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**ALEKSANDRE QAZBEGI'S  
MOUNTAINEER PROSAICS:  
THE ANTICOLONIAL VERNACULAR ON  
GEORGIAN–CHECHEN BORDERLANDS\***

Once, when he was herding sheep in the mountains, the Georgian prose writer Aleksandre Qazbegi was approached by two travelers, a Frenchman and an Englishman.<sup>1</sup> The travelers wanted to know where they could buy wool to take back home to Europe, but did not know in what language to address the “savage” shepherd. The travelers gossiped together in French about the mountaineers’ presumed barbarism, not suspecting that Qazbegi under-

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\* I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Paul Manning, Harsha Ram and to *Ab Imperio*’s anonymous reviewers and editors for their generous engagement with this work. Readers should be aware that a precise transliteration of the author’s name (more popularly spelled Kazbegi) would yield Alek’sandre Qazbegi. I have opted throughout for the simplest possible transliteration for Georgian terms, and have therefore omitted all diacritics in the body of the article.

<sup>1</sup> A slightly earlier text that uses an encounter with a Frenchman to comment on conceptions of civilization difference among Georgians, Russians, and Europeans is Ilya Chavchavadze’s “Letters of a Traveller” (1871), discussed below. Whereas Chavchavadze’s French interlocutor conveys the inferiority of Russian civilization vis-à-vis Europe, Qazbegi’s encounter with a Frenchman uses humor and irony to question civilizational dichotomies as such.

stood every word of their exchange. Unbeknownst to them, the Georgian writer-turned-shepherd had been educated in French and read Maupassant in his leisure time. Eager to shock his auditors, Qazbegi announced in fluent French that there are many sheep in the mountains and wool is easy to find.

Not content with the shudder of surprise he induced in his interlocutors by his fluent French, Qazbegi decided to prolong his pleasure with yet another revelation. He replied to the travelers' praise of his French that most shepherds in the mountains spoke the language far better than he did. "Almost all our shepherds speak French," he told the Europeans. "I've been living in other places, far from these mountains, so my French is rusty, but, as for the other shepherds, you wouldn't be able to distinguish them from native French-speakers."<sup>2</sup> The European travelers were dumbfounded. "We thought you were barbarians!" they exclaimed in unison. Already in this humorous self-representation, the Georgian prosaist used the figure of the mountaineer to parody a colonial discourse that based its claim to civilization on Europe's putative distance from non-European barbarians. As literary theorist Gary Saul Morson reminds us, parody takes on a specific life in prose; its evolution within Georgian literary culture is thus intimately related to the increasing relevance of prosaic forms to the vernacular anticolonial imagination.<sup>3</sup>

After Georgia was incorporated into the Russian Empire, Qazbegi suggests, ethics became ethnologized as a virtue specific to the mountaineers, particularly to non-Georgian Muslim Chechens. As against the political landscape that divided the north from the south Caucasus, and thus separated Georgians from their Chechen brethren, Qazbegi perceived the mountains as a landscape inflected by ethical values that, because they belonged to the domain of daily life, were best expressed in prose. Qazbegi's contemporary, the ethnographer Urbneli (N. Xizanishvili), voiced similar values in his ethnographic writings. Urbneli contrasted his approach to that of the Russian Romantics, especially Lermontov and Pushkin, who were drawn to the Caucasus by virtue of its "loveliness and [the] beauty of its nature" and for whom "the sublime landscape is constituted as "pure art" rather than "the truth and reality of life," to his own vernacular ethnography. Us-

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<sup>2</sup> Aleksandre Qazbegi. *Namtsqemaris mogonebani* [1883] // *Txzulebata sruli krebuli ot'x tomad*. Vol. 1. Tbilisi, 1948. P. 445. Future references to Qazbegi's works are to this edition. For a reading of this work that emphasizes its engagement with ethnography, see Emzar Kvitaishvili. *Kartuli dokumenturi prozis mshvneba* // *Literaturuli ziebani*. 2001. No. 21. <http://www.nplg.gov.ge>.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Saul Morson. *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia*. Evanston, IL, 1981. Pp. 107-115.

ing “aesthetic” negatively to suggest a way of seeing that commodifies the object of perception and impedes contact with the world, Urbneli complains that “Europe views Georgia primarily from an aesthetic perspective, and this is why the content of our life remains uninvestigated [and] unknown to others.”<sup>4</sup> As a prosaist and crafter of an anticolonial vernacular, which for the purposes of this article and in parallel to its usage in other disciplines, signifies not a new language per se, but rather a new orientation, Qazbegi followed Urbneli’s precedent: he gave form to mountaineer life by conjoining ethnography with literary prose.<sup>5</sup>

Like his protagonists, Qazbegi was a mountaineer, albeit one who had been educated in Moscow, at the Agricultural Academy, and prior to that at a classical gymnasium. He was born in 1843 in Stepantsminda (St. Stephan), a village high in the mountains of Xevi, into a family that belonged to the Georgian nobility.<sup>6</sup> Situated near what was originally Ingush and Chechen territory, Stepantsminda was incorporated into another geography by the colonizing process that was initiated in these mountainous regions of the Caucasus during the early decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> After he returned from Moscow in 1870, unable to complete his education due to a financial crisis brought about by his father’s death, the young Qazbegi shocked his family with the news that he had decided to become a shepherd for the next seven years of his life. This was the occupation in which Qazbegi was engaged when he crossed paths with the French travelers.

Qazbegi spent the better part of these years, 1872–79, wandering the mountains and sleeping under the stars, exposing himself to the sufferings

<sup>4</sup> N. Xizanashvili (N. Urbneli). *Mgzavris shenishvnebidgan* [From the Notes of a Traveler] // Droeba. 1883. No. 129. P. 2.

<sup>5</sup> In parallel to its signification in art history and architecture, “vernacular” is used throughout this article to denote a relation to space and to representation that is worldly and grounded in local contexts. Although obviously entailed in language, “vernacular” is not reducible to language, which is why Qazbegi’s anticolonial vernacular can be seen as new, even though his language was no less literary than that of his predecessors. For a more detailed elaboration on the concept of anticolonial vernacularity in Caucasus contexts, see Rebecca Gould. *The Literatures of Anticolonial Insurgency: Vernacular Modernities in the Caucasus*. New Haven, forthcoming.

<sup>6</sup> For a valuable Soviet ethnography of Xevi, see Sergi Makalatia. *Xevi*. Tbilisi, 1934. For a collection of primary source documents concerning Qazbegi’s biography, see Vano Shaduri. *Masalebi Aleksandre Qazbegis biografiisatvis: Qazbegebis sagvareulos moghvatseni*. Tbilisi, 1985.

<sup>7</sup> For the Russian colonization of the Georgian mountain regions, see Austin Jersild. *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845–1917*. Montreal, 2002.

and struggles of the mountaineers, who, in his estimation, were connected to an ethical system that remained beyond the ken of the Georgians residing in the plains. Qazbegi's literary career began when he ceased to be a shepherd, and left the mountains for cosmopolitan Tbilisi in 1879. During those decades, and for centuries, where the majority population was Armenian and Azeri, and, unlike in the Georgian highlands and Imeretia (western Georgia), Georgians were in the minority.<sup>8</sup> Alongside his consistent focus on the lives of his fellow Moxeves (Georgian mountaineers from Xevi), Qazbegi's best works give ample attention to Chechens and Circassians, a focus that afforded an unprecedentedly detailed perspective on the interface between Georgian and Muslim mountaineers lives.

Georgian attitudes to their mountaineer neighbors have inevitably been inflected by the geopolitical agendas of the empires that have passed through the Caucasus. From the middle of the nineteenth century, Russian policies therefore exerted a major influence on Georgian attitudes toward mountaineers, particularly when they were Muslim. So as to grasp the complexity of this relation, it is important to keep in mind that Georgia came under the coercive influence of the Russian Empire even before the tsarist army began to make substantial incursions into the northern Caucasus. When Alexander I annexed Georgia in 1801, he violated the Treaty of Georgievsk that the Georgian King Irakli had signed with Russia in 1783.<sup>9</sup> This treaty had nominally guaranteed Georgia's independence and promised continuation of the ancient Bagrationi dynasty in return for giving Russia permission to oversee Georgia's foreign affairs.<sup>10</sup> The resentment of the Georgian nobility toward the coercive imposition of Russian sovereignty, including Russia's violation of the terms of the Treaty of Georgievsk, led to uprisings against Russian rule, first in Kakhetia in 1812, and then, even more dramatically, to a foiled rebellion in 1832.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For the population of Tbilisi (called at that time Tiflis) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see M. Polievktov and G. Natadze. *Staryi Tiflis v izvestiakh sovremennikov*. Tiflis, 1929. Pp. 41-49.

<sup>9</sup> For a Georgian account of these events, see Zurab Avalov. *Prisoedinenie Gruzii k Rossii*. St. Petersburg, 1906. Also see David Marshall Lang. *The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy: 1658-1832*. New York, 1957. Pp. 183-184.

<sup>10</sup> For the original text of the treaty, see G. G. Paichadze. *Georgievskii traktat*. Tbilisi, 1983.

<sup>11</sup> For the 1812 uprising, see Akaki Gelashvili. *Kaxetis 1812 tslis ajanqeba*. Tbilisi, 2003. For the 1832 attempt to bring Russian sovereignty to an end, see Stephen Jones. *Russian Imperial Administration and the Georgian Nobility. The Georgian Conspiracy of 1832 // Slavonic & East European Review*. 1987. Vol. 65. No. 1. Pp. 53-76.

