the episodes, we find locally-specific features. There are first his obvious uses of different Arabic literary genres and tropes. From the very first "opening chant" of the play it is obvious that we are in an Arabic cultural world: this metered verse, probably sung in performance, expands on its theme of love with familiar, even stereotyped imagery from the Arabic poetic repertoire: moons (*badr, hilāl*) and wine (*mudām, rāḥ al-kuʾūs*).[66] Soon after, Calypso is referring to her nymphs as "maidens of the *jinn*" (*ʿadhārā al-jinn*) and "weeping over the traces" of Ulysses (*wa-abkī ʿalā al-atlāl ḥubban faqadtuhu*), in an evocation of one of the most classic themes of early Arabic poetry.[67] The two kings, Idoménée and Ulysses, are supplied with ministers who answer them with the phrase "to hear is to obey" (*samʿan wa-ṭāʿatan*) like their counterparts in *Alf laylah wa-laylah*.[68] When Télémaque and Hippias fight, they duel not only with swords, as in Fénelon's French, but also with capping verse couplets reminiscent of the tourneys of the old Arabic poets;[69] the mutual insults of Calypso and Neptune also smack of poetic *hijāʾ*.[70]

Most strikingly, Saʿdallāh adds a fifth scene after the four derived from Fénelon. This is of his own invention, and its whole structure derives from Arabic folktale and myth. After parting from Mentor, Télémaque arrives in Ithaca, heralded by a prophetic dream. He comes to Ulysses and Penelope's court disguised as a wandering seer (*ʿarrāf*), and offers riddles and prophecies about their lost son, using numeromancy according to the Arabic alphabet.[71] He demands of Jupiter whether Télémaque is alive or dead, and is answered dramatically by "a voice from behind the stage" that he is alive. Finally, he reveals himself as Télémaque and is welcomed by his parents. Despite the French and Ancient Greek derivation of the material, and indeed the relative newness of the stage-play in Arabic, Saʿdallāh's adaptation embeds the international classic *Télémaque* deeply within multiple Arabic traditions. His version draws on "high" as well as popular and oral literature; and on all three modes of Arabic writing: metered verse, plain prose and *sajʿ*.[72]

Besides these features which bring Fénelon's story clearly within the canons of Arabic literary art and storytelling, we also find elements which answer to preoccupations of the particular milieu and timing of the adaptation: Beirut in the 1860s. In one episode, Mentor makes peace between King Idoménée and his enemies. The latter – the "Dauniens" in Fénelon's text – become the "barbarians" (*barābirah*) in Saʿdallāh's: they inhabit the mountainous hinterland of Idoménée's city, Salente.[73] Idoménée requires of these barbarians an extortionate tribute: they take up arms and arrive *en masse* at the city gates.

It is not hard to find in this episode (though of course it is partly derived from Fénelon) an

Opera," in Schmitt-Maaß et al. eds., *Fénelon in the Enlightenment*, 365–75; German and Hungarian versions in Köpeczi, "Le *Télémaque* en Europe centrale et orientale," 9–10.

66 *Riwāyat Tilīmāk*, 4–5.
67 Ibid., 5; 6.
68 Ibid., 51, 110.
69 Ibid., 68–71.
70 Ibid., 44–45.
71 Ibid., 115–6, 126.
72 Meral, "Ottoman Reception," 230, calls it a "verse adaptation," but this is inexact.
73 See Fénelon, *Avantures de Telemaque*, 207, 208: "ces Sauvages", "ces barbares."

echo of recent events in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. In 1840, commoner rebels against high taxes and conscription had come down from the Mountain to the outskirts of Beirut to negotiate with representatives of Emir Bashīr al-Shihābī.[74] In 1860-1861, sectarian violence in Mount Lebanon had come very close to spreading to Beirut itself, and Saʿdallāh's kinsman, Buṭrus al-Bustānī had addressed an impassioned plea for peace to his countrymen in his broadsheet *Nafīr Sūriyyah* ("The Syrian Clarion"). It is in this light that we should read Mentor's appeal to the two representatives of the "barbarians" before the gates of Salente, as performed in the school Buṭrus ran, just eight years later:

ايجوز ان تفتكوا بجميع اليونانيين ما هو ذنب الشيوخ والنساءِ والاطفال والعمي والعرج والمقعدين (...) كيف تطيقان بكاءَ وعويل اخوتكما وكيف تهدمان ما بناهُ الالهة (...) ارجعا حالاً الى قومكما وردَّاهم الى جبالهم الشامخة البهية ولا تعوداهم على سفك دم الابرار

