Kullberg, Christina, and David Watson. "Introduction: Theorizing the vernacular." *Vernaculars in an Age of World Literatures*. Ed. Christina Kullberg. Ed. David Watson. New York,: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. 1–24. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 25 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501374081.ch-001>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 25 April 2023, 23:11 UTC.

Copyright © Volume Editors' Part of the Work © Christina Kullberg and David Watson 2022.
Released under a CC BY-NC-ND licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).
You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

Introduction: Theorizing the vernacular

Christina Kullberg and David Watson

... the great angst of the vernacular is its spatio-temporal entropy.

—Sheldon Pollock, “Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History”

It may already be too late for the vernacular. Sheldon Pollock begins the epilogue to *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (2006)—his magisterial study of the cosmopolitan and vernacular—by warning the reader about the gradual disappearance of vernacular languages. The globalization of English, he argues, is resulting in a homogenization of language and culture, a “reduction of diversity in the cultural ecosystem” (567) comparable to the global decline in biological diversity during the last decades. Consequently, we are facing a stark choice between a homogenous globalism, and a violent alliance between nationalism and vernacular cultures intent on policing and excluding difference (568). From this perspective, two futures, both cruel, remain open to vernacular cultures: to dissolve into a globally deployed yet uneven neoliberal culture, or to become complicit with a reassertion of exclusionary national and group formations.

More than a decade later, we are now well into the millennium that would put an end to the vernacular. At first glance it seems like both cruel versions of Pollock’s prophecy have been realized. Even languages such as French that were considered to be dominating thirty years ago have lost prestige and function under the pressure of global English. Nationalism along with violent populism expand across the world, paradoxically enough often by means of global English used on social media platforms. One could even add to the dark scenario by suggesting that this is indeed also the closure of the literary millennium and the end of the book. Yet, apocalyptic images such as these rarely give the whole picture. Is it so that accounts heralding the end of the vernacular or suspecting it of allying itself with a resurgent nationalism

(Kymlicka 2001) reflect a certain blindness in theory and method to account for it in an operative, productive way?

Our argument here is that it is not too late for the vernacular, which is to say we should neither view it solely as a residual formation that is fading away quickly, nor solely associate it with often-reactionary, populist political cultures. On the contrary, given the precarious historical moment that we now experience to various degrees of acuteness, critical engagements with literature in the world—what is generally referred to as world literature—prompts a theorization of the vernacular. Our time, shaped by a long century of decolonization, new imperial formations, and emergent new technologies, is indeed an age that requires a different take on the vernacular. We cannot, as was arguably the case when Goethe famously coined the notion of world literature, take the West, or the “canon” or even print culture and the world market as points of departure for thinking literature in the world. Climate crises, rising economic inequalities, platform capitalism, growing populisms and activism spur new attention to the active role of the local, the indigenous, the minor, and the peripheral in international literary flows and exchanges. This is where our volume wants to make a contribution by rethinking the vernacular through its various practices, functions, and meanings. The case studies brought together here explore the vernacular in different places, cultures, and historical moments. By means of different methodologies from literary studies, anthropology, linguistics, and history of ideas, they testify that the vernacular is not just one thing. It is always plural and shifting. And as a protean category, the vernacular should not be dismissed too quickly as if we always already know what it signifies, but should instead be rethought and explored time and time again for what it tells us about the variegated, uneven globe we inhabit and its cultures.

Such a project runs into an immediate problem. The development of the still emergent field of world literary studies is to a large extent inimical to an exploration of vernacular formations. From David Damrosch and Franco Moretti, world literature, whether it is understood as a network of texts, as a “mode of reading” or as an intellectual discourse (Tihanov 2018: 468), puts the emphasis on texts that “gain in translation” in a broad sense (linguistically, thematically, culturally) and therefore are marketable and circulate easily (Damrosch 2003: 281). Despite accurate criticism, notably from postcolonial scholars, that world literature could as well be called “literature for the West” (D’Haen 2013: 2–3), researchers within the field continue to equate world literature with cosmopolitanism. It is said to belong nowhere and everywhere—“at home in any place; free from local

attachments or prejudices”—and as such it is the literary expression of a world citizen, a cosmopolitan subject belonging everywhere and nowhere. The problem here is not so much the characterization of world literature as being “homeless” in the world, but that the equation builds on a binary opposition between the cosmopolitan and the vernacular and emphasizes, as well, exchanges between center and periphery, forgetting and occluding other circuits of circulation and modes of being in the world, and eliding thereby the place of the vernacular from discussion within world literary studies. This has consequences for *what* is being considered world literature and *how* we read these texts. Studying the evolution of the contemporary novel, Rebecca Walkowitz (2015), for instance, shows how politics of translation and global English impact on novels with worldly ambitions; they are “born translated” and thus more internationally marketable. Walkowitz continues to argue that the high commercialization of literatures of the world does not pass unchallenged, partly due to individual authors from peripheral places, often working between languages, who infuse their globally exchangeable prose with differences and to the fact that global English itself multiplies and is provincialized as it spreads across the world. In an attempt to shift the focus from circulation and the “born translated,” Emily Apter (2013) famously argued *against* world literature by insisting on the untranslatability of certain textual dimensions. But to identify the vernacular too quickly with what remains untranslatable in today’s world literary field is to risk reducing it to an object or expression of difference, and equating it too easily with the local, the “exotic,” or the national—formations easily considered anachronistic today. In this framework, put bluntly, either literature from small places and languages must adopt a form and style that abide by rules set by an English-speaking market or else it can resist these demands by remaining local. The premise and risk remain the same: the local is separated from the global, elite cosmopolitanism from popular or regional vernaculars.

In theorizations that do engage more overtly with the vernacular, particularly when examining the consolidation of a specific (national) literature, the vernacular is often only considered as a step toward a cosmopolitan language within which it is subsumed. Pascale Casanova’s now classic account of the emergence of French as the language of the “World Republic of Letters” (2004) is a paradigmatic instance of such a move. The problem is that this approach captures the cosmopolitan destiny of the vernacular, not necessarily the vernacular as a concept in itself. As Pollock puts it, the vernacular is understood as a “response to a specific history of domination and enforced change, along

with a critique of the oppression of tradition itself, tempered by a strategic desire to locate resources for a cosmopolitan future in vernacular ways of being themselves” (2000: 624). In other contexts, the vernacular is analyzed as an expression of resistance to the hegemony of cultural centers, as occurs, for example, when multilingual literature mobilizes a defense of local languages against the homogenizing pressure of imposed colonial languages and global English. Here, too, the vernacular is not the starting point for analysis but is framed as a reaction to cosmopolitan domination and relegated to a secondary position within the literary field.