And yet, even as they rejected the coercive imposition of Russian sovereignty, the Georgian nobility felt that their aristocratic lineage obliged them to serve in the imperial army, which meant that this literary elite had a disproportionate role in advancing the conquest of the north Caucasus and its annexation by Russia during the second half of the nineteenth century. This they did with great success, attaining to the highest ranks and honors. Georgian aristocrats, particularly the poet Grigol Orbeliani (1804–83), helped to bring to an end the anticolonial Islamic state fashioned by Imam Shamil, which in uniting Chechnya and Daghestan into a single political entity, was able to withstand Russian incursions for an astonishing quarter century (1834–59).<sup>12</sup> The Georgian literary elite's complex position, between anticolonial resentment on the one hand and pro-Russian sentiment on the other, generated as many contradictions in the domain of literary form as it did in the domain of geopolitics. Qazbegi profited from the ambivalence that haunted the literary tradition he inherited through his birth and education. By way of reacting against it, and seeking a more firmly oppositional stance to Russian rule, he elaborated a critique of industrial modernity, and of the barbarian/civilized dialectic on which it was founded.

This essay explores Qazbegi's prosaics of the colonial encounter from the within the Georgian experience of modernity through three related lines of inquiry. First, I consider some European sources for Qazbegi's prose. Second, I consider Qazbegi's uses of local narratives, pertaining to the Muslim Chechens residing on Georgia's mountainous borderlands, alongside the Moxeves. Third and finally, I trace the place of a Georgian anticolonial vernacular prosaics within world literary history.

### *Fiction and Ethnography*

Early modern Georgian poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries made it possible to express poetic norms in the Georgian language, thereby creating a new linguistic reality from the interface between a local language (Georgian) and a global one (Persian).<sup>13</sup> Working in another historical mo-

<sup>12</sup> For Orbeliani and Russian culture, see Igor Bogomolov. *Grigol Orbeliani i russkaia kul'tura*. Tbilisi, 1964. For Orbeliani's role in quelling an anticolonial uprising in Guria (western Georgia) in 1841, see Stephen Jones. *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883–1917*. Cambridge, MA, 2005. P. 295n31.

<sup>13</sup> For early modern Georgian recreations of a Georgian vernacular on a Persian basis, see Rebecca Gould. *Sweetening the Heavy Georgian Tongue: An Early Modern Georgian Appropriation of Jāmī's *Yūsuf and Zulaikhā** // Thibaut d'Hubert and Alexandre Papas (Eds.). *A Worldwide Literature: Jāmī (1414–1492) in the Dār al-Islām and Beyond*. Leiden, forthcoming. I do not of course intend to imply that Georgia had no literature

ment, marked by the interface of Georgian and Russian rather than Georgian and Persian, Qazbegi infused this literary language, which had, for most of its history, been addressed primarily to a courtly elite, and which had verse as its preferred medium, with a new vernacular, informed by the dialects spoken in the mountains. He broke with what Paul Manning has described, for the 1870s Georgian literature, as the manuscript culture that excluded nonaristocrats, who were “spoken of savagely in the way that one might speak of someone who cannot talk back.”<sup>14</sup> Manning has carefully tracked the implications of this shift from manuscript to print culture from the perspectives of linguistic and historical anthropology.<sup>15</sup> My interest here is with what this transformation meant, over the *longue durée*, for the aesthetic status of Qazbegi's chosen medium. In transposing a literary language crafted in Tbilisi's urban spaces to the mountains, Qazbegi created a landscape and a medium for themes that had, at the time of his writing, not yet been incorporated into the Georgian literary repertoire.

While Qazbegi's prose engaged the forgotten highlanders, it is important to remember that he rendered their ways of speaking and imagining into a literary idiom. These were the people concerning whom the Georgian critic Chreladze described in Georgia's most prominent nineteenth-century newspaper, *Iveria*, as “generally pathetic, poor shepherding people, wrapped in ragged old skins with the fur turned inside out.”<sup>16</sup> “Whenever we encounter them somewhere,” Chreladze continued with disdain, “we must grin, for on seeing them we can't stop ourselves from laughing. We considered both the men and the women of the mountains to be equally ridiculous.” Even though he was writing after Qazbegi's major works had been published, Chreladze's evocation of the elite's contempt for the mountaineers pertained to an age before dialectical difference had become central to Georgian prosaics. While he appreciated the new aesthetic Qazbegi introduced to Georgian literature,

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prior to the early modern reinvention; rather I wish to indicate that the tension between Georgian and Persian during the early modern period anticipated the similarly productive tension between Georgian and Russian in a later period.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Manning. *Strangers in a Strange Land: Occidental Publics and Orientalist Geographies in Nineteenth-Century Georgian Imaginaries*. Boston, 2012. P. 116.

<sup>15</sup> See Paul Manning. *Describing Dialect and Defining Civilization in an Early Georgian Nationalist Manifesto: Ilia Ch'avch'avadze's "Letters of a Traveler"* // *Russian Review*. 2004. Vol. 63. No. 1. Pp. 26-47; and Manning. *Strangers in a Strange Land*, respectively.

<sup>16</sup> St. Chreladze. *Chveni mtis xalxi: sabibliografi tserili [Our Mountain People: A Bibliographic Letter]* // *Iveria*. 1892. No. 1. P. 1. Cited and discussed in Manning. *Strangers in a Strange Land*. P. 306 n18. I am grateful to Paul Manning for providing the full citation beyond the material cited in his book.

the Georgian critic was still inclined to despise the vernacular dimensions of mountaineer culture, which were reflected especially in mountaineers' speech. The mountaineers whom Chreladze saw as "children of misery" constituted for him an undifferentiated homogeneous mass. "All dress the same way and have the same life," Chreladze marveled. "Even their names don't resemble names! The mountaineer husband to be calls his fiancée 'woman' (*kalau*) while [his wife-to-be] calls him 'man' (*vazhau*)." The very heterogeneity of mountaineer life was thus an object of ridicule as late as the 1890s, and in Georgia's most influential periodical. Qazbegi's anticolonial vernacular had to wait until after the author's death to attain its rightful place in the Georgian public sphere.

Following the early modern era, marked by intensive Persian literary influence, Georgian writers invested in Russian literary norms. Georgian poets such as David Guramishvili (1705–92) and Nikoloz Baratashvili (1817–44) crafted new idioms from within their encounters with modern European, and particularly Russian, literature while limiting their literary endeavors to verse.<sup>17</sup> The new Romantic generation was increasingly hostile to the Islamic literary influences that were seen as remnants of a barbaric premodernity. Now, instead of criticizing the Persian Shahs and Ottoman Sultans, who were already in decline and therefore posed no challenge to Russian, let alone Georgian, sovereignty, Georgian poets of the colonial era increasingly took to counterpoising European civilization—which was as yet enshrined in poetry—to the unpoetic culture of Caucasus mountaineers. Guramshvili and Barastashvili do not encompass the entirety of Georgian literature, and there were Georgian poets who idealized the mountaineers just as the Romantics idealized Russian and European civilization. But for the most part, the anticolonial vernacular imagination orientation pertains to a later moment in Georgian literary culture.

Qazbegi's counterpart in the domain of poetry, Vazha-Pshavela (1861–1915), heralded the anticolonial vernacular turn with his poems dedicated to the mountaineers of Pshavi and Xevsuretia.<sup>18</sup> Just as Qazbegi's fictions

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<sup>17</sup> For Baratashvili's poetics, see the recent collection: Gaga Shurgaia, Luigi Magarotto, and Hans-Christian Günther (Eds.). *Nik'oloz Baratashvili: ein georgischer Dichter der Romantik*. Würzburg, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Vazha-Pshavela is one of the most widely studied Georgian poets and the scholarly corpus on his work is dense. Key works in European scholarship include Kevin Tuite. *The Banner of Xaxmat'is-Jvari: Vazha-Pshavela's Xevsureti* // Ekaterine Gamqrelizde (Ed.). *Der Dichter Vaza-Pshavela: fünf Essays*. Würzburg, 2008. Pp. 11-37; and Luigi Magarotto. *La poésie épica di Važa-Pšavela* // Luigi Magarotto and Gianroberto Scarcia (Eds.). *Georgica I*. Rome, 1985. Pp. 7-48.



were informed by his ethnography, Vazha's poetry was also enriched by the ethnographies that he composed, and which document the life ways of the mountaineers whose trials and tribulations he rendered in verse.<sup>19</sup> Given the convergence in their aims, which coexisted with a divergence in their chosen mediums, it should come as no surprise to see Georgia's two major vernacular writers embracing each other in a hug, in a memorable picture taken when the two authors were at the height of their careers (fig. 1). Vazha's example, like Qazbegi's, illustrates that being a vernacular intellectual entailed more than making specific decisions about dialects and languages, although such linguistic choices constituted one aspect of the vernacular intellectual's task. More important, a vernacular intellectual was someone who, contrary to the preferences of many of his peers, grounded his aesthetic vision in precolonial and local culture. The Chechen Umalat Laudaev and the Daghestani Bashir Dalgat epitomized this process for the north Caucasus, for when they undertook to render mountaineer life ways in prose, they did so in ethnographic rather than strictly literary genres.<sup>20</sup>



Fig. 1. Qazbegi and Vazha (left to right).