> Is it right for you to slaughter all the Greeks? What is the crime of the old men, the women, the children, the blind, lame and crippled? […] How can you bear the weeping and wailing of your brothers? How can you destroy what the gods have built? [...] Return now to your people (*qawm*) and get them to go back to their lofty and beautiful mountains, and not return to shed the blood of the pious[75]

The issue of barbarism versus civilization was very much a part of the discourse of the *Nahḍah* milieux of Beirut at the time. "Civilization" (*tamaddun*) was discussed in detail in both *Nafīr Sūriyyah* and the al-Bustānīs' newspaper *al-Jinān*;[76] while both Ottoman reformers and representatives of the European powers intervening in Lebanon in 1860-1861 used the civilization/barbarism distinction in their own ways.[77] Saʿdallāh in his *Tilīmāk* offers one of the more interesting and potentially heterodox contributions to the debate. As in Fénelon's French, he allows the barbarians to put their case:

ونحن البرابرة الذين تحسبوننا متوحشين قد فضلناها (اي المسالمة) على كنوز الارض ولهذا قد ابتعدنا عنكم وتركنا لكم الارض المخصبة وتوغلنا في البراري والقفار (...) فانتم معاشر اليونانيين الذين تعدُّون انفسكم حكماءَ وعقلاءَ وآل معارف قد سعيتم ورآءَ الجهل وضللتم عن طريق الحكمة التي تنتحلونها لانفسكم (...) وسخرتم بنا نحن معشر البرابرة وطمعتم فينا وقطعتم رباط الصلح

> We the barbarians (*barābirah*), whom you consider savages (*mutawaḥḥishūn*), have preferred [peace] to the treasures of the earth: for this reason we withdrew from you, abandoned to you the fertile land and advanced deep into the hinterlands and deserts [...]. You, the Greeks, who reckon yourselves wise (*ḥukamāʾ*), rational (*ʿuqalāʾ*) and a people of knowledge (*āl maʿārif*), have pursued ignorance (*jahl*) and lost the way of wisdom which you claimed as your own [….] You ridiculed us, the barbarians, you coveted [what was ours] and severed the bond of peace[78]

The two barbarian shaykhs, who announce themselves as 'representing our people' (*bi-l-*

74 Asad Rustum, *Bashīr bayna al-Sultān wa-l-ʿAzīz. 1804-1814* (Beirut: al-Jāmiʿah al-Lubnāniyyah, 1956), 2: 178.

75 *Riwāyat Tilīmāk*, 63–4.

76 *Nafīr Sūriyyah* and "Khiṭāb fī al-hayʾah al-ijtimāʿiyyah," in Jān Dāyah, *al-Muʿallim Buṭrus al-Bustānī : dirāsah wa-wathāʾiq* (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1981), 113–87. Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 227–30; *al-Jinān* 1 (1870): 462-3, 504, 600, 633. See my "Utopia and Civilisation", ch. 2.

77 Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 768–96; Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 115.

78 *Riwāyat Tilīmāk*, 57–8; cf. Fénelon's "Chefs [des] Sauvages": "Du moins est-il juste que vous nous y laissiez en paix & en liberté. […] N'oubliez jamais, que c'est d'un peuple que vous nommez grossier et sauvage que vous recevez cette leçon de modération & de générosité." *Avantures de Telemaque*, 207–8.

niyābah ʿan shaʿbi-nā),[79] deliver this answer from their people to Idoménée, in terms recalling those of the Lebanese rebels of 1840: "No tribute will we pay, no king will we obey: free we were created and free we will die" (*Jizyatan lā nadfaʿu wa-malikan lā naṭīʿu aḥrāran khuliqnā wa-aḥrāran namūt*).[80]

Saʿdallāh and his Beiruti audience thus seem capable of appreciating the virtues of free and martial "barbarians" (and Mentor negotiates a peace, removing the heavy tribute demanded). More prominently stressed, though, are values of settled, civilised life and good government. Mentor, before leaving Télémaque, lays down the principles of rulership:

