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Leezenberg, M.

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From Cosmopolitan to Vernacular in the Language Sciences: A Global History Perspective

Michiel Leezenberg*

Summary: Sheldon Pollock's justly famous work on cosmopolitan orders and processes of vernacularization in the worlds of Latinity and Sanskrit invites questions of a comparative and global-historical character. I will raise such questions in the context of the Persianate cosmopolitan order, especially as exemplified by the early modern Ottoman Empire, focusing on the wave of vernacularizations this empire witnessed in the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries. In this process of vernacularization, new vernacular forms of philological learning appear to have played a crucial role. Building on Bourdieu's work, I will try to analyze the Ottoman cosmopolitan as a pre-modern form of linguistic domination, and vernacularization as a form of resistance. Moving beyond Bourdieu, I will be arguing for a genealogical approach that is alive to premodern non-European philological traditions, and to the historically variable relation between (philological) knowledge and power.

Keywords: Global intellectual history, genealogy, vernacularization, Persianate world, Ottoman empire, language sciences, premodern linguistic domination, Pierre Bourdieu, Sheldon Pollock

1. Introduction

Since the start of the twenty-first century, the study of the interaction between cosmopolitan and vernacular languages has steadily gained in prominence. This attention is due primarily, of course, to the pathbreaking work of Sheldon Pollock, who appears to have been the first to systematically draw attention to the remarkable parallels in the linguistic history of the two virtually unrelated cultural or civilizational areas of Latinity and Sanskrit. From around the year 0 CE, Pollock argues, both areas knew universal or cosmopolitan written

M. Leezenberg
Department of Philosophy, University of Amsterdam
E-mail: m.m.leezenberg@uva.nl

languages of learning and literature, and both underwent comparable processes of what he calls *vernacularization*, or the promotion of hitherto merely spoken languages to the status of literacy, literature, and learning, around the year 1000 CE.[1]

Later authors have drawn attention to other cosmopolitans and other processes of vernacularization; but there are also theoretical issues to be raised. Here, my empirical focus will concern one such case, that of the Persian, or Persianate, realm; analytically, I will concentrate on methodological questions concerning power, or domination, and concerning global history in general. Given the incompleteness of the historical picture even at a basic descriptive level, we are still far from any explanatory account, something of which Pollock is clearly aware;[2] but it may be of use to raise theoretical points already at an early stage if we want to search for possible wider patterns and for some kind of comprehensive vision. Thus, I will be arguing that Pollock's argument can be extended, and in part strengthened, by looking at the Persianate world, and more specifically the early modern Ottoman Empire; this case history suggests that there is even more reason than Pollock thinks to search for possible wider or even global patterns underlying these modern processes of vernacularization. Moreover, I will argue that Ottoman vernacularization crucially involved new forms of premodern vernacular "philology," in the broad sense of the systematic study of languages and texts.

Analytically, I will explore whether we can analyze cosmopolitans as involving a form of premodern "linguistic domination," as Pierre Bourdieu calls it.[3] I will also pay attention to matters of global or interconnected history.[4] Pollock himself explicitly invites such discussions. Initially, he argues that – despite the substantial differences between them – in both the Latin and the Sanskrit worlds, vernacularization helped institute an early modern era; in his later elaboration, he asks whether we can detect any wider historical factors at work here.[5] Obviously, the topic of cosmopolitan and vernacular raises questions of global history almost as a matter of definition; at least as importantly, it invites us to pursue analytical questions concerning forms and modalities of power involved not only in linguistic practices, but also in the various forms of philological learning in different traditions.[6]

[1] For a brief preliminary statement, see Pollock 2000; for a fuller argument, presented with a breathtaking wealth of descriptive detail, see Pollock 2006.

[2] Pollock 2000, on 595; see Pollock 2006, chapters 12–14.

[3] Bourdieu 1991.

[4] See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "On the Origins of Global History," inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, November 2013; Subrahmanyam 2015.

[5] Pollock 2000, on 592; Pollock 2006, chapter 12.

[6] For a first comparative overview of different philological traditions see Pollock et al. 2015.

2. Pollock on Vernacularization and Cosmopolitan: Some Theoretical Points

First, however, I will discuss in somewhat greater detail a few aspects of Pollock's views that invite further discussion. Although the basic outlines of his argument are by now rather well known, they merit a brief recapitulation. Around the year 0 CE, Pollock argues, both Latin in the Mediterranean area and Sanskrit in the Indian subcontinent became genuinely cosmopolitan languages of learning, literature, and government. They were not necessarily spoken as native languages by anybody, but served as the main if not exclusive means of written communication over vast realms. Moreover, he argues, both cosmopolitan realms witnessed a major wave of vernacularization around the year 1000 CE, in which hitherto exclusively spoken vernacular languages became new media of written literature, including French, Catalan, and Italian in Europe, and Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada in the Sanskrit realm.

Analytically, three points stand out in this account. First, Pollock rightly calls attention to the role of philological learning, or what one might call "language sciences," in both cosmopolitans. Since both cosmopolitans and vernaculars were "everywhere and always produced by deliberate choices and conscious practices,"[7] both kinds of practice tended to involve a systematic appeal to "philology" in the broad sense of the grammatical codification of the language involved and/or commentaries on the (literary and other) texts produced in it. Thus, perhaps starting with Varro's *De lingua latina* (first century BCE), the Latin cosmopolitan developed a venerable tradition of reflection on, and codification of, the Latin language, involving countless generations of Latin grammarians.[8] Learning concerning language and literature was similarly well-developed in the Sanskrit cosmopolitan. The most famous philological text here is undoubtedly Pânini's Sanskrit grammar; but there is a vast corpus of studies of, and commentaries on, earlier texts, whether written or oral. Thus, Pollock emphasizes the importance of genres of "commentary" (like *bhâsya* and *vârtikka*) and in the Indian tradition, and his point may be generalized: a lot of the philological work in different traditions and in different periods takes the form of commentaries on older texts, and simultaneously explicates and consecrates the latter as classical or canonical.[9] Thus, philological learning may well play a major if variable role in the articulation of both cosmopolitan and vernacularized languages more generally.

