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Winner: *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Indian Literatures*, by Ulka Anjaria and Anjali Nerlekar

A handbook was originally meant to be a succinct reference book, small enough to be carried by hand and concise enough to be informative for a novice. That was back in the 12th century, when the world's languages and literary traditions were still lesser known to those who were not their native users. *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Indian Literatures*, just over 700 pages from end to end, exemplifies all the virtues of the broadened era of world literature in the 21st century, where such handbooks not only play the part of a learned guide but also unveil a landscape that is at once dazzling and complex in its scope. It is evident to anyone coming away from sampling this volume that world literary and linguistic practices have always been more diverse and unruly than any of their canonized or area-based representations.

Editors Ulka Anjaria and Anjali Nerlekar took on the mammoth task of capturing the multilingual landscape of South Asia in a monumental collection of new and old directions in the study of Indian literatures. New critical paths, off-the-beaten-path linguistic connectivities, and intersectionalities cast off the familiar practice of organizing such a handbook according to countries, regions, and languages. Instead of singling out categories of gender, race, colonialism, monolingualism, and class, *Modern Indian Literatures* simply shows how these operative terms had long been coursing through the veins of the subcontinent in different textual and cultural forms. From translation to multilingualism, monoculture to Luso-Indian, graphic novel to online gaming, the volume slices different cross-sections of modernity and temporality and cuts across multiple colonial histories, linguistic contexts, and medialities. English, for example, is treated as no more an exceptional script and language than Hindi, Punjabi, Telugu, Assamese, or Kannada. Gender is embedded in the very question of Dalit-feminist politics or queer Bengali verse; race and its inequalities are inscribed in the history of caste; and the plurality of modernism is found in multiple native precursors. The colonial imprint can only claim to be one layer of inscription among others in a sedimented history that stays dynamic and alive to its own regional tensions and richness.

One will not find any identitarian category unperturbed and unquestioned. Tracing literary relations in translations, border contestations, and disavowed and reaffiliated linguistic genealogies, the volume is deeply thoughtful and forward-looking, while the vision behind it is bold, methodical, and deserving of emulation. It embodies what every world region literature had always wanted to tell about itself--as a cosmopolitan, dynamic, and ever-evolving world in tandem with other worlds. It is a delight to see such a volume both address its external audience in new ways while generating vibrant conversations within.