This close interface between fiction and ethnography across multiple Caucasus literatures suggests that Kevin Tuite's argument that "it is in the domain of literature [*la littérature*] that the ethnographic concept receives a particularly original elaboration," made with respect to Georgian material, pertains to the Caucasus as such.<sup>21</sup> This sequence through which the vernacular turn was inaugurated, first in ethnography and only later in fiction,

<sup>19</sup> Vazha-Pshavela. *Etnografiia, polklori, kritika, publicistika, korespondenciebi*. Tbilisi, 1956.

<sup>20</sup> Cf.: Umalat Laudaev. *Chechenskoe Plemia // Sbornik svedenii o kavkazskikh gortsakh*. Vol. 6. Tiflis, 1872. Pp. 1-62. Dalgat authored many major studies of mountaineer belief systems. See Bashir Dalgat. *Pervobytnaia religiia chechentsev i ingushei*. Moscow, 2004; and *Idem*. *Rodovoi byt i obychnoe pravo chechentsev i ingushei: issledovanie i materialy 1892–1894 gg.* Moscow, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Kevin Tuite. *Ethnographie et fiction en Géorgie // Kiven Strohm and Guy Lanoue (Eds.). Célébrer une vie: actes du colloque en honneur de Jean-Claude Muller*. Montréal, 2007. P. 170.

substantiates Manning's claim that "factual descriptions of life, including genres like ethnography, are in fact the primary genres of 'realism,' and literary forms [are] strictly secondary and parasitic."<sup>22</sup> Like Tuite, Manning advances his argument with reference to a Georgian archive, but this sequence (ethnography first, followed only afterward by fiction) broadly elucidates the process through which the vernacular turn was instantiated, and the anticolonial vernacular was formed and refined, across the Caucasus.<sup>23</sup>

Beyond being the first modern Georgian to write intelligibly and sympathetically about Muslim mountaineers, Qazbegi was both inheritor and critic of the geopolitical and interconfessional burdens of Georgian history. A lone figure in his lifetime, Qazbegi's mediation of Georgian and Russian literary and geopolitical relations parallels the ways in which the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Persianizing Georgian poets Teimuraz I and Nodar Tsitishvili engaged with the Persianate literature of Safavid Georgia. This parallel, however, falters when one considers the place of ethnography in Qazbegi's aesthetic, which marks a new horizon, and a new place for the vernacular, in Georgian literary culture. Another major difference between Qazbegi and his Persianizing predecessors is that his fictions contest the suspicion of an elite literary culture, structured by the dissemination of manuscripts, to prose as the medium for aesthetic form, and print as the medium for its dissemination.

In an important study of the interface between fiction and ethnography in Georgian literary history, Tuite usefully distinguished between anti-ethnography, a method that, he argues, situates its characters in distant geographies to comment allegorically on Georgian cultural traits, and pseudo-ethnography, which is distinguished from anti-ethnography by its physical location within Georgian territory, and by its deployment of a fictional ethnographer "who speaks with an author's voice."<sup>24</sup> As will become important for the ensuing discussion, anti-ethnography is less a negation of ethnography than its inverse, a deployment of ethnographic methods in distant, and often fantastical, contexts. Pseudo-ethnography by contrast uses ethnographic methods in culturally proximate, and hence seemingly realistic, contexts, but with non-Georgian characters, who make this familiar geography appear

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<sup>22</sup> Manning. *Strangers in a Strange Land*. P. 306 n17.

<sup>23</sup> For South Asianists such as Subramanian Shankar, vernacular realism is "a realism *aspiring* to reproduce the local in all its specificity," but for contexts that are not exclusively local (Subramanian Shankar. *Flesh and Fish Blood: Postcolonialism, Translation, and the Vernacular*. Berkeley, 2012. P. 11).

<sup>24</sup> Tuite. *Ethnographie et fiction en Géorgie*. P. 165.

strange. In terms of Tuite's typology, Qazbegi's mountaineer fictions are pseudo-ethnographic attempts to incorporate the allegorical force of anti-ethnography, which for his purposes is tantamount to political critique. Tuite supplements his typology with the important insight that anti-ethnographies (Rustaveli's medieval epic *Knight in the Panther's Skin* is his quintessential example) transpire in non-Georgian spaces because the distance from everyday Georgian landscapes elucidates psychological profundity (*profondeur psychologique*) more effectively than mimetic representation.<sup>25</sup> While Tuite associates anti-ethnography with the premodern Georgian literature and pseudo-ethnography with Georgian literary modernity, Qazbegi conjoins the two typologies into a single, coherent aesthetic.

### *Vernacular Nationalisms*

Qazbegi entered Georgian literature in an era when poets such as Baratashvili had begun, under the influence of Romanticist trends from continental Europe and Russia, to replace Georgia's historically eastward orientation with a new outlook directed toward Europe. While Qazbegi was influenced by the Romantic poets who preceded him, the authors who inspired him most, including Maupassant and Dostoevsky, were prosaists. Like Dostoevsky in particular, Qazbegi was deeply affected by the increasing relevance of journalism to the public sphere. Whereas the "first independent, privately owned daily in Russia" appeared in 1863 under the title *Golos* (Voice), under the editorship of A. A. Kraevskii, in just under three years, Georgia developed an indigenous tradition of print culture, represented most prominently by *Droeba* (Times), edited by Ilya Chavchavadze (1837–1907) until he broke away from the editorial collective to found *Iveria*.<sup>26</sup> By providing a home for genres of occasional writing, the serial newspaper created a space for a genre that could blend "the personality of the author, with his individual literary background and ideological perspective."<sup>27</sup>

For genres like the feuilleton, a short sketch that became, one of the most popular "serial [*gazetnykh*]" genres, accessible and legible to the widest

<sup>25</sup> Tuite. *Ethnographie et fiction en Géorgie*. P. 164.

<sup>26</sup> The phrase with reference to *Golos*, is from Katia Dianina. *The Feuilleton: An Everyday Guide to Public Culture in the Age of the Great Reforms // The Slavic and East European Journal*. 2003. Vol. 47. No. 2. P. 188. For *Droeba*, see Manning. *Strangers in a Strange Land; Elguja Chaduneli. Gazet "Droebis" publitsista sazogadoebriv-ekonomikuri shexedulebebi*. Tbilisi, 1969; and L. Berzenishvili. *XIX saukunis kartuli demokratiuli presa: glexobis sakitxi gazet "Droebis" mixedvit, 1866–1885 tsts*. Tbilisi, 1981.

<sup>27</sup> Dianina. *The Feuilleton*. P. 194.

circle of readers,” the newspaper’s eclectic blend of narrative genres had the effect of making “this inherently journalistic form of writing almost border on fiction.”<sup>28</sup> In contrast to modern newspapers, the majority of these Georgian serials were “composed more or less entirely of occasional correspondence” and in particular the feuilleton, which was categorized within this rubric of correspondence. In distinguishing between the concept of the public sphere pioneered by Benedict Anderson through his study of print culture’s homogeneous simultaneity and its Georgian counterpart, Manning identifies the main difference in the fact that “the public, Georgians, that is readers of *Droeba*, were also by and large imagined as potential *writers* to *Droeba*—correspondents.”<sup>29</sup> Hence the interface between reader and writer was more intimate in Georgian print culture than in the examples, taken from more territorially extensive public spheres, that have shaped the Andersonian conception of nation formation.

More than other theorists of literary form, the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin appreciated how prosaists such as Dostoevsky, and the genres in which they worked in their journalistic writings, like the feuilleton, contested the poetic norms of preceding generations with a realism that aimed to extend “the limits of human sympathy, to make literature appear to be describing...reality itself.”<sup>30</sup> Bakhtin clarified prosaics’ ethical implications when he asserted that it was impossible to incarnate an individual “into the flesh of existing socio-historical categories.” “There always remains,” Bakhtin insisted, “an unrealized surplus of humanity [*izbytok chelovechnosti*].”<sup>31</sup> This surplus of humanity is the origin of empathetic consciousness in Qazbegi’s anticolonial vernacular prosaics. By rendering the mountaineers’ vernacular life ways, including their ways of speaking, thinking, and their everyday tribulations, Qazbegi’s prosaics speak to the Bakhtinian ethics of novelistic discourse, albeit with a political angle unforeseen by the Russian literary theorist.

While the transformation in literary norms described by Bakhtin has long been recognized in terms of the changing sociology of literature, and, to a lesser extent, of the changing canons of literary form, the vernacular

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<sup>28</sup> For these citations, respectively: A. V. Zapadov. *Russkii fel’eton*. Moscow, 1958; and Dianina. *The Feuilleton*. P. 194.

<sup>29</sup> Manning. *Strangers in a Strange Land*. P. 163.

<sup>30</sup> George Levine. *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley*. Chicago, 1981. P. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *Epos i roman // Mikhail Bakhtin. Voprosy literatury i estetiki. Issledovaniia raznykh let / Ed. S. Leibovich*. Moscow, 1975. P. 480.

reorientation entailed in this shift becomes most apparent in the case of a literature like Georgian, which was experiencing a new turn to the non-elite strata of society, including those residing in the mountains. Compared to Russian, Georgian writers prior to Qazbegi were more interested in creating alliances with past literary traditions than in inaugurating new ways of representing the Georgian mountaineers. The early modern Georgian vernacularization invariably looked to Persianate models for their literary norms. By contrast, the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a new kind of vernacularization that actively cultivated dialectical registers within the literary language, but which, most significantly for the purposes of my argument concerning its anticolonial status, was demographic, social, and political.

