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BRILL

# “A Rare Pearl Passed from Hand to Hand”

## *Cosmopolitan Orders and Pre-Modern Forms of Literary Domination*

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### Abstract

Pascale Casanova’s notion of the “world republic of letters” systematically transcends national boundaries, as well as the opposition between internalist structural analyses and externalist political reductions, arguing that individual works of literature acquire their meaning only against the background of this transnational literary field with its own, irreducibly literary forms of domination. Yet, I will argue, Casanova’s work is not yet sufficiently transnational and not sufficiently historicizing; specifically, it overlooks non-Western cosmopolitan traditions and premodern vernacularization processes. As a case study, I will discuss the vernacularization of Georgian, Kurdish, and Armenian within the Persianate cosmopolitan, and on the consecration of national epics in these three languages. These examples suggest an approach to the literary field that allows for greater geographical width and historical depth; it also invites us to look for more radical historical variability in the concept of literature itself.

### Keywords

literary domination – orientalism – Persianate cosmopolitan – vernacularization – national epics

### 1 Introduction

First published in French in 1999 and consecrated by its 2004 English translation, Pascale Casanova’s *The World Republic of Letters* has given a major impetus to a critical and theory-driven approach to world literature. Against the humanist assumption of the “republic of letters” as a universal realm for the exchange of ideas between equal spirits free from political oppression, she argues that

what she calls the “world republic of letters,” or “transnational literary space,” is characterized by specifically literary forms of competition, inequality and domination, which cannot be reduced to political or economic domination; and that individual literary texts acquire a definite meaning only against the background of this transnational field.

Thus, the aim of Casanova’s book is to “rediscover a lost transnational dimension” that has been obscured by two centuries of nationalization of literature and literary history, and to introduce an alternative to these nationalized histories (Casanova *World* xi). Our literary unconscious, she argues, is still largely national: most existing studies of literature tacitly or explicitly assume the modern nation state or the nation (characterized by a singular and homogeneous national language) as the self-evident frame of analysis and arena for literary production and competition.

Paradoxically, she argues, these national literary traditions only emerged as part of a world literary space: from the moment of its inception in early modern Europe, the literary field has always crossed political boundaries; and it has become truly global in the postcolonial era. Thus, she traces the transnational phenomenon of the early nineteenth-century “birth” or “invention” of literature, that is, of an autonomous realm of individual self-expression, no longer bound by conventional morality or religion, and seemingly apolitical, timeless, and guided by purely or primarily aesthetic concerns.<sup>1</sup> She calls this moment the “Herderian Revolution,” i.e., the rise of the philological study of vernacular practices as national traditions.<sup>2</sup> Next, she proceeds to sketch the genesis and structure of this modern world literary space in relation to the rise of modern nation states, identifying the major centers of transnational cultural production and consumption: initially Paris; then London; and more recently New York. Locating individual works within this transnational field, she adds, tran-

1 Foucault (303, 312–313) very briefly discusses the nineteenth-century redefinition of language as the expression of a *Volksggeist*, and the reconceptualization of literature as a purely aesthetic, that is, non-referring and non-expressive function of language, but fails to note that this modern conception of literature is, first and foremost, national; cf. Nichanian (*Deuil* 83) for some criticism on this point.

2 Casanova’s discussion of the “Herderian revolution,” incidentally, is based almost entirely on secondary literature rather than Herder’s own texts, thus reproducing a deplorable tradition of treating him as the father of *Eng*-nationalism, and of seriously distorting his actual ideas in the process. Most importantly, it downplays Herder’s universalist ideal of *Humanität*, and mistakenly credits him with “locating the source of artistic fertility in the ‘soul’ of peoples” (Casanova *World* 77). In fact, the notion of a people’s spirit (*Volksggeist*) does not occur a single time in Herder’s writings.

scends the opposition between “internalist” (for example, structural) analyses and “externalist” politicizing and historicizing readings.

Perhaps precisely because of this theoretical richness, Casanova’s analysis can be, and has been, criticized. Thus, she has been accused of a residual eurocentrism, and of overlooking the importance of orientalism in the constitution of the very category of world literature, and of the national literatures that emerged in the nineteenth century (Mufti 458). My own line of criticism, however, is a slightly different one: first, I would like to argue for a stricter analytical separation of the early modern wave of vernacularization and the emergence of modern nationalism around 1800; second, I would like to call attention to the existence of a premodern and early modern transnational field of literature, or something closely resembling it; and third, I would like to call for more attention to premodern and non-Western traditions of learning, modalities of power, and forms of agency. Jointly, these points seem to invite us to allow for greater historical depth, and for a more radical historical variability, in the shaping and reshaping of the field or sphere of literature. It also invites us to think harder about what forms of power and domination were involved in premodern cosmopolitan literary formations. As such, I hope, the present contribution will be read as a continuation and extension, rather than a rejection, of Casanova’s seminal work.

## 2 Two Problems

Casanova’s great hero is Pierre Bourdieu; but Benedict Anderson also takes pride of place.<sup>3</sup> Both authors very much engage with Marxist notions: Bourdieu attempts to transgress Marxist economist determinism, developing his general theory of action with a quasi-Marxist vocabulary of the struggle and competition for, and accumulation of, the “symbolic capital” specific to a particular field of action; and Anderson sees “print capitalism” as the technological-economical material basis shaping the ideological superstructural imagined community of the nation, in an argument clearly inspired by Walter Benjamin’s analysis of the art work in the age of technological reproducibility.

Casanova’s use of these authors seems to lead to two major problems, one related to spatiality, and the other to temporality. Before discussing these, however, I will first note a minor point of criticism, which concerns Casanova’s and

3 See in particular Bourdieu, *Language, Rules*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. In *The World Republic*, Casanova leaves largely untouched Bourdieu’s argument about linguistic domination in *Language*; she develops these matters in more detail, focusing on French, in *Langue*.

Anderson's notion of "the Creole" or "hybridity." In discussing the formation of South American nationalisms and literatures, Casanova approvingly quotes Anderson that "language was not an element that differentiated [the former colonies of the Americas] from their respective imperial metropolises ... Indeed, language was never even an issue in national liberation."<sup>4</sup> If this is correct, non-Western nationalisms may be "non-Herderian," in that they need not proceed from an identification of nation and vernacular language. In emphasizing the alleged "creole" character of South American nationalisms, however, both Casanova and Anderson appear to overlook the obvious fact of the continuing linguistic domination of Spanish even among the local elites that fought against the political domination of the Spanish metropolis.<sup>5</sup> In the newly independent South American states, both actual Creole languages and the native tongues of indigenous peoples were effectively marginalized by the languages of colonizing powers, most prominently Spanish and Portuguese. Put differently, the formation of modern nation states, even if apparently non-Herderian, almost invariably involves the production and imposition of a unified national language, and the concomitant exclusion of other languages or language varieties, a process discussed in some detail by Bourdieu (*Language*). Although Casanova does not address the linguistic domination of indigenous languages and creoles by Spanish, of Catalan by Castilian, or e.g. of Kurdish by Turkish, in any detail, such forms of local linguistic and literary domination could be added to her account in a relatively straightforward manner.