Second, Pollock suggests we think about cosmopolitans and vernacularization in terms of actions rather than ideas.[10] For example, he argues that in studying the Latin cosmopolis, we should focus more on the practices of assimilation, or as he calls it, "linguistic devastation," rather than on (Stoic and

[7] Pollock 2000, on 616.

[8] For an overview see Kaster 1988.

[9] Pollock 2015, on 115. Pollock emphasizes, however, that ancient India – despite the obvious early example of Pânini – did not have any concept of "philology," nor any distinct knowledge form (*vidyâsthâna*) we would qualify as philological.

[10] Pollock 2000, on 593.

other) ideologies of cosmopolitanism.[11] This emphasis on "conscious and deliberate" social practices implies that linguistic change is a social rather than a natural process; and indeed, Pollock emphatically rejects evolutionary explanations of cosmopolitanism and vernacularization: "these developments cannot in any sensible way be characterized as natural or evolutionary […] what we encounter everywhere is strategic choice, or strategic resistance."[12] Put differently: linguistic and literary orders cannot be naturalized, since they involve the normative and power-saturated practices, and more specifically the conscious and deliberate choices, of elite actors.[13]

Third, and in part contradicting the above, Pollock's "practice turn" is oddly incomplete. Despite his emphasis on practices, Pollock maintains a strict analytical distinction between "culture" (including language and literature) and "power," by which he primarily appears to mean the sovereign power of rulers, or perhaps what we would nowadays refer to as "politics." Thus, he regularly and consistently speaks of "practices of culture and power," or "cultural and political practices,"[14] apparently assuming that the two are entirely disjunctive, or implying that culture as such is power-free and that power as such is autonomous with respect to culture.

Pollock's analysis thus raises analytical questions concerning the methodological status of power in cosmopolitan and vernacular cultural (and more specifically, literary and philological) practices. He rightly notes that cosmopolitan orders need not depend on state power; although the Latin cosmopolitan was obviously sustained by the Roman Empire, the Sanskrit cosmopolitan had no such imperial backing or foundation.[15] Below, however, my main point will be a different one: my suggestion will be that we may analyze cosmopolitan constellations as *themselves* amounting to a form of linguistic power or domination. Accordingly, we may reanalyze vernacularization as involving a form of resistance against such domination. My main analytical concern will be with the implications of reanalyzing cosmopolitan and vernacular philologies in such forms of domination and resistance.

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[11] Ibid., on 602.

[12] Ibid., on 499.

[13] The importance of strategies, choices, and of domination and resistance, also restricts the usefulness of naturalist or quasi-naturalist approaches like, most recently, Beecroft 2015, whose so-called "ecological perspective" on world literature depicts different, and increasingly large-scale "literary ecologies," like cosmopolitan, vernacular, national, and global as developing out of each other in a quasi-natural evolutionary process. Arguing that "ecology, rather than economics, provides the better model for understanding" (p. 19), and reducing the concerns with political, economic, and literary domination one finds in, respectively, Pollock, Moretti, and Casanova, to a purely ecological – i. e., naturalistic – concern with the "interaction of literature with its environment" (p. 2–3), Beecroft systematically dodges all questions of power, struggle, domination and resistance, to which the abovementioned authors had called attention, and winds up with a curiously ahistorical and apolitical definition of a language as "a dialect with a literature" (p. 6).

[14] E.g., Pollock 2000, on 592, 602, 615.

[15] Generally, however, and regardless of the notoriously vague concept of "empire," cosmopolitans *do* appear to involve an imperial background of *some* kind, and thus some kind of political power.

3. The Persian Cosmopolitan: An Early Modern Wave of Vernacularization

Before engaging with such theoretical concerns, however, let me first discuss what may be called the Persian, or rather Persianate, cosmopolitan, which introduces a number of complicating factors already at the descriptive, let alone the theoretical, level. From around the eleventh century CE, Modern Persian became the language of the written literature of courtly elites in virtually all parts of the Northern and Eastern Islamic world where Arabic was not the main spoken idiom. This cosmopolitan literary civilization persisted at least into the eighteenth century CE, and clear traces of it can still be seen even later. For centuries, it spanned a huge area, reaching from Southeastern Europe, across the Anatolian and Iranian plateaus into Central and South Asia, with less dominant Persianate influences extending even further into Southeast Asia.

Modern Persian as a language of written literature emerged in the early eleventh century CE, initially with Firdowsî's *Shahname*; arguably, it involved the self-conscious assertion of this modern Persian literary language against the domination of Arabic in both literature and learning. Slightly later, authors like Nizâmî, Rûmî, Hâfez, Saadî and others confirmed and strengthened the hegemonic status of this modern variety of Persian as a language of literature. I am not entirely certain one can call this emergence a case of vernacularization, however, since it is preceded by a long pre-Islamic tradition of writing in earlier forms of Persian and in closely related dialects.[16]

The modern Persian literary language was linked neither to any strictly language-based Persian ethnic or national identity nor to 'Abbâsid or other imperial power. Thus, Firdowsî started writing his epic under the patronage of the Persian-speaking Sâmânid dynasty, but finished it while in the service of the Turkic king Mahmûd of Ghazna; Nizâmî – born to a Kurdish mother, and living at the court of a petty local prince in what is nowadays called Azerbaijan – wrote all of his poems in Persian. The tales of heroic bravery from the *Shahname* and the stories of chivalric romance and courtly love from works like Nizâmî's *Laylî and Majnûn* and *Khosrow and Shirîn*, Jâmî's *Yûsuf and Zulaykha*, and others, proved such powerful models that poets in other traditions, languages and faiths also started writing poetic works in similar forms.

To mention but a few examples: the Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli (died 1216 CE) explicitly modeled his *Man in the Panther Skin* (*Vepkhistqaosani*), which would subsequently be consecrated as the Georgian national epic, on the genre of the "Persian tale" (*ambavi sp'arsuli*); and in fact, traces of Nizâmî and other Persian romance poets are pervasive in his work. Likewise, the Azeri poet Fuzûlî (died 1556 CE) composed a courtly romance on Layla and Majnûn in

[16] Moreover, it may make sense to analytically distinguish between an 'Iranian' oral tradition that goes back to pre-Islamic times, and the 'Persianate' cosmopolitan literary order that emerged after 1000 CE, although perhaps these two traditions can no more be strictly separated than their oral and literate dimensions.