Across the Caucasus, poets and prose writers came to regard indigenous cultures as sources and stimuli for creative work rather than as mere backdrops for evocations of past times and places. In Armenia, Khachatur Abovyan (1809–48) composed his novel *The Wounds of Armenia* (1841) before disappearing from the world. In Chechnya and Ingushetia, the ethnographers Laudaev, Dalgat, and the Ingush Chakh Akhriev introduced ethnography to the northern Caucasus.<sup>32</sup> The confluence of the vernacular turn and ethnographic writing in the Caucasus calls to mind Bakhtin's postulate that the interaction between artistic prose (*khudozhestvennaia proza*) and living rhetorical genres (*zhivye ritoricheskie zhanry*), which are “journalistic, moral, and philosophical,” characterizes literary—one might add here *vernacular*—modernity.<sup>33</sup> This congruence of genres is also attested in the suggestion of an anonymous contributor to *Droeba* that a “literature of the people,” might be “salvaged,” in its raw form and refined into a “work of poetry” by literate members of educated society (*sazogadoeba*).<sup>34</sup>

During the same years that in Russia, Nikolai Leskov (1831–95) was busy making rural Russia legible to the metropolitan readers in St. Petersburg and Moscow, in Georgia, Ilya Chavchavadze was occupied with making the mountain landscapes—and, less comprehensively, the mountaineers themselves—a source for his prose. While Chavchavadze's “Letters of a Traveller” (1871) posits “a close, almost organic connection between the voice of nature, in the form of the Terek River, and the voice of the people,” Qazbegi's anticolonial prosaics foregrounds human agency in settings

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<sup>32</sup> Laudaev. Chechenskoe plemia. For an introduction to Akhriev and his writings, see L. P. Semenov. Chakh Akhriev. Vladikavkaz, 1928.

<sup>33</sup> Bakhtin. Slovo v romane // Voprosy literatury i estetiki. P. 82.

<sup>34</sup> A. K. Mtserloba // Droeba. 1876. No. 32. 28 March. P. 1.

that threaten to crush it.<sup>35</sup> In Manning's framing of this literary genealogy, "Chavchavadze's thematic focus on the mountaineers of Georgia as a privileged locality for [the] pristine Georgianess of speech and custom" resulted in "the immense explosion of realist ethnographic and folkloric literature dealing with these regions... beginning with the ethnographic and literary writings of the Moxevian writer Aleksandre Qazbegi."<sup>36</sup> The shift from Chavchavadze to Qazbegi exemplifies multiple aspects of the vernacularizing process: a movement away from a prose genre, the travelogue, that drew its ideology from the culture of the colonizer and that moved within the poetics of the imperial sublime, was followed by Qazbegi's anticolonial fictions that derived their themes, and to some extent their forms, from indigenous ethnography. Chavchavadze and Qazbegi were both influenced by Russian precedents, but Qazbegi supplements Chavchavadze with a sustained critique of Georgian elite literary culture, waged through the chronotopic rhetoric of prose.

Over the course of the long nineteenth century, Armenian, Georgian, Vainakh (Chechen-Ingush), and Daghestani vernacularities attained new heights of clarity and sophistication. Each of these vernacular orientations made the people newly central to the construction of autochthonous national identities, and constituted them as new foci of authorial interest. Relatedly, Caucasus authors evinced a new interest in ethnographic forms and conventions, through which they forged a vernacular aesthetic to suit a new affective register and a newly anticolonial political agenda.<sup>37</sup> Their renewed interest in narrative was also reflected in the popularization, as well as the serialization, of the novel and the short story, both of which entailed new architectonics of representation. Qazbegi is the most eminent representative of these vernacularizing trends in Georgian literature during the nineteenth century, which my account of the anticolonial vernacular conceives of as sociological, political, and aesthetic in equal measures.

### *Anticolonial Prosaics*

Even since Qazbegi transformed Georgian fiction, Georgia's mountaineers have been treated in Georgian literature as the bearers of sanctified tradi-

<sup>35</sup> Cited in Paul Manning. *Describing Dialect and Defining Civilization in an Early Georgian Nationalist Manifesto: Ilia Ch'avch'avadze's "Letters of a Traveler"* // *Russian Review*. 2004. Vol. 63. No. 1. P. 29.

<sup>36</sup> Manning. *Strangers in a Strange Land*. P. 57. Another work relevant to the subject of Qazbegi's debt to Georgian folk culture (Jemal Jaqeli. *Kartvel mtielta polkloruli traditsiebi Al. Qazbegi shemokmedebeshi*. Batumi, 1974) is at present inaccessible to me.

<sup>37</sup> For the interface between ethnography and journalism in the Georgian context, see M. Xintabade. *Kartuli polklori da gazeti "Droeba"*. Tbilisi, 2005.

tions lost to Georgians lowlanders. Qazbegi's novel *The Parricide* (Mamis mkvleli), published in 1882, carries this idealization further than had been seen before in its narration of the star-crossed lovers Nunu and Iago. Nunu and Iago's dream of marriage is threatened by the ambitious and cruel tsarist official Girgola. When Girgola kidnaps Nunu, the Chechen protagonist Parcho and the Georgian protagonist Koba save the innocent Nunu from the official's malicious intentions. Through such relatively conventional plots, Qazbegi's mountaineer protagonists demonstrate the values that Georgians relinquished when they joined the Russian conquest and waged war against their mountaineer neighbors.

During and after the Russian conquest, Georgian intellectuals asserted—and in some cases fabricated—European affiliations for themselves, their culture, and their literature. Given Russia's outstanding poetic tradition, such affiliations were most easily consolidated in verse. Assimilation to Russian cultural norms meant acquiring civilization's external trappings, but, even though the pace of Georgian literary production did not cease, the aesthetic entailed in the imperial sublime could not accommodate the anticolonial vernacular.<sup>38</sup> As Qazbegi knew well, every cultural adaptation is political, and every language, in the words of Bakhtin, constitutes a “a concrete opinion, insuring a maximum degree of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life.”<sup>39</sup> Especially during the early Soviet period, Georgian poets such as Titsian Tabidze exposed the high costs to Georgian literature entailed in the literary elite's decision to side with the tsar against the north Caucasus mountaineers.<sup>40</sup> Georgian intellectuals' divided consciousness in this regard has been a major topic in modern European Kartvelogy (the study of Georgia).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> I use “imperial sublime,” which functions in the context of this article as the antithesis of the anticolonial vernacular, in the influential sense outlined by Harsha Ram in his study of Russian Romantic poetry (*The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire*. Madison, WI, 2003). For an earlier endeavor to consider the relation between the imperial sublime and anticolonial vernacularity in Caucasus literatures, see Rebecca Gould. *Topographies of Anticolonialism: The Ecopoetical Sublime in the Caucasus from Tolstoy to Mamakaev // Comparative Literature Studies*. 2013. Vol. 50. No. 1. Pp. 87-107.

<sup>39</sup> Bakhtin. *Slovo v romane*. P. 84.

<sup>40</sup> See chapter 3 in Gould. *The Literatures of Anticolonial Insurgency*.

<sup>41</sup> See Manning. *Describing Dialect*. P. 22; Valerie Le Galchier-Baron. *L'invention de la montagne en Georgie: le “réalisme romantique” d'Aleksandre Q'azbegi // Revue des Études Géorgiennes et Caucasiennes*. 1992–93. Vol. 8-9. Pp. 151-175; and Oliver Reisner. *Die Schule der georgischen Nation. Eine sozialhistorische Untersuchung der nationalen Bewegung in Georgien am Beispiel der “Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung der Lese- und Schreibkunde unter den Georgiern”*. Wiesbaden, 2004.

In the context of the cultural split that bisected the Georgian intelligentsia, the admiration expressed by Grigol Orbeliani, the Georgian poet who participated in the Russian conquest of Daghestan, for Qazbegi's first major work, *Elguja* (1881), marks a turning point in Georgian literary history. In the margins of his copy of *Droeba*, the newspaper in which *Elguja* was serialized two years before his death, Orbeliani inscribed: "Amazing! I am overjoyed. [Qazbegi] is the Georgian Homer." Referring to Qazbegi by his penname, "Troublemaker" (Mochkhubaridze), Orbeliani proclaimed: "May God bless you, Mochkhubaridze, for the joy this story has given to my heart."<sup>42</sup> Although there is no gainsaying the rifts between an intelligentsia that facilitated Russian colonization and an intelligentsia that, like Qazbegi, countered the imperial sublime with an anticolonial and prosaic vernacular, Qazbegi's conjoining of literature and ethnography enabled these constituencies to converge aesthetically, ethically, and politically.

For centuries, Georgian authors have played a double role in befriend- ing the Muslim mountaineers while courting the bounties of empire. Orbeliani recognized and admired this duality in Qazbegi's depiction of the challenges faced by *Elguja's* female protagonist, the Circassian Mzagho. In a typical Qazbegian plot that pits Georgian aggressors against innocent Muslim mountaineers, Mzagho is kidnapped by the Georgian officer Givi, who has been corrupted through his association with the Russian coloniz- ers, and forced to become his wife against her will. Orbeliani perceived in Mzagho's suffering a critique of the imperial army in which he had served as a high-ranking officer while conquering Daghestani lands. The alliance between cosmopolitan poetics and imperial conquest in Georgian literary history necessitated the radical break with the past pioneered by Qazbegi's anticolonial vernacular prosaics.<sup>43</sup>

As meticulously as with any Dutch painting through which the concept of the vernacular has been clarified for art history, Qazbegi's anticolonial ver- nacular seeks a method for depicting everyday life among the mountaineers.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Orbeliani's words in this and preceding sentence are taken from Beso Zhghenti. Aleksandr Kazbegi // Aleksander Kazbegi. Izbrannye proizvedeniia / Trans. F. Tvaltvdze and A. Kocheova. Tbilisi, 1955. P. 11. Zhghenti, unfortunately, does not indicate his source for this quotation.