The first major problem concerns spatiality. Following the model of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture, Casanova rejects any attempt to reduce the transnational literary space to social, political, or economic processes; yet, she consistently sees the development of a transnational literary field as occurring in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries CE, coinciding with – though not explained by – the rise of modern European states. To this point, she adds that "for a national literary space to come into being, a nation must attain true political independence ... literary relations of power are forms of political relations of power" (Casanova *World* 8). She identifies this political power, moreover, with the sovereign power of modern nation states. That is, Casanova clearly believes

4 Casanova *World* 84, quoting Anderson 47.

5 Thus, her discussion of Latin America (Casanova *World* 222, 233–4, 325) focuses on the emancipation of Spanish-language Hispano-American literature from European literary domination, rather than the local domination of indigenous languages, creoles, or even Catalan, by Castilian Spanish. Compare, for example (Borges "Invectiva"), on substandard forms of Spanish like Lunfardo and Arrabalero. Casanova does briefly allude to the 'double domination' obtaining in, and the rivalries occurring between, peripheral areas like Lisbon and São Paulo (Casanova *World* 122), without providing any further details.

that although literary domination cannot be *reduced* to political power, it is crucially constituted, conditioned, or enabled by it. Moreover, she sees this power as located primarily in the sovereign state, thus overlooking other modalities of power which may not be located in or exercised by the state or state-like institutions, and which may not take the shape of sovereignty.

Perhaps as a result of this focus on the rise of the modern state, Casanova seriously underestimates the transregional (“transnational” would seem rather anachronistic here) character of premodern literary formations. The world republic of letters, she argues, escaped not only the oppressive political realities of its time, but also the geographical constraints of the past: “previously confined to regional areas that were *sealed off from each other*, literature now emerged as a common battleground” (Casanova *World* 11, my emphasis). Likewise, she appears to think of premodern oral traditions as purely local, peripheral, and/or rural.

This identification of the premodern with the oral and the local seems no accident: it appears linked to the notion of power presupposed in *The World Republic*. Casanova implies that not only the political but also the linguistic and literary relation between the urban center and the rural periphery, or between literate cosmopolitan high culture and vulgar oral tradition, is not simply one of geographical distance and separation, but also one of domination and even violence (Casanova *World* 11–12; 43). Thus, she characterizes oral traditions in purely negative terms, as based on the lack of literary (that is, literate) capital (Casanova *World* 16). On a more empirical plane, she assimilates the nationalisms and written national literatures emerging out of oral folkloric traditions in Southeastern Europe and the Ottoman empire to newly colonized countries in the post-WWII Global South, wrongly claiming that their “inherited” languages had “no real literary existence” but only oral traditions (Casanova *World* 80). This claim not only overlooks the early modern vernacularization – and literarization – of various Balkan languages; it also projects a matrix of decolonization onto a rather different process: neither Ottoman rule nor the increasing influence of imperialist powers in the nineteenth-century empire qualifies as colonial rule in the strict sense of the word.<sup>6</sup>

Casanova’s argument thus presupposes that the premodern realm of letters was merely local or regional; but this overlooks a central, if not defining,

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6 Casanova also seems to project back modern national identities and nationalist conflicts onto a premodern (if not “primitive”) and supposedly purely local Balkan past. Thus, she misleadingly qualifies the twentieth-century conflict between Serbs and Croats as the “simplest, most archaic” form of a clash between “two historical enemies” (Casanova *World* 37).

transregional linguistic and literary aspect of many premodern societies: the existence of vast cosmopolitan realms.

Nobody has done more for the comparative study of these realms than Sheldon Pollock. In particular, he discusses how the cosmopolitan order of Latinity held sway in Europe from around the start of the common era until around 1000 CE, when the first vernacular Romance languages emerged as literate and literary media (or, one might even say until the seventeenth century, when French took over the role of Latin as the main language of learning), and systematically contrasts this order with that of Sanskrit, which, he argues, likewise roughly coincided with the first Millennium CE.<sup>7</sup> It remains to be seen how such orders could be accommodated by Casanova's analysis.

The second major problem with Casanova's account concerns temporality. Despite her repeated appeals to Braudel's historiography of the *longue durée*, with its attention to different temporal and geographical scales, Casanova's temporality largely remains the singular and linear one of the development of modern capitalism: the formation of the world literary space, she argues with a phrase borrowed from Anderson, was shaped by the "revolutionary vernacularizing thrust" of capitalism.<sup>8</sup> This, however, seems to exclude a priori the possibility of anything like a transregional literary space or field in any premodern or non-Western setting. Thus, she leaves wide open the question of how we should deal, for example, with the premodern use of Latin as a language of literature and learning in much of Western Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Casanova's temporality, moreover, is too loose for analytical purposes. Although she acknowledges the expansion of vernaculars in early modern Europe (*Casanova World* 35), she insufficiently distinguishes this period from the early nineteenth century, which witnessed the redefinition of these vernaculars as *national* languages, that is, as expressing the unique spirit of the nation that spoke it. This becomes most clearly visible in her comment that "the birth of literature grew out of the early political history of nation-states" (*Casanova World* 35). Thus, she appears ambivalent concerning the chronological development of the literary field: on the one hand, she distinguishes the early modern vernacularization in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe from the "philological" or "Herderian revolution" that occurred around 1800, and from the rise of the modern nation-state; on the other, however, she appears to

7 See in particular (Pollock *Cosmopolitan*) for a brief statement.

8 *Casanova World* 47; cf. Anderson 39.