وساوِ الفقير بالغني وردَّ القويَّ عن الضعيف ولا تحابِ بالوجه واشفق المساكين والارامل (...) وان حاربت اعداءَك فاطلب منهم المسالمة اولاً وثانياً وثالثاً (...) واوصهم (اي قوَّاد عساكرك) بان لا يفتكوا بالاطفال والشيوخ والمقعدين والنساءِ وان لا يهدموا المنازل (...) ولا يقتلوا الاسرى (...) ومر عبيدك بشغل الارض والحراثة لكيما يزيد الخصب في مملكتك ويتبارك رعاياك طالبين لك النصر والسلامة وعلم الشبان العلوم والفنون والصنائع (...) فيقيمون لك ذكراً مخلداً في مؤَلفاتهم

> Treat the poor equally with the rich, restrain the strong from [harming] the weak, show no deference to rank (*lā taḥābi bi-l-wajh*), take pity on the poor (*masākīn*) and widows […] If you make war on your enemies, seek peace a first, second, and third time […] tell [your generals] not to kill children, old men, cripples and women, nor to destroy houses […] or kill prisoners [….] Set your servants (*ʿabīd*) to working the earth and agriculture, so that the harvest from your kingdom increases, and your subjects (*raʿāyā*) will be blessed, praying for your victory and preservation. Teach sciences (*ʿulūm*), arts (*funūn*) and crafts (*sanāʾiʿ*) to the young […] they will create an everlasting memorial to you in their writings (*muʾallafāt*) [….][81]

It was values such as these that made *Télémaque* so appealing to the elites of societies, whether in Europe or in Beirut, where old, rank-based orders were encountering the challenge of upwardly mobile "bourgeois" forces.[82] The values of hard work and education, the injunction to equal treatment regardless of rank, are placed within a hierarchical, monarchical order, comprising traditional duties of kingship like clemency and prudence. And – again, as in Europe and elsewhere – one major ground on which old and new elites could meet was that of the *patria*: in Syria the *waṭan*; and we find frequent references to the virtues of the homeland (to which Télémaque longs to return) in Saʿdallāh's play.[83] The family is also offered as a mainspring of action and desire, reflecting a new bourgeois form of domesticity.[84] The importance of pedagogy for forming the elite of the *waṭan* – the very project of the al-Bustānīs' Madrasah Waṭaniyyah – is incarnated in the close relationship

79 *Riwāyat Tilīmāk*, 57.
80 Ibid., 62.
81 Ibid., 89–91.
82 See Paul Schuurman, "Fénelon on Luxury, War and Trade in the *Telemachus*," *History of European Ideas* 38, no. 2 (1 June 2012): 179–99; Jacques Le Brun, "Fénelon et la politique," in Hillenaar ed., *Nouvel état présent*, 45–57; Alain Viala, "Le monarque d'élection", *Littératures classiques* 70: 119–30.
83 For instance, Jupiter remarks that to be exiled from one's *waṭan* is the worst punishment humans can suffer: *Riwāyat Tilīmāk*, 42; those who sow discord in or betray the *waṭan* are punished in Hell: 78-9, 86. Many Central and Eastern European translations of *Télémaque* addressed themselves to the "nation" or "people": Köpeczi, "Le *Télémaque* en Europe centrale et orientale."
84 See Fruma Zachs's comments: *The Making of a Syrian Identity: Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 72–76; Christine B. Lindner, "Rahil Ata Al-Bustani: Wife and Mother of the Nahda," in *Butrus al-Bustani: Spirit of the Age*, ed. Adel Beshara (Melbourne: IPhoenix, 2014), 49–67; Marilyn Booth, "'She Herself Was the Ultimate Rule': Arabic Biographies of Missionary Teachers and Their Pupils," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 13, no. 4 (2002): 427–48.

between Mentor the teacher and Télémaque the pupil.

One other interpolation of Saʿdallāh's shows the potential but also perhaps the difficulty of accommodating new and individualistic desires within a fixed divine and familial order. This occurs when Télémaque visits Hell in search of his father, and Pluto, the King of Hell, describes to him the tortures of the damned. Télémaque, with youthful scepticism, doubts firstly whether this punishment is really all that bad, and secondly whether disembodied spirits can actually suffer from (presumably corporeal) fire. He puts an impertinent question:
يا اله الجحيم ارجوك ان تخبرني من اين تجلبون الحطب حتى توقدوا كل هذه النار التي لا تطفأ

> O god of hellfire (*yā ilāh al-jaḥīm*), I wish you would tell me where you get the firewood (*min ayn tajlubūn al-ḥaṭab*) to feed all this fire that never goes out?[85]

