

THE GLOBAL POPULARITY OF DANTE'S 'DIVINA COMMEDIA': TRANSLATIONS, LIBRARIES, WIKIPEDIA¹

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Studies of the translation and reception history of Dante's *Divina Commedia* have rarely included the use of either distant reading (aka large-scale literary analysis) or Digital Humanities, much less both. However, using both these methods allows innovative research questions to be pursued and answered with regard to Dante's *fortuna*, as I have shown in four previous articles regarding Dante and other writers. This contribution draws on three new datasets that I constructed myself in order to study canons of world literature, using Dante's *Divine Comedy* as a case study: a comprehensive catalogue of all the worldwide complete translations of the *Commedia* (or single canticles such as *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*), published from the 16th century until 2021; readership data pertaining to all the Wikipedia entries dedicated to Dante's biographical entry and his works; and *Commedia* holdings, in both Italian and translation, in all national libraries with online searchable catalogues. The aim is to see where Dante's text is translated and circulates the most, and whether his work is globally popular.

Keywords: Translation, Reception, Digital humanities, Wikipedia, Libraries

Introduction

Studies of the translation and reception history of Dante's *Divina Commedia* have rarely included the use of either distant reading (aka large-scale literary analysis) or Digital Humanities,² much less both.³ However, using both these methods allows innovative

¹ I am grateful to Chiara Sbordoni, Elizabeth Coggeshall, Akash Kumar, and three anonymous reviewers from *Bibliotheca Dantesca* for their advice and suggestions.

² For a pioneering DH database of examples of foreign reception of Dante and his texts, see Elizabeth Coggeshall and Arielle Saiber, <https://research.bowdoin.edu/dante-today/>, accessed October 20, 2022. This 'crowd-sourced repository' doesn't provide analysis, but offers a precious repository of "citings and sightings" of Dante across the world.

³ The most comprehensive studies of Dante translations until now are Vittore Branca and Ettore Caccia (eds), *Dante nel mondo: raccolta di studi promossa dall'Associazione Internazionale per gli studi di lingua e letteratura italiana* (Florence: Olschki, 1960); Enzo Esposito (ed.), *L'opera di Dante nel mondo: edizioni e traduzioni nel*

research questions to be pursued and answered with regard to the reception of Dante's work, as I have shown in four previous articles regarding Dante and other writers.⁴

This contribution draws on three new datasets that I constructed myself in order to study canons of world literature, using Dante's *Divine Comedy* as a case study: a comprehensive catalogue of all the worldwide complete translations of the *Commedia* (or single canticles such as *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*), published from the 16th century until 2021;⁵ *Commedia* holdings, in both Italian and translation, in all national libraries with online searchable catalogues; and readership data pertaining to all the Wikipedia entries dedicated to Dante's biographical entry and his works.

The aim is to see where Dante's text is translated and circulates the most, and whether his work is globally popular. To do so, I will be utilizing three different criteria – book translations, library circulation, and Wikipedia readership data – to examine literary canonicity in different cultures. Each of these three criteria measures a different type of canonicity on different levels, both diachronic (500 years of translations) and relatively synchronic (current 2021 library holdings and 2017–2021 Wikipedia pageviews). Since canonicity is, at bottom, an institutionalized measurement of popularity, I'll thus be comparing three different types of popularity. My article will first present the data regarding translations of Dante, then the library holdings of Dante's magnum opus, and finally the global readership of Wikipedia entries dedicated to Dante. I will then end by reflecting on Dante's position within theories of world literature. There have been many definitions of world

Novecento: atti del convegno internazionale di studi: Roma, 27–29 aprile 1989 (Ravenna: Longo, 1992); “Dante, oggi / 2,” *Critica del testo* 2011; and *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, now available at https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elenco-opere/Enciclopedia_Dantesca; Mirko Tavoni, “The Divine Comedy in translation (first part),” <https://www.newitalianbooks.it/the-divine-comedy-in-translation-first-part/> and “The Divine Comedy in translation (second part),” <https://www.newitalianbooks.it/the-divine-comedy-in-translation-second-part/>.

⁴ Jacob Blakesley, “Distantly reading Dante translations,” *VERTIMO STUDIJS* 10 2017: 65–75, <http://doi.org/10.15388/VertStud.2017.10.11282>; Jacob Blakesley, “Translating the classics,” *Routledge Handbook of Translation History*, ed. Christopher Rundle (London: Routledge, 2021), 372–388; Jacob Blakesley, “World Literature According to Wikipedia Popularity and Book Translations: The Case of Modern Italian Poets,” *Comparative Critical Studies* 17, no. 3 (2020): 433–58; Jacob Blakesley, “The Wikipedia Popularity of James Joyce,” *James Joyce Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (Winter 2022): 289–313.

⁵ This includes all complete (or nearly complete) translations of the *Commedia* or its canticles, published either in print (whether individual volumes, or in journals, or samizdat) or online, for which I've been able to trace the translator's name. Reprints and revised editions are not counted.

literature, although perhaps the reigning definition is David Damrosch's: "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language." Since Dante's works are not born canonical, ex-novo, in Italian or any other language, we will see where Dante is "actively present in a literary system beyond that of its original culture."⁶

Whether Dante's *Commedia* belongs to *World Literature* or not has been debated by scholars, although it is usually taken for granted (cf., in the Anglophone world, from Eliot and Pound to more contemporary scholars like Sandra Bermann⁷ and Damrosch himself)⁸ Indeed, my contribution aims to problematize this question by offering new ways of viewing Dante's worldwide canonicity (or lack thereof). By adopting large-scale literary analysis championed by Franco Moretti under the moniker "distant reading,"⁹ while using DH resources and tools to create original datasets, I will demonstrate how this concrete data offers a drastically diverse portrayal of Dante's masterpiece, on both a global and local scale. In fact, as I will argue, it shows that Dante's *Commedia* is not a canonical or popular work worldwide. This has implications not only, evidently, with regard to the reception of Dante but more broadly impacts our understanding of the literary canon, and our very conception of world literature.

Translations

In this section, I will focus on the overall number of translations published, not on tracking how the translation trends varied over the centuries. To collect this information, I have drawn on several resources: bibliographies of Dante translations, such as those by Paul Colomb de Batines,¹⁰ Marco Besso,¹¹ and Giuliano Mambelli;¹² online bibliographies and/or catalogues of translations like the *Bibliografia Dantesca Internazionale*, run by the Società Dantesca

⁶ David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton, 2003), 4.

⁷ Sandra Bermann, "In the Light of Translation: On Dante and World Literature," in *Foundational Texts of World Literature*, ed. Dominique Jullien (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 85–100.

⁸ Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton, 2003).

⁹ Franco Moretti, *Distant reading* (London: Verso, 2013).

¹⁰ Paul de Batines, *Bibliografia dantesca, ossia Catalogo delle edizioni, traduzioni, codici manoscritti e commenti della Divina Commedia e delle opere minori di Dante, seguito dalla serie de'biografi di lui* (Prato: Aldina, 1846).

¹¹ Marco Besso, *La fortuna di Dante fuori d'Italia* (Florence: Olschki, 1912).

¹² Giuliano Mambelli, *Le traduzioni della Divina Commedia e delle opere minori: bibliografia* (Florence: Olschki, 1926).