9 She does take up this topic, however, in her subsequent (*Casanova Langue*), which discusses how French replaced Latin as a dominant language, setting the stage for its emergence as a world language far beyond the latter's regional scope.

collapse this distinction, witness her comment that “the ‘invention’ of popular languages and literatures throughout Europe in the nineteenth century ... *corresponds exactly* to the grammatization undertaken in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (my emphasis) (*Casanova World* 79). The rather imprecise phrase “corresponds exactly” allows her to jump rather casually over two or more centuries. This is not an accident or a slip of the pen: not only are early modern vernacularization and the nineteenth-century rise of the nation state repeatedly conflated elsewhere in her argument; this blending of two very different historical periods also occurs in Benedict Anderson, who equally easily skips from Herder’s presumed identification of language, *Volk*, and culture to fourteenth-century humanism to the sixteenth-century European discovery of non-European civilizations, in blithe disregard of two or three centuries of both economic development and linguistic history in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

Against both Anderson and Casanova, I would like to argue that it is analytically more precise to distinguish the early modern wave of vernacularizations from the rise of modern nationalism and of national languages properly speaking. The inspiration from this argument, too, comes from Pollock’s discussion of the Sanskrit and Latin cosmopolitan spheres or orders: around the year 1000 CE, he writes, both orders witnessed a significant process of *vernacularization*, i.e., a shift towards newly literate uses among vernaculars that were hitherto primarily spoken. In the Latin cosmopolis, Romance languages like French, Italian, and Catalan emerged as languages of fine letters, learning and government in this period; in the Sanskrit cosmopolis, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada were similarly promoted. Pollock’s analysis implies that vernacularization is neither a specifically modern nor a uniquely European phenomenon: the main processes of vernacularization he discusses occurred around the tenth–eleventh centuries CE. Thus, vernacularization need not, or not exclusively, be shaped by any ‘vernacularizing thrust’ or ‘logic’ of capitalism, but may involve other dynamics and agencies as well.

### 3 More Vernacularizations

In short, we should pay more attention to non-Western and premodern or early modern literary formations. This line of criticism should be distinguished from postcolonial critiques, like Aamir Mufti’s argument that Casanova fails to take into account the role of philological orientalism in the creation of the transna-

<sup>10</sup> See in particular chapter 2 of *Imagined Communities*.



tional literary field. Specifically, Mufti claims that Casanova wrongly sees the “Herderian Revolution” as purely internal to Europe rather than a reorganization that is planetary in nature and crucially informed by orientalist philology (Mufti 459). According to him, the “deep encounter” between Western languages (primarily, English) and the languages of the “global periphery” already took place “at the dawn of the modern era and fundamentally transformed both cultural formations involved in the encounter” (Mufti 461). The entrance of non-Western textual traditions into the international literary space, that is, was determined by orientalist philology, which had already constituted those traditions *as* literature.

Mufti’s plea for more systematic attention to non-Western premodern literary cultures and his call for greater attention to the role of orientalist philology and colonialism in the constitution of the category of literature as national are certainly justified. But like Casanova, he gives rather short shrift to premodern and early modern constellations and dynamics that preceded the constitution, or institution, of the modern category of literature and the modern imaginary of the nation.<sup>11</sup> This becomes clearest in Mufti’s description of modern Indian vernacularization. He sees this as a primarily if not purely colonial process, and more specifically as a phase of what he calls “Orientalism’s Indian project,” which followed a “logic of indigenization” of, first, Sanskritizing the tradition and second, inventing modern vernaculars like, most importantly, Urdu and Hindi (Mufti 476–8). This line of reasoning implies that non-Western modern identities are primarily if not exclusively the product of imperialism (Mufti 462). In thus arguing that the vernacularization of Urdu and Hindi were driven by British imperialism and orientalist knowledge, however, Mufti overlooks possible earlier waves of vernacularization, and hence the possibly local dynamics and agencies that drove them.

Clearly, other premodern cosmopolitan orders and processes of vernacularization can be identified beyond those in the Sanskrit and Latin cosmopolitan orders discussed by Pollock. The most obvious example is probably the civilizational sphere centered around classical Chinese language (*Wenyan*), which reached beyond the Chinese empire to include Korea, Japan, and Southeast

11 It should be noted, incidentally, that, much like Casanova’s, Mufti’s discussion of Herder is based entirely on English-language secondary literature, in particular Isaiah Berlin’s influential but flawed work. Herder, witness his Freemasonic ideal of *Humanität*, was rather more of an Enlightenment universalist and less of a cultural relativist than Mufti seems to think; moreover, *pace* (Mufti 460), even relatively early works, like the 1778 *Volkslieder* – later republished as *Stimme der Völker* – and the 1784 *Ideen*, betray an acquaintance with oriental folkloric traditions and with the “orientalist” learning of his age.

Asia; it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that this *Wenyan*-based cosmopolis disappeared, in favor of the Beijing dialect that lay at the basis of the modern-day written standard of China (Putonghua). An argument can also be – and has in fact been – made for an ‘Arabic Cosmopolis’ covering the Islamic world (cf. Ricci *Translated*). Here, however, I will focus on another cosmopolitan order and another wave of vernacularizations, which centered around modern Persian. This order has been labeled “Persianate civilization”; “the world of Persian literary humanism”; and “the Balkans-to-Bengal complex”;<sup>12</sup> but I will stick to the term “Persianate cosmopolitan” in order to invite and facilitate comparison with the Latin, Sanskrit, and other premodern cosmopolitan orders. This civilizational sphere covered roughly all parts of the Islamic world where Arabic was not the dominant spoken language; but it also spilled over into a number of Christian cultures in the Caucasus and to the Sanskrit sphere in South Asia.

During the eleventh and twelfth century CE, “Modern Persian,” a new form of Persian containing substantial numbers of Arabic loans, was both codified and consecrated in a number of works of literature, like Firdowsi’s *Shahnâma* and Nizâmî’s *Laylî o Majnûn*; these works were reproduced by both oral and literate means. Tellingly, Hamid Dabashi suggests that local vernaculars were only used in oral traditions, and only Persian knew a substantial tradition of literate composition (Dabashi 26; 331n); but this claim overlooks the emergence of various written vernacular literatures within the Persianate realm over the centuries. The central status of Persian-language works like, in particular, Firdowsi’s and Nizâmî’s, is not in doubt, however. Given the largely rural, and overwhelmingly illiterate, population, Firdowsi’s epic was reproduced in various oral forms as well. In turn, Firdowsi’s epic did not rest merely on individual invention or oral traditions, but also on earlier written traditions of heroic tales, most importantly an incomplete versified version by Daqîqî and a prose *Shahnâma* by ‘Abd al-Razzâq; and conversely, episodes from the *Shahnâma* entered oral traditions in various languages. Thus, oral traditions are not simply the primordial source of literate practices, as was widely believed in the wake of the Herderian revolution, and in particular the folk tale collecting activities of the Grimm brothers. Rather, in the Persianate case, there has been a long and complex process of interaction between primarily literate and primarily oral practices, with neither necessarily or simply being primordial with respect to the other.