Azeri Turkish, which has roughly the same structure as Nizâmî's version, and whose language is shot through with Persian vocabulary. And finally, the Kurdish poet Ehmedê Xanî (died 1707 CE) wrote a courtly story of worldly and mystical love, *Mem û Zîn*, which is self-consciously written in vernacular Kurdish, but openly states its indebtedness to Nizâmî and Jâmî and likewise contains large numbers of Persian expressions. By referring to Persian characters, stories and motifs, and by using Persian poetic vocabulary in works in vernacular languages, all of these authors clearly signify literary sophistication or literariness, or accumulating something like what Bourdieu would call "symbolic capital."[17]

We may call this wider cultural sphere "Persianate" rather than "Persian," as Marshall Hodgson was perhaps the first to suggest.[18] What he calls the "Persianate zone" or "Persianate tradition," as distinct from the "Arabic zone," involves not simply the use of Persian, but also the influence – or domination – of Persian linguistic and literary models in areas where languages other than Persian were spoken or written. More recently, Hamid Dabashi has described, and celebrated, this sphere as a secular "world of Persian literary humanism"; and to indicate its geographical vastness, Shahab Ahmad has coined the expression of a "Balkans-to-Bengal complex."[19] Here, however, I will employ the term "Persianate cosmopolitan" in order to facilitate comparison and confrontation with Pollock's analyses.

There have been a number of earlier studies of the Persianate cosmopolitan realm, most of them focusing on the Iranian and South Asian experiences.[20] Within this vast realm, however, the Ottoman Empire forms a distinct area, which is still relatively understudied. For centuries, this area knew a complex cosmopolitan linguistic order, with Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish (the so-called *elsine-i selâse* or "three languages") serving as the cosmopolitan media for, respectively, religious learning, poetry, and administration for Muslim authors; Koine Greek serving as the cosmopolitan medium for most though not all of the empire's orthodox subjects, and the so-called Sacred Language (*Lashon Hakodesh*), a blend of biblical Hebrew and Syriac, being used by Jews. Among Sephardic Jews who had escaped from the Iberian Peninsula in the wake of the Reconquista, Judeo-Hispanic – basically a calque of the Sacred Language with a largely Romance vocabulary – was used in liturgy, writing, and printing.

Thus, the Ottoman cosmopolitan order was rather more systematically multilingual than Pollock allows for. Moreover, in early modern times, it underwent a major, and quite remarkable, wave of vernacularizations among virtually all population groups. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries CE, one witnesses the near-simultaneous rise of various vernaculars, whether spoken by Muslims, Christians, or Jews. Thus, among Christians of different denominations, one sees the rise of modern Greek, modern Armenian,

[17] For a more detailed argument see Leezenberg 2020.

[18] Hodgson 1974, chapter VI.

[19] Dabashi 2012, on 14; Ahmad 2016, on 73–75.

[20] See, e. g., Green 2019.

Romanian, and Slavic languages like – most importantly – Serbian and Bulgarian; among Muslims, languages like Albanian, Bosnian, and Kurdish emerge, as well as a form – or forms – of written Turkish closer to the spoken vernacular than to the hybrid Ottoman language; and among the Ottoman Jews, so-called Ladino, a colloquial variety of Judeo-Hispanic, gains prominence. [21]

These processes display several intriguing features. First, the Ottoman vernacularizations, and the role of local early modern vernacular philologies played in them, belie the still widespread belief that the rise of national identities and national movements in the Ottoman Empire (and in the non-Western world more generally) was the result of the "influence," "inspiration," or "hegemony" of western romantic nationalist ideas, or more specifically of orientalist philological categories. Such a belief simply *assumes*, or posits, this hegemony rather than demonstrating – let alone explaining – how and why it came about in the first place. In fact, however, there is little if any evidence to prove this assumption of a western orientalist philological influence, which appears to be as widely shared as it is unexamined; and there is some significant evidence that goes against it. Not only does the wave of vernacularizations that paved the way for later language-based nationalisms clearly precede any substantial Western European influence (and, in fact, the very rise of German romantic nationalism itself), but later developments also fail to fit the "Western orientalist influence" mold. Thus, the rise of modern Turkish grammars in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire has repeatedly been claimed to have been "inspired" by the categories of philological turcology, and by the works of Western scholars like Arthur Lumley Davids, Léon Cahun, and Arminius Vambéry; but for reasons of chronology alone, such claims are difficult to maintain.[22] Moreover, and more importantly, the grammatical categories employed by the first modern Turkish grammars written by Ottoman authors, like the influential 1853 *Kavâ'id-i osmaniyye* ("Fundamentals of Ottoman [Turkish]") by Ahmed Cevdet Pasha and Fuad Pasha, clearly derive from the classical Arabic grammatical sciences rather than modern European philology.[23]

More generally, there were of course long-standing grammatical traditions concerning the classical or sacred languages in the region, like Arabic, Koine Greek, Old Church Slavonic, and Hebrew (or perhaps the Lashon Hakodesh). The new vernacular grammars appearing in, or shortly after, the eighteenth century clearly precede any possible Western orientalist philological influence; like Dimitrie Eustatievici's *Gramatica rumâneascâ* for Romanian (1757); Vuk Karadzic's *Pismenico Serbskoga jezika* for Serbian (1814); Neofit Rilski's *Bolgarska gramatika* for Bulgarian (1835); and Elî Teremaxî's *Serfa Kurmancî*

[21] For more details see Leezenberg 2016.

[22] *Contra*, e.g., Kushner 1977, on 57.

[23] For a more detailed argument see Leezenberg 2021.

(presumably late eighteenth century CE) for Northern Kurdish.[24] Thus, Ottoman vernacularization clearly invites the search for a genuinely global history of the language sciences, and more specifically of modern vernacular philologies.