Our contention is that this glossing over of the vernacular hides problematic tendencies within studies of world literature. A consequence of the expectations surrounding the proper object of world literature—the globe, its colonial geography, and so on—is that small-scale circulation, from one small language to another, for instance, goes under the radar. Moreover, while contemporary literary criticism may be leaving the vernacular behind it is also the case that recent fiction by authors ranging from James Kelman to Marlon James and Patrice Nganang are saturated with different vernaculars and that more authors in West Africa for example chose to write in vernacular. It is also the case that an increasing number of local publishing houses have surfaced in places like the Caribbean and publish local authors for regional audiences even while establishing new global networks. Moreover, it is indisputably the case that histories of migration and diaspora have resulted in the global dissemination and transformation of vernacular traces of the local, as notably research on African-American literature has demonstrated (Lemke 2009). The international success of hip-hop sufficiently shows how vernacular expressions reach well beyond locality and are transformed when received in another context.

This volume argues that the vernacular can and does indeed intervene productively in the shaping of world literature as an aesthetic strategy, in terms of a mode of reading, and as a global network of texts. Even more so, it poses serious questions to the field. Can theories and methods of world literature encompass the opposite of the cosmopolitan? And if that is indeed the case, as we suggest here, how can we theorize the vernacular, in time, space, and language, in a manner that interacts with, and contributes to, world literature studies? It is the ambition of this volume to calculate what this inclusion would mean for how we think about world literature, and, in the obverse, how accounts of world literature force us to rethink and reimagine the vernacular. We seek

to bring out the vernacular as an operative and analytical *concept*, in itself containing manifold versions of itself, rather than as a thing in and of itself, a category that functions as a short-hand for national literatures as is often the case within the European literary field. This is challenging in so far as the set of terms used to carry out this investigation is broadly Western (European) and thus, as Shaden Tageldin (2018) warns, does not always operate in accordance with the material or their spatio-temporal contexts. However, as chapters in this volume dealing with China and West Africa demonstrate, even if there might not be a vernacular equivalent to “the vernacular,” the concept may nonetheless be useful as a critical tool for reading, or misreading productively, temporal and spatial layers in a text, for reading tensions between scripts and orality, between languages of power.

In many ways the concept of the vernacular we seek to activate productively in this volume is indebted to some of the oldest ways of thinking about it. Etymologically, the word derives from learned Latin *vernaculus*, referring to slaves born in the house. It is defined as *particular to a country, to its habitants; synonymous with native, domestic, indigenous*; a language spoken by the people, often equated with the mother tongue and vulgar language. The implicit association with slavery has made it particularly useful in conceptualizing those subordinate peripheral formations and modes of circulation that are often obliterated in world literature theories. At the same time, the second connotation of the term—the domestic—highlights a sense of attachment to a place or a community, suggesting a resistance to universalizing claims of any theory of literature. Yet looking at Dante Alighieri’s *De vulgari eloquentia*, it becomes clear that the domestic connotation is intimately tied to the shifting character of what he called vulgar languages. Exiled from his local Florence, Dante perceived the language spoken by people in their everyday life as mobile as opposed to stagnated “grammar” or Latin. Here the vernacular is understood in terms of orality rather than written language, in the sense that it is the first language we hear when we begin to distinguish sounds—a definition that echoes in African literatures where the term “mother tongue” is often used (Warner 2019). It is a language acquired without instruction, whereas “grammar” needs to be taught following set rules rather than life. Dante thus reversed the dominant reasoning around languages by eulogizing the vernacular as an expression of a universal and natural *human* quality:

Of these two kinds of language, the more noble is the vernacular: first, because it was the language originally used by the human race; second, because the whole

world employs it, though with different pronunciations and using different words; and third, because it is natural to us, while the other is, in contrast, artificial.

(1996: 3)

The vernacular acquires value here not from being extremely local but from the fact that everyone speaks it, an insight that would later allow for particular instances of the vernacular to be reframed as national, perhaps even proto-democratic, forms of language. Dante himself does not distinguish one vernacular language from others but considers *the* vernacular, which translates into the human ability to speak and acquire a language. He defines it in relation to speech (*locutione*), to body, and to practice. In the vernacular, sound (senses) and meaning (reason) merge as an expression of distinctively and perfectible human qualities. The plurality of languages across the world is an expression of the richness of that perfectibility.

For Dante, then, even within one vernacular, languages multiply: there are different languages for different arts and crafts (one for architects, one for masons, etc.). Language is thus valued in terms of communication, practice, and creativity; it is the means by which human beings get by in everyday life, cultivate gardens, and construct worlds. These functions both deterritorialize *and* locate the vernacular. It is a language that *works* precisely because it is not set by rules, but evolves as it adapts to the situation. In this perspective—and contrary to the logic of contemporary nationalisms—the vernacular would not hold the promise of stability, nor would it be inimical to circulation. Rather, it would be a language between a person and her immediate surroundings, between practitioners in a particular context determined by time and purpose. As such the vernacular, due to the mobility of the speakers propelling new linguistic circumstances, would be transforming and include all kinds of expressions, not only linguistic. Curiously, then, Dante's ever emerging vernacular recalls a process of creolization or language mixing, transforming through time, whereas grammar is presented as a bordering performance that singles out *a* language. Italian, French, and Spanish were long considered to be "corrupt" versions of Latin, a description historically used for explaining the emergence of Creole languages too (Bachmann 2013). The vernacular, as it were, is a language that cannot be counted, to rephrase Naoki Sakai (2009); it is shifting because it opens up to other languages.

We thus understand the vernacular as a concept that would not refer to a specific object but rather capture a precodified status of language and culture undergoing the fraught, contested process of becoming *a* language or *a* culture.