In some respects, Nizâmî’s influence was even more widespread than Firdowsi’s. Like the latter, Nizâmî appears to draw from both literate and oral

12 Coined, by, respectively, (Hodgson 293); (Dabashi ix); and (Ahmad 33).

traditions; and in fact, his plot derives from an Arabic original. His *Laylī o Majnūn* tells of two Arab youths, Layla and Qays, who meet in school and fall in love; but when Layla's father refuses to grant permission for a marriage, Qays gradually becomes mad (*majnūn*) with love, and withdraws from human society; eventually both lovers die, having remained chaste. Clearly, Nizāmī's tale is an allegory of human and divine love, even though the distinction between literal or divine love (*eshq-e haqīqī*) and human or metaphorical love (*eshq-e majāzī*) remains largely implicit in the poem. Nizāmī's version of this story has acquired an immense prestige in the entire Balkan-to-Bengal complex. It has been recomposed in Persian and translated into other Islamicate language countless times, and Layla and Majnūn have become the proverbial unhappy lovers in both oral and literate cultures of the Islamic world.

What was produced by authors like Firdowsī and Nizāmī, and by later poets like Hafez, Rūmī and Sa'dī, was not "literature" in the modern sense, but works of *adab*, or cultivation and (courtly or urbane) refinement – an ideal not unlike the early nineteenth-century German *Bildung*, or, perhaps, the ideal of *sprezzatura* in Renaissance Italy. Dabashi translates *adab* as "literary humanism" (Dabashi 26; 331n40); but it should be noted that *adab* did not clearly distinguish the literary and the didactic, or the aesthetic and the moral. For example, for centuries, medrese pupils in the Ottoman empire and elsewhere were taught Persian not by studying textbooks or works of grammar, but by reading Sa'dī's *Golestan*. The first Western translation of this work, printed in Amsterdam in 1651, was significantly titled *Rosarium politicum*, and read as a work of practical moral and political wisdom. Thus, *adab* should be distinguished from *adabiyya/edebiyat*, a modern neologism that gained currency around the mid-nineteenth century (see e.g. Memduh, *Tarīh*). Intriguingly, this neologism appeared virtually simultaneously in modern Ottoman Turkish, in Arabic and in Persian, with some evidence pointing to Turkish rather than Arabic as the language in which this and other quasi-Arabic neologisms of the humanities and social sciences originated.<sup>13</sup> Hence, it is an open question whether we can see the premodern Persian cosmopolitan as a transnational literary space in Casanova's sense.

This Persian cosmopolitan was not confined to the successive Persian empires; it also included the Mughal empire in the Indian subcontinent and the Ottoman empire to the West of the Iranian plateau, and even the largely Christian-inhabited areas of the Caucasus. Earlier studies of this cosmopolitan

13 Mufti insufficiently distinguishes premodern *adab* from modern *adabiyya/edebiyat* (Mufti 461 a.o.).

realm have focused either on the center in historical Persia, and on the intensive exchanges between Persia and Mughal India; but the Ottoman and Caucasian experiences are at least as revealing.<sup>14</sup> In the Ottoman empire, Persian was but one element in a complex cosmopolitan constellation, which, for Muslims alone, involved “three languages” (*elsine-i selâse*) for literate communication: Persian for literary expression, Arabic for religious learning, and Ottoman Turkish for administration and official correspondence. Later, Ottoman Turkish was increasingly used for high literature as well; but this language was so saturated with Arabic and Persian loan words and constructions as to be virtually incomprehensible to non-elite Ottoman subjects.

The linguistic and literary constellation of the Ottoman empire was even more complex, however, given the languages written by non-Muslims. The Greek Orthodox church, led by the patriarchate in Istanbul, employed Koinè Greek as its language of liturgy, learning and letters; the autocephalous Orthodox centers in Peć and Ohrid cultivated Old Church Slavonic until they were abolished by the Istanbul patriarchate in the 1760s. The Ottoman Armenians not only had a church of their own, but also a distinct liturgical language, Classical Armenian (*Grabar*); in addition to this, they had texts in Middle Armenian (twelfth century), while in the eighteenth century, a new transregional “civil language” (*K'aghak'akan*) emerged, which was distinct both from the classical written standards and from the locally spoken Armenian dialects shot through with Turkish expressions. In fact, vulgar Armenian dialects, like dialectal versions of Greek, had such a low status that a substantial number of Greeks and Armenians had undergone a language shift to locally dominant languages or *linguae francae*, whether Turkish, Kurdish, or other. Ottoman Jews had a written “sacred language” (*lashon hakodesh*), a blend of classical Hebrew and Aramaic; the Sephardic Jews that had immigrated from Spain also had a written language often called “Ladino,” or in the literature, “Judeo-Hispanic,” which was roughly, a calque of classical Hebrew grammar complemented by a basically Spanish vocabulary.

This highly complex and highly cosmopolitan order underwent a dramatic wave of vernacularizations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries CE.<sup>15</sup> During this period, literate languages that were much closer, though not nec-

14 Thus, none of the contributions to Amanat & Ashraf (eds.), *Persianate World*, address the Ottoman empire in any detail; and only one of the various contributions in Green (ed.), *Persianate World*, by Murat Umüt Inan, discusses the Ottoman empire, with the others focusing on South and Central Asia.

15 For more details, see (Leezenberg Revolution). A book-length account of these processes is in preparation.

essarily identical to, locally spoken dialects emerged among Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike. The various Christian communities in the empire witnessed new literate uses of language varieties hitherto only spoken; these are nowadays labeled as, among others, Modern Greek, Modern (Western) Armenian, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Romanian. Muslim authors started using spoken vernaculars like Albanian and Kurdish for literate purposes. Among Ottoman Jews, finally, a shift from the Hebrew-based Judeo-Hispanic to a variety of Ladino much closer to the vernacular actually spoken by Sephardic Jews may be observed; moreover, many Greek and Romance-speaking Jews in Istanbul and the Danube provinces shifted towards a variety of this more prestigious Judeo-Hispanic. Even the written Ottoman Turkish of courtly scribes and poets saw a significant shift towards the dialect actually spoken in Istanbul, to the dismay of the more sophisticated officials who prided themselves on writing a language no commoner could understand.

These – often quite self-conscious – uses of spoken vernaculars for new literate and literary purposes reflect new linguistic ideologies that qualified spoken vernaculars as worthy of being used for literary and learned purposes, and indeed of being studied. And, to the extent that spoken vernaculars came to be seen, not merely as worthy of having their grammar written down, but as having grammatical rules in the first place, this process of vernacularization also involved significant structural changes as well.