Pluto reproaches him for inquiring into matters beyond his ken:
اسمع يا ابن البشر انتم فيكم خصلة ذميمة مكنتها في قلوبكم الكبرياءُ واسسها الجهل فانتم لا تسلمون الا بالذي تقدرون ان تفهموهُ جيداً ويقع تحت احدى حواسكم الخمس . والحال انتم بشر وجوبتير لم يعطكم غوامض اسرارهِ فاذاً انتم لا تقدرون ان تعرفوا هذه الشريعة الازلية التي وضعها جوبتير

> Listen, o human! (*yā ibn al-bashar*) You people have a reprehensible quality which pride has established in your hearts, and its basis is ignorance. You accept nothing but that which you can well understand and which falls under one of your five senses. But in fact you are humans: Jupiter has not granted to you his secret mysteries (*ghawāmiḍ asrāri-hi*). Hence you cannot know this eternal law (*sharīʿah*) which Jupiter has created [….][86]

"Opposition" (*iʿtirāḍ*) to Jupiter, Télémaque is told, will lead only to anxiety and confusion of spirit" (*qalaq al-ḍamīr wa-irtibāki-hi*). And, more menacingly:
وانت حرٌّ ان اردت ان تاتي الى هذا المكان (اي الجحيم) (...) تذوق الى الابد اشد العذابات ان كان بالنار والحطب او بلا نار وحطب

> You are free, if you wish, to come to this place [Hell] […] you will taste for eternity the worst tortures, whether by fire and firewood or without them![87]

The matter is resolved fairly lightly – Télémaque willingly drops the point, saying that he had only come to Hell to look for his father anyway. But we can nonetheless place this episode alongside a number of other, similar narratives of religious doubt and reassurance which were then becoming noticeable, if hardly widespread, among educated Syrian Christians.[88] In 1882 the controversy over the teaching of Darwinism at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut would focus on many of these issues;[89] and in this episode of *Tilīmāk* we can perhaps see some of the ground being prepared for it. In Saʿdallāh's version, by contrast to al-Ṭahṭāwī's, it is not Greek paganism and polytheism that presents a problematic strangeness.

85 *Riwāyat Tilīmāk*, 83.
86 Ibid., 84.
87 Ibid., 85.
88 See e.g. Fransīs Fatḥallāh Marrāsh, Kitāb *Ghābat al-Ḥaqq* (Aleppo: s.n., 1865), 37–8; 103–4; Mīkhāʾīl Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage, and Plunder: The History of the Lebanon in the 18th and 19th Centuries by Mikhayil Mishaqa (1800-1873)*, trans. Wheeler N. Thackston Jr. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 99, 235–7.
89 See Marwa Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Saʿdallāh still justifies his inclusion of unbelief in his version ("the translation of unbelief increases belief"), but he certainly does not shy away from representing the gods on stage: Jupiter appears not only as a voice from within, but also on stage "with wings beating."[90] The troubling issue is not now paganism, but the challenge posed to faith by an individual following the thread of his own reasoning and trust in his "five senses."

The play's major vogue in Egypt seems to have begun in striking fashion on 5 August 1880, with a command performance for the new Khedive, Tawfiq, at the Zizinia Theatre in Alexandria. The director was the Syrian Sulaymān al-Qardāḥī, a member of Yūsuf Khayyāṭ's theatre company, and the actors were young pupils from an Alexandria girls' school run by his wife. A review in the *Moniteur égyptien* described "cette représentation doublement extraordinaire" ("this doubly extraordinary performance"):

> Ce sont les demoiselles de l'institution qui ont eu le rare courage d'oser interpréter en langue arabe les principales scènes de l'immortel chef-d'œuvre de l'archevêque de Cambrai – Vous imaginez-vous une Calypso de douze ans, inconsolable du départ d'Ulysse et, voyant arriver dans son île, un jeune Télémaque de dix ans à peine, aux moustaches et aux allures de mousquetaire, accompagné de son précepteur, un Mentor de onze printemps, en dépit de sa barbe, patriarcale.
>
> It was the young ladies of the institute who, with rare courage, ventured to interpret in Arabic the main scenes of the immortal masterpiece of the Bishop of Cambrai. Just imagine a twelve-year-old Calypso, inconsolable after the departure of Ulysses; seeing arrive on her island a young Télémaque, scarcely ten years old, with a moustache and the look of a musketeer, accompanied by his tutor, a Mentor of just eleven springs, notwithstanding his patriarchal beard. [91]