The meaning and function of vernacular changes with time and place, and depends on a range of factors such as actors, media, and oppositional forces. This conceptualization of the term allows for discussing language and culture *in statu nascendi*, thus better capturing the variety of aesthetic engagements with the vernacular in different contexts and in different times. It can be used as an identity marker in nationalist formations. It can also be an instrument for subaltern resistance. As seen in Kamau Brathwaite's "jazz-novel," the vernacular may reach well beyond language as an object and include non-verbal expressions, sensibilities, and rhythm. In the current state of global warming, vernacular literary explorations extend to engagement with the non-human world, as in Patrick Chamoiseau's novel *Les Neuf consciences du Malfini* (2009) which is narrated from the perspective of a bird and attempts to account for the local Caribbean experience of climate crisis. As such it may open up new modes of reading literature in the world that draws attention to the co-production of literature and the world rather than to a pre-established canon of texts or map of the globe. To put this otherwise, to view the vernacular as the *statu nascendi* of literary language provides this volume with the means to analyze the world literary trajectory of a text.

As will be demonstrated in the case studies, the vernacular can be used as a pluriform concept rather than as a thing in itself. It will thus mean different things and do different things depending on context and methodology, leaving it open for constant negotiations. In order to situate our conceptualization of the term, what follows in the rest of this theoretical introduction is an account of how it has been used within world literary studies, first on a temporal scale in regard to the deep-history of the field and to the rise of nation-formations, which is imbricated in the notion of world literature, and second, on a spatial scale where we discuss the concept in relation to minor, sub-altern, and diasporic movements. Perhaps counterintuitively, it is precisely because of the tensions between the different uses and interpretations of the vernacular that we propose it as an operative concept for reading literatures in the world.

The vernacular in global deep histories and in the rise of the nation-state

The recent critical turn toward world literary studies has necessitated the rethinking of the vernacular in various ways. It has rendered legible the importance of the vernacular to literary history across millennia by extending

deep into the past the study of vernacular formations, and, thereby, necessitating a comparative analysis of the concept of the vernacular. In doing so it has also shifted attention for such an investigation away from European history, secular modernity, and the formation of the nation-state. Christian Høgel (2018) for instance argues for the term trans-imperialism to do better justice for how literature circulated in earlier periods. In this and many other accounts of literary circulation and formation beyond the modern nation-state, it becomes obvious that the connection between power and politics, language and literature is still there, only it is not the West that is taken as a point of departure or a model for explanation. The decolonization of world literature by means of a *longue durée* perspective is thus not a de-politicization of the term. Quite to the contrary, language and literature are considered in terms of power struggles, which in turn entails that vernacular and cosmopolitan languages emerge in relation to one another.

When a language, through various means, is then constituted and articulated in relation to another dominant language it enters into a process of *vernacularization*. This is the term used by Alexander Beecroft, Pascale Casanova, and Sheldon Pollock, in different contexts, to describe the consolidation of a language with regard to time and space and, ultimately, in literature that differentiates itself from a cosmopolitan language. Pollock, for instance, identifies a connection between increasing movements among peoples simultaneously in southern Asia and western Europe around the eighth century AD, which, following on a cosmopolitan epoch, saw the emergence of vernacular languages and literary cultures, and assisted in inaugurating the early modern period. It is here that he localizes the vernacular millennium, which is now supposedly brought to a close.

Leaving aside the anxieties imbuing Pollock's account, part of the significance of his work for our understanding of the vernacular is that he explores it by rethinking the time frame and temporal scale within which vernacular languages and literatures are to be investigated. Within the enlarged frame proposed by his study the premodern and modern are interlinked, and the vernacular emerges as the subject of a continuous history stretching across a millennium. It is clear that Pollock's "vernacular millennium" shares in the turn within the emergent field of world literary studies toward new enlarged time frames or scalar expansions. In his critique of this turn in "Prolegomena to a Cosmopolitanism in Deep Time" (2016), Bruce Robbins identifies three discreet reasons for the new methodological investment in expanded time frames: a movement initially

occurring within postcolonial studies to engage as Pollock does with cultures and texts predating modernity, attention to ecological degradation and the enlarged time frames such a project requires, and the international indigenous movement which has drawn attention to non-European colonial ventures. And indeed, such an expanded frame could widen and deepen our understandings of the cosmopolitan and vernacular dynamics in East Asia where literary Chinese, *wenyan*, was, in Denecke's and Zhang's terms, the *scripta franca* (Denecke and Zhang 2015: vii–viii) and the main medium of communication between the elites for almost two millennia up until the twentieth century. Japan, Vietnam, and Korea had adopted the Chinese script and the Chinese literary language although it was pronounced in local, “vernacular” languages. Chapter 6 of this volume discusses how China underwent radical language reforms in the first half of the twentieth century with the creation of a modern vernacular Chinese in which the oral *baihua* and the scriptural *wenyan* was fused. In Chapter 9, we see how this language reform, along with the linguistic effects of Mao's cultural revolution, mark even contemporary literature, written in French by Chinese authors in exile.

The methodological investment in enlarged timescapes, or “deep time” as Robbins puts it, has shaped recent inquiries other than Pollock's into the vernacular and its literatures. For instance, Beecroft's exploration of vernacular literature in his *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (2015) situates this literature within a time frame dwarfing even the vernacular millennium. According to him, vernacular literature developed in a series of consecutive historical waves, “beginning with the emergence of ancient Near Eastern vernaculars about three thousand years ago, followed by the emergence of a series of vernaculars in Europe and the Mediterranean between the third century BC and the fourth century AD, and then by Pollock's vernacular millennium beginning around the eighth century AD” (148). Each one of the vernacular ecologies, to use his term, is preceded by a cosmopolitan tradition, which it emulates and transforms. In the long history Beecroft is narrating, once the vernacular has supplanted the cosmopolitan it too gives way to a different literary ecology: “when the era of the coexistence of cosmopolitan and vernacular came to an end, it was a specifically European ecology that was to take its place,” he argues, “that of the national literature” (193). Indeed, national literature plays a similar role in Beecroft's account as the globalization of English does in Pollock's history, with both signaling if not the end of the history of the vernacular then certainly a transformation in its status as the dominant literary ecology of an epoch.