Thus, the Ottoman empire shows even clearer evidence of early modern and precolonial processes of vernacularization in the Persianate realm than the Indian subcontinent prior to the British conquests. Here, however, my main concern is not with structure, use or ideology of early modern vernacular languages, but with the changing relation between cosmopolitan and vernacular literatures. Exactly what concepts and practices of literature do we find in the pre-modern Persianate realm, and exactly what kind of domination did the literary dominance of Persian amount to? And exactly how did the nineteenth-century emergence occur of a modern notion of literature as first and foremost a national heritage, rather than as cosmopolitan edification or moral instruction? And finally, how do such questions of early modernity and the *longue durée* dovetail with Casanova's account of the birth of a modern literary space as conditioned by the modern nation state and modern capitalism? Below, I can only give a rough outline of an answer; but I hope to convince the reader that these questions are worth pursuing.

#### 4 Three Tales

I would like to focus my argument, however, not so much on the Persianate cosmopolitan as such, but rather on three vernacular literary traditions that emerged out of it in premodern and early modern times, as illustrated by three epic poems: the Georgian romance *The Knight in the Panther Skin* (*Vepkhistqaosani*) by Shota Rustaveli (d. after 1220 CE); the Kurdish *mathnawî* poem *Mem û Zîn* by Ehmedê Xanî (d. 1707 CE); and the anonymous Armenian oral epic, *Sasuntsi David* (David of Sasun) or *Sasna dzurer* (Sasunian Daredevils), first transcribed and published in the late nineteenth century. All three show clear traces of a Persianate background, and all three were consecrated as national epics in the late nineteenth century, and canonized as embodying or exemplifying their respective national literatures, if not national identities more generally.<sup>16</sup>

About Rustaveli's life, we know virtually nothing, except that he seems to have served at the court of Queen Tamara, the ruler during what has been called Georgia's "Golden Age." He may well have known Persian, and perhaps even Arabic; but apart from some hints to this effect in his poem, there is no solid evidence of this. Although generally remaining politically independent until the late eighteenth century, when it was crushed between the Persian and Russian empires, Georgia (and the Caucasus more generally) clearly belonged to the Persianate cultural sphere of influence. Already in the twelfth century, literary works like Gurgânî's *Vîs and Ramîn* were translated into Georgian.<sup>17</sup> Rustaveli openly acknowledges this debt to Persian ancestors: "A Persian tale, this, turned into Georgian; a thing like a rare pearl passed from hand to hand, and put into verse" (Rustaveli 4). These lines have often been read as stating that Rustaveli's tale is a translation of some Persian original; but I prefer to interpret them as acknowledging its indebtedness to the Persianate cosmopolitan in a broader sense, without its plot necessarily following any one Persian model.

There are abundant further traces of such a broader Persianate background in the *Vepxistqaosani*. Rustaveli openly states that his protagonists are of Arab origin, and is clearly indebted to Firdowsî for various images and motifs, at one

16 Few people will be familiar with all of the languages involved. For convenience of reference, I have used Feydit's French translation of Abeghian's 1939 edition of *Sasuntsi David* (Feydit *David*); Stevenson's rendering of *Vepkhistqaosani* (Rustaveli *Lord*); and Saadalla's English rendering of *Mem û Zîn* (Saadalla *Mem*).

17 For a discussion of the Persian elements in the *Visramiani*, see (Gippert "Automatic") For an overview of Georgian-Iranian contacts over the centuries, see (Farmanfarmaian "Georgia"). I am not aware of any similar synoptic studies on Armenians and Kurds, however.

point calling the arm of his male protagonist “stronger than Rustam’s” (Rustaveli 25). The story’s most important or, as Stevenson calls it, “most immediately striking” Persian influence, however, is undoubtedly Nizâmî’s *Laylî o Majnûn* (Rustaveli xvii). Love is as central a concern for Rustaveli as it is for Nizâmî; and he indicates that he is indeed indebted to the Persianate concept of *eshq*, rather than to a pagan Greek or Christian notion of love. In his preface, he explicitly distinguishes between “heavenly love” and “the earthly passion ... which has some likeness to the mystic,” adding that “in the speech of the Arabs, our *lover* (*majnûrî*) means ‘madman’” (Rustaveli 5; cf. xvii). Further, Rayfield has pointed out that Rustaveli’s prologue (which invokes, successively, the deity, the ruler, poetry, and love) is identical in structure to the *dibacha* (introduction) of Nizâmî’s *Laylî o Majnûn* (Rayfield 80).

A similar account of Persianate influences can be given for the Kurdish poet Ehmedê Xanî (1650–1707 CE), who in 1695 CE finished his romance or *mathnawî* poem, *Mem û Zîn*, about two ill-fated lovers whose marriage is prevented by the local prince (described as a “Kurd of Arab stock”), and who eventually both die shortly one after the other. Although endowed with rich counterpoint involving, among others, sexuality, hunting, fighting, and friendship, and although references to characters and episodes from Firdowsî’s *Shahnâma* abound, Xanî’s story – much like Rustaveli’s – is clearly modeled primarily on Nizâmî’s *Laylî o Majnûn*. Accordingly, Xanî openly places himself in the Persianate tradition of classical *mathnawî* poets like Nizâmî and Abdulrahmân Jâmî (d. 1492 CE): “When you sell perfect knowledge for a copper coin/No one would take Nizâmî as a groom/And no one would have Jâmî as a servant” (Saadalla 34).

Moreover, and more explicitly than his predecessors, Xanî distinguishes between worldly and divine love, or as he calls them, “metaphorical” and “literal” love (Saadalla 15 a.o.): to the extent that the human love between the poem’s protagonists remains unconsummated, he implies, it can be purified and transmuted into divine love. Moreover, his Kurdish is shot through with Persian literary expressions. Thus, neither Rustaveli nor Xanî has any difficulty in acknowledging either the Persian inspiration of their work or the Arab descent of their heroes, and in neither work do we find any clear antagonism to an enemy people (or even individual), whether characterized in religious, ethnic, or political terms.<sup>18</sup>

18 In *Mem û Zîn*, the king and his evil counselor Beko are in a sense opponents; but Xanî explicitly states that it is precisely the King’s blocking Mem and Zîn’s getting married which helps to keep their love pure, and ultimately to transmute it into divine love;