Al-Qardāḥī soon formed his own company, which opened its first Cairo season with *Tilīmāk* on 13 April 1882 in the Khedival Opera House. The famous actor-singer Salāmah Ḥijāzī played the title role, and again, the Khedive, members of the court and also foreign consuls attended.[92] *Tilīmāk* was then a regular item in the repertoire of the al-Qardāḥī company when it revived under the British occupation in 1886-1889, alternating largely between Cairo and Alexandria.[93] One of their main competitors in Egypt, meanwhile, was the troupe of Iskandar Faraḥ, founded in 1891, with which Salāmah Ḥijāzī often performed; *Tilīmāk* probably formed part of this company's repertoire also.[94] When Ḥijāzī started his own company in 1905 (which existed until 1914), he continued to play the role of Télémaque which he had already made his own.[95] The original Zizinia performance probably remained the only all-female one, but it

90 *Riwāyat Tilīmāk*, 2–3, 40. He has become more monotheistic, too, Jupiter as God the Father (see e.g. 40, 45), although there is a good basis for this in Fénelon's original: Lanavère, "Les deux antiquités."

91 *Le Moniteur égyptien* no. 185, 8/9 Aug 1880, cited in Philip Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century: 1799-1882* (Reading: Garnet & Ithaca Press, 1996), 144. The play may have been performed in Egypt by Khayyāṭ's company prior to this, as Sayyid ʿAlī Ismāʿīl suggests (*Tārīkh al-masraḥ fī Miṣr fī al-qarn al-tāsiʿ ʿashar* [Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah li-l-Kitāb, 1997], 141), but evidence is scarce.

92 Najm, *Al-Masraḥiyyah*, 107–8.

93 Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism*, 298–318. In the 1890s *Tilīmāk* drops from the records of their performances, though it may have remained in the repertoire: Najm, *Al-Masraḥiyyah*, 108–111; Ismāʿīl, *Tārīkh al-masraḥ*, 139–156.

94 Aḥmad Shafīq Pasha saw a performance in their theatre in Cairo in 1892: *Mudhakkirātī fī niṣf qarn* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Miṣr, 1934), 31–32.

95 The play seems to have been performed by lesser-known companies, such as Jawq al-Surūr: *al-Muqaṭṭam*,

seems to have been normal practice for these companies to use both male and female actors.[96]

While some performances were certainly attended by the ruling elite – Khedives, consuls and high officials – the bulk of the audiences were probably drawn from the urban middle class. Performances were often sponsored by civic associations as well as the Khedive's government.[97] The theatre could be combined with other forms of bourgeois, commercial culture: one troupe tempted spectators with prize-draws, promising viewers of one performance of *Tilīmāk* the chance to win "a golden ring and pair of bangles."[98] There is some evidence, though, of *Tilīmāk* reaching other classes of society. *Al-Ahrām* wrote of an 1887 Alexandria performance:

وكانت قاعة الملعب وغرفها غاصة بالناس فصفق استحساناً واستعادة وكان فى جملتهم نحو ١٢٠ جندياً من الجنود المصرية وهم تحت امرة قائدهم الذي اتى بهم الى الملعب تنزيهاً لخواطرهم وترويحاً لنفوسهم مما يقاسوه من تعب النهار وقد كانوا بغاية النظام والسكينة وياحبذا لو اقتدى سائر ضباط الجيش بهذا العمل

> The theatre hall and boxes were packed with people, who clapped in applause and for encores. Among their number were around 120 soldiers from the Egyptian army, under the command of their captain (*qā'id*), who had brought them to the theatre for the amusement of their minds (*tanzīhan li-khawāṭiri-him*) and the relaxation of their spirits (*tarwīḥan li-nufūsi-him*) from the effort (*ta'b*) they endure during the daytime. They were extremely orderly and quiet – how fine it would be if other officers of the army would imitate this action[99]

This was evidently an exceptional occurrence: but in this case at least, we can see the drama clearly overstepping the bounds of literacy. It recalls the circumstances in which the first Serbian translation of *Télémaque* was made: for the insurgent soldiers of the anti-Ottoman rebellion of 1809-1813.[100] The *waṭan*, evoked so frequently in versions of *Télémaque*, may have been intended initially for decorous elite audiences, in a pedagogical atmosphere like that of the Madrasah Waṭaniyyah – but others might lay claim to it too. The soldiers at the Alexandria theatre were "orderly and quiet," but it was only a few years since the constitutionalist and nationalist uprising of 1882, supported by patriotic soldiers, had challenged both the Khedive's government and Anglo-French control of Egypt. [101]