<sup>43</sup> For this alliance, see Harsha Ram. The Imperial Sublime; in addition: Harsha Ram and Zaza Shatirishvili. Romantic Topography and the Dilemma of Empire: The Caucasus in the Dialogue of Georgian and Russian Poetry // *Russian Review*. 2004. Vol. 63. No. 1. Pp. 1-25.

<sup>44</sup> For the link between Dutch realism and the aesthetics of modern prose, see Rebecca Gould. *Adam Bede's Dutch Realism and the Novelist's Point of View* // *Philosophy and Literature*. 2013. Vol. 36. No. 2. Pp. 423-442.



Although his early fiction partakes of melodrama, Qazbegi's later, more sophisticated, anticolonial vernacular prosaics is saturated with the everyday. This prosaic aesthetic is on display in the opening of the short story "Eliso" (1882), published the same year as *The Parricide*, which narrates a Chechen deportation to Ottoman lands in drastically prosaic terms. "Fires kindled inside the circle," the narrator writes, "boiling the common meal for the night. Women prepared food, while old men sat on logs, smoking their tobacco pipes silently."<sup>45</sup> Unless they had not just read in the preceding sentence that "Near Vladikavkaz, on a low-lying meadow, a group of carts crammed with furniture stood in a circle, guarded by Russian troops," readers would have no reason to suspect that the Chechens are facing imminent catastrophe.

Qazbegi understood the forced migrations that the colonial regime inflicted on Chechens and other mountaineers as a catastrophe of precisely nonepic proportions. Qazbegi also discerned in this distance from the epic register, the danger that, because it does not lend itself to poetry, the Chechen experience would never be given literary form, which is to say it would never be rendered, and never be known, to the outside world. To paraphrase Morson, what art represents it misrepresents, and what it does not represent is destined to go unrepresented. When readers inhabit a literary culture that recognizes only the imperial sublime as worthy of attention, they are unlikely to be moved by vernacular literary form. This aesthetic education leaves readers unequipped to deal with the everyday disasters that constitute colonial modernity, and powerless to address the conundrum of Marx's dictum "They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented" (as famously underscored by Edward Said in his epigraph to his *Orientalism*).<sup>46</sup> Colonialism's crisis of representation is also a crisis of literary form. In failing to recognize how the sheer banality of colonial governmentality generates and conditions suffering, a poetics premised on the imperial sublime cannot adequately account for the experience of colonialism among the colonized.

By way of overcoming readers' natural imperviousness to others' mundane suffering, prosaics reminds the reader of that "unrealized surplus of humanness," that is a precondition for empathy, in life as in art. It cultivates an aesthetics of affect that cannot easily be given poetic form and risks

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<sup>45</sup> Aleksandre Qazbegi. *Eliso // Txzulebata*. Vol. 1. P. 385. For a full translation of this story and other works by Qazbegi, see *Georgian Notes on the Caucasus: Three Stories by Aleksandre Qazbegi (1848–1893) / Trans. Rebecca Gould*. Syracuse, forthcoming.

<sup>46</sup> Edward Said. *Orientalism*. New York, 1978. Said's citation is from Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852).

being dismissed as “sentimental.” Although Qazbegi’s writings have been dismissed on the grounds of excessive sentimentalism by later scholars and critics, his emphasis on empathy—which is neither wholly realist nor Romantic—might better be understood as one dimension of his unique anticolonial prosaics.<sup>47</sup> With respect to the prosaic evocation of affect, Qazbegi’s aesthetics aligns with that of the Russian novelists who so inspired Bakhtin (and who have also been dismissed by later writers as overlaid with sentiment).<sup>48</sup>

When, in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, Prince Andrei tells Pierre that the outcome of battles is determined by “a hundred million diverse chances which will be decided on the instant by whether we run or they run, whether that man or this man is killed,” he elaborates a prosaics, which is however neither vernacular nor anticolonial.<sup>49</sup> Equally evocative of the aesthetic imperative for art to represent life in its rawness is the assertion of Dostoevsky’s protagonist in *A Raw Youth*, that the novelist “possessed of a longing for the present [*toskoi po tekushchemu*]” and unsatisfied by the historiographic mode of narration that stresses closure at the expense of possibility and structure at the expense of chaos, must be willing to “guess and make mistakes” when he undertakes to represent the world around him.<sup>50</sup> Qazbegi learned much from the prosaic insight that reality is governed more by sentiment, irrational impulses, and other contradictory aspects of human nature, than by the well-regulated laws of poetic form.

*The Parricide*’s protagonists, Nunu and Iago, are among Qazbegi’s most memorable characters. These star-crossed lovers are prevented from joining their lives together by the power imbalance between serfs and the class of Georgians in the employ of the Russian army (who are known by

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<sup>47</sup> For an influential attempt to recover this (largely female gendered) aesthetics for North American literature, see Nina Baym. *Woman’s Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820–70*. Ithaca, 1978.

<sup>48</sup> I refer primarily to Nabokov’s influential reading of Dostoevsky, for which, see Vladimir Nabokov. *Lectures on Russian Literature* / Ed. Fredson Bowers. New York, 1981. P. 110.

<sup>49</sup> Leo Tolstoy. *War and Peace* / Trans. Ann Dunnigan. New York, 1968. P. 930. Cited in Gary Saul Morson. *Contingency and Freedom, Prosaics and Process* // *New Literary History*. 1998. Vol. 29. No. 4. P. 676.

<sup>50</sup> Fedor Dostoevskii. *Podrostok* // Fedor Dostoevskii. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh*. Leningrad, 1975. Vol. 13. P. 455. Interestingly, the passage in which this comment occurs has been interpreted as Dostoevsky’s indirect critique of the literary method of *War and Peace*, precisely for Tolstoy’s subordination of art to “historical form” and his refusal to confront the messiness of reality in his prose. For this line of argument, see Morson. *The Boundaries of Genre*. P. 12.

titles such as *diambeg* and *esaul*). In terms of the anticolonial vernacular, Nunu and Iago's tragedy is even more affecting than the broader paradoxes of colonial rule that serve as its ultimate cause. While, for Dostoevsky, a writer in whose literary spirit Qazbegi fashioned his works, the dialectic of faith and doubt is the central axis around which human experience turns, for Qazbegi, suffering in colonial modernity is haunted by banality. (These two obsessions are not mutually exclusive, for Dostoevsky is also enamored of banality as a literary problem.) In keeping with Bakhtin's understanding of novelistic discourse as a system that incorporates multiple social registers and genres, and which, while heterogeneous when viewed externally, attains coherence from within, Qazbegi's anticolonial vernacular is most successful when it portrays individual political disenfranchisement as the effect of systematic oppression.<sup>51</sup>

Notwithstanding the posthumous critical disdain for Qazbegi's aesthetic excesses, Qazbegi's importance to Georgian literary history is beyond contestation. The Soviet Georgian scholar Beso Zhghenti noted the shock *Elguja* elicited among the Georgian literary public following its publication. "*Elguja*," writes Zhghenti, "elicited general astonishment. For the first time in Georgian literature, mountaineers appeared as heroes. The resonant and deep *dramatic* images of courageous...mountaineer peasants fighting for their honor and freedom...[and] marked by integrity of character and high morals, at once found their way to the reader's heart."<sup>52</sup> Similarly focusing on Qazbegi's flare for the dramatic, Rayfield observes that Qazbegi invested his fellow Moxeves and their Chechen and Circassian neighbors with "universal tragic force, and brought into the epic of their folk legends the structures of Greek tragedy."<sup>53</sup> While both observations admirably reclaim aspects of Qazbegi's aesthetics that cannot easily be assimilated to vernacular realism, they miss the distinctiveness of Qazbegi's prosaics, which consciously seeks to replace, in aesthetic terms, the imperial sublime with an anticolonial vernacular prosaics. Qazbegi has his share of melodrama. But this is not where his distinctiveness as an artist lies.

Qazbegi's uniqueness consists rather in what he does with the prosaic flow of time, with the "perfect, warm night, one of those evenings when a person feels blessed to be alive, when pleasure surges through every coil of every vein" that opens "*Eliso*."<sup>54</sup> As Morson phrases it, such narrative

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<sup>51</sup> Bakhtin. *Slovo v romane*. P. 72.

<sup>52</sup> Zhghenti. *Aleksandr Kazbegi*. P. 11, emphasis added.

<sup>53</sup> Donald Rayfield. *The Literature of Georgia: A History*. Oxford, 1994. P. 198.

<sup>54</sup> Qazbegi. *Eliso*. P. 385.

gestures awaken us to “events that we do not appreciate simply because they are so commonplace.”<sup>55</sup> These events are prosaic in the sense that “a small but real measure of choice exists at every instant,” and in the way their unfolding makes available different kinds of pasts, and implicitly, different possible futures.<sup>56</sup> Most genres and literary discourses are flexible in their relation to time, but prosaics, in the Bakhtinian–Morsonian view, is uniquely able to conjure, represent, and hence to generate, the unstructured flow of time.