Italiana,¹³ and the Dantepoliglotta project, formerly run by Giuliano Turone.¹⁴ Likewise, I've made use of the bibliographies dedicated to Dante translations into specific target individual languages: Bressan,¹⁵ Cronia,¹⁶ Cunningham,¹⁷ Manuppella,¹⁸ as well as bibliographies covering translations of Italian literature in translation such as Hausmann and Kapp,¹⁹ Healey,²⁰ Kader,²¹ and Laurenti.²²

Since the invention of the printing press, 474 complete translations of Dante's *Commedia* have been published in a total of 61 languages, along with a number of complete canticles in 11 other languages.²³ However, the 474 translated *Commedie* haven't been translated equally around the globe, as Table 1 shows. Nearly half of them have been translated into only four languages: English, German, French, and Spanish.

Table 1. Complete translations of the *Divina Commedia*, top quartile²⁴ by target language²⁵

¹³ "Bibliografia Dantesca Italiana," Società Dantesca Italiana, accessed October 20, 2022, <http://dantesca.ntc.it/dnt-fo-catalog/pages/material-search.jsf>.

¹⁴ "Dante Poliglotta," accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.dantepoliglotta.it>.

¹⁵ Arnaldo Bressan, *Dante in sloveno: traduzioni ed edizioni novecentesche di Dante* (Udine: Istituto di lingue e letterature dell'Europa Orientale, 1990).

¹⁶ Arturo Cronia, *La fortuna di Dante nella letteratura serbo-croata; imitazioni, traduzioni, echi [e] letteratura dantesca* (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1965).

¹⁷ Gilbert Cunningham, *The divine comedy in English: a critical bibliography* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965-6).

¹⁸ Giacinto Manuppella, *Dantesca luso-brasileira: subsidios para uma bibliografia da obra e do pensamento de Dante Alighieri* (Coimbra: Coimbra ed., 1966).

¹⁹ Frank-Rutger Hausmann and Volker Kapp, *Bibliographie der deutschen Übersetzungen aus dem Italienischen von 1730 bis 1990* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2004).

²⁰ Robin Healey, *Italian literature before 1900 in English translation: an annotated bibliography, 1929-2008* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

²¹ Belgin Kader, *Italyancadan Türkçeye çevrilen eserler bibliyografyasi, 1839-2011* (Istanbul: Beta Basın Yayın, 2011).

²² Carlo Laurenti, *Bibliografia delle opere Italiane tradotte in cinese 1911-1999* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 1999).

²³ I'm omitting translations into Italian languages/dialects. For methodological questions relating to the gathering of data and definitions of translation, I refer to my forthcoming monograph on the history of global Dante translations. Revised and/or reprinted translations are not included.

²⁴ Statistically speaking, there are four quartiles: Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4. The top or highest quartile is the fourth quartile, whereas the bottom or lowest quartile is Q1.

²⁵ For clarification: 'German' includes all standard German translations, but excludes one translation into Plattdeutsch and one translation into Swiss German; 'Spanish' includes 33 European Spanish translations, and 12 Latin American Spanish translations; 'Dutch' includes 12 Dutch translations and 1 Belgian Dutch translation; 'Portuguese' includes 4 European Portuguese translations, and 9 Brazilian Portuguese translations.

<i>Target language</i>	<i>Complete Commedia</i>	<i>Complete canticles</i>
English	79	297
German	59	190
Spanish	45	146
French	42	154
Korean	23	72
(Mandarin) Chinese	23	71
Japanese	16	55
Dutch	15	49
Turkish	15	45
Portuguese	14	53
Russian	11	40
Greek	9	34
Swedish	8	27
Polish	8	26

After the aforementioned four languages are a number of languages with more than 10 but fewer than 25 complete translations of the *Commedia*: (Mandarin) Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Dutch, Turkish, Portuguese, and Russian. Another handful of languages feature anywhere from 5-9 translations, most of which enter into the top quartile: Arabic, Farsi, Greek, Hungarian, Latin, Polish, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, and Swedish. Meanwhile an even larger group of languages accounts for between 2 and 4 translations, ranging from Catalan with 4 translations to Slovene with 2. And about 20 languages, from Afrikaans to Welsh, have only one complete translation of the *Commedia*, while 11 languages have, as mentioned, only a partial translation of the *Commedia* (i.e., a complete translation of one or two of the canticles)

We can already identify notable geographical and linguistic trends. The majority of translations have been published in European languages, especially in (British) English, French, German, and (peninsular) Spanish: 45 of the 72 target languages overall are European. Reflecting this data, 303 complete translations were published in Europe, in contrast to only 105 in Asia, 59 in the Americas, 5 in Africa, and 2 in Oceania.²⁶

Despite the overall massive number of translations into European languages, East Asian languages like (Mandarin) Chinese,

²⁶ Where translations into language spoken in two or more different continents are enumerated, the publication place is taken as representative of the language (e.g., an English-language translation published in New York is counted as ‘American’, not ‘European’). In addition, the UK is here considered part of Europe, *pace* Brexit.

Japanese, and Korean have more translations than the vast majority of European languages. Yet these three East Asian languages are quite exceptional, since, besides Farsi and Turkish, most other Asian languages have far fewer numbers, if any at all.

Meanwhile, if we turn to the Americas, translations have been published there in three widely spoken languages, (American) English, (Brazilian) Portuguese, and (Latin American) Spanish, but in any other language except for Esperanto. As for Africa, there are no complete indigenous translations of the *Commedia* published in any African country, leaving aside translations into Afrikaans, Arabic, and English.²⁷

Yet while the target languages with the greatest absolute number of translations thus feature English, German, French and Spanish, if we look at this number in proportion to the speakers of the respective languages, an entirely new ranking emerges. Table 2 shows the top quartile, namely the top 25% of languages with complete translations of the *Commedia* or its canticles, in proportion to a combined total of L1 and L2 speakers.

<i>Language</i>	<i>Ratio: Canticles/ L1+L2 speakers (millions)</i>	<i>Translated Canticles</i>	<i>Translated Comme- die</i>	<i>L1 + L2 speakers (millions)</i>
Vlach	5.26	3	1	0.19
Breton	4.76	3	1	0.21
Occitan	4.55	3	1	0.22
Maltese	3.77	8	2	0.53
Basque	3.70	6	2	0.54
Plattdeutsch	3.33	3	1	0.3
Icelandic	3.03	4	1	0.33
Welsh	1.75	3	1	0.57
Frisian	1.11	3	1	0.9
Lithuanian	1.03	10	3	2.9
Latvian	1.00	6	2	2.0
Slovene	0.91	10	2	2.2
Irish	0.83	3	1	1.2

²⁷ Afrikaans arrived in South Africa during the 17th century, and derives from Dutch; Arabic arrived in the 7th century, but is generally not considered an indigenous African language: <https://newlinesmag.com/essays/in-search-of-african-arabic/>

Armenian	0.78	10	3	3.9
Greek	0.68	34	9	13.3

The top quartile is mainly constituted by languages with small native speaker populations, fewer than 10 million (here I exclude dead and artificial languages like Latin, Esperanto, and Interlingua). And unlike Table 1, where the languages were exclusively national languages of large states, the relative leaders in translation in Table 2 are evenly distributed among two categories of languages. First, there is a group of national languages, belonging, however, to either small or medium-small size states, like Armenian, Icelandic, Irish, Greek, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, and Slovenian. Second, there are minority languages, which may have official status in one or two countries, but are not the national language, such as Vlach (also known as Aromanian), along with minority languages like Basque, Breton, Frisian, Occitan, Plattdeutsch, and Welsh, spoken mostly in England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, or Spain. None of these above languages are among the most prolific in terms of number of absolute translations, compared to the leading target languages seen in Table 1.