It is clear that the play changed considerably in response to local tastes as these Egyptian troupes performed it in successive seasons. This performance attended by the soldiers was billed under the alternative, rhyming title of *'Ishq al-aqdamīn wa-shaghaf al-ābā' bi-l-banīn* ("The Passion of the Ancients and the Love of Parents for Their Children").[102] An 1886 performance by the Qardāḥī troupe introduced dramatic novelties of staging, as *Al-Ahrām*

---

27 October 1893, in Īzīs Fatḥallāh, *Salāmah Ḥijāzī* (Cairo: Dar el-Shorouk, 2007).

96 See e.g. *al-Muqaṭṭam*, 27 October 1893, in Fatḥallāh, *Salāmah Ḥijāzī*; Najm, *Al-Masraḥiyyah*, 107.

97 Ismā'īl, *Tārīkh al-masraḥ*, 231–62; Najm, *al-Masraḥiyyah*, 109, 110.

98 *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, 27 October 1893, in Fatḥallāh, *Salāmah Ḥijāzī*.

99 *Al-Ahrām*, 13 January 1887, reproduced in Fatḥallāh, *Salāmah Ḥijāzī*, 69. The performance was by the Qardāḥī company, with Ḥijāzī in the title role; cf. Ismā'īl, *Tārīkh al-masraḥ*, 146; Najm, *al-Masraḥiyyah*, 109, n. 19.

100 Biljana Stikić, "La réception et l'utilisation des *Aventures de Télémaque* en Serbie," *Documents pour l'histoire du français langue étrangère ou seconde* 31 (2003): 65–76.

101 Juan Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). See Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism*, 184-97, for the role of the theatre in these events: stage depictions of the pre-Islamic hero 'Antar may have been taken as referring to the rebels' leader, Colonel Aḥmad 'Urābī.

102 Cf. Ismā'īl, *Tārīkh al-masraḥ*, 146.

reported:

وكان منظر نزول جوبيتر مدهشاً جداً إذ ظللته الغمام وارتجد لهيبته صعقات الرعود والبروق فصفق لهم المشاهدون تصفيق الاستحسان واستعادوهم مراراً

> The sight of Jupiter descending was most astonishing: he was shrouded in clouds, thunderbolts and flashes of lightning trembled in awe of him: the spectators clapped in applause and made them repeat [it] several times.[103]

This audience evidently had no concerns about the placing of deities on the stage. It was also prepared to intervene to demand repetition of the spectacle, suggesting a more vernacular, less decorous kind of atmosphere than that found in performances by the pupils of the Madrasah Waṭaniyyah or the schoolgirls of the Zizinia.

Further evidence of how *Tilīmāk* changed in later performances comes from a commemorative volume on Salāmah Ḥijāzī: this lists seven songs with information on their rhythm, indicating they were probably sung, plus another seven poems or snippets of verse which may have simply been spoken. [104] They vary considerably from the verses in Saʿdallāh al-Bustānī's text: the most remarkable addition is four songs by the denizens of Hell: the Misers (*al-Bukhalāʾ*), the Proud (*al-Mutakabbirīn*), the Slanderers and Murderers (*al-Namāmīn wa-l-Qatalah*), and the Myrmidons of Hell (*al-Zabāniyah*). This graphic spectacle of the underworld may perhaps have inspired the fictional debate between an Egyptian Muslim scholar and an English Orientalist on the morality of representing Hell, in ʿAlī Mubārak's *ʿAlam al-Dīn*.[105] Despite these changes, though, the overall shape of the play probably remained that of al-Bustānī's 1870 script: the 1880 schoolgirls' performance had five acts, of which one was evidently the Calypso episode;[106] and the themes of Ḥijāzī's songs fit well enough with the themes of al-Bustānī's episodes.[107] It is in some version of Saʿdallāh al-Bustānī's play, through the mediation of singers and dramaturges like Ḥijāzī and al-Qardāḥī, that the *Télémaque* story reached its largest and most diverse audiences in Arabic.