With *Sasuntsi David*, it seems, we are in an entirely different discursive and moral universe. To begin with, it is an anonymous oral epic, first recorded in the rural Mush dialect of Western Armenian, rather than the work of any single – let alone a literate – author. Further, unlike Rustaveli's and Xani's works, the poem expresses a generic hostility against all Arab and Muslim characters; it features no courtly or mystical love; and its hero is a strong and masculine fighter rather than a passively suffering courtly martyr.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, on closer inspection, Persianate – or perhaps Iranian – elements and motifs appear to be present in abundance. David himself is compared to the *Shahnâma*'s greatest hero, Rostam; and his horse, Jelali (itself an Iranian name), bears comparison to Rostam's horse, Rakhs. Even the epic's alternative title, *Sasna dzurer*, 'Sasunian daredevils,' employs a term *dzur* which may have a sense not only of "brave" or "reckless," but also of "mad" – like Arabic/Persian *majnûn*. Another frequently used term for "hero" is the Iranian *pahlavan*.<sup>20</sup> Finally, tales like *Sasuntsi David* were sung by semi-professional Armenian bards (*ashug*, – itself, significantly, an adaptation of the Persianate '*âshiq*'), many of whom were versed in Turkish, Kurdish, and/or Georgian as much as in Armenian. To the best of my knowledge, however, no existing study of *Sasuntsi David* has attempted to explore its background in either the Persianate cosmopolitan or the Ottoman empire, or even to discuss any Kurdish or Turkish versions of the epic.<sup>21</sup>

## 5 One Epic's Consecration

The story of the rediscovery of *Sasuntsi David* deserves some more detailed discussion. It was first transcribed by the Armenian bishop Garegin Servantsdiant

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and subsequently, he states that Beko's behavior is evil only in appearance, since in reality, it helps to realize God's plans.

19 To be sure, much the same holds for the oral versions of both *The Knight in the Panther Skin* and *Mem û Zîn*; but of *Sasuntsi David*, no comparable literate version is available. Considerations of space preclude a fuller discussion.

20 Even at a purely linguistic level, Armenian is known to have contained so many loan expressions from different Iranian that it was long considered a branch of the Indo-Iranian languages, until the neogrammarian Heinrich Hübschmann carefully identifying the loans, isolated it as an independent Indo-European language (Hübschmann "Stellung").

21 Perhaps I should emphasize that such an exploration need not contradict the Medieval-historical and the pagan-mythological readings, or render them invalid; these perspectives may well mutually complement and enrich each other.



(d. 1892 CE), who wrote that he spent three years searching for someone who could recite this tale, and ultimately found a man named Krpo, whom he could persuade only with some difficulty to reproduce a poem he had not recited in years (Servantsiants 127; cf. Der Melkonian-Minassian *Épopée* 27–29; Nichanian *Ages* 334). These comments suggest that in that period, the poem was not widely known or actively recited even in its claimed region of origin. Moreover, the publication of this oral poem, and its presentation as the Armenian national epic, flew in the face of a long and sophisticated tradition of written (and, since the sixteenth century, printed) literature in Armenian, whether in the classical language (Grabar), in Middle Armenian or in the supra-regional modern “Civil Armenian” (*K'aghak'akan*).

Present-day studies consistently talk of *Sasuntsi David* as a thousand-year old epic; they generally see the third canto as the epic's core or oldest part, and as describing an actual historical event: in 851 CE, an 'Abbâsid army, led by general Yûsuf, invaded the Mush plain; but in the ensuing winter, they were attacked and driven out by Armenian mountain dwellers from Sasun, headed by one Hovnan of Khout. In the epic, it is the superhuman hero David who leads the Sasunians in their struggle.

These historical events, however, may be more remote from the epic than is usually believed. Generally, it has simply been assumed *that* the epic preserves the memory of the ninth century, rather than exploring exactly *how* it does so. But if the epic, or at least its third canto, was indeed composed in the tenth century CE, that is, less than a hundred years after the event, it is difficult indeed to explain why the names of its principal heroes and villains appear to have been so thoroughly forgotten. No mention is ever made either of the revolt's leader, Hovnan; of the Abbâsid general Yûsuf; or of al-Mutawkkil, the then caliph. Instead, the first canto merely tells of a struggle against a nameless “caliph of Baghdad” rather than any specific 'Abbâsid ruler; the third canto describes David's confrontation with, and ultimate victory over, a Muslim ruler called “Misra Malek” (“the Egyptian king” – once again, not a proper name of any historical individual). Moreover, as Joseph Orbeli already notes in his preface to the Feydit translation (Feydit 12), the epic appears to take the presence of Arab-Muslim rulers as given. Put differently: it seems to describe not a war of resistance against an Arab or Muslim invasion of Armenian lands, but a revolt against an already established authority coming to the villagers to collect taxes.

This may make it tempting to read the epic – or at least part of it – against the background of Ottoman tax policies and resistance against it; but among Armenian scholars, there has been a consistent effort to lift the entire epic out of the Ottoman settings in which (at least part of) the oral narrative was produced,

reproduced, and initially transcribed.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Abeghian called it a "Medieval epic," even though it has not been attested prior to the sixteenth century, and has tried to match the epic's characters with historical figures from 'Abbâsid times.

Philologically, the claim that *Sasuntsi David* is over a thousand years old is completely arbitrary; but the choice does not seem arbitrary in the light of both nationalist projects and Soviet policies. First, tracing the epic to the tenth century CE renders it older than Rustaveli's poem and the *Shahnâma* of Firdawsî (the millennial of whose birth had just been celebrated in Iran in 1934), and facilitates its presentation as a purely Armenian creation, not shaped in any way by Persian or Iranian – let alone Ottoman – influences. Second, it appears to have been KGB chief Lavrenti Beria – himself, like Stalin, of Georgian origin – who, amidst his purges of writers and writers' unions both in Georgia and elsewhere in the Soviet Union, ordered large-scale celebrations of Rustaveli's centenary in 1937 (Rayfield 302). In the following year, millenary celebrations were organized for the Armenian national epic, too; these included the publication of Abeghian's normalized and standardized version of the text.

This tendency to dehistoricize *David of Sasun* became more pronounced in post-Soviet times. Later studies by Armenian scholars, like Azat Yeghiazaryan, reject the Marxist "historical" school headed by Abeghian, and try to lift the epic outside of history altogether, by emphasizing its "pagan" (that is, both pre-Islamic and pre-Christian) and "mythological" elements, and representing the protagonist David as a supposedly timeless mythic hero rather than as a historical figure like Hovnan (Yeghiazaryan Introduction).