Second, a remarkable, if not decidedly odd, aspect of the Persianate cosmopolitan is the near-complete absence of any grammatical learning concerning its main medium, the modern Persian language. There were few if any scholars studying Persian *sarf* (roughly, morphology) and *nahw* (roughly, syntax) in anything like the way that Arabic *sarf* and *nahw* were established and well-integrated topics of instruction in classical Islamic education. In fact, few if any Persian textbooks or grammars were even in existence prior to the eighteenth century CE; rather, pupils would learn Persian by reading the Persian literary classic, Saadî's *Golestan* ("Rose Garden"), aided by the oral elucidations of their instructor, and, sometimes, by small written Persian lexicons or line-by-line commentaries (*sharh*). That is, although there was no elaborate philological tradition that tried to codify Persian grammar, there was a philological tradition of learned commentaries on Persian literary writings. In so far as the Persianate cosmopolitan involved the linguistic and literary domination of modern Persian, this domination was hardly if at all matched by any grammatical codification or consecration of that language.

The absence of any major Persian grammatical tradition is rather surprising; it may reflect purely practical reasons, like the relative simplicity of modern Persian morphology, both with respect to the ancient Indo-Iranian languages and – more directly relevantly – with respect to the overwhelming complexities of classical Arabic grammar. But perhaps the absence of a major tradition of Persian grammar does not simply reflect the lack of any practical need for such works; rather, it may reflect a language-ideological belief that languages other than Arabic did not have any grammar at all, or if they did, that its rules were not worth studying. I have, in fact, encountered remarkably few premodern acknowledgements that Persian – let alone other vernacular languages – has any grammatical norms or rules at all. The language-ideological motivation for this denial appears to have been the belief that contemporary spoken vernaculars had developed out of the "mixture" of classical (and, possibly sacred or revealed) languages like Arabic with other tongues, and as such amounted to corruptions of "correct" languages rather than to autonomous languages with their own norms of correctness – let alone languages worthy of being studied. This linguistic ideology appears to have been quite widespread; it would not be seriously challenged until the early modern wave of Ottoman vernacularizations. To mention but two examples of these early modern innovations: in his 1675 Armenian grammar, the *Puritas haygica sev grammatica armenica*, written in Latin and published in Rome, Hovannes Holov (Ioannis Agop in the Latinized version) writes with so many words that the

[24] Karadzic's contacts with the Grimm brothers are well known; but it should be emphasized that his Serbian grammar actually antedated the latter's grammar of German, and that he appears to have developed his ideas prior to these contacts, either already during his stay in Ottoman-held lands or – more likely – while in exile in the Austro-Hungarian empire.

colloquial or "vulgar" forms of Armenian spoken by his contemporaries are but deviations from the norms and grammatical rules of classical Armenian (*Hrabar*), implying that, as such, they lack a system of grammar virtually by definition; he does, however, acknowledge an intermediate form of Armenian, which he calls *K'aghak'akan* or "civil Armenian," and which, he argues, does have rules of its own.[25] Likewise, in the preface to his *Serfa Kurmancî* or "Kurdish Morphology," presumably written in the eighteenth century CE, Kurdish scholar Elî Teremaxî emphatically argues that even a vernacular language like Kurdish has grammatical rules, clearly presuming that his audience is not necessarily convinced of the truth of his views or of the need for a grammatical description of Kurdish: "without this science [of *sarf*]," he writes, "there cannot be correct speech […] it is necessary for the Kurdish people (*tayfa*) to know the science of *sarf* in the Kurdish language. In all languages, this science exists and is practiced; but what we need now is *sarf* in the Kurdish language."[26]

Thus, early modern vernacularizers appear to have been clearly aware that they were doing something new, unexpected and/or subversive; in agreement with what Pollock already noted,[27] Ottoman vernacularization typically involved conscious choices and a deliberate acts by members of literate elites. The authors involved clearly felt a need to defend and legitimize these choices in the face of opposition, presumably from those for whom the use of dominant cosmopolitan languages was self-evident, or culturally or religiously sanctioned. More generally, our understanding of patterns of cosmopolitanization and vernacularization – and of the widely diverging roles of the language sciences in these processes – may be deepened by taking language-ideological factors into account.

4. Early Modern Vernacularization: A Global History Perspective

The early modern wave of vernacularization in the Ottoman Empire reflects a local and regional dynamic, but does not appear to involve any substantial economic, cultural, linguistic, or intellectual influence from Western Europe. Moreover, it coincides with the rise of the new vernaculars of modern German and Russian in Northern Europe, and with the emergence of Hindi/Urdu as a new written medium spoken and written by both Hindu Brahmin and Muslim Ulama in the Mughal Empire.[28] It may well be that some broader global-historical pattern both shapes and links these seemingly disconnected developments; but what this pattern is, we do not yet know.

What is the historiographical importance of this early modern wave of vernacularization? First, it precedes both the political and economic penetration by colonial powers from Europe and the intellectual influence of either

[25] Agop 1675; see Leezenberg 2016, on 268.
[26] Teremaxî 1997, on 10–14.
[27] Pollock 2000, on 616.
[28] See Rahman 2011; Leezenberg 2016.

Catholic or Evangelical missionaries; instead, another historical dynamic appears to be at work, although – as said – we do not yet have a concrete understanding of this dynamic. Second, it points to a number of factors that are only partly considered by Pollock. For one thing, vernacularizations may occur at various points in time, and there may be a more complex interaction – or alternation – between cosmopolitan and vernacular languages than Pollock allows for. For another, the multilingual character of the Ottoman cosmopolitan, and the different forms of competition between both cosmopolitan and vernacular languages, raise a number of wider questions about language and learning, and about power and resistance – questions that are left mostly implicit by Pollock's analyses.

When we look at cosmopolitan orders other than the ones studied by Pollock, then, it will emerge that the relations between vernacular and cosmopolitan are often rather more complex, more contested, and more variable across different situations, regions, and periods. The Ottoman case already points to the fact that a cosmopolitan constellation need not involve any single dominant language; and other cosmopolitans may force us to develop an even more nuanced empirical and historical picture.[29] The presence of three cosmopolitan languages among the Ottoman Empire's Muslim elites alone, not to mention the distinct cosmopolitans among its Christian and Jewish population groups, suggests that cosmopolitan orders may in fact be multilingual, without any one language being dominant in all functions or genres. Moreover, the early modern wave of vernacularizations chronologically dovetails with vernacularizations in Central and Eastern Europe and in South Asia, even though it displays substantial differences with them.