Notwithstanding the formally innovative aspects of Qazbegian anticolonial vernacular prosaics, it is the ethical dimension to Qazbegi’s aesthetic that earns him a permanent position in world literary history.<sup>57</sup> Qazbegi’s reflections on the lives of Chechen mountaineers remains unsurpassed, even among other thematically related achievements in the realm of prosaics, including Tolstoy’s much better-known chronicle of the mountaineer encounter with colonialism, *Hadji Murad* (1912). “Eliso” chronicles the forced banishment (Russian *mukhadzhirstvo*, Georgian *muhajiroba*) of the Chechens and other Muslim mountaineer communities from the Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire that followed the tsarist conquests of the 1860s and 1870s. In keeping with Bakhtin’s concept of novelistic discourse as one that is constituted through the interrelations of heterogeneous genres, Qazbegi’s “Elberd” draws on actual newspaper clippings and reconstructed dialogues to narrate the story of a Chechen man sentenced to death by hanging for trying, unsuccessfully, to prevent a Russian soldier from raping his wife. But, as I argue shortly, Qazbegi’s most extended engagement with Chechen thematics occurs in *The Parricide*.

Qazbegi wrote about Chechens in terms that prior Georgian authors had restricted to Georgians. Many authors have aimed to represent their cultural others persuasively, but few have done so successfully. Stories such as “Eliso” richly attest to Qazbegi’s investment in the specificities of Chechen culture, which anticipate the comparably ethnographic incorporation of Avar, Chechen, and Qumyq lexicons into the text of Tolstoy’s *Hadji Murad*.<sup>58</sup> In keeping with the anticolonial vernacular’s mandate to evoke

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<sup>55</sup> Morson. *Prosaics: An Approach to the Humanities*. P. 519.

<sup>56</sup> Morson. *Contingency and Freedom, Prosaics and Process*. P. 683.

<sup>57</sup> This line of Qazbegi criticism was pioneered by the Georgian literary critic Kita Abashidze (1870–1917). See Kita Abashidze. *Etiudebi XIX saukunis kartuli literaturis istoriidan*. Tbilisi, 1962. Pp. 353–438.

<sup>58</sup> For Tolstoy’s use of indigenous Daghestani sources, see Uzdiat Bashirovna Dalgat. *L.N. Tolstoi i Dagestan*. Makhachkala, 1960.

ethnographic life worlds in terms of their own experience, Qazbegi similarly intersperses his narrative with Chechen phrases such as *marsha dooghiil* (“walk in freedom”—a standard Chechen greeting).<sup>59</sup>

Bakhtin described this prosaic form of ventriloquism well when he stipulated that, in contrast to the poet, the prose writer partakes in the “unfolding of social heteroglossia [*sotsial'noe raznorechie*] surrounding the object, the Tower of Babel mixture of languages that circulate around any object, [and] the dialectics of the object. . . interwoven with the social dialogue surrounding it.”<sup>60</sup> While the incorporation of foreign languages is only one element in the prosaist’s repertoire, it does distinguish the short story writers, novelists, and ethnographers who chronicled the Caucasus from their poetic counterparts, including Pushkin, Grigol Orbeliani, and Aleksandre Chavchavadze, whose engagement with the imperial sublime prevented them from cultivating the anticolonial vernacular.

As noted above, Qazbegi’s ethnographic fictions are contemporaneous with the first published ethnographies of the northern Caucasus by Chechens and Ingush authors. *The Compendium of Research on the Caucasian Mountaineers* (*Sbornik svedenii o kavkazskikh gortsakh*; henceforth *SSKG*), published in Tbilisi in ten volumes from 1868 to 1881, was the primary venue for the publication of such ethnographies in Russian. These Russian publications were paralleled by an emergent ethnographic tradition in Georgian, which was however still in its infancy at the time of Qazbegi’s writing.<sup>61</sup> The frontispiece for the ninth volume of *SSKG* (figure 2) says a great deal about the aesthetic that shaped the readerly tastes of its editors and contributors. The opening image mixes a nineteenth-century impulse toward generic embellishment—the Darial Gorge is encapsulated in a flower frame—with a vernacular embrace of local rhythms of time and place, with the waters of the gorge lapping below and a cavalcade of mountaineers mounting the peaks. Stirred by the ethnographic engagements reflected in such images, Qazbegi’s anticolonial vernacular aesthetic took as its primary

<sup>59</sup> Qazbegi. *Eliso*. P. 395.

<sup>60</sup> Bakhtin. *Slovo v romane*. P. 92.

<sup>61</sup> Such works include Mate Albutashvili. *Pankisis xeoba: istoriul-etnograpiuli da geograpiuli aghtsera* (1898) / Ed. G. and N. Javaxishvili. Tbilisi, 2005; and, for the Soviet period, the writings of Sergi Makalatia, Tedo Saxokia, Giorgi Tedoradze, Besarion Nizharadze, Giorgi Chitaia, Alexi Ochiauri, and Natela Baliauri. See the discussion of the latter two ethnographers in Paul Manning. *Love Khevsur Style: The Romance of the Mountains and Mountaineer Romance in Georgian Ethnography* // Bruce Grant & Lale Yaşın-Heckmann (Eds.). *Caucasus Paradigms: Anthropologies, Histories, and the Making of a World Area*. Münster, 2006. Pp. 23-46.

subject not only the mountain landscape, as poets had already done, but also the mountains' inhabitants, a task for which prose narrative was uniquely equipped, and which had prior to his intervention not been systematically deployed for that purpose in Georgian literature.

In the hands of ethnographers such as Laudaev and Akhriev, Caucasus ethnographies drew on a panoply of prosaic devices to give their subjects verbal flesh. Qazbegi also composed nonfictional ethnography, with serialized essays such as "Moxevians and Their Life," which ran in *Droeba* over the course of 1880.<sup>62</sup> In contradistinction to other contemporaneous Russian and Georgian ethnographies, which treat the mountaineers as "ethnographically separate from states and historical life," Qazbegi narrates "the ethnographic life (*qopa, tsxovreba*)" of the mountaineers as one that is shaped by "exchanges with the Russian state and its local Georgian comprador class [that Qazbegi comes from], that is, by an endless series of imposts, fines, impressments into forced labor, and most of all, bribes to avoid all of these."<sup>63</sup>

Qazbegi's sophisticated ethnography of mountaineer life situates his protagonists squarely within contemporary political life. His ethnographic aesthetic combines a deep immersion in local life ways with an embrace of prosaics. Whereas, in Bakhtin's account, urban prosaists turned in earlier eras to "street songs, proverbs [*pogovorki*], [and] anecdotes" as they carried out a "lively play with the 'languages' of poets, scholars, monks, knights and others" in their literary experiments, ethnographic prosaists like Qazbegi, Laudaev, Akhriev, and Dalgat engaged with local customs, indigenous languages, and religious rituals and processions, as they collectively created a prosaic vernacular that, even if not always explicitly anticolonial, consistently differed from the normative aesthetics inculcated in colonial sources.<sup>64</sup> In historical terms, their writing assembled a new literary language for the indigenous communities newly included within the colonial fold. In literary terms, these writers furthered the vernacularizing process, and finalized the break with the imperial sublime that dominated Georgian literary culture a generation earlier.

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<sup>62</sup> A. Mochkhubaridze [Aleksandre Qazbegi]. Moxeveebi da imati tsxovreba // *Droeba*. 1880. No. 167. Pp. 156-167.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted from the unpublished draft of the book: Paul Manning. *Semiotics of Drink and Drinking*. London, 2012 // <http://www.dangerserviceagency.org/doc/wips/chapter%20%20Wine%20June%202008.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Bakhtin. *Slovo v romane*. P. 86.



Fig. 2. Frontispiece to SSKG, vol. 9. The cover depicts the Darial Gorge.

In *The Parricide*, Qazbegi introduces Imam Shamil—the Avar military leader whose Islamic state Orbeliani helped to dismantle—to his readers as Chechen, when the historical Shamil was in fact Daghestani. Qazbegi’s slip reveals the symbolic capital that Chechens possessed for the author and his readership. Chechens for Qazbegi operate within a society more equitable and just than the socially stratified if more “civilized” plains. “Chechens never knew slavery [*batonqmoba*],” writes Qazbegi in a typical ethnographic aside, because “they considered each other equal.”<sup>65</sup> After refashioning Shamil as Chechen, Qazbegi establishes a lineage for his hero leading from the mountains to the plains. Shamil, we are told, wanted to “unite his people, heart and soul, to the Georgians.”<sup>66</sup> As a prototype of mountaineer resistance, Shamil was refashioned by Qazbegi as a freedom fighter who sought alliances with Georgians. Qazbegi’s framing set the terms of many later Georgian reflections on Shamil’s legacy, most significantly by the major twentieth-century novelist Mikheil Javakhishvili (b. 1880), who was executed in 1937 for his divergence from Stalinist aesthetics. Javakhishvili’s novelistic account of another famous figure in the history of Caucasus anticolonialism, the Georgian *abrugi* (social bandit) Arsena Odzelashvili, is clearly inspired by Qazbegi’s precedent.<sup>67</sup> As Rayfield rightly notes, both novels address “the discontent of the Georgian peasantry not just with their own feudal masters, but with Russian rule and with the Russian officers who with brutal beatings, deportations and hangings, enforced that rule,” and both do with an eye to elaborating an anticolonial vernacular in prose.<sup>68</sup>

One strategy adopted by Qazbegi for representing Chechens to a non-Chechen readership was to render them as Christian. This act of domestication suggests that certain types of local affiliations penetrated more deeply than religion for Qazbegi. In terms of Tuite’s distinction between the anti-ethnographic and pseudo-ethnographic in Georgian literary history, Qazbegi’s impulse to domesticate his Muslim characters by describing them as Christian is in keep with anti-ethnography’s allegorical mandate, which uses foreign characters to elucidate local realities. At the same time, *The Parricide* is a pseudo-ethnographic text, inasmuch as it is set in Georgia, in familiar surroundings. All that is unfamiliar about the text are its Chechen protagonists.