Ecological metaphors such as Beecroft's are absent in Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (2004). She reads instead the constitution of languages and the flows of literature through a grid borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu's sociology. Consequently, rather than referring to organic constellations, she insists on the institutional dimension of the relationship between the vernacular and the cosmopolitan. Vernacularization understood in political terms translates as a struggle for recognition: it is the process by which a local language gains in value so that it can compete with another, cosmopolitan, language's dominance. Literature is crucial in Casanova's model, since print culture makes it possible for a language to intervene in the formation of knowledge and ultimately in the shaping of politics. This leads her to conclude that even national literatures are a global affair, as they are "constructed through literary rivalries, which are always denied, and struggles, which are always international" (36). Accordingly, it was because Joachim du Bellay's *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse* (1549) marked "the first time that a national literature had been founded in a complex relation to another nation and, through it, another language, one that moreover was dominant and apparently indomitable, namely Latin" (46), that it became the foundation of the world republic of letters, not because it eulogized France or the French language. Nonetheless, the effect of Du Bellay's treatise was that France reversed the power balance in a century and a half and became the dominant literary power of Europe, to the extent that Paris, according to Casanova, still holds its central place as the cultural capital of the world, even if English is the global language and the economic power resides elsewhere.

This model is somewhat nuanced in *La Langue mondiale: traduction et domination* (2015). Here Casanova points out the impossibility of localizing a moment in time when French took over Latin for instance, citing Lodge's contention that standard language is a dialect among other dialects (25). She concludes that a language only becomes prestigious once its users (*les locuteurs et les scripteurs*) give it prestige and significance beyond the communicative function of language (29). The transition from vernacular into a prestigious language was, in the case of French, supported by a conscientious strategy that had little to do with regional attachment. The Renaissance authors of the Pléiade-group to which Du Bellay belonged validated French by borrowing from the Ancients (51). Put differently: the vernacular became a literary language by means of plagiarism. Reading between the lines, Casanova seems to adopt a French libertine conception of language: as a language enters into the grammar of sociability, its arbitrary quality increases, it becomes artificial. In this process,

vernacularization “denaturalizes” local language by turning it into a cosmopolitan language and distinguishing it from other languages viewed as vernacular. Not only does vernacularization produce a travesty of another language, but also far from the authenticity and the naturality often implied in the idea of the mother tongue, its *originality* (in the double sense of the term) lies in a construction: the lexical, topical, and phraseological borrowings are converted into something characteristic of that vernacular.

Casanova’s demonstration sharply proves that equating the vernacular with authenticity is historically inaccurate and theoretically suspect. If the vernacular is interpreted as an expression of cultural authenticity, it is charged with a particular political meaning occluding that it is in itself a construction. But as old regimes fell and new state formations emerged in Europe in the late eighteenth century and all through the nineteenth century, language became the bearer of the nation and by extension the people. The standardization of vernaculars through the establishment of academies of letters and dictionaries since the seventeenth century became a principle for unifying the people under the state. The process almost mirrors vernacularization around the eighth century AD: now the vernacular, which had become cosmopolitan, turns inward to seal a pact between its speakers, the space of belonging, and the space of power. Yet, as we can see by studying peripheral regions like the Baltic, discussed in Chapter 7, this process did not follow a neat evolutionary chronology. The case of Aino Kallas’ Estonian novels from the 1920s also show that the presumably local sources of inspiration for constructing a vernacular literature for the new nation-state were indeed multicultural and even written in languages of foreign powers that had been dominating the region.

However, this inward turn produced by the alliance between language and nation-building projects should not lead us to overlook that the re-vernacularization of cosmopolitan languages that occurred in the nineteenth century and onward came about in part as a result of globalization and colonization. It is in this light that John K. Noyes (2015) reads the key thinker of place, language, and literature as foundation of that collective identity that forms the modern nation-state, the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder. It must be said that the influence of Herder’s thoughts on the importance of the vernacular language can hardly be overstated. It planted the seeds for the growth of a truly cosmopolitan phenomenon—the nation-state—and the incessant philological activity that accompanied it put the study of literature at the service of power and paved the way for the scholarly literary disciplines divided by

language as well as for comparative literature. As problematic as Herder is, Noyes manages to rescue him from the far-right and reads his investment in the local as a critical response to globalization during the colonial expansion of the second half of the eighteenth century. Imperialist expansion made the European intellectual discover the infinite diversity of the world, but also that imperialism, in its brutal exploitation, was a threat to that very diversity. According to Noyes, it was the knowledge about the horrors of imperialism that motivated Herder to develop an attachment to locality and language in terms of anti-imperialist thinking. In this context he developed the notion of *Volk*, “people,” referring to more than just the inhabitants of a place. *Volk* implied an ethnic and cultural community, carried by a common language so that it became interwoven with or even synonymous to the nation. If the *Volk* was to survive and prosper, it had to search for its own, particular soul instead of following cosmopolitan standards, including writing in cosmopolitan languages. This did not necessarily mean closing in on the region. On the contrary, other vernaculars were mobilized in the articulation of *Volk* culture; Herder found inspiration in faraway languages, such as Peruvian oral poetry (Tihanov 2018: 476–7). Its stance is thus global but in terms of an exoticizing of other languages. And in this turn, language becomes an expression of authenticity and origins.

We may fruitfully contrast this account with that of Benedict Anderson on the nation as an “imagined community.” He conceives of the nation as a community or “sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time” (1983: 26). In Anderson’s reasoning, the possibility to imagine the nation came when three fundamental conceptions began losing their grip: the idea that a particular script language offered privileged access to ontological truth, precisely because it was an inseparable part of that truth; the belief that society was naturally organized under sovereigns ruling by divine dispensation; and third, a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of people essentially identical. The slow decline of these certainties was caused by economic change, social and scientific discoveries, and the development of increasingly rapid communications. But the stark alliance between nation, people, and language identified by Anderson as taking the place of these certainties denies the vernacular the ability to transform, excludes it from mobility, and denies it temporal “coevalness,” to use anthropologist Johannes Fabian’s term (Fabian 2014). The modern nation-state thus seems to impose a particular time frame onto the vernacular languages of the world, either by forcing them to enter into

modernity by means of cultural and linguistic assimilation with the nation-state or by refusing them entry into modernity.