In fact, as Table 3 indicates, the most prolific languages in absolute terms are located only in the second highest (Dutch and German), second lowest (French, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Turkish), or lowest quartile (Chinese, English, and Portuguese), when adjusted for population.

<i>Lan- guage</i>	<i>Commedia/L1+L2 speakers (millions) ra- tio</i>	<i>Com- medie</i>	<i>L1 + L2 speakers (mil- lions)²⁸</i>	<i>Quar- tile</i>
Dutch	0.61	15	24	Q3
German	0.44	59	135	Q3
Korean	0.28	23	82	Q2
Turkish	0.17	15	88	Q2
French	0.16	42	267	Q2
Japanese	0.13	16	126	Q2
Spanish	0.08	45	543	Q2
English	0.06	79	1348	Q1

²⁸ This data comes from Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com, accessed October 20, 2022.

Portu- guese	0.05	14	258	Q1
Chinese	0.02	23	1120	Q1

Clearly, then, the ratios adjusted for total speakers here do not correspond to the absolute number of translations. The point to emphasize is that the criterion of translations in absolute terms or by speakers yields highly divergent results. I will return to this at the end of the paper.

Finally, up until now we have focused exclusively on the target languages with Dante translations. If we shift our analysis to the most spoken languages in the world, including both native and second language speakers, an entirely different perspective emerges. In fact, despite the *Commedia* being translated into dozens of languages, it hasn't been translated into 6 of the 20 most spoken global languages, here given with their rank in parentheses: there are no *Commedie* – or even complete single canticles – in Hindi (3), Indonesian (11), Marathi (14), Telugu (15), Yue (18), or Wu (19), languages spoken predominantly in East, South, or Southeast Asia.²⁹ Not only that, but in 66 of the 100 most spoken languages, Dante's text remains untranslated, with not even a single canticle of the *Commedia*, in African languages like Egyptian Spoken Arabic, Hausa, Nigerian Pidgin, Swahili, Yoruba, and Zulu to East Asian languages like Hakka, Jin, Min Nan, Yue, and Wu to South Asian languages Bhojpuri, Eastern and Western Punjabi, Hindi, Marathi, and Telugu to Southeast Asian languages Burmese, Indonesian, Khmer, and Thai. Not only is the *Commedia* thus absent from the majority of the top 100 spoken languages, but an even larger percentage of the top 101-200 spoken languages lack *Commedia* translations as well, from Akan, Dari, Kyrgyz, and Lao to Rundi, Setswana, Tigrigna, and Turkmen, leading native languages in, respectively, Ghana, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Burundi, Botswana, Eritrea, and Turkmenistan. In fact, Dante's *Commedia* is non-existent in 88 of the top 101-200 spoken languages in the world. This means that as a whole, over 75% of the top 200 most spoken worldwide languages lack Dante translations.³⁰ And while the 46 most spoken languages with Dante translations do cover

²⁹ "Top 200 languages," *Ethnologue*, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/ethnologue200>.

³⁰ I have excluded Italian and Italian dialects (Neapolitan, Venetian, and Sicilian), featuring in the top-200, from the following analysis, replacing them with the 201st-204th most spoken languages.

about 3.7 billion people,³¹ judging by native speakers, that leaves out the other 4.3 billion people who lack Dante’s text in their mother tongues, even if some of them can access Dante through a non-native language. This fact should make us seriously reconsider the putative global canonicity of Dante’s magnum opus.

Library holdings of Dante’s Commedia

This next section begins with an overview of the worldwide national library holdings of Dante’s *Commedia*. This provides us with a complementary measurement of popularity. Not all countries, however, have national libraries with working online catalogues, or even national libraries at all. So, I have been able to consult and gather information from all the 126 countries whose national libraries have working online catalogues. The remaining 67 countries lack either working online catalogues or simply do not have a national library. The 126 national libraries – the only ones with online, searchable catalogues – can be separated into four quartiles, which we will do first with absolute numbers (Table 4), and then proportionately according to the population size.³²

Table 4. Highest quartile for <i>Commedie</i> held by national libraries			
Country	Total <i>Commedie</i>	Trans- lated <i>Com- medie</i>	Italian-language <i>Commedie</i>
Spain	877	787	90
United Kingdom	661	345	316
France	535	291	244
USA	467	261	206
Russia	402	339	63
Germany	337	324	13
Austria	236	88	148
Netherlands	211	125	86

³¹ Data based on the Ethnologue list: “Top 200 languages,” *Ethnologue*, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/ethnologue200>.

³² Some countries have two national libraries, for example Germany and Russia; both of their libraries have been included in the data. Some countries have merged national and university libraries: Bosnia, Croatia, Denmark, Iceland, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Oman, and Slovenia. This can obviously affect their data. We should also bear in mind that in many of the countries without national libraries – of which the majority are African states – we certainly shouldn’t expect large holdings, or perhaps any at all: both because of the generally lower overall holdings, but also because of low literacy rates in many such countries.

China	181	171	10
Brazil	150	91	59
Argentina	123	91	32
Czechia	121	70	51
Israel	119	87	32
Poland	105	85	20
Denmark	102	46	56
Belgium	98	57	41
Sweden	98	56	42
Turkey	96	93	3
Mexico	85	66	19
Croatia	82	39	43
Hungary	82	57	25
Finland	81	57	24
Latvia	76	62	14
Lithuania	75	63	12
Australia	74	37	37
India	74	62	12
Greece	73	29	44
South Korea	73	72	1
Peru	72	70	2
Belarus	70	67	3
Slovenia	69	43	26

The top quartile is constituted by a majority of **European** countries (20). In contrast, there are only five **Asian** and five **American** countries, and only 1 **Oceanian** country; notably missing are any **African** or **Caribbean** countries. The states represented here are those with the greatest number of translations like France, Germany, Russia, Spain, and the UK, as well as **American** and **Asian** countries with prolific translation histories like the USA and Brazil; China, South Korea, and Turkey. At the same time, there are also a few smaller states like Denmark, Finland, Israel, Latvia, and Slovenia, with very few translations in their own native languages.

European dominance continues in the second highest quartile too, even if the second highest quartile is led by two Asian states, Iran and Japan. In fact, there are 16 **European** states; in contrast, there are only a half-dozen **Asian** countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Japan, and Taiwan) and **American** countries (Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, and Venezuela). **African** countries make their first appearance (Tunisia and South Africa), alongside one **Oceanian** state, New Zealand.

The second lowest quartile is made up of a plurality of **Asian** states: these are mostly Middle Eastern (Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and UAE) or Southeastern Asia (Brunei, Indonesian, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam), with a few **African** (Egypt, Morocco, and Sudan), **Central** and **South American** (Belize, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Uruguay), and **Caribbean** states (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago) as well. There are just a few, small **European** countries, primarily located in the Balkans (Bosnia, Kosovo, and North Macedonia).