These three works do not only reflect a complex interaction between the cosmopolitan Persian and vernacular languages, they also point to a complex relation between the literate and the oral. Rustaveli's romance was distinct from its literary predecessors in that it was written in a form of Georgian much closer to the everyday language spoken by the commoners of the time. In subsequent centuries, his work also entered the oral tradition, showing, once again, the complex interaction between literate and oral practices (cf. Rayfield 82). Likewise, numerous oral retellings of the story of Mem and Zin circulated in

22 In the 1930s, Soviet scholars like Heciyê Cindî and Emînê Evdal used Kurdish-speaking Armenian informants as sources for their collections of Kurdish folklore; they also transcribed a Kurdish version of the – supposedly purely Armenian – oral epic of David of Sasun. It is very well possible that Turkish-language versions were around as well, but to the best of my knowledge, there are no discussions – let alone transcriptions – of these. Conversely, Chyet, *Thorn Bush*, includes a number of Armenian and Aramaic versions of the supposedly purely or primarily Kurdish folk epic or Memê Alan.

Kurdish (and, to a lesser extent, also in Armenian and modern colloquial Aramaic); but the exact relation of these to Xani's version has not yet been the object of any systematic study.<sup>23</sup> The anonymous and initially oral poem of *Sasuntsi David*, finally, also shows traces of a wider Persianate (and not simply Iranian) environment that was at least in part literate.

## 6 Three National Epics

The story of how these works were consecrated as, or perhaps rather transformed into, the national epics of, respectively, Georgians, Kurds, and the Armenians, deserves a detailed study of its own. The Georgian case has perhaps the longest history: the first Georgian printing press was established in Tbilisi during the reign of king Vakhtang VI (1703–1712 CE), and it was Vakhtang who commissioned the first printed edition of *The Knight in the Panther Skin* (Rayfield 120). As noted, the epic continued to enjoy considerable popularity both in its written form and in oral versions; but its consecration, or redefinition, as a national epic seems to have taken place only during the second half of the nineteenth century. An important moment in this process appears to have been the new, scholarly edition published in 1881, prepared by a philological commission headed by Akaki Tsereteli (Rayfield 185).

The consecration (and, in fact, transcription) of the Armenian epic, by contrast, belongs all to the late nineteenth century. Despite some occasional references by outsiders, *Sasuntsi David* remained largely unknown to the outside world – including, one should add, to the vast majority of Armenians – until 1874, when Servantsdians published one canto in his *Grots-brots*. Initially, urban Armenian literati were shocked at this glorification of illiterate folk literature, which deviated from the norms of both Grabar and Civil Armenian; but the publication dovetailed with the wider process of developing a modern Armenian literature in a language closer to the spoken rural dialects. After the German-trained Russian-Armenian philologist Manouk Abeghian published another version in 1889, other variants of the epic were recovered in a more systematic manner, and in 1936, the first volume of a critical edition of different versions of the epic was published, under Abeghian's editorship. In 1939, a unitary text in a normalized form of Eastern Armenian (rather than the

23 For a study of a number of these oral versions, see Chyet, *Thorn Bush*; this study, however, appears predicated on the assumption that oral traditions are primordial with respect to literate practices.

Sasun dialect) was compiled on the basis of the hitherto collected variants, and published as the "official version," as part of the epic's millenary celebrations.<sup>24</sup>

*Mem û Zîn*, finally, falls somewhere in between the Georgian and Armenian cases. It had long been popular among medrese pupils as a work of mystical literature on worldly and divine love, but it was promoted to the status of Kurdish national epic in the 1890s, in the journal *Kurdistan*. The first printed edition of the complete text did not appear until 1919. In his preface to this printing, the editor, Hemze Muksî, explicitly compared Xanî to Ferdowsî, adding that "each people wishing to create its national existence and sovereignty must first give strong care to its literature" (cf. Leezenberg "Consecration" 85).

It is tempting to view these late-nineteenth consecrations as reproducing Western, and more specifically German, hegemonic orientalist-philological categories; but these can only be attested to a limited and variable extent. At first blush, Georgian nationalism seems to have been shaped decisively by German categories as filtered through Russian translations. In fact, during the nineteenth century, a new type of Georgian writer emerged: the *tergdaleuli*, or Russian-educated and Western-influenced intellectual, of whom Akaki Tsere-teli and Ilia Chavchavadze (1837–1907) were the most famous representatives. The consecration of *The Knight in the Panther Skin*, however, seems to have a longer history, and to antedate such Russian and German influences.

In the Russian empire, the works of Herder had also reached Armenian nationalists like Khatchatur Abovian (1818–1848), who pursued his studies at the German-language university of Dorpat;<sup>25</sup> but this German philological and orientalist tradition, itself transformed and adapted in the Russian empire and its successor, the Soviet Union, hardly reached the Ottoman empire until well after the 1870 German unification and the subsequent German victory in the 1871 Franco-Prussian war.<sup>26</sup> Thus, there is no indication that Servantsdians had any familiarity with either Herder or German romantic nationalism; in fact, Herder's name is not even mentioned in any Armenian-language publication

24 Nichanian (*Ages* 340–341), where mention is also made of contemporary critics, who argue that this version "distorts the structure, the composition, the contents and the ideological essence of our epic."

25 Cf. (Nichanian *Deuil* 74), who adds that Abovian discussed Herder's works with his fellow student of Armenian background, Hrand Nazareants, who had also been working on translating Herder's *Ideen* into Russian.

26 The story of the Russian reception of, and in part polemics against, German orientalism is worthy of much more critical attention, but cannot be addressed here; see (Tolz *Orient*) for an overview.

in the Ottoman empire prior to the 1890s.<sup>27</sup> In short, German romantic nationalism (as symbolized by the image of Herder) and German philological orientalism do seem to have played an important role in the development of some of the nationalisms in the Persianate realm; but such an influence can first be attested only late in the nineteenth century. Moreover, philological orientalism need not have been all-pervasive or hegemonic; to assess this possibility in detail, however, one would also have to study local and premodern vernacular philological traditions.

## 7 Four Cosmopolitan Orders

In short, the Persianate realm constitutes a cosmopolitan order that witnessed a significant process of vernacularization, and helped shaping vernacular literatures of both Muslim and Christian peoples, in premodern and early modern times, well before any Western political influence, capitalist penetration, or modern orientalist learning had reached the region. Accordingly, it seems necessary to rethink Casanova's notion of the world literary space in such a way as to allow for a greater historical variability in the articulation and rearticulation of both literate and oral literary practices, and to accommodate the literary constellations obtaining in, in particular, the Latin, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Persianate cosmopolitan orders.