Juxtaposing Herder and Anderson, it seems like the imagined community of the nation-state is built upon a fundamentally contradictory relationship to vernaculars. On the one hand, the world's cultural and linguistic diversity is revealed and used as an argument against the centralization of power under one monarch in one place. As such the thought of the nation state appears as an incitement to anti-imperialism which was the case in Latin America and the Spanish islands of the Caribbean in the late nineteenth century. Still using the language of the imperial power—Spanish—Cuban authors turned to native Caribbean mythology and African diasporic songs and storytelling to challenge Spain's authority in the Americas. This would in the twentieth century explode into a vernacular literary language where Spanish was fused with Creole, Afro-Cuban and indigenous cultural expressions in the work of Alejo Carpentier and José Lezama Lima, for example, that questioned the post-independence dictatorships. On the other side of the spectrum, the standardization of language within the Western modern nation-state, a language that made it possible to imagine a community, occurred at the expense of linguistic diversity. Chapter 2 in this volume makes this point clear by investigating the complicated process behind the construction of Castilian as the language of Spain under Franco. The dictatorship forcefully struck down the other languages of the country. Yet, as the chapter shows, this linguistic repression was not monolithic but adapted to the situation and to the particularity of the different languages in Spain. The vernacular is situated here in a precarious position within a modernity in which language, culture, and the nation-state enter into an often-exclusionary alliance. At the same time, in other contexts, such as East Asia, where a cosmopolitan language, literary Chinese, had for almost two millennia been coexisting with various local languages, the link between vernacularization and the emergence of nations was built on a long history of complicated linguistic negotiations (Zhou 2011: 129–30).

It is undoubtedly the romantic understanding of the vernacular as a vehicle for a specific locality, culture, and authenticity that has prevailed in European thought and thus framed much of how the vernacular has been opposed to and subjugated under the cosmopolitan in world literary theory. As argued in Chapter 3, this has further consequences for literatures deemed vernacular in a Eurocentric partition of the literatures in the world, which has been at the basis of world literature since Goethe. Working through and practicing

translations, the chapter demonstrates how the romantic-nationalist reading eschews complex spatial and temporal trajectories within a literature—in this case Tamil classics. Another example of other processes of vernacularization beyond both the nation and the cosmopolitan destiny would be the Saamaka maroon community discussed in Chapter 5. Leaning on international law, the community won the right to both their territory and language over the Surinam government and Chinese multinational companies in 2007. At the same time, parts of Saamaka culture risk being lost as young Saamaka are today spread across the globe and the chapter offers an anthropological approach to how Saamaka history is passed on to new generations. Our volume accounts for different temporal trajectories of the term vernacular, thus clearly showing that vernacularity as an expression of the local and of “authenticity” is not “natural”; it is a product of a particular time and place. This insight should not, however, belittle the fact that the political consequences of such a construction of the vernacular in complicity with the rise of the nation-state have been far-reaching, even violent, and still affect us today.

Vernacular mobilities in the diaspora and the post-colony

Once the language of the nation-state was imposed onto speakers of other languages by means of universal education, the spread of print culture, and of political administration, it became a strong force of domination over other peoples. For this reason, postcolonial scholars in particular have wondered what an account of the vernacular that is oriented more towards complex interlinkages between national and imperial as well as cosmopolitan and vernacular formations—formations frequently threaded together by an unprecedented increase in human mobility, willing or unwilling—would look like. For instance, by the turn of the millennium, Homi K. Bhabha (2000) framed the postcolonial subject in terms of a “vernacular cosmopolitanism,” who despite colonial oppression and inequalities could enter into global exchanges as a citizen of the world. Here, as previously in *Location of Culture* (1998), Bhabha is primarily interested in interrogating the liminality of the (postcolonial) contemporary subject, caught between the local and the global. Vernacular is associated with subalternity to put it simply. Yet implicitly this means that it is only by adapting a cosmopolitan posture that the vernacular, or its subject, can be relevant to the world, while another type of vernacular, the one that stays at home, remains

excluded from modernity. As S. Shankar argues in *Flesh and Fish Blood* (2012), the emphasis on hybridity and up-rootedness within postcolonial studies has made the field “suspicious of any robust idea of the local or the vernacular” (20); it has failed to acknowledge vernacular modes of knowledge “oriented away from the transnational, the modern, and the hybrid and toward the local, the traditional, and the culturally autonomous” (1).

Taking his examples from the Indian context, Shankar defines the vernacular in terms of local languages and literatures. Rather than tracing a sense of belonging, as in Pollock’s reading of vernaculars in the deep history of Chinese literature, Shankar detects global concerns in these texts. The postcolonial vernacular would thus be a local expression of the anxiety of modernity. In other words, the vernacular becomes a way to question the frames in which we usually think of the world be it from the point of view of the nation or that of the cosmopolitan. In an interesting turn, Shankar reaches beyond the postcolonial moment by reading the vernacular in light of universalism and humanism. Vernacular humanism, he claims, is marked by an anxiety; it does not assume its own humanness, but redefines the human from their own particular perspective and in so doing articulates a “conflicted approach to the universal that is not yet ready to relinquish an orientation toward the rooted, the culturally autonomous, and the local” (100). In comparison with Casanova’s model of prestige and consecration within the world literary system, Shankar’s local angle suggests that the vernacular does not necessarily seek to take the place of a dominant language. It can be understood as an assertion that questions the exclusionary grounds of universalism and humanism alike.

Voices critical of the postcolonial approach, or rather its inability to approach the vernacular, have also been raised in African contexts. In *Vernacular Palavers: Imaginations of the Local and Non-Native Languages in West Africa* (2004), Moradewun Adejunmobi suggests that it is necessary to get rid of the presupposition that using colonial language is a matter of decolonial struggle or is indicative of a desire for recognition. History shows that the promotion of local languages has also been a tool for asserting power over colonial subjects in West Africa. Adejunmobi problematizes the common assumption that “a return to the mother tongue would imply a remedy to alienation” (viii) caused by colonial suppression. The response to alienation is here instead to open up towards the world as if the mother tongue is not a language but an expression of practice that articulates itself by finding resonance in other contexts. Focusing on the vernacular reveals a different pattern where colonial and postcolonial subjects

alike have adjusted to a polyglot life. In Chapter 1 in this volume, Adejunmobi extends this discussion in relation to Afrobeat, showing that the vernacular is not necessarily equivalent to a traditional expression, or to writing in either the mother tongue or the colonial language, but serves to distinguish between the local and the non-local in a particular context.