In addition to these five Arabic versions of *Télémaque*, less well-known translations indicate the extent to which the text became a part of the formation of *Nahḍah* literati. Another manuscript translation is said to have been made by Ḥabīb al-Yāzijī (d. 1870), from a family closely linked to the Bustānīs and the rest of the Beirut literary scene;[108] while in 1912, a verse translation by Wadīʿ al-Khūrī – Khalīl al-Khūrī's brother and co-editor of *Ḥadīqat al-Akhbār* – was apparently printed in Beirut. According to Yūsuf Sarkīs, this was made in imitation of Sulaymān al-Bustānī, who had recently completed his verse translation of the Iliad (1907).[109] Wadīʿ was also a former pupil of Shāhīn ʿAṭiyyah, the reviser of Ṭahṭāwī's

103 *Al-Ahrām*, no. 2424, 22 January 1886, cited in Ismāʿīl, *Tārīkh al-masraḥ*, 141–2.

104 Muḥammad Fāḍil, *al-Shaykh Salāmah Ḥijāzī* (Damanhūr: Maṭbaʿat al-Ummah, 1932), 116–9; reprinted in Fatḥallāh, *Salāmah Ḥijāzī*, 147–53 (with accompanying CD with recording of Ḥijāzī singing one of the songs). My thanks to Raphael Cormack for sending me copies of both books.

105 ʿAlī Bāshā Mubārak, *ʿAlam al-Dīn*, facsimile reprint of original 1882 edition (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah li-l-Kitāb, 1993), 408–410.

106 Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 144.

107 Adam Mestyan informs me (personal communication, 27/12/2014) that an early twentieth-century actors' script, in al-Markaz al-Qawmī li-l-Masraḥ wa-l-Funūn al-Shaʿbiyyah in Zamalek, Cairo, might shed much light on how the play was performed.

108 See *Al-Jinān*, 15 March 1871 (p. 194); Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, (Vatican City: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1944), 4: 323; Yūsuf Ilyān Sarkīs, *Muʿjam al-maṭbūʿāt al-ʿArabiyyah wa-l-muʿarrabah* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Sarkīs, 1928), 2: 1931.

109 Sarkīs, *Muʿjam al-maṭbūʿāt*, 1: 850.

translation.[110] Translating *Télémaque* was evidently becoming a matter of competitive emulation among a circle of Beiruti Christian literati.[111] The narrative was also used in Arab countries, as elsewhere, as a pedagogical text: Jurjī Zaydān translated part of it as a school exercise in 1881.[112] Telemachus has his own article in the al-Bustānīs' Encyclopedia, *Dā'irat al-maʿārif*, which mentions the "famous and valuable book" and al-Ṭahṭāwī's "remarkable (*muʿtabarah*) translation."[113] In 1881, Muḥammad ʿAbduh wrote an article in which he echoed al-Ṭahṭāwī in placing *Télémaque* alongside Arabic and Persian mirrors for princes.[114] Finally, *Télémaque* was retranslated in 1957, as *Tilimāk*, by the well-known Palestinian translator ʿĀdil Zuʿaytir.[115]

Conclusion: Waves and Trajectories

The Arabic trajectory of *Télémaque* in the nineteenth century took it through a remarkable range of metamorphoses. And yet this variety itself formed part of a much wider pattern. The Arabic case may be seen as in many respects characteristic of the work's pathway in many of the "semi-peripheral" languages – Mediterranean, Eastern European, Near Eastern – of the Morettian literary system. In these, the vogue of *Télémaque* and the broader hegemony of French culture coincided temporally with their national or proto-national literary revivals or Enlightenment movements, and with the constitution of a national language and literary tradition – these phenomena being themselves aspects of the rise of local reforming elites, aristocratic and, increasingly, bureaucratic and bourgeois. This gave *Télémaque* a particular prominence, often a formative role, in the foundation of their modern literatures.