Thus, cosmopolitan areas themselves may be fruitfully studied from a perspective that more systematically takes wider settings and global connections into account. Occasionally, Pollock does point to such complicating factors, for example, when he mentions the long-standing linguistic and literary contacts between Greek and Latin, which persisted even long after the latter had become a cosmopolitan language in its own right;[30] but he does not appear to draw any substantial conclusions from them. Thus, he briefly alludes to the three or four centuries during which Greek continued to shape the development of Latin literary culture, and in fact *blocked* the spread of Latin in the Eastern Mediterranean; but these observations do not lead him to explore broader questions of contacts and competition between cosmopolitan languages, or – put differently – of diffusion and domination.[31] At one point, Pollock briefly entertains the fascinating but elusive possibility that the rise of both

[29] The major cosmopolitans to be (re-) considered in this context are those of (Koine) Greek in the Eastern Roman Empire and its successors; in interaction with Latin in the West, with Syriac in the Fertile Crescent, and with different varieties of Slavic languages in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Undoubtedly there are other cases of cosmopolitan multilingualism that would be worthy of our attention, notably Sumerian and Akkadian in Mesopotamia in the Ancient Near East and Mayan and Quechua (or more strictly, Runa Simi) in pre-Colombian and early colonial South America; but I must plead near-total ignorance in these cases.

[30] Pollock 2006, on 263–264.

[31] Ibid., on 263–265.

Latin and Sanskrit occurred as a "reaction to the superposed cultural forms" of Greek letters at, respectively, the Western and the Eastern borders of the Hellenic world, in the final centuries BCE.[32] And yet elsewhere, he floats the – equally fascinating – suggestion that "both India and Rome had inherited their imperial models from Achaemenid Persia."[33] Such attempts at global-historical explanation, fascinating as they are, face formidable empirical and methodological challenges, beginning – to mention but one factor – with the relative lack of historical source materials, or texts readable as such, for much of South Asia's history.

Pollock's own discussion of possible explanations for post-1000 CE vernacularization in both Western Europe and South Asia "as a connected Eurasian phenomenon" deserves some further attention.[34] Admitting that we are still far from a coherent picture, he briefly discusses, and largely rejects, Janet Abu-Lughod's hypothesis of a Medieval economic "world system" (as theorized in the wake of Immanuel Wallerstein's seminal work on the modern world system) as a possible explanation for these vernacularizations. Next, he proceeds to an equally brief, and actually rather generic, consideration of "Islam as a factor in global change during this period."[35] This discussion, while making some suggestive points, appears to relapse – against his own explicit recommendation[36] – into an idealist view of Islam as a system of ideas (or, more precisely, as an ideology or system of legitimation) rather than a set of practices (whether political, cultural, or linguistic). Most directly relevant in the present context, of course, are the complex and interrelated linguistic and literary practices of using Arabic, Persian, and different Turkic languages simultaneously as instruments and as symbols of, respectively, religious and philological learning, high literature, and courtly power, as already mentioned above. Almost equally relevant is the development of, and interaction among, practices of religious piety, secular literary refinement (*adab*), and cosmopolitan and vernacular philological learning.

Clearly, we are only just beginning to see the vaguest outlines of the questions to be addressed here. One point concerning the role of philology stands out, however. In discussions of the rise of modern national identities (and, by extension, also of gendered, sexual and other identities) in the modern Islamic world, South Asia, and elsewhere, much attention is usually paid to the influence of orientalist Western philology. The above discussion, however, suggests that in the Ottoman Empire at least, the early modern vernacular philologies that arguably paved the way for subsequent language-based nationalisms to emerge, took their categories not from modern orientalism, but rather from, in particular, premodern Greek and Arabic traditions of philological learning, and thus developed independently of, and in part prior to, any Western orientalist influence.

[32] Ibid., on 265.

[33] Ibid., on 482; see Pollock 2005.

[34] Pollock 2006, on 482–494.

[35] Ibid., on 488.

[36] Pollock 2000, on 593.

5. Cosmopolitan and Vernacular as Linguistic Domination and Resistance

Thus, there seems to be considerable room for further descriptive and historiographical elaboration of Pollock's cosmopolitan-vernacular binary; but also, refinements may be introduced at the theoretical level. In particular, the practice-theoretical insight that all social practices are power-saturated belies his own strict distinction between practices of culture and practices of power. Hence, although they are by no means oblivious to questions of power, Pollock's analyses may be fruitfully elaborated by a more consistently practice-oriented approach, which pays attention to different (and specifically, non-sovereign) forms or modalities of domination.[37]

Here, the works of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would seem to be particularly relevant and potentially fruitful. In a number of studies, Bourdieu explores the origin and structure of what he calls the linguistic and literary "fields," i.e., autonomous spheres of social action, primarily in early modern and modern France.[38] Here, he analyzes the dominance of the official French language in modern France as a form of *symbolic domination*, which cannot be reduced either to state power or economic domination, but has specific markets, forms of capital, and processes of competition of its own. Put differently, although clearly *backed* by state power, and by state institutions like schools, broadcasting stations, and language academies, linguistic domination cannot be *reduced* to (sovereign) state power. Likewise, his notions of symbolic power and capital are clearly related to economic domination and capital, but cannot be reduced to them.

Later studies have elaborated Bourdieu's ideas in a more consistently global or transnational dimension. Thus, Abram de Swaan has extended Bourdieu's analyses to the modern global language system dominated by English.[39] More recently, and more directly relevantly to our purposes here, Pascale Casanova has discussed literary and linguistic domination from a systematically transnational perspective inspired by Bourdieu.[40] The new national literary fields that emerged in the course of the nineteenth century, she argues, developed against the background of a transnational "republic of letters," which was a literary "market" with its own forms of competition and capital. On her analysis, the rise of modern nationalisms cannot be seen in isolation from this wider transnational linguistic and literary field.