In the African diaspora, however, the meaning of the local has undergone a significant shift. In *The Vernacular Matters in American Literature* (2009), Sieglinde Lemke argues that the vernacular should be identified with the “expressions of culturally excluded people,” whether by virtue of race, class, or gender, and that its usage “signals a lack of cultural capital” (3), in part because the vernacular is often understood as being synonymous with the popular. The vernacular participates then in a politics of recognition attuned to cultural difference and different processes of exclusion and marginalization. In the context of transatlantic slavery, the etymological roots of the vernacular obviously come out with particular force and frame it within an urgent contemporary politics. Grant Farred approaches the vernacular, or what he terms vernacularity, in a similar albeit more radical fashion than Lemke in his *What’s My Name: Black Vernacular Intellectuals* (2003). According to Farred, vernacular speech signifies economic and political disenfranchisements, it is politicized “minority discourse” (17) that is “characterized by its informality, its nontraditional grammatical structures, its discursive hybridity, and its proclivity for drawing on and incorporating other cultural formations, even other languages” (18). As already politicized discourse, vernacular utterances are often political themselves and substitute for other modes of engagement in the public sphere and civil society. Farred and Lemke are writing from a critical tradition in which vernacular expression is associated with the language of the disenfranchised, dispossessed, and social movements. The vernacular signifies for them cultural differences and political contestations. Moreover, it is understood as embodying a diversity—that of languages, culture, and the population—that exists in tension with the nation-state and its regular disavowal of such forms of difference.

As this perhaps suggests, one feature that has attached itself to critical treatments of vernacular formations we may very well gloss by using the notion of cultural survival. In his “On Cultural Survival” (2004), Gil Anidjar explains that what is at stake in the notion of cultural survival is the “community ‘as it is,’ mastering and controlling its past and its future, rather than living its changes in its intricate connections with alterities that can no longer be thought as simply *exterior*” (7–8). The notion of cultural survival encodes, then, something

about the contingencies faced by different cultures, the temporalities of risk, endurance or extinction that come into play once a cultural formation becomes intent on reproducing itself into a future identical with its present. Chapter 4 in this volume investigates how poetry from the Lesser Antilles mediates such a mode of cultural survival in the wake of hurricanes Maria and Irma in 2017. The vernacular here is not necessarily located in linguistic terms but in rhythm and sound language. Another, similar mode of survival is at stake when Vicente Rafael details in his *Motherless Tongues: The Insurgency of Language amid Wars of Translation* (2016) how the language policies of the United States both at home, especially in relation to immigrants, but also within imperial contexts, such as its occupation of the Philippines, have regularly resulted in the suppression of vernacular languages in favor of American English. He describes this process as a form of “repression that amounts to an act of translation, transforming a train of possible expressions into a grammatically correct and stylistically recognizable discourse” (1). Speaking of the Philippines, he argues that the repression of local languages and vernaculars in favor of English “turned natives neither into Filipinos nor Americans but into failed copies of the latter” (30). Rafael’s depiction of Filipinos as sent “ontologically adrift by English” (30) serves as a stark reminder of what is at stake in the survival of vernacular formations in imperial and national contexts. But as Rafael notes, the desire for a shared, singular language, for a disavowal of linguistic plurality, also stems from a desire for cultural survival. He argues that “signs of linguistic difference,” of different languages and vernaculars, are often experienced as a “cultural assault” (93) to be readdressed by an assertion of monolingualism. The desire for cultural survival emerges here as a shared currency circulating between, for instance, migrant communities, colonized subject, as well as the nation-state.

One mode of survival, of course, relies on the circulation of the vernacular. Arguing that African American literature should be considered as a diasporic and not a national formation, Wai Chee Dimock reads this literature as a “linguistic force—articulated in the vernacular rather than in formal speech—and as bearing witness to the global migration of tongues, the mixing of syntax and phonemes across continents” (2006: 142). Drawing on linguistic studies of the black vernacular as a creole form incorporating traces of an African past into standard English, Dimock argues that the vernacular produces and testifies to routes and pathways stretching across centuries and interlinking Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States. In this account, the expanded time frame within which Dimock situates African American literature is not exactly the

result of a methodological choice made by the critic, as it is for Pollock and Beecroft. Rather, it is in a sense produced by instances of the vernacular itself, by acts of language that summon forth past histories and suggest the consanguinity of distant places. In other words, the vernacular houses and memorializes a long history stretching back across slavery, the Middle Passage, and the African beginnings of this diasporic literary formation. In this respect Dimock's work, as she acknowledges, is indebted to that of such Caribbean authors as Wilson Harris. Harris, in his *The Womb of Space: The Cross-Cultural Imagination* (1983), identifies what he terms "primordial resources within a living language" that, once activated, produce an experience of "simultaneity in the imagination of times past and future" (1983: x). Dimock, like Harris, invites us to imagine a vernacular language as a heterochrony, a collection of slices of time that carries traces of the past into the present and future, and undulates its own non-linear, expansive temporality. To put this more concretely, the vernacular continues to bear witness to a "global migration of tongues," as she glosses the violent acts of enslavement and expulsion making up the history of the Black Atlantic. Chapter 8 in this volume continues this exploration of the "migration of tongues" focusing on Marlon James' *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, the circulation of vernacular tongues and cultural forms in the hemispheric Americas, and the cultural and social impact of neoliberalism on Jamaica and its relation to the United States.