Unlike any of the other three quartiles, the bottom quartile is composed of a plurality of **African** states, either located in **East Africa** (Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda), **West Africa** (Benin, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Niger), or **Southern Africa** (Namibia, Swaziland). Alongside these **African** states are a number of countries located in **Asia** (Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Sri Lanka, and Turkmenistan), the **Caribbean** (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Dominica, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), and **Oceania** (Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu). There is additionally one **South American** country (Guyana), as well as one **European** microstate (Andorra).

If we turn to analyzing the data, adjusting for total speakers, the top quartile continues to be dominated by Europe, even more than before (Table 5). This time, 27 states are **European**, compared to 20 in the previous analysis. Many of the states are the same as before, along with the addition, however, of a number of smaller states.

National Library	Ratio of total <i>Commedie</i> to population
Liechtenstein	552
Monaco	436
Iceland	180
Malta	97
Luxembourg	68
Latvia	40
Slovenia	33
Montenegro	27
Lithuania	27
Austria	27
Estonia	23
Croatia	20
Spain	19

Denmark	18
Finland	15
Brunei	14
Israel	13
Andorra	13
Netherlands	12
Moldova	12
Czechia	11
Antigua and Barbuda	10
United Kingdom	10
Armenia	10
Sweden	10
Albania	9
Georgia	9
Belgium	9
Hungary	8
Serbia	8
France	8
Ireland	8

As a whole, region by region, since the two different analyses – absolute translations and relative translations by population – show significant similarities, I won't need to compare all the quartiles of the latter. It's enough to state that in both measurements, **European** nations rank first in the top and second top quartiles; **Asian** nations rank first in the second lowest quartile; and **African** nations lead the lowest quartile. What changes, however, is the classification of certain countries. For example, three **American** countries (Brazil, Mexico, and the USA) and four **Asian** states (China, India, South Korea, and Turkey) all drop down from top quartile to the second lowest quartile (with India, in fact, reaching the bottom). In contrast, smaller countries like Antigua and Barbuda, Andorra, Brunei, Monaco, and Montenegro all rise from either bottom quartile or second bottom quartile, in absolute terms, to the very top quartile, when adjusted for population.

Along with studying the circulation of Dante's text in libraries worldwide, data on library holdings also allow us to compare two additional aspects of popularity: namely, the library circulation of Italian editions and second language translations.

Similarly to total *Commedie*, the top quartile of national libraries ranked by absolute number of Italian editions is dominated by **European** states, accounting for 23 of the 31 spots (Austria,

Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvian, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom). The only other countries represented are five countries located in the **Americas** (Argentina, Brazil, China, Mexico, and USA), along with one country in **Africa** (Tunisia), **Asia** (Israel), and **Oceania** (Australia).

Furthermore, in a few countries, as Table 6 shows, Italian copies are actually more prevalent than translations: Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Greece, and Malta. It is assuredly no coincidence that four of these five nations have been either colonized by Italy (Croatia, Greece, and Malta) or colonizers of Italy (Austria).

Table 6. National Libraries with more Italian editions than translations					
<i>National Library</i>	<i>Li-</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Com-</i>	<i>Italian edi-</i>	<i>Translations</i>
		<i>medie</i>		<i>tions</i>	
Austria		236		148	88
Croatia		82		43	39
Denmark		102		56	46
Greece		73		44	29
Malta		49		30	19

However, the data reveals, in fact, that in some national libraries where translations of Dante are considerably widespread, Italian copies are few and far between. For instance, Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Indonesia, Iran, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Peru, Romania, South Korea, Turkey, Ukraine, and Venezuela all have 10 or more total editions of the *Commedia*, and even upwards of 90 in the case of Turkey, but only 1, 2, or 3 Italian copies at most.

Indeed, while 98% of **European** national libraries (41/42, excepting Andorra) have at least one copy of Dante's text in Italian, and about 70% of **American** libraries (11/16), the percentage is far less in other regions. 40% of **Oceania** national libraries (2/5); 35% of **Asian** national libraries (13/37); 25% of **African** national libraries (4/16); and 0% of **Caribbean** national libraries (0/11) own Dante's Italian edition.

Up until now, I have spoken of translations indiscriminately, without reference to whether translations are published in the native language or a second, third, or even fourth language. In fact, in many countries, the translations into non-native languages are held more widely than translations into official native languages.

Indeed, non-native translations proliferate more than mother tongue translations in about a third of the national libraries (41), as Table 7 indicates. The leading non-native languages are English, followed by German, Russian, French, and finally Czech. This indicates that a large percentage of library readers access the *Commedia* in languages that are not their mother tongues.

Country	Total Translations	L1 translations	Combined non-native translations	Leading non-native translation language
Slovakia	13	5	8	Czech
Bahrain	2	0	2	English
Brunei	6	0	6	English
Ghana	2	0	2	English
Iceland	37	3	34	English
Indonesia	9	0	9	English
Jordan	3	1	2	English
Kuwait	7	3	4	English
Malaysia	2	0	2	English
Maldives	1	0	1	English
Malta	19	8	11	English
Myanmar	1	0	1	English
Philippines	6	0	6	English
Qatar	16	2	14	English
Rwanda	2	0	2	English
Saudi Arabia	3	1	2	English
Sri Lanka	1	0	1	English
Taiwan	25	10	15	English
Thailand	5	0	5	English
UAE	6	2	4	English
Bulgaria	19	5	14	French
Greece	29	10	19	French
Morocco	14	3	11	French
Portugal	41	18	23	French
Tunisia	24	3	21	French
Vietnam	9	4	5	French
Croatia	39	14	25	German
Czechia	70	32	38	German

Denmark	46	18	28	German
Finland	57	19	38	German
Israel	87	7	80	German
Lithuania	63	17	46	German
Slovenia	43	15	28	German
Armenia	26	10	16	Russian
Belarus	67	3	64	Russian
Estonian	26	0	26	Russian
Tajikistan	7	0	7	Russian
Turkmeni- stan	1	0	1	Russian
Ukraine	43	15	28	Russian
Uzbekistan	5	0	5	Russian

That Dante circulates so broadly in non-native languages hasn't been demonstrated before, and is a crucial fact to understanding the reception and translation of Dante's text worldwide. It is noteworthy that all the mediating languages – Czech, English, French, German, and Russian – are European. English is the mediating language for a broad group of Asian countries, especially Arabic-speaking states, as well as a pair of African states and European states. German is the mediating language for a number of European states and one Asian country. French is the mediating language for three European countries, as well as two African countries. Russian is the mediating language for several European and Central Asian states. And Czech is the mediating language for the state forming its previous political union, Slovakia.

Wikipedia

Now that we have seen important data regarding the translations and library holdings of Dante's *Commedia*, I'll turn to Wikipedia data to assess the popularity of Dante among worldwide Wikipedia readers. This data is not strictly comparable in that collected in the other two sections, which referred to physical books. Wikipedia statistics refer, instead, to readership data, namely the number of online visits to entries on Dante and his works in relevant Wikipedia language editions. However, this additional layer of information provides key detail regarding interest and prestige of Dante's work across the world. The corpus examined here includes Dante's biographical entry, and all the entries dedicated to his works (14, plus a group of 100 entries, each of which is dedicated to one canto of the *Commedia*).