This is not to deny all specificity to the Arabic case. But as I have argued, even something as Arabic-specific as al-Ṭahṭāwī's choice of *sajʿ* fits within a far broader set of problems around the generic classification of *Télémaque* and hence the correct form for its translation. Other issues raised in *Télémaque*, which were certainly strongly rooted in nineteenth-century Syria or Egypt – the homeland, concern for peace, anxiety about religious doubt – also clearly have their counterparts in Enlightenment and mid-nineteenth-century Europe, and beyond. We are dealing both with the globalisation of what we may call Enlightenment-bourgeois literature and culture, as well as the formation of separate, local Enlightenment-bourgeois literatures and cultures. This instance of literary translation places us at the intersection of a translingual dynamic of spread, from core to periphery – what Moretti calls a "wave" model – and an Arabic-specific dynamic of transmission – what Moretti calls a "tree" model, but which is perhaps better captured by the metaphor of the separate (though often parallel) "trajectories"

110 See ʿAṭiyyah's obituary in *al-Niʿmah*, March 1913: 788; 791-2.

111 Meral, "Ottoman Reception", 213, references another supposed translation, but the newspaper notice mentioned refers to a Turkish translation of some of Fénelon's "ḥikāyat," presumably his *Fables*: *al-Zawrā'/Zevrâ'* (Baghdad), no. 62 (11 July 1287 [1871]), digitised at http://www.tufs.ac.jp/common/fs/asw/tur/htu/list2.html#z.

112 Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism*, 220.

113 Buṭrus al-Bustānī, *Kitāb Dā'irat al-maʿārif wa-huwa qāmūs ʿāmm li-kull fann wa-maṭlab*, vol. 6 (Beirut: Maṭbaʿat al-Maʿārif, 1876): 208; translated in Meral, "Ottoman Reception", 225.

114 See above, and Meral, "Ottoman Reception", 223–4. For echoes of *Télémaque* in other work by ʿAbduh and al-Ṭahṭāwī, see Ellen McLarney, "Freedom, Justice, and the Power of *Adab*," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48, no. 1 (February 2016): 25–46, esp. 32–33, 36.

115 Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1957.This most likely relates to a desire to have a modern, and presumably "faithful," translation of a classic work of French literature. Cf. the 1946 Modern Turkish translation referred to by Meral, "Ottoman Reception," 213.

of the work in different languages.[116]

Indeed, we can identify, tentatively, the point at which we pass from the predominance of one dynamic to that of the other. In the early translations of Īlyās and Bāsīlī, with their references to *Télémaque*'s fame among Christian peoples of the Ottoman Empire and Mediterranean, we are largely within a dynamic of spread, where the major factor is the foreign vogue of *Télémaque*. With al-Ṭahṭāwī, firstly the mechanism of spread is rather different: through a direct French-Egyptian contact mediated by the state, rather than trade- and faith-based networks of Mediterranean Christians; and with awareness of *Télémaque*'s parallel Ottoman trajectory (via the reference to Yusuf Kamil Pasha's translation). But, secondly, this sense of *Télémaque* as something foreign and translingual is already losing ground to a view of *Télémaque* as a component of Arabic writing and thinking. Hence al-Ṭahṭāwī's greater attention to generic and stylistic issues, as well as his sustained effort to syncretise Islamic and Greek myths: attempts to incorporate *Télémaque* into Arabic literary culture. With ʿAṭiyyah's rewriting – based on al-Ṭahṭāwī, not on a return to the French – and above all in the stage versions, with their heavy use of Arabic-specific forms and tropes, the internal Arabic dynamic gains the ascendancy. *Télémaque* is now an Arabic classic in its own right: its European origin and vogue in other languages have not disappeared, but they can become secondary.

But again, we may see precisely such a naturalisation of *Télémaque* as itself not untypical of a wider pattern – paralleled, for instance, in the debates comparing *Télémaque* with *Don Quixote* in Spanish, or in the spate of imitations it provoked in Polish. This may be taken as an indication that, as Moretti suggests, the "wave" and "tree" (or trajectory) models are in fact different ways of seeing the same phenomenon.[117] Indeed, the "wave," whereby literary works from the core spread through the periphery and semi-periphery can be seen – in an example such as *Télémaque*, or (as in Hofmeyr's account) *The Pilgrim's Progress* – as itself participating in defining those separate but parallel national literary traditions, which could then be seen as "trees" or separate trajectories. The formation of these separate national literatures, on the other hand, may equally be seen as providing the "wave" with something to spread through. The challenge, in my view, is less that of choosing the more powerful model (the "wave", in Moretti's view) over the less powerful one, than that of combining or working between them, holding together in tension the problematics of national and of world literature. This is, at least, the direction suggested by this example of the Arabic trajectories of a "translingual mass text" of the Enlightenment.

116 Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* (new series), 1 (2000): 66–68; for "trajectory," see Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 142–3, drawing on Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: New Left Books, 1974).

117 Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," 67.