<sup>65</sup> Aleksandre Qazbegi. *Mamis mkleveli* // *Txzulebata*. Vol. 1. P. 303.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> For the most recent edition of this heavily redacted and many-times censored text, see Mikheil Javakhishvili. *Arsena Marabdeli: romani* / Ed. Nana Suxitashvili. Tbilisi, 2005.

<sup>68</sup> Donald Rayfield. *Time Bombs: The Posthumous and Post-Soviet Reinterpretation of Two Georgian Novels* // G.M.A. Margagliotta and A. A. Robiglio (Eds.). *Art, Intellect and Politics: A Diachronic Perspective*. Leiden, 2013. P. 584.



Although Qazbegi's framing was anachronistic, it was based on a substratum of historical awareness, for, as many ethnographers have documented, pagan traditions persisted among the Caucasus mountaineers well into the modern era.<sup>69</sup> This pseudo-ethnographic domestication of a foreign, if neighboring, people is evident when the Chechen hero of *The Parricide*, Parcho, proposes to his fellow Georgians as they hide in the mountains and prepare to raid the plains below that they "go worship at the cross".<sup>70</sup> Predictably, the Georgian Christian mountaineer Koba agrees to Parcho's plan enthusiastically. More surprising is that the initiative to pray in Christian fashion is taken by a Muslim Chechen. Parcho's initiative to pray as a Christian reflects Qazbegi's pseudo-ethnographic eagerness to represent Georgia's cultural others as variations on Georgian selves. In Qazbegi, the anticolonial vernacular becomes an ethical commitment to recognizing the other pseudo-ethnographically, which culminates in a literary mode that Bakhtin would later famously theorize as the form of literary discourse specific to the novel.

Together with much of Daghestan, medieval Chechnya was included within the Christian empire ruled over by the Georgian Queen Tamar (r. 1184–1213). One of the most commonly cited proofs of Georgia's influence during this period is Txaba-Erde, a Christian church dating back to the eleventh century, located in present day Ingushetia, on the border with Georgia. Georgian scholars have documented tablets found in the church that are inscribed with words in the Vainakh (Chechen-Ingush) language using the Georgian alphabet.<sup>71</sup> This small piece of evidence for the historical depth of the cultural exchanges between Chechens and Georgians could be multiplied by further examples from Daghestan.<sup>72</sup> Qazbegi's representation of Parcho's willingness to utter Christian prayers builds on popular Georgian

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<sup>69</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the pagan practices of the north Caucasus, see: Mariel Tsaroieva. *Anciennes croyances des Ingouches et des Tchétchènes: peuples du Caucase du nord*. Paris, 2005; Idem. *Peuples et religions du Caucase du Nord*. Paris, 2011; Idem. *Tusholi: la dernière déesse-mère du Caucase*. Paris, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Aleksandre Qazbegi. *Mamis mkleveli // Txzulebata*. Vol. 1. P. 303.

<sup>71</sup> See D. Gunia. *Satadzro reliepiuri figuruli gamosaxulebebi—mati roli da mxatvruli xasiati kavkasiis xurotmodzghvarul skolata kontekstshi // Proceedings of II International Congress of Caucasiologists*. Tbilisi, 2010. Pp. 61-62, 224-225; L. I. Lavrov. *Epigraficheskie pamiatniki Severnogo Kavkaza na arabskom, persidskom i turetskom iazykakh*. Moscow, 1966. Vol. 1. P. 16.

<sup>72</sup> For some sources, see Magomed Gasanov. *On Christianity in Dagestan // Iran & the Caucasus*. 2001. Vol. 5. Pp. 79-84; and P. K. Uslar. *Nachalo khristianstva v Zakavkazie i na Kavkaze // Sbornik svedenii o kavkazskikh gortsakh*. Vol. 2. 1869. Pp. 1-24 (first page).

traditions, while imparting to them a new political, and anticolonial, edge. In keeping with Qazbegi's wish to eradicate religious difference, Parcho and his Georgian comrades make a pact on the site of a church, after Parcho's call to Christian prayer had already conjoined Chechen and Georgian belief systems into an allegorical unity that is anti-ethnographic (in Tuite's sense, an inversion of the ethnographic rather than its negation) because it is presumed on the erasure of cultural difference.

Islam became normative in Chechen belief systems only in the eighteenth century. Its influence was uneven, and often difficult to distinguish from popular pre-Islamic beliefs, even following the Islamicization of Chechnya.<sup>73</sup> Until that period, Chechen and Ingush religious beliefs partook almost exclusively of pan-Caucasian paganism, with an admixture of Christianity. Many Chechens and Ingush even today fondly recall Christian elements in their cultural pasts, even as they rigorously follow Islamic rituals.<sup>74</sup> Qazbegi's portrayal of his Chechen protagonist in terms that argue for a family resemblance to his Georgians counterparts testifies to the author's desire to project a composite Georgian–Vainakh culture onto an ethnographic present. What was at stake for Qazbegi in blurring religious, linguistic, and cultural boundaries between Georgians and Vainakh peoples? Qazbegi sought alternatives to urban literary traditions. He wished to critique Georgia's "comprador" colonialism in prose. Inventing Chechen heroes enabled Qazbegi to confront his Georgian readers with an anticolonial vernacular vision of a mountaineer polity untainted by the cowardice of the plains.

### *Afterlives of an Oeuvre*

My fieldwork in Tbilisi has frequently brought me into contact with many Georgians who dwell on the shame that Qazbegi's descriptions of Imam Shamil induced in them.<sup>75</sup> One interlocutor spoke of how Qazbegi's rage was directed against his fellow Georgians, including so she felt, herself, who had failed to live up to Shamil's high moral standards. "It is as though

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<sup>73</sup> For the history of Islam in Chechnya, see Anna Zelkina. *Islam and Society in Chechnia: From the Late Eighteenth to the Mid-nineteenth Century* // *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 1996. Vol. 7. No. 2. Pp. 240-264.

<sup>74</sup> For further delineations of these syncretic paradoxes, see Rebecca Gould. *Secularism and Belief in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge* // *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 2011. Vol. 22. No. 3. Pp. 339-373.

<sup>75</sup> This fieldwork was conducted primarily during the years 2006–7 and the summer of 2013, with funding from the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) and the American Councils for International Exchange.

Qazbegi hates his fellow Georgians for betraying ourselves,” this undergraduate at Tbilisi State University said. The effect of Qazbegi’s fictions on contemporary Georgian readers is consistent with Qazbegi’s contestation of the civilizational poetics of empire through an anticolonial vernacular mountaineer prosaics. Qazbegi was Georgia’s first modern novelist to incorporate mountaineers on both sides of the Caucasus, north and south, into a common cultural geography. His anticolonial prosaics interrogates the historical constitution of Georgian self-identity while also placing colonial ambitions, including the aesthetic fostered by the imperial sublime, under critical scrutiny. Qazbegi was also, in Manning’s words, “the only true Georgian *narodnik* [populist],” who forsook his family’s tradition of service to the tsar and instead chose to become a shepherd.<sup>76</sup> Qazbegi chose his life, like his prosaics, deliberately, in the belief that prose alone could sustain the ethical vision he pursued across narratives of forced deportation, parricide, and colonial conquest. Unlike his Romantic predecessors who cultivated the imperial sublime in poetry, Qazbegi saw his anticolonial aesthetic as most conducive to prose.

Qazbegian prosaics rejects the poetry of conquest in favor of the prose of critique. Without wishing to suggest that prose is intrinsically more able to resist colonial violence, or more politically engaged than poetry, the preceding pages have asked why Qazbegi preferred prose to poetry at this particular historical juncture. I have also sought to better understand the relation between the vernacular and anticolonial agendas set forth in his work, which I have come to regard as a key diacritic, not of modernity in general, but specifically of modernity in colonial borderlands. As Manning points out, the years intervening between “the publication of Chavchavadze’s letters (1861–1871) and Aleksandre Qazbegi’s first writings about the Moxevians (1880)” were marked by “the development and consolidation of a specifically Georgian print culture...in the newspaper *Droeba*.”<sup>77</sup> While *Droeba*’s base in Tbilisi caused the newspaper to be inflected by the rhythms of urban life more than by the grandeur of the mountains, the discussions that took place in this newspaper set the stage for more comprehensive engagements with colonial legacies in subsequent generations. Most notable among Qazbegi’s progeny is Mikheil Javakhishvili whose historical fiction, in particular the much-censored *Arsena Marabdeli* (composed 1925–32; published 1933–36), continues the anticolonial theme as well as the vernacular aesthetic, and he

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<sup>76</sup> Manning. *Strangers in a Strange Land*. P. 65.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* P. 78.

paid an even higher price than did Qazbegi for his opposition to the dominant politics of his time.<sup>78</sup>

Taken as a whole, Qazbegi's work carves out a place for affect in the literary imagination, and aligns readerly empathy with mountaineers whose unglamorous resistance lacks heroism in the classical sense. These mountaineers include figures such as Elberd and Eliso's father Anzor Cherbizh, who served as a *nā'ib* (deputy) of Imam Shamil. For Qazbegian prosaics, as for prosaics generally, the smaller and more inconsequential a character, the more obscure, marginalized, and oppressed a person is, the more profound is his or her significance. Like Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Qazbegi's narrators remind us of the importance of the little acts that we perform, for good or for evil, every day. "You pass by a small child," says Zosima to his auditors, "you may not have noticed the child, but he has seen you." This exchange of glances, both conscious and unconscious, is thereby inscribed onto the child's "frail heart" for the remainder of his life.<sup>79</sup>

Qazbegi's anticolonial vernacular cultivates an aesthetic that Orbeliani's generation ignored, even though, as we have seen, these earlier poets could also be moved by Qazbegi's prose. Like Thoreau, who organized an excursion into the woods that, while much better known and studied than that of his Georgian counterpart, was only a fraction of the length of Qazbegi's sojourn in the mountains, Qazbegi prized the autonomy of the unshackled imagination above all else, in literature as in life.<sup>80</sup> By relentlessly subjecting imperialism—including its promulgation through poetic form—to prosaic interrogation, Qazbegi became the greatest regional writer Georgian literature has ever known. Future scholarship on his work, hopefully within a comparative context, will assure the inclusion of his mountaineer prosaics within a global anticolonial vernacular imagination.