A Bourdieu-inspired reanalysis of cosmopolitans in terms of literary domination, and of vernacularization in terms of resistance, especially as informed by the early modern Ottoman developments sketched above, may serve as a corrective to some of Pollock's views. Thus, Pollock rejects earlier analyses like Gramsci's and Bakhtin's, which view the rise of early modern

[37] In fairness to Pollock, it should be noted that already his 1993 paper on "Deep Orientalism," he called attention to premodern forms of domination in Sanskrit culture. See Pollock 1993.

[38] Bourdieu 1991; Bourdieu 1995.

[39] De Swaan 2001.

[40] Casanova 2004; Casanova 2015.

vernacular languages in Europe as a popular or subaltern reaction from below against the 'official culture' of courts and churches; instead, he argues, "the bearers of vernacularization in both southern Asia and western Europe were the cultural and political elites who were associated with or directly controlled the royal court."[41] Ottoman vernacularization, however, does not seamlessly fit in with this suggestion that the bearers of vernacularization were cultural and political elites associated with royal courts: it occurred at least in part in the more peripheral and/or rural areas that knew neither urban centers of administration nor local princely courts. For Serbian, for example, literary and philological work virtually coincided in the person of rural-born Vuk Karadzic, who grew up in Ottoman-ruled lands but wrote most of his major works while in exile in Vienna, like his 1814 publication of a collection of Serbian folk songs and a Serbian grammar (reportedly, the latter was created by taking a work of Slaveno-Serbian grammar, and replacing all Slaveno-Serbian grammatical paradigms with corresponding spoken dialectal Serbian equivalents).

Moreover, in many cases, the first attempts at creating vernacular literary texts in the Ottoman Empire were soon followed by the first exercises in vernacular philology; in some cases, the two occurred virtually simultaneously. Thus, it was in relatively remote and isolated areas of the empire that a Kurdish poet like Ehmedê Xanî simultaneously attempted to develop Kurdish as medium of learned mathnawî poetry (witness his mathnawî poem *Mem û Zîn*), and as a medium of written philological and religious learning (witness his *Nûbahara piçûkan*, a versified Arabic-Kurdish lexicon); that cultural and linguistic reformers like Paisii Hilendarski and Sofron Vrachanski called for, and simultaneously created, a literate form of Bulgarian (or what they still called "Bulgaro-Slavonic"); that Albanian *bejtexhinj* ("bayt poets") like Muçizade, Nezim Frakulla, Hasan Zyko Kamberi consciously started composing verse in Albanian, virtually coinciding with the appearance of the first Arabic-Albanian vocabularies; and so on. Clearly, though, some members of the empire's political elites were involved in these processes. Thus, Dimitrie Cantemir not only pioneered the early eighteenth-century efforts to develop a Romanian language of learning and letters, soon followed by Dimitrie Eustatievici's 1757 *Gramatica rumâneascâ*; but he was also famous for defecting to Russia after a long career at the Ottoman court. In short, most, though certainly not all, processes of Ottoman vernacularization appear to have taken place in the empire's more peripheral regions and outside political elite circles. In many cases, the first attempts at creating vernacular literary texts were soon followed by the first exercises in vernacular philology; in some cases, these occurred virtually simultaneously.

6. Beyond Bourdieu: A Genealogical Approach

In turn, however, there is a substantial difficulty with Bourdieu's analyses: they almost exclusively focus on Western European societies in the modern and

[41] Pollock 2000, on 610; see also, among others, Pollock 2006, on 438 and 460.

early modern period (and to a lesser extent on their colonies), and hence have difficulties in accommodating the greater time depth demanded by Pollock's account; and Bourdieu's idea of linguistic practices as involving a competition for "symbolic capital" in a "linguistic market" appears to be tailor-made for specifically modern settings, where social action is conditioned by – though not reducible to – the economic competition among *homines oeconomici* in a capitalist market.

The unilinear temporality presupposed in Bourdieu's and Casanova's analyses will also have difficulties in accommodating conceptual changes involving a more radical reorganization than the mere separation, or speciation, of new fields of social action.[42] Bourdieu appears to see the genesis of distinct "fields" of social action (like those of language, science, and literature) in evolutionist terms as a kind of speciation that is irreversible and linear; moreover, he assumes a background of Western European capitalist expansion and state centralization. Thus, his perspective, as well as a number of other approaches in global history, and specifically in intellectual history, continues to presume a unilinear, unitary, and Eurocentric temporality passing from a premodern to a modern world.[43]

However, from the proto-global historians of the *Annales* school (notably, of course, Fernand Braudel), we have learned that history may know different temporalities, depending on whether one looks at "event history" or at other levels of description. Braudel and his colleagues have, in turn, being criticized for the asymmetrical spatiality implied in their work; thus, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has recently argued that, to the extent that the *Annales* school's representatives take into account Ottoman, Chinese, Mughal Indian, and other perspectives at all, their style of world history still presumes Europe as a privileged space.[44] Finally, and famously, Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* made a principled, and even more forceful, argument against the unitary and teleological temporality (and, possibly, the ethnocentric spatiality) upon which both Hegelian and Marxist histories are ultimately based, even though he still shares, or reproduces, part of the *Annales* school's eurocentrism.[45]

Such discussions point out the more complex questions of agency, temporality, and spatiality involved in discussions of intellectual history, questions which too often remain implicit, and hence go unanswered. Such

[42] For a more detailed critique of the linear temporality assumed by Bourdieu and Casanova, see Leezenberg 2020.

[43] For a similar critique, cf. Subrahmanyam's 2015 review of Moyn and Sartori 2013. More specifically, many studies in transnational intellectual, linguistic, and literary history presuming a process of modernization to be linked to the development of global capitalism, implicitly or explicitly taking Wallerstein's World Systems Theory as a model. Although World Systems Theory has by now largely been abandoned in historiography and the social sciences – see Subrahmanyam 2015 –, it received a new lease of life in the study of world literature, in particular due to Franco Moretti's writings: e. g., Moretti 2000 and Moretti 2005.

[44] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "On the Origins of Global History," inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, November 2013.