Moving away from the concerns of the American empire and back to the question of world literature that concerns us here, the "culturally excluded" would translate into that which passes unnoticed by center-periphery theories. This is the point made by Françoise Lionnet and Shu Mei Shih in *Minor Transnationalism* (2005) where they argue for the need for examining relationships among different margins, instead of studying the relationship between center and periphery in binary terms. Similarly, in *Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination* (2015), Stephanos Stephanides and Stavros Karayanni explore the idea of *vernacular worlds* arising from "more scattered and less scripted" contexts. There are spaces of circulation and exchange that warrant further attention as they suggest that the vernacular operates regardless of the cosmopolitan. Or else, the vernacular may work *through* the cosmopolitan. An example in point would be indigenous, locally bounded literatures written in what Ronne Moberg and David Damrosch call "ultra-minor" languages that have reached well beyond their local origin thanks to translations into cosmopolitan English. Here, as in the work of Lionnet and Shih and some scholars of African American vernaculars, the tensions between margins and centers are conceptualized through Gilles

Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophy of language, more precisely the concept of minor literature (1991). It is not necessarily a literature of rootedness written by minorities, but a literature that cannot belong anywhere *because* it is minor. There is thus a crucial difference between minor and cosmopolitan literature as well. The former exists everywhere by virtue of its minor status, while the latter is the circumscribed domain of the elite, the powerful, the dominant. This allows for entering the local–global dynamics differently. Ultraminor vernaculars like Sámi literature may via cosmopolitan languages connect to other ultra-minor vernaculars without losing their vernacularity. The vernacular is thus not lost in translation, but gains political force by using the cosmopolitan as vehicle. Such rethinking of global dynamics adds yet another dimension to the complexity of the concept that motivates this volume. The vernacular is not only a language or a thing such as an expression of the local, rather it refers to certain potentiality of language to become something else; it is a pre-coded language that may be politically, aesthetically, or culturally charged.

Rethinking the vernacular

Where do all of these different histories and theorizations of the vernacular leave us? For one thing we may conclude that if the vernacular is on the path to extermination or is only an expression of narrow-minded and violent nationalisms, it clearly still sparks critical debate. It may be that the vernacular—in contrast to a reified, even exoticized, conception of the local—is best understood *in relation* to more expansive milieus such as the nation, the cosmopolitan, and the planet. To advance this argument requires a conception of the vernacular that associates it with different even conflicting vectors in the circulation of languages and cultures. Such an account would pay heed to Beecroft's contention that within European modernity the vernacular, whether as language or literature, is subsumed by and incorporated within the national, while also considering the fact that within this modernity imperial rule, settler colonialism, slavery, class struggles, and the movements of peoples and cultures have resulted in the production of regional, subnational vernacular formations (Jones 1999; Miller 2010; Rafael 2016) that remain at odds with official and national formations. But such an account would also pay attention to what Pollock describes as the “dialectic between cosmopolitan and vernacular that creates them both” (2000: 616).

Rather than attending to the tense situation of the vernacular in relation to the national we advance that it is necessary to explore the different flows and circulations constitutive of the vernacular. It may, for instance, become necessary to understand Franco Moretti's thesis concerning the history of the modern novel as naming one trajectory within Pollock's dialectic—the European form of the novel is *vernacularized* within the peripheries of the literary system when it is made to accommodate local content, including vernacular languages. Or in a contrastive vector, we may find in Casanova's account of the "Faulknerian revolution" (2004: 327) the resources to imagine the feedback loops whereby vernacular literatures modify cosmopolitan literary systems. William Faulkner's vernacular modernist aesthetic is indissociably bound to his project of giving expression to the numerous vernacular cultures and languages of the American South. Yet, in Casanova's account, in doing so he provides a model for writers in Algeria, the Caribbean, and Latin America as to how to activate the vernacular within literary forms also inhabiting the world literary system. Finally, we may consider whether the works of authors such as the African American modernist and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston do not inhabit vernacular flows and circuits anterior to the cosmopolitan milieu of European modernity and world literature. Ostensibly engaging with the legacy of slavery in the United States, her *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), much of it written in Haiti, incorporates the African American dialect alongside modernist narration, and moreover, alludes to West African cultural traditions she first encountered in the Caribbean (Pavlić 2004). In doing so the novel maps a diasporic terrain, and asks of us to resituate the drift of vernacular cultures within the circuits and coils of the Black Atlantic and the Middle Passage.

Such instances suggest that the vernacular is not simply to be equated with the local, but that it should be understood in relation to its mediations by the cosmopolitan and the national, how it transforms these in turn, and even in relation to vectors of the vernacular operative underneath European modernity. We argue, then, that the vernacular becomes visible within and is constituted by flows, forces, and antagonisms unleashed when the local is set flowing within the nation, the cosmopolitan, or across the globe. From such a vantage point the concept would have no pre-established ontological claim, as if existing outside and prior to other larger-scale formations, but would be constituted by the contact between different and uneven language and cultural formations. After all, we recognize the vernacular when it appears to be a subordinate peripheral formation within a larger system, which it may then transform or which may

transform it in turn. Following on, to reintroduce it as a concept within world literary studies may very well be to reorient ourselves towards the fate of the peripheral and subordinate within such a system, which may include the transformation of the system itself.

As we have seen from the discussion above the vernacular goes well beyond literature as a form. It may respectively refer to “sensibilities,” to “ways of belonging,” to oral literature, to music, to culture in general with an attachment to locality or to a marginalized position. We must not forget that vernaculars operate in everyday life, where it is not first and foremost an instrument in a battle over power. The majority of language users remain untouched by language struggles in their daily lives and switch unproblematically between languages. Literature reflects this reality too. We may also conclude that the vernacular is always political, but not necessarily in the ways that we think. In some situations, it is a tool for contesting the current linguistic order. In others, it might be a way to make room for maneuver. It may express a sense of belonging to a place or a culture in order to consolidate a community against the surrounding world or in order to better communicate with other communities across the globe. Again, the notion of plurality is foregrounded not only in regard to the various types of expression, but also to the observation that the vernacular seems to emerge in multilingual situations. There are then a range of reasons to stretch the concept even further and think it beyond pre-established political formations and beyond a specific language, as a certain sensibility and a way of being in the world.

How can it be otherwise? If there is one thing to be learned from the history of the vernacular it is that the term contains a multiplicity, and is constituted by the various ways it has mediated the forces of the nation and empire, and has circulated across cosmopolitan milieus. That strange thing the vernacular is a conjunctural formation, transforming, retreating, advancing, and shapeshifting in relation to the uneven system of languages and cultures it inhabits and refracts. For this reason, we may wonder about prognoses worrying about the demise of the vernacular. The contemporary global linguistic landscape can hardly be understood solely in terms of an Anglo-globalism in which English accompanies the global unrolling of the neoliberal economy. Within contemporary neoliberalism, language is linked to entrepreneurship, personal enterprise, and profit (Rojo 2018). While many languages are viewed as subordinate to English in such a system, the acquisition of a new language, online services in multiple languages, and, related, multilingual work at, for instance, call centers or within tourist industries are all ways in which issues of language and mediation are

connected with the global economy (Pujolar 2018). It may be that such an environment, perhaps best described as a hierarchical multilingual milieu, fosters rather than inhibits the growth of new vernacular formations.