The rationale for utilizing Wikipedia, an open source collaborative encyclopedia that began in 2001, is the following. Wikipedia is a new and global digital resource for investigating the reception of authors and texts, a "global memory place,"³³ as it is not only the most consulted online encyclopedia, but the fifth most visited website in the world.³⁴ It is "the most widely read knowledge repository on Earth."³⁵ Across its 318 active language-specific editions (excluding 11 'dormant' language editions), Wikipedia includes a total of over 59 million entries (also called pages), consulted by over a billion people per month.³⁶ This has allowed 18 Wikipedia language editions to have more than one million entries; 70 Wikipedia editions more than 100,000 entries; 164 Wikipedia editions more than 10,000 entries, and 287 Wikipedia editions more than 1,000 entries.³⁷ The 318 active Wikipedia editions are, naturally, only a small percentage (4%) of the overall 7,151 living languages, although they cover over 5 billion potential users.

To be clear, the Wikipedia language editions do not correspond to specific geographical areas. The English Wikipedia, for example, composed in English, can be accessed by anyone. Therefore, the readership information can refer to readers whose native language is English; or to readers whose second or third language is English; to readers living in the USA, UK, India, or France or Malawi, for example.³⁸ As with my previous studies on the topic, I am taking the number of pageviews or visits as a proxy for the popularity and prestige of Dante and his works. Using the Wikimedia

³³ Christian Pentzold, "Fixing the floating gap: The online encyclopaedia Wikipedia as a global memory place," *Memory Studies* 2.2 (2009): 255–72.

³⁴ Włodzimierz Lewoniewski, Krzysztof Węcel, and Witold Abramowicz, "Relative Quality and Popularity Evaluation of Multilingual Wikipedia Articles," *Informatics* no. 4.43 (2017): 1–24.

³⁵ Dariusz Jemielniak, *Common Knowledge: An Ethnography of Wikipedia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

³⁶ "Unique Devices," *Wikimedia Statistics*, accessed October 20, 2022, [https://stats.wikimedia.org/#/all-wikipedia-projects/reading/unique-devices/normal|line|2-year|\(access-site\)~mobile-site*desktop-site|monthly](https://stats.wikimedia.org/#/all-wikipedia-projects/reading/unique-devices/normal|line|2-year|(access-site)~mobile-site*desktop-site|monthly).

³⁷ "List of Wikipedias," accessed October 20, 2022, https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias, accessed October 20 2022. There are additionally 300 other Wikipedia language editions in incubation, which may or may not become certified Wikipedia editions (<https://incubator.wikimedia.org/wiki/Incubator:Wikis#Wikipedia>).

³⁸ Owing to censorship, however, Wikipedia access (except by VPN) is currently blocked in China and Myanmar. "Censorship_of_Wikipedia," accessed October 20, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_of_Wikipedia.

Foundation Analytics,³⁹ the Pageviews analysis suite of tools,⁴⁰ and the global database of Wikipedia entries, Wikidata,⁴¹ I have collected the readership data from all the 318 active Wikipedia editions relating to Dante and his works.

To begin with, 186 active Wikipedia editions, including Italian, have one or more entries dedicated to Dante and/or his works. On the other hand, there are no entries dedicated to Dante or his works in the other 132 active Wikipedia editions. We can break this down by continent and language.

In 101 of the 131 European language Wikipedia editions, Dante entries are present, including the official national languages of all European states, from Albanian, Croatian and English to French, Russian, and Ukrainian. With that said, however, Dante entries are entirely missing from the other 30 European language Wikipedia editions like Greenlandic, the national language of Greenland, along with those in minority languages spoken predominantly in **Belgium** (Walloon), **Finland** (Inari Sami), **France** (Franco-Provençal and Norman), **Germany** (Upper Sorbian, Lower Sorbian, Palatinate German, and Ripuarian), **Greece** (Pontic), **Italy** (Friulian), **Latvian** (Latgalian), **Moldova** (Gagauz), **Netherlands** (Dutch Low Saxon), **Norway** (North Sami), **Poland** (Kashubian and Silesian), **Romania** (Vlax Romani), and **Russia** (Adyghe, Altai, Ingush, Kalmyk, Karachay-Balkar, Komi, Komi-Permyak, Lak, Lezgian, Moksha, Old Church Slavonic, and Tuvan). In addition, the other 156 living European languages, which lack Wikipedia editions entirely, obviously do not have Dante entries.

Dante is also present in the majority of Wikipedia editions composed in Asian languages, so 60 of 107, including the majority of Asian official or de facto national languages. Dante entries are completely absent, however, from the Wikipedias composed in the national languages of **Bhutan** (Dzongkha), **Laos** (Lao), **Maldives** (Dhivehi), **Myanmar** (Burmese), **Nepal** (Nepali), and **Sri Lanka** (Sinhala), as well as minority languages spoken in **China** (Nuosu and Uyghur), **India** (Awadhi, Bishnupriya Manipuri, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Kotava, Meitei, Odia, Pali, Sanskrit, Telugu, and Tulu), **Indonesia** (Acehnese, Balinese, Banyumasan,

³⁹ “Wikimedia Statistics,” Wikimedia, accessed on October 20, 2022, <https://stats.wikimedia.org/#/all-projects>.

⁴⁰ “Pageviews analysis,” Wikimedia, accessed on October 20, 2022, <https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&range=latest-20&pages=Cat|Dog>.

⁴¹ “Main Page,” Wiki Data, accessed on October 20, 2022, https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Wikidata:Main_Page.

Buginese, Gorontalo, Madurese, Nias, Sundanese, Tetum), **Iran** (Gilaki, Gothic, Mazandarani, Northern Luri), **Myanmar** (Mon and Shan), **Nepal** (Doteli), **Pakistan** (Saraiki and Sindhi), and **Taiwan** (Amis, Paiwan, Sakizaya, Seediq, and Tayal). Furthermore, considering that there are a total of 2,294 living Asian languages, the vast majority of which do not have Wikipedia editions, Dante entries are missing from the overwhelming number of Asian languages globally speaking.

However, compared to their presence in European and Asian indigenous languages, Dante entries are even far less present elsewhere. Dante entries exist in only 9 of 48 African language Wikipedia editions, namely those spoken in **Algeria** (Kabyle), **Egypt** (Egyptian Arabic), **Ethiopia** (Amharic), **Madagascar** (Malagasy), **Nigeria** (Yoruba), **South Africa** (Afrikaans), **Tanzania** (Swahili), **Togo** (Kabiye), and Arabic. And if we extend the comparison to the entirety of the 2,144 African languages spoken today, 9 out of 2,144 is an incredibly small percentage.

Turning to the Americas, there are Dante entries in 5 of 18 indigenous American languages, namely minority languages spoken in **Bolivia** (Aymara), **French Guiana** (French Guianese Creole), **Mexico** (Nahuatl), **Paraguay** (Guarani), and **Peru** (Quechua), alongside, obviously, colonial languages like Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. However, there are no Dante entries in any of the **USA** indigenous languages with Wikipedia editions (Chamorro, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Choctaw, Hawaiian, Inupiaq, Muscogee, Navajo, Pennsylvania German) or **Canadian** indigenous languages (Atikamekw, Cree, Inuktitut) or **Suriname** (Sranan Tongo).