[45] Foucault 1974.

questions are particularly pertinent, however, when investigating cosmopolitan and vernacular orders. More recent approaches to global or "connected" history, like Subrahmanyam's writings, no longer presume, and may even explicitly contest, the asymmetrical conception of Europe as the main source or actor of historical processes, or as the center of both economic and intellectual history in both the early modern and the modern period. As a result, they can present new narratives concerning different actors in different places, and suggest different temporalities and periodizations.

To mention but one example of such a reorientation: premodern "literature" cannot simply be called an autonomous field of social action, and as such, it presents a conceptual obstacle for theories like Bourdieu's and Casanova's. Classical Persian poetry was *adab*, rather than literature, or *adabiyya*, as a "field," i. e., in a purely aesthetic, let alone a national, sense. *Adab* involved, among others, the ability to recite, or to compose, appropriate verses for any particular occasion; thus, it amounted not so much to "literature" in a purely aesthetic or expressive sense as to a broader notion of "good manners," *Bildung*, or urban, urbane, and/or courtly refinement, which involved social distinction as much as moral excellence. Hence, one may ask whether it amounts to an autonomous or unitary "field."

Adab has been called one of the most important concepts in the study of classical Islamic civilization. In the nineteenth century CE, however, it underwent a major conceptual transformation, from a cosmopolitan Islamicate and/or secular Persianate civilizational ideal to the more national, or nationalist, modern concept of "literature," referred to as *adabiyya/adabiyyat/edebiyat* in modern Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, respectively. Another radical change concerns the evaluation, and even conceptualization, of vernacular languages. These changes, I would suggest, amount not so much to the genesis or speciation of a purely "literary field," as Bourdieu and Casanova would suggest, as to a more radical conceptual reconfiguration driven by new modalities of power and, possibly, resistance. A fuller account of these developments requires a more consistently historicizing perspective that is more alive to such reconfigurations, to epistemic and other discontinuities, and to historically specific forms of power.

The emergence of Ottoman vernacular languages as objects of learning may amount to one such discontinuity: their subsequent history also suggests that they gradually became objects of power, or concerns of government. These two aspects, however, need not, and generally do not, develop simultaneously, especially in so far as they concern state power. Instead, one might argue that, and should explore to what extent, vernacularization may involve a form of *resistance* – whether against an empire's central authority, against linguistic domination, or against some other form or modality of power. Thus, vernacularization in the Ottoman Empire occurred already in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, arguably against the different kinds of linguistic domination by cosmopolitan languages like the "three languages" for Muslims; Koine Greek for Orthodox Christians; and the Sacred Language and Judeo-Hispanic for Jews. No state-based linguistic policies worthy of the name, however, were formulated, let alone implemented, until the very last

decades of the nineteenth century. Likewise, the Russian empire only started developing substantial language policies from the mid-nineteenth century onwards; but, apart from a generic promotion of Russian as the main language of administration and (higher) education, these policies were far from uniform in their motivation, let alone implementation. Thus, the notorious 1863 Valuev circular prohibited the publishing of any works in Ukrainian or, as it was then called, "Little Russian"; but imperial Russian policies towards Polish were rather more ambiguous, ambivalent, and variable; and the vernacularization of the Baltic languages was actually *encouraged* by the Russian authorities, in an effort to counter the influence, or linguistic domination, of both German and Polish.[46] In short, sovereign state power appears only at a relatively late stage, and often plays an ambiguous role, in processes of cosmopolitanism and vernacularization.

This point is of particular relevance for a genealogical approach to the language sciences. In Foucault's genealogy, knowledge and power are mutually interdependent and inextricably intertwined; but the historical and regional variability of the different forms of knowledge about languages in different episodes of cosmopolitanization and vernacularization, the radical reorganization of premodern cosmopolitan *adab* into modern *adabiyya*, or into national "literatures" which rather more closely resembled literary "fields" in Bourdieu's sense, and the equally variable time lapse between different aspects of literization, literarization, grammaticalization, and governmentalization, jointly suggest that perhaps we should think of the relation between different forms of knowledge and different modalities of power and resistance in more flexible and historically variable terms.

A more consistently global-historical and genealogical perspective, which attempts to identify specific cases of non-Western and premodern linguistic domination, may also help to elucidate some recent discussions of the Persianate cosmopolitan. Thus, in his discussions of classical Persian literature, Hamid Dabashi has recently castigated world-literature frameworks like Casanova's for being eurocentric.[47] He does not mince his words, bluntly stating that "World literature is imperialism in literature-theoretical terms," since it was theorized primarily if not exclusively in the context of Western literary studies.[48] The new field or discipline of world literature, he adds, has always been primarily an appendix to English departments (presumably, in the United States in particular). Accordingly, he calls for the dismantling of the world literature project in its entirety, since, he argues, it is nothing but the "ideological arm" of a European and American imperial imaginary, and leaves no room for "epistemic alterities."[49] As one such alterity or alternative, his book presents the classical Persian epic of the *Shahname*, written by Firdowsî.

[46] For an overview of imperial Russian language and nationality policies that focuses on the Baltics and the predominantly Slavic-speaking Western provinces, and accordingly gives short shrift to the Transcaucasian and Central Asian experiences, see Miller 2008, esp. chapter 4.

[47] Dabashi 2012; Dabashi 2019.

[48] Dabashi 2019, on 196.

[49] Ibid., on 209.

In itself, Dabashi's call for a greater and more systematic attention to the Persian cosmopolitan is surely justified. As the above discussion has made clear, this cosmopolitan is not only a descriptively rich field of investigation in its own right, it also suggests a number of intriguing theoretical elaborations or corrections to Pollock's and others' pictures. Ironically, however, Dabashi appears entirely blind to the forms of literary and linguistic domination involved in this cosmopolitan itself, and in what he calls "Persian literary humanism." This blindness shows up, first, in his surprisingly depoliticized reading of the *Shahname* (which, to judge from the title, centrally deals with Persian royal and imperial power): thus, he analyzes one of the epic's most famous episodes, the story of Kaveh, the blacksmith's revolt against Zahhak the tyrant, not in political terms of power and resistance (not to say tyranny and revolt), but in Freudian terms of Zahhak's alleged challenge and Kaveh's alleged return to a patriarchal order.[50] Elsewhere, he calls this seeming celebration of Persian kingship an epic not of kings but of resistance, and calls attention to its "subversive poetics."[51] Second, Dabashi's blindness to premodern literary domination also appears when in his celebration of Persian literary humanism, he incorrectly assumes that languages other than Persian knew no written literatures but only oral traditions.[52] Thus, he not only ignores the various vernacularizations and the various premodern written vernacular literatures already discussed above; more importantly, he also overlooks the analytical point that, arguably, the long-standing pre-eminence of Persian did in fact amount to a form of premodern linguistic or literary domination.