It is not at all clear, however, what shape such an extension could or should take. At present, genealogical questions of what forms of linguistic and literary domination characterized the Persianate cosmopolitan, and of what modalities of power sustained its forms of knowledge and poetic expression, remain wide open. In fact, it has recently even been argued that such genealogical analyses *cannot* be given, because Nietzsche's and Foucault's brands of genealogy apply to modern Western forms of knowledge, modalities of power, systems of morality, and states only (Hallaq 84–85). There is no good reason, however, to deny *a priori* that premodern and early modern formations of knowledge (and, perhaps more generally, writing) may also involve power, in particular if one also pays attention, as Foucault does, to modalities other than the sovereign power of the modern state.<sup>28</sup> Recently, for example, it has been argued that it was precisely imperial formations like the Roman and 'Abbâsid empires which

27 For this point, I am indebted to Yektan Türkyilmaz.

28 In such a context, Stefano Pellò's comment that Persian philology became a 'means to conquer the world' (quoted in Eaton 76) gains in significance.

encouraged the production of encyclopedic knowledge, a form of knowledge that has long been dismissed as derivative and compilatory (cf. Muhanna, *World*).

Can we, then, make a more informed guess as to what form of literary domination characterized the Persian cosmopolitan order? Two initially plausible possibilities immediately come to mind: first, a discretionary imperial mode of power exercised by an individual ruler, rather than the law-based sovereignty of the modern state; and second, a form of religious authority that also dominates the linguistic and literary domains. Both suggestions, however, run into immediate difficulties. First, premodern cosmopolitan orders display rather variable relations to anything resembling state power: the Latin and Chinese orders appear to have been sustained by an empire, but the same cannot be said of the Sanskrit cosmopolitan, as Pollock already noted (Pollock 612). The Latin cosmopolitan, itself in many respects a calque of Greek literary models, was sustained by the institution of the Roman empire, and later by the equally transregional institution of the Catholic church. The Sanskrit cosmopolitan, by contrast, existed without any such imperial or ecclesiastic support, except, of course, by the Brahmanic scholars; but it is an open question to what extent these formed a corporate body or institution, let alone exactly what if any modalities of power they wielded in virtue of their learning. The Persianate order, in turn, appears to have been distinct from both: as already argued above, it stretched over not one but three empires, and was not strictly enforced by any of these. Already before Persian was made the language of courtly administration and correspondence by emperor Akbar in 1584 CE, Persian poetry had consolidated its dominant position in the South Asian world of letters. Thus, unlike the Latin and Sanskrit orders, the Persianate cosmopolitan was sustained neither by the worldly power of an emperor nor by the religious authority of a church, a clergy, or a corpus of texts.

Second, it has recently been argued that the Persianate order was rather more open and accommodating, and in fact, more cosmopolitan, than the Sanskrit one, precisely because – unlike Latin, Sanskrit, and Arabic – Persian was *not* a sacred or liturgical language, and because – unlike the Brahmanic scholars – the Persianate learned men showed an interest in, and readily assimilated materials from, other cultures, like the pre-Islamic Iranian, Arab-Islamic, and classical Greek traditions, and readily acknowledged this indebtedness (Eaton 83). Further, Eaton adds, the Persianate cosmopolitan was of a non-religious character, thus making it easier for non-Muslims to participate. He seems to have in mind specifically the inclusion of Hindu scholars in the Persian-speaking courtly elite established by emperor Akbar; but one may also point to the reception of Persian *adab* among Christian peoples like the Georgians

and Armenians.<sup>29</sup> If such arguments hold, it may be useful to further explore the differences between the various cosmopolitan orders as much as their common features.

## 8 Five Conclusions

In short, one may safely state that the Persianate cosmopolis, and more specifically the form of domination it involved, remains rather undertheorized – much, in fact, like the premodern Latin, Sanskrit, and Chinese cosmopolitan orders.<sup>30</sup> Although Pollock makes some initial efforts at explicating the forms of power involved in these orders, later studies of the Persianate cosmopolis (e.g. as collected in Amanat & Ashraf (eds.), *Persianate World*, and Green (ed.), *Persianate World*), largely confine themselves to descriptive purposes. Undoubtedly, it is useful to look in close detail into the empirical historical features that distinguish the Persianate realm from other cosmopolitan constellations; but the explication and refining of our theoretical tools may help us integrate this realm into a study of world literature, giving the latter both a wider geographical reach and more historical depth.

Second, a more systematic attention to the Persianate cosmopolis, and to other premodern and early modern linguistic and literary orders, may invite us to rethink the basic concepts we employ. In particular, the development from premodern *adab* to modern *adabiyya* suggests that the category *literature* is more historically variable, and perhaps contested, than linear accounts of the progressive genesis of an autonomous literary space would seem to allow for.

Third, looking at the Persianate and other premodern cosmopolitan orders may invite us to rethink the relation between oral and literate practices. Rather than conceptualizing the former in purely negative terms like the absence of hegemony, a lack of literary capital, or distance from the center, one may surmise that literary practices in general may well have both oral and written dimensions, in the center as much as in the periphery.

Fourth, the Persianate cosmopolitan order, in particular, allows us to look at how premodern forms of literary domination (or, in one prefers, linguistic, literary, cultural and/or intellectual hegemony) are articulated and reproduced

29 Eaton's argument, like the other discussions of the Persianate cosmopolis mentioned above, focuses on Central Asia and, especially, South Asia. Plenty of room remains for further studies of the Caucasus and the Ottoman empire as part of this cosmopolis.

30 There is some irony in this fact, given that the *Journal of World Literature* appears to have been born in part precisely out of the experience of Persian nationalism and cosmopolitanism (cf. Azadibougar & Haddadian-Moghaddam "From Persian").

in the absence of direct political control or strict religious dominance. In particular, a study of the textual practices within this cosmopolitan order may also reveal the wealth of local traditions of philological learning and the different modalities of power involved in them.

Fifth, and finally, a focus on vernaculars, and more specifically on "peripheral" languages and literary traditions, and on the premodern and early modern processes of vernacularization they may reflect, may give us a better appreciation of the richness and complexity of cosmopolitan formations, and take us beyond the still regrettably widespread belief that premodern vernacular traditions are primarily local, primordially oral, and purely national. Methodologically, all these conclusions may boil down to supplementing or enriching Bourdieu-inspired accounts of the world republic of letters or transregional literary space, like Casanova's, with a more genealogically oriented attention to possibly incommensurable premodern cosmopolitan formations, historical changes and discontinuities, geographically variable traditions of knowledge and forms of agency, and historically variable modalities of power.

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