Together with the Americas we need to consider the Caribbean, which geographically forms part of the region: while Dante entries appear in 2 of 3 Caribbean languages (Haitian Creole and Jamaican Patois), the majority of indigenous – and most spoken – Caribbean languages don't have dedicated Wikipedia editions, such as those spoken in the **Bahamas** (Bahamas English Creole), **Barbados** (Bajan), **Dominica** and **Saint Lucia** (Lesser Antillean French Creole), **Grenada** (Grenadian English Creole), **Haiti** (Haitian Creole), **Jamaica** (Jamaican English Creole), **Saint Kitts and Nevis** (Leeward Caribbean English Creole), **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** (Vincentian English Creole), and **Trinidad and Tobago** (Trinidadian Creole English). As with Europe and Asia, the range of American (including Caribbean) languages – 1,061 – far outstretches the number of Wikipedia language editions Dante is present in.

There are likewise hardly any native Oceanian languages with Dante entries. Only 2 of 10 such Wikipedias editions do, which are spoken on two Pacific islands, **Nauru** (Nauruan) and **Vanuatu** (Bislama). Indeed, there are no Dante entries in the Wikipedia editions composed in the principal Oceanic indigenous languages spoken on **Fiji** (Fijian), **Marshall Islands** (Marshallese), **Samoa** (Samoan), and **Tonga** (Tongan), or important minority languages spoken in **French Polynesia** (Tahitian), **New Zealand** (Maori), **Papua New Guinea** (Tok Pisin), and **Pitcairn Island** (Pitcairn-Norfolk). Furthermore, the overwhelming number of Oceanian languages do not have Wikipedia editions, such as those in the national languages of **Micronesia**, **Palau**, **Kiribati**, **Solomon Islands**, or **Tuvalu**. So, Dante entries are the least prolific, even compared to the other continents, present in only 2 out of 1,313 Oceanian languages.

Yet just because a Dante entry is present in a Wikipedia doesn't reveal to what extent it is visited. This is what I will now focus on.

Wikipedia editions with most pageviews

<i>Wikipedia edition</i>	<i>Average annual pageviews</i>
English	4111k
Italian	3235k
Spanish	1717k
Russian	1088k
German	522k
Portuguese	475k
French	466k
Japanese	326k
Polish	196k
Ukrainian	181k
Mandarin Chinese	181k
Swedish	122k
Arabic	114k
Dutch	113k
Hungarian	106k

Croatian	99k
Czech	98k
Persian	94k
Romanian	90k
Turkish	63k
Greek	61k
Finnish	53k
Serbian	42k
Hebrew	41k
Macedonian	37k
Bulgarian	34k
Korean	33k
Albanian	31k
Bosnian	31k
Norwegian (Bokmål)	26k
Indonesian	24k
Vietnamese	24k
Tagalog	23k
Lithuanian	21k
Danish	21k
Slovak	19k
Catalan	19k
Slovene	18k
Georgian	16k
Simple English	15k
Armenian	15k
Hindi	11k
Thai	8k
Asturian	7k
Latvian	6k
Bengali	6k
Azerbaijani	5k

As Table 8 indicates, the majority of Wikipedia editions in the top quartile are those in **European** languages, nearly 30 out of 43. **Asian** languages make up the remainder. Globally speaking, the

Wikipedia with the most views of its Dante pages is surprisingly not the Italian Wikipedia, but the English Wikipedia. Annually speaking there are over 4 million annual average page views of the English Dante entries. Italian and Spanish are behind, 2nd and 3rd, in pageviews. Russian is comfortably in fourth, the only other edition with more than one million views. There is then a significant drop off with German above 500 thousand Dante views, and Portuguese and French a bit behind. Japanese is in 8th place, around 320 thousand. Ukrainian and Polish round out the top ten. The only other Wikipedia editions with more than 100 thousand annual pageviews are Dutch, Hungarian, Mandarin Chinese,⁴² Modern Standard Arabic, and Swedish editions. Another seven Wikipedia editions have between 50 and 100 thousand annual pageviews, including **European** languages like Croatian, Czech, Finnish, Greek and Romanian as well as **Asian** languages like Farsi and Turkish.⁴³

The second highest quartile is composed of mostly **European** minority languages, along with several national languages like Belarusian, Estonian, Icelandic, Maltese, Nynorsk. There are in addition more than a dozen **Asian** languages, including national languages like Kazakh, Malay, Mongolian, Urdu, and Uzbek. Three **African** languages make their appearance (Afrikaans, Egyptian Arabic, and Swahili).

European languages still predominant in the third quartile, with however only two national languages among them (Irish and Luxembourgish). The significant number of **Asian** languages also mostly comprises minority languages, with the exception of Kyrgyz and Pashto. The remaining languages are either **African** (Amharic, Kabiye, and Yoruba), **Caribbean** (Haitian Creole and Jamaican Patois), or **Constructed**, like Interlingue, Lingua Franca, and Novial.

The bottom quartile is led by **Asian** languages, with 20, compared to 19 **European** languages. However, while all the **European** languages are minority languages, some of the **Asian** languages are national languages like Khmer, Tajik, Tibetan, and Turkmen. Alongside these there are a handful of indigenous **American** languages (Aymara, Guarani, Guianan Creole, Nahuatl, and

⁴² From 23 April 2019 onwards, the Chinese Wikipedia edition cannot be accessed in Mainland China, so in practical terms it represents diasporic Chinese readers (or else mainland Chinese readers accessing via vpns): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_of_Wikipedia#China.

⁴³ The Turkish Wikipedia edition was blocked by the Turkish government from 29 April to 15 January 2020: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Block_of_Wikipedia_in_Turkey, so the pageviews during this time period were only by Turkish readers outside Turkey (or via vpns).

Quechua), a pair of **African** languages (Kabyle and Malagasy), and one **Oceanian** language (Nauruan).

Now I will examine the pageview statistics in relative terms, based on the ratio of annual Dante pageviews to the total number of Wikipedia edition pageviews. This allows me to compare large and small Wikipedia editions in terms of the proportion of Dante pageviews.

The top quartile in Dante pageviews, taking into account total Wikipedia pageviews, includes languages with many translations like Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Hungarian, Romanian, and Greek, alongside languages with only one translation, such as Georgian, Macedonian, and Vlach (see Table 9). As is evident, nearly all of these languages are broadly-speaking Western. Besides Italian and the Italian Romance language Ladin, the leading languages here are all Balkan: Macedonian, Bosnian, Croatian, and Albanian.