Finally, one dimension of cosmopolitan and vernacular linguistic, literary, and philological practices, and of concomitant forms of domination and resistance, that could be relevant but has hitherto escaped Pollock's and others' attention is that of gender. In many cases, vernacularization appears to have been accompanied by the introduction of a simplified writing system; accordingly, it also carried an implicit or explicit gender dimension. Some examples from the Chinese cosmopolitan clearly show this dimension. Thus, in Japan around the seventh century CE, a simplified and phonetic syllabary script, originally called *Man'yôgana* but eventually known as *Hiragana*, was developed. The male literate elites initially refused to employ this script; as a result, the regular Chinese-based script (*kaisho*) they continued to use was called *otokode*, or "men's writing," whereas the simplified cursive script (*sôsho*) was labeled *onnade*, or "women's writing"; as a result, masterpieces like Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji Monogatari* appear to have been written by and for women, in a language variety and script perceived as "feminine." The creation of a specifically Korean script in the fifteenth century appears to have had a similarly significant gender dimension: initially, the male literati, who were used to writing Chinese characters, refused to use the new "vernacular language" (*onmun*) of Hangul, originally called *Hunminjeongeum*, or "the correct sounds to instruct the people"; but the new, simplified script enabled

[50] Ibid., on 4–9.

[51] Ibid., on 207

[52] Dabashi 2012, on 331.

the women of *yangban* (landed aristocracy) and commoner families to acquire literacy.[53] One could and should ask whether any similar patterns may be found in, for example, the Islamic and/or Ottoman cosmopolitans; but to the best of my knowledge, this question has not yet been addressed in any detail. One starting point here may be the recently increasing attention for Persian, or rather Persianate, female poets, who composed their verse in Persian regardless of their geographical location or ethnic background.[54]

7. Conclusion

It is time for some preliminary stocktaking. First, the above has suggested that early modern Ottoman vernacularization involves not just changing practices and ideologies of language, but also, and crucially, new vernacular philologies. For the most part, these new philologies appear not to have emerged from among local political elites, nor can their emergence be attributed to any substantial European intellectual ("orientalist") influences, to the expansion of global capitalism, or to imperialist hegemony. As such, they invite the development of a truly global perspective in the history of linguistic knowledge; such a perspective should take into account the different traditions of philological learning without attempting to reduce changes among them to any single master narrative, to any single overarching temporality, or depicting them as emanating from any one intellectual, economic, or political core or center.

Second, I have explored to what extent we can view cosmopolitan linguistic and literary orders in terms not of civilization, prestige, and influence but of linguistic domination, and more generally of different modalities of power. Analytically, I have looked at the possibilities and limitations of Bourdieu's theory of linguistic and literary fields, in particular raising the question of to what extent it can be applied to premodern and non-European cosmopolitan settings. Empirically, I have analyzed the case of Persianate literary civilization in the Ottoman Empire as a particular form of premodern linguistic and literary domination, and traced the wave of vernacularizations it witnessed in early modern times. While the empire's early modern cosmopolitan order may be qualified as a form of premodern linguistic domination, its multilingual character does not fit in well with either Bourdieu's or Pollock's account; moreover, the premodern practice of *adab* appears not quite to qualify as a "field" in Bourdieu's sense; only in the nineteenth century did it transform into the modern category of *adabiyya* or "literature." More generally, the early modern Ottoman vernacularization appears to reflect a more radical conceptual and epistemological reorganization than Bourdieu's linear temporality, which pictures the emergence of new fields as a form of speciation, allows for.

Third, and finally, we should not only be attentive to different modalities of political power, but also explore to what extent we can analyze historically

[53] See Miller 1967, on 121–126; Kim-Renaud 1997, on 15.

[54] See Davis 2021 for an anthology of these poets in English translation.

and geographically specific forms of knowledge *themselves* as involving particular modalities of power and resistance. More precisely, we may explore whether and to what extent different waves of cosmopolitanization may involve the assertion of new forms of either state power or linguistic domination, and whether and to what extent different waves of vernacularization amount to resistance against such domination. Given the historiographical limitations of Bourdieu's approach, a Foucauldian genealogy, which relentlessly pursues historical contingencies and connections between non-sovereign modalities of power and (philological and other) knowledge, may be particularly useful here. Some caution should be exercised here, however, in the light of Foucault's residual eurocentrism, witness his description of "modernity" as a strictly and purely (Western) European development involving a radical rupture, or "epistemic mutation," in human-scientific knowledge, including the rise of modern critical philology, around 1800.[55] Similarly radical changes appear to have occurred elsewhere, as is suggested by the early modern vernacularizations in the Ottoman Empire; moreover, these changes *preceded* the rise of the modern Western European human sciences, and thus appear to reflect a local dynamic – or possibly, a wider transregional historical process that as of yet is insufficiently understood.

The above considerations invite the further development of a global and genealogical perspective on the language sciences, i. e., a history of philological knowledge that, first, avoids Eurocentric assumptions, and looks at cosmopolitan and vernacular forms of knowledge in terms of power and resistance; second, explores local dynamics and shared and/or converging global historical patterns rather than postulating European influences; and – last but not least – systematically thematizes questions of gender in relation to language, letters, and learning.

If the (admittedly sketchy) account presented above is anywhere near correct, there is reason to believe that other civilizational areas may have witnessed similar mutations as early modern Western and Central Europe, and that these mutations cannot be understood in terms of any European master narrative; hence, a more developed global perspective on different philological traditions and their roles in cosmopolitan and vernacular practices very much remains a desideratum.

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[55] See in particular Foucault 1974, chapter 8.

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