This essay has tracked the convergence of vernacularity and anticolonialism in the oeuvre of a writer whose imagination traversed multiple moments

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<sup>78</sup> For an excellent discussion of the many levels of censorship to which *Arsena Marabdeli* was subjected, see Donald Rayfield. *Time Bombs*. Pp. 584-589. For a similarly anticolonial orientation in a Soviet poet who was executed the same year as Javakhishvili, see Titsian Tabidze. *Rcheuli natsarmoebi* / Eds. I. Abashidze, R. Gargiani, and D. Sturua. Tbilisi, 1966, especially his poem "Gunib" 1: 106 (discussed in detail in chapter 3 of *The Literatures of Anticolonial Insurgency*).

<sup>79</sup> Fedor Dostoevskii. *Bratia Karamazovy* // Fedor Dostoevskii. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh*. Leningrad, 1976. Vol. 14. P. 289.

<sup>80</sup> Thoreau only spent two years, 1846-47, in Walden Pond. For the timeline of his stay as well as his drafting of his memoir, see Richard Lebeaux. *Thoreau's Seasons*. Amherst, MA, 1984. Pp. 210-211.

in the colonial encounter. Morson and Emerson's argument that what is missing from "formalist and narratological approaches to the novel" is a "prosaics of prose," works also as a critique of existing Qazbegi scholarship, particularly of its almost nonexistence in languages other than Georgian.<sup>81</sup> When it focuses on the literary aspects of Qazbegi's oeuvre, this scholarship analyzes Qazbegi's work with reference to its poetics rather than its prosaics, as if, under the conditions of colonial modernity, a text can only attain to the condition of literature by in some way reconciling itself to the imperial sublime that inevitably severs art from life.<sup>82</sup> While Bakhtin dedicated much of his life to dislodging the aesthetic prejudice that privileges verse over prose, the implications of this intervention for anticolonial vernacular prosaics remains largely unprobed.

While anticolonial vernacular finds its medium in prose, for much of literary history, the literary lexicon has privileged texts in verse, conceiving of "poetics" as a universal category, while confining "prosaics" to the study of the novel, and conceiving of it as a term specific to literary analysis rather than a conceptual tool for tracing the dissemination of language across time, space, and cultures. Mindful of these timeworn prejudices, a new scholarly movement has explored the ways in which prosaics "seeks out those rare artworks that are messy and processual, as life is."<sup>83</sup> A growing critical consensus, among whom Bakhtin and Morson are merely two of the relevant theoretical touchstones, insists on the need for a prosaics, and not only a poetics, of literary form. More broadly, the prosaic critique

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<sup>81</sup> Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. Stanford, 2000. P. 19.

<sup>82</sup> One example of Qazbegi scholarship that focuses on poetics at the expense of prosaics includes Sergo Manasevich Dzhorbenadze, Vano Shaduri and Valerian Itonishvili (Eds.). *Aleksandre Qazbegis biografiisa da shemokmedebis sakitxebi*. Tbilisi, 1987. Two of the eight essays in this collection (Pp. 111-133 and 151-173) examine Qazbegi's "poetics [*poetika*]" while none consider what may have been specific to his prose. In fairness, it should be noted that Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky, originally titled *Problems in Dostoevsky's Art* (*Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo*, 1929), appeared in a second edition, revised by the author, as *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics* (*Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*, 1963).

<sup>83</sup> Morson. *Prosaics Evolving*. P. 72. I would, however, distance myself from Morson's apparent view that it is possible to overcome the intrinsic tension between art and life. In advocating a prosaics that can enable us to grasp life's contingency, it seems to me that Morson approaches too closely to denying the essential artfulness of all works of art, whether they are composed in verse or in prose. For a fuller critique of this aspect of Morson's prosaics, see Caryl Emerson. *Prosaics and the Problem of Form // The Slavic and East European Journal*. 1997. Vol. 41. No. 1. Pp. 16-39.

of traditional poetics may be linked to the literary anthropological turn, in which my own work is deeply engaged.<sup>84</sup>

The aesthetic and ethical implications of prosaics reach well beyond Qazbegi's oeuvre. One perspective that has been missing so far from explorations into the potential of prosaics to elucidate the contours of everyday life is how this aesthetic method works in the context of colonial modernity. While Bakhtin primarily conceptualized prosaics as a way of coming to know neighbors who speak our languages but in different registers, the colonial situation presents a more attenuated heteroglossic context, that is ineradicably marked by legally enforced imbalances of power. Chechens who spoke Russian, the language of their colonial masters, frequently considered themselves, or sought to become, members of the colonizing class. And yet these Russophone intellectuals, among whom should be included Laudaev, Akhriev, and Dalgat, also inaugurated indigenous ethnography within their respective cultures, albeit in a language, Russian, that cannot be considered a vernacular so long as we abide by a strictly linguistic conception of this term.

In contradistinction to the utopian strands in Bakhtinian dialogism, heteroglossia under the conditions of colonial rule often facilitated dominance instead of bridging social difference.<sup>85</sup> In such contexts, heteroglossia indexed the linguistic gaps that underwrote norms of colonial governance. Enriched by its anticolonial vernacular imagination, Qazbegian prosaics pursued a path different from that pursued by the archetypal polyphonic novelist, Dostoevsky, for whom the rise of popular journalism served much the same function as ethnography did for Qazbegi. Dostoevsky's characters come to know each other in spaces of geopolitical if not absolute neutrality. Even when their actions are fraught with imbalances of power, this power is not inflected by the cultural and religious differences that are constitutive of colonial governmentality. In Dostoevsky, nearly everyone is Christian, and those who are not Russian are simply exempted from the dialogic situation. By contrast, Qazbegi's characters are preemptively interpolated into uneven distributions of power, and, frequently, there is no way for them to escape

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<sup>84</sup> See Gould. *The Literatures of Anticolonial Insurgency*; Idem. *Jim Crow in the Soviet Union* // *Callaloo: A Journal of African Diaspora Arts and Letters*. 2013. Vol. 36. No. 1. Pp. 125-141; Idem. *Leaving the House of Memory: Post-Soviet Traces of Deportation Memory* // *Mosaic, A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*. 2012. Vol. 45. No. 2. Pp. 149-164.

<sup>85</sup> For the relation between the science of linguistics and colonial rule, see Joseph Errington. *Linguistics in a Colonial World: A Story of Language, Meaning, and Power*. New York, 2010.

from the force field fostered by these colonial distributions of power. Partly due to its many historical divergences from the more familiar norm, the task of interpreting and extending Qazbegian anticolonial vernacular prosaics is a project for a postcolonial future.

## SUMMARY

In Georgian literary history, Aleksandre Qazbegi (1848–1893) is notable for his formally innovative prose style as well as for the anticolonial themes that emerge from the seven years he passed among the mountaineers of Xevi. Drawing on ethnography to advance expressive possibilities that Mikhail Bakhtin considers specific to prose, Qazbegi's literary aesthetic challenged prior poetic norms, while crafting new alignments between vernacular realism and prosaic form. This essay examines the conjunctures of ethnography, prosaics, and literary form to consider how the Georgian anticolonial vernacular extended the aesthetic and political scope of the literary imagination as a tool to render mountaineer life on Georgian–Chechen borderlands.

## РЕЗЮМЕ

В истории грузинской литературы прозаик Александр Казбеги (1848–1893) известен благодаря формально новаторскому стилю и антиколониальной тематике творчества, отражающей опыт семилетнего пребывания среди горцев Хеви. Казбеги широко использовал этнографический материал, что позволяло ему в полной мере раскрыть экспрессивные возможности прозаического стиля (по М. Бахтину). Подобная литературная эстетика бросала вызов существующим нормам поэтики, создавая возможности для синтеза реализма местной речи и прозаической формы. В статье Ребекки Гоулд рассматривается взаимоналожение этнографии, бытовых и литературных форм в грузинской антиколониальной местной речи, благодаря которому преодолевалась ограниченность эстетического и политического литературного воображения. Новаторская поэтика Казбеги, таким образом, становилась инструментом антиколониального представления жизни горцев грузино-дагестанского пограничья.