<i>Wikipedia Edition</i>	<i>Dante pageviews/ Edition pageviews (per million)</i>	<i>Dante pageviews (thousands)</i>	<i>Edition pageviews (mil)</i>
Macedonian	430	37.2	86.4
Italian	383	2910.9	7598
Ladin	383	0.2	0.6
Bosnian	339	31.1	91.9
Croatian	294	98.5	335.6
Albanian	292	31.4	107.5
Romansh	252	1.1	4.5
Picard	218	1.0	4.6
Tagalog	189	22.6	119.5
Saterland Frisian	173	1.0	5.6
Ukrainian	158	181.5	1151
Ligurian	140	0.9	6.3
Romanian	139	90.2	648.7
Sardinian	132	0.9	6.8
Kabiye	129	0.3	2.4
Spanish	123	1717.4	13999.9

Asturian	120	6.5	54.3
Greek	119	61.3	515.3
Novial	118	0.4	3.7
Hungarian	114	105.6	924.5
Slovene	110	18.4	167.4
Bislama	110	0.3	2.6
Vlach	104	0.3	2.7
Lingua Franca Nova	103	0.4	3.6
Ladino	103	0.6	5.9
Portuguese	102	475.2	4649
Võro	100	0.6	5.9
Karakalpak	96	0.4	4.2
Armenian	94	14.6	154.7
Kabardian	92	0.3	3.1
Russian	91	1087.7	11979
Jamaican Patois	91	0.3	3.2
Livvi-Karelian	90	0.4	4.4
Zhuang	87	0.3	3.4
Pangasinan	84	0.3	3.4
Mirandese	83	0.4	4.7
Central Bikol	83	0.8	9.3
Czech	82	97.6	1195
Lithuanian	80	21.3	265.6
Santali	80	0.2	2.1
Bulgarian	79	34.5	435.4
Tarantino	79	0.4	5.6
Nauruan	77	0.2	3.1
French Guianese Creole	77	0.1	1.1
Zeelandic	77	0.4	4.8
Georgian	73	16.0	218.0
Swedish	73	122.1	1682

Macedonian, for instance, has such a high percentage that it's nearly six times the amount of Swedish, the lowest Wikipedia in this quartile. The majority of languages represented here are European languages, with 17 **European** national languages (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish, and Ukrainian), compared to only 3 **Asian** national languages (Armenian, Georgian, and Tagalog), 2 **Oceanian**

national languages (Bislama and Nauruan), 1 national **Caribbean** language (Jamaican Patois), and 0 national **African** languages. Furthermore, there are 14 **European** minority languages, but only 6 **Asian** minority languages, one **African** language, one **American** language, along with 2 **Constructed** languages.

At the same time, nearly half of the languages in the top quartile have no translations of Dante at all, namely languages – almost all minority – spoken in **China** (Zhuang), **Estonia** (Võro), **France** (Picard), **French Guiana** (Guianan Creole), **Germany** (Saterland Frisian), **India** (Santali), **Israel** (Ladino), **Nauru** (Nauruan), **Netherlands** (Zeelandic), **Philippines** (Central Bikol and Pangasinan), **Portugal** (Mirandese), **Russia** (Kabardian and Livvi-Karelian), **Spain** (Asturian), **Switzerland** (Romansh), **Togo** (Kabiye), **Vanuatu** (Bislama), and **Constructed** (Novial). We should note that entirely absent from the top quartile are languages with far more absolute pageviews but fewer relative pageviews compared to the respective overall Wikipedia edition: thus, the absence of English, German, French, Japanese, Chinese, and Polish, for example, from this quartile.

The second upper quartile of relative Wikipedia popularity shows, again, a higher number of European national languages than any other region, with 11 national **European** languages (Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Latvian, Norwegian, Polish, Serbian, Slovak) compared to only 5 national **Asian** languages (Hebrew, Mongolian, Persian, Tibetan, Turkish) and 1 national **Asian/African** language (Arabic). There are also more minority **European** languages present (18) compared to **Asian** (7), **African** (1) or **American** (1) languages. Once more, there are many languages represented here without any Dante translations: Abkhazian, Aymara, Bhojpuri, Buryat, Chavacano, Corsican, Cornish, Erzya, Extremaduran, Fiji Hindi, Hakka, Hill Mari, Interlingue, Kabyle, Tibetan, Udmurt, Veps, and West Flemish.

In contrast, the second lowest quartile is constituted by more national **Asian** languages (9: Azerbaijani, Bengali, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Pashto, Turkmen, Uzbek, Vietnamese) than **European** (3, Estonian, Icelandic, Irish), **African** (2, Amharic and Yoruba), and **Caribbean** (1, Haitian Creole), alongside 13 minority **Asian** languages, 13 minority **European** languages, and 3 minority **American** languages. The majority of the languages in this quartile here have no Dante translations, namely Alemannic, Banjar, Bavarian, Faroese, Gan, Guarani, Haitian Creole, Ido, Ilokano, Kapampangan, Kurdish (Kurmanji), Kurdish (Sorani), Limburgish, Maithili, Manx, Meadow Mari, Minangkabau, Mingrelian,

Nahuatl, Newar, North Frisian, Pashto, Punjabi, Quechua, Rusyn, Sakha, Samogitian, Scottish Gaelic, Turkmen, Western Punjabi, Yoruba, and Zazaki.

The bottom quartile continues the previous trend, with 9 **Asian** national languages (Hindi, Indonesian, Kazakh, Khmer, Kyrgyz, Malay, Tajik, Thai, Urdu) compared to only 4 such **European** languages (Belarusian, Luxembourgish, Maltese, Nynorsk). This is also the quartile with the largest number of **African** national languages (3, Afrikaans, Egyptian Arabic, Malagasy). There are additionally 17 **European** minority languages, 12 **Asian** minority languages and 1 **African** minority language. As with previous quartiles, the majority of languages with Wikipedia editions in this quartile have no translations, namely Aragonese, Avar, Bashkir, Cantonese, Cebuano, Chechen, Chuvash, Crimean Tatar, Eastern Min, Egyptian Spoken Arabic, Hindi, Indonesian, Javanese, Khmer, Kyrgyz, Luxembourgish, Malagasy, Malay, Marathi, Norman, Ossetian, Scots, South Azerbaijani, Southern Min, Swahili, Tatar, Thai, Volapük, Waray, West Frisian, and Wu.

So, depending on whether we're considering the absolute number of Dante pageviews or the relative number, the ranking changes dramatically.

Dante's Commedia and World Literature

Dante's *Commedia* has been translated, often repeatedly, into nearly 100 languages, including dialects.⁴⁴ Worldwide, there are more than 470 complete translations of the *Commedia*, increasing by the year. The *Commedia* is held in on all continents, in over 100 national libraries: from Australia to France, Germany to Russia, from Belize and Uruguay to Rwanda and Sudan, from Antigua and Barbuda and Mongolia to Saudi Arabia and Trinidad and Tobago, often circulating in both translation and Italian. Entries relating to Dante or his works are viewed in over 180 Wikipedia language editions, including most of the top 20 spoken languages worldwide, as well as in non-Western languages as different as Bislama, Jamaican Patois, Kabiye, and Tagalog. Despite this, it is an error to conclude that the *Commedia* is globally canonical or popular.

First, let's begin with translation. Yes, Dante's work has been translated into around 100 languages, but how many languages are there anyway? 7,151. So, Dante has been translated into approximately 1.4% of global languages. Perhaps that's unfair, though,

⁴⁴ I continue to refer to only complete translated canticles or complete translated *Commedie*.

since many languages haven't been written down. So, let's recalculate, using the number of languages with "developed writing systems": 4,065. Now we get about a 2.5% translation rate. If we try to calculate this rate per continent – Asia and Africa each have more than 2,000 different languages, while the Americas and the Pacific region each have over 1,000, while Europe has almost 300 – we still come up with embarrassingly low figures for any non-European continent: less than a tenth of 1 percent in Asia, Africa, Americas, and Pacific. Indeed, even limited to a list of the top 200 most spoken languages in the world, Dante's *Commedia* still falls short, translated in less than 25% of them.