Note: This theoretical introduction is the result of a collective work by the members of the “Vernacularities” group in the research program “Vernacular and Cosmopolitan Dynamics in World Literatures.” The critical discussions with Christian Claesson, Elisabeth Herrmann, Katarina Leppänen, Shuangyi Li, Lena Rydholm, and Imy Schweiger have been crucial for the writing of this chapter. Our special gratitude goes to Gahlin Tihanov for his perspicacious reading of the text and for his engagement with our project.

References

- Adejunmobi, M. (2004), *Vernacular Palaver: Imaginations of the Local and Non-Native Languages in West Africa*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Anderson, B. (1983), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism*, New York: Verso.
- Anidjar, G. (2004), “On Cultural Survival,” *Angelaki. Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 9 (2): 5–15.
- Appiah, K. A. (2005), *The Ethics of Identity*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Apter, E. (2013), *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, New York: Verso.
- Bachmann, I. (2013), “Creoles,” in M. Maiden, J. C. Smith, and A. Ledgeway (eds), *Cambridge History of the Romance Languages* (CHRL), 400–44, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beecroft, A. (2015), *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, New York: Verso.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1998), *The Location of Culture*, New York: Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2000), “The Vernacular Cosmopolitan,” in F. Dennis and N. Khan (eds), *Voices of the Crossing: The Impact of Britain on Writers from Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa*, 133–42, London: Serpent’s Tail.
- Biti, V. (2013), “The Fissured Identity of Literature: The Birth of National Literary History Out of International Cultural Transfers,” *Journal of Literary Theory*, 7 (1): 1–30.
- Casanova, P. (2004 [1999]), *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. DeBevoise, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Casanova, P. (2015), *La Langue mondiale: traduction et domination*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Chamoiseau, P. (2009), *Les Neuf consciences du Malfini*, Paris: Gallimard.

- Dante, A. (1996), *De vulgari eloquentia*, trans. S. Botterill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Damrosch, D. (2003), *What is World Literature?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Damrosch, D. and B. Moberg (2017), "Defining the Ultraminor," *Journal of World Literature*, 2 (2): 133–7.
- Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1991), *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Denecke, W. and L. Zhang, (2015), "Series Editors' Foreword" to East Asian Comparative Literature and Culture Series, in J. A. Fogel (ed.), *The Emergence of the Modern Sino-Japanese Lexicon*, vii–ix, Leiden: Brill.
- Dimock, W. Ch. (2006), *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Du Bellay, J. (1549), *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse*, Paris: Arnoul L'Angelier.
- Fabian, J. (2014 [1983]), *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Farred, G. (2003), *What's My Name: Black Vernacular Intellectuals*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- D'Haen, T. (2013), "Major Histories, Minor Literatures, and World Authors," *Comparative Literature and Culture*, 15 (5): <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2342>.
- Harris, W. (1983), *The Womb of Space: The Cross-Cultural Imagination*, Westport: Praeger.
- Hurston, Z. N. (2006 [1937]), *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, New York: Amistad.
- Høgel, C. (2018), "World Literature Is Trans-Imperial: A Medieval and a Modern Approach," *Medieval Worlds*, 8: 3–21.
- Jones, G. (1999), *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kymlicka, W. (2001), *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lemke, S. (2009), *The Vernacular Matters in American Literature*, London: Palgrave.
- Leonhardt, J. (2013), *Latin: Story of a Language*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lionnet, F. and S-m, Shih, eds. (2005), *Minor Transnationalism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Miller, J. L. (2010), *Accented America: The Cultural Politics of Multilingual Modernism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moradewun, A. (2004), *Vernacular Palavers: Imaginations of the Local and Non-Native Languages in West Africa*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Mufti, A. (2018), *Forget English! Orientalism and World Literatures*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Noyes, J. K. (2015), *Herder: Aesthetics against Imperialism*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Pavlič, E. M. (2004), "Papa Legba, Ouvrier Barriere Por Moi Passer': Esu in 'Their Eyes' & Zora Neale Hurston's Diasporic Modernism," *African American Review*, 38(1): 61–85.
- Pollock, S. (2000), "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," *Public Culture*, 12(3): 591–625.
- Pollock, S. (2006), *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pujolar, J. (2018), "Postnationalism and Language Commodification," in J. W. Tollefson and M. Pérez-Milans (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Language Policy and Planning*, 486–504, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rafael, V. (2016), *Motherless Tongues: The Insurgency of Language amid Wars of Translation*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Robbins, B. (2016), "Prolegomena to a Cosmopolitanism in Deep Time," *Interventions*, 18 (2): 172–86.
- Rojó, Luisa Martín (2018), "Neoliberalism and Linguistic Governmentality," in J. W. Tollefson and M. Pérez-Milans (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Language Policy and Planning*, 545–64, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sakai, N. (2009), "How Do We Count a Language? Translation and Discontinuity," *Journal of Translation Studies*, 2: 71–88.
- Shankar, S. (2012), *Flesh and Fish Blood: Postcolonialism, Translation and the Vernacular*, Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Stephanides, S. and S. Karayanni, eds. (2015), *Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Leiden: Brill.
- Tageldin, S. (2018), "Beyond Latinity: Can the Vernacular Speak," *Comparative Literature*, 70 (2): 114–31.
- Tihanov, G. (2018), "The Location of World Literature," in W. Fang (ed.), *Tensions in World Literature: Between the Local and the Universal*, 77–99, Singapore: Springer.
- Walkowitz, R. (2015), *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Warner, T. (2019), *The Tongue-Tied Imagination: Decolonizing Literary Modernity in Senegal*, New York: Fordham University Press.
- Zhou, G. (2011), *Placing the Modern Chinese Vernacular in Transnational Literature*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.