Besides the absence of the *Commedia* in translation, even the translation activity is highly divergent. Even in the most favorable continent, Europe, Dante's work hasn't been translated evenly. While some European countries account for an overwhelming number of translations – especially England, France, Germany, and Spain – other European nations like Norway, North Macedonia, and Slovakia have only given rise to only 1 complete translation of the *Commedia*, while still others, like Andorra, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, and Monaco haven't translated it at all.

In Asia, furthermore, there are huge swathes of countries without any translations composed in native languages: we can think specifically of Central and Southeast Asia, where the *Commedia* has been natively translated in only 1 of the 16 countries, or Western Asia, where the *Commedia*, again, has been translated in only a minority of countries (8 of 18).

Even in the Americas, the situation is not much better. In fact, fewer than a third such nations have complete native translations. Yet still more pronounced is the situation in Africa, with complete indigenous translations of Dante published in only 3 of 54 states. Meanwhile, translations are nearly non-existent in Oceania, with a complete translation published in only 1 of 14 countries. Yet among all the regions, the 13 Caribbean states are at the bottom, with not one single native Dante translation.

While most of the national libraries have at least one copy of Dante, in many countries he's available only in non-native languages: how many readers, then, must he have? In addition, in numerous countries, the Italian edition of his text is not held at all, meaning the exposure to his text occurs only through mediated translations.

And if we move on to looking at Wikipedia reception, although Dante entries are present in around 180 Wikipedia editions, Dante entries are entirely absent from over 130 Wikipedia editions,

representing 130 different languages. And even in many Wikipedia language editions with Dante entries, they are rarely consulted. So, this certainly isn't a point in favor of global canonicity.

Indeed, the relative lack of translations, scarce library holdings, and uneven level of Wikipedia popularity in the non-European world are clear indicators that Dante is simply not a globally canonical figure. Otherwise, we would expect translations of the *Commedia* into languages from Hindi, Indonesian, and Quechua to Tigrigna, Turkmen, and Swahili, library holdings in national libraries from Fiji, Guyana, and Jamaica to Kazakhstan, Kenya, and Tuvalu; and pageviews visited in Wikipedia editions from Burmese, Kashmiri, and Lao to Somali, Tok Pisin, and Zulu. None of which, however, is the case.

Yet Dante is popular all the same in many contexts, even if not equally across the world. We can compare the top-10 among the three different criteria – *translations*, *library holdings*, and *Wikipedia visits* – in absolute and relative classifications: absolute refers to total numbers, while relative refers to numbers adjusted for speakers.

Several languages excel in all three absolute (but not relative) criteria: Chinese, English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish. Other languages excel in two criteria: Dutch (translations and libraries) and Russian (libraries and Wikipedia). Yet others excel in two relative (but not absolute) criteria, because of their small number of speakers: Icelandic (translations and libraries), Lithuanian (translations and libraries), and Maltese (translations and libraries). Other languages/countries excel in one criterion, but both its absolute and relative measurements: Austria (libraries) and Ukrainian (Wikipedia).

However, the majority of top-10 languages/countries excel in only one measurement: absolute translations (Japanese, Korean, and Turkish); relative translations (Basque, Breton, Frisian, Occitan, Plattdeutsch, Welsh, and Vlach); absolute Wikipedia visits (Polish); and relative Wikipedia visits (Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Macedonian, Picard, Romanian, Romansh, Saterland Frisian, and Tagalog). The popularity of Dante can thus be identified in all of the above languages and/or states. From one perspective, it's clear that Dante is most popular in six languages, judging solely by absolute number of translations, library holdings and Wikipedia visits: Chinese, English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish. On a lesser scale, Dutch and Russian popularity, although less pronounced, is quite evident. Yet if we turn to relative measurements, a whole new world opens up, ranging from national languages of

small European countries, so Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Icelandic, Macedonian, Maltese, and Slovene to minority European languages like Basque, Breton, Frisian (both its Eastern and Western variants), Occitan, Picard, Plattdeutsch, Romansh, Vlach, and Welsh, most of which are spoken in translation-friendly states like England, France, Germany, Spain. The only other popular languages are Romanian, national language of two states, and Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines.

We think of Dante as a world author, *per forza* – if he is not, then who is? – but we tend to dismiss the fact that seen from the perspective of a citizen of Bhutan, Botswana, Laos, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Tajikistan, and Tonga, the world literary canon is not the same as it is to those of us living in so-called first world countries like Italy, the UK, and the United States. Does this mean Dante is less of a world author?

We must return to an important claim by Theo D’haen, who wrote that “the ‘world’ of world literature looks different from different locations.”⁴⁵ The word “locations” used by D’haen indicates countries as well as languages: so that world literature appears differently to an English speaker in Toronto than to a French speaker in Quebec. Let us take an even more extreme case, South Africa, where multilingualism is “a defining characteristic of being South African.”⁴⁶ In South Africa, there are 11 official and statutory national languages, all of which have over 1 million native speakers: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Setswana, Northern and Southern Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu.⁴⁷ 7 of these eleven languages have their own Wikipedia editions, and although Dante is viewed in two of them (Afrikaans and English), he is absent from five of them (Northern Sotho, Tsonga, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu). Moreover, Dante has also been translated into only Afrikaans and English. Data indicates that a combined 33 million South Africans know Afrikaans and/or English as either an L1 or L2 language.⁴⁸ This means that the remaining 26 million South Africans who know neither language have no access at all to Dante, either in translations or Wikipedia language editions.

⁴⁵ Theo D’haen, *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature* (London: Routledge, 2013), 166.

⁴⁶ Susan Coetzee-Van Rooy, “Motivation and Multilingualism in South Africa,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Motivation for Language Learning*, eds. M. Lamb, K. Csizer, A. Henry, and S. Ryan (London: Palgrave, 2019), 472.

⁴⁷ <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/ZA/languages>, accessed October 20, 2022.

⁴⁸ <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/ZA/languages>, accessed October 20, 2022.

Or let us take Papua New Guinea, the country with the highest linguistic diversity in the world: its nearly 9 million people scattered over 600 islands speak a total of 840 different languages.⁴⁹ However, none of the 839 indigenous languages have Dante translations, only the colonial language of English does. Since only 150,000 inhabitants speak English as a first language,⁵⁰ only 2% of Papua New Guineans have access to Dante in their mother tongue. Instead, 33% of Papua New Guineans could read Dante in English, their second language; while 65% of Papua New Guineans have no access to Dante at all.

What this data thus shows is that Dante is not equally canonical across the globe; and that even in the same country, his reception dramatically varies. Rather than positing, therefore, that world literature is a single global system – as influential scholars like Moretti and Heilbron have posited – it would be more accurate to identify specific languages, states, and regions where texts proliferate, in order to see how literary works acquire local and transnational prestige and popularity. One must always bear in mind that world literature exists – theoretically speaking – in the over 7,000 languages currently spoken, and that each incarnation of world literature is different from another. Dante as translated and interpreted in English is different from Dante in Arabic or Farsi or Japanese or Turkish. This is why future translations of Dante's *Commedia* in new languages will be all the more exciting, for what they reveal not merely about global Dante Studies but the development and dynamics of literary canons worldwide. In conclusion, then, let us then speak of world literatures, but not of a singular – and non-existent – world literature.

⁴⁹ <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/PG/languages>, accessed October 20, 2022.

⁵⁰ <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/PG/languages>, accessed October 20, 2022.