

essay brings vividly to life, Dalit writers are also minorities within the caste society of India. As citizens of India, they too feel or are treated as forever foreign, though as a result of caste, not national origin. What then is the meaning of *minority* in these two essays? How is the purely local and particular related to the cosmopolitan? Is the affirmation of the local nature of Dalit knowledge different in epistemological terms from the affirmation of the uniqueness of Partition? Historically and politically, they are different. But in epistemological terms, each depends on a notion of pure particularity or exceptionalism. Entirely local or unique knowledge inherently resists comparison. But the insight that comparing Koshy's cosmopolitan minority with Gajarawala's Dalit minority brings is that phenomena so different in kind nonetheless share a related epistemological logic. They are "in/commensurable," the slash signifying the connection of similarity and the disconnection of difference.

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*Reply:*

I appreciated S. Shankar's comments regarding the recent issue of *PMLA* on Asian writing and, in particular, regarding my essay "Some Time between Revisionist and Revolutionary: Unreading History in Dalit Literature." Shankar fleshes out how attention to the vernacular—linguistic and contextual—is a crucial part of any demand for new theoretical practices and new models of reading. The questions that guide my own work have also been determined by this attention. In the case of Dalit literature, reading not only Hindi but also the many "hindis" within Hindi has worked in concert with the global anglophone to produce a comparatist project of all my intellectual endeavors. The project of "unreading," then, is particular to the relational work I see these texts doing vis-à-vis Indian historiography and the challenge they pose to hegemonic tropes of historical agency. Attention to the vernacular

also demands, I would suggest, a careful attention to the various aesthetic forms in which South Asian histories might be embedded, often made legible only by new methodologies.

I would like to take a moment to address Shankar's other concern, which, I believe, offers an opportunity to have a dialogue on the production of theoretical knowledge. Shankar questions whether it is possible for all Dalit texts to be read in the way I suggest: as complicating or challenging outright a historicist literary discourse. My reading of Dalit literature, he writes, "should not be generalized into an argument about Dalit texts as such." Shankar seeks to remind us here of the self-difference of the Dalit—indeed, any subaltern—project, the treelike lineages that vary regionally, linguistically, and politically. But it seems that Shankar's argument is less about what some or all Dalit forms of textuality do or do not do than about the kinds of claims that can be made about subaltern literatures. In some sense, then, his question is about what can only be termed, in our postmodern times, the politics of generalization alongside the will to particularize. Not only is the Dalit text read as the social location of a particularized and nontransferable ethnographic specificity; it is also only fit to comment on its own self or selves. I argue that we should challenge this critical impulse. In a moment that has generated a discourse of "world literature," for the Dalit text to move beyond its particularity it must demonstrate its own worldliness for the sake of its legibility. While particularism is to some degree the water in which Dalit literature swims (particularism of caste, of history, of language), its critical imperative (my own, as well) is to surpass it. I read the Dalit text not simply as self-reflective but also as productive of a certain metanarrative—in other words, "fiction as theory." It is when we read the Dalit text relationally—in dialogue with, or as a dialectic response to, its many others (the novel, uppercaste culture, a hegemonic "Indian" history)—that we can speak of the Dalit text as such. The "Dalit text as such" refers as much to the individual text as to the larger ideologi-

cal project of various Dalit texts, most of which seek to inhabit a counterhegemonic space from which originates its fiercest critique. In any case, if the particular experience of a Dalit text cannot speak on behalf of its peers, it certainly can speak to its others.

This is to respond at an angle to Shankar's important point, which he inaugurated so eloquently in his well-known discussion of the vernacular in "Midnight's Orphans" (*Cultural Critique* 56 [2004]: 64–95). I appreciate the opportunity to take it up here.

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## A Realistic Wittgenstein

TO THE EDITOR:

Andre Furlani's excellent essay "Beckett after Wittgenstein: The Literature of Exhausted Justification" (127.1 [2012]: 38–57) includes an error in its Works Cited section. The title of Cora Diamond's important book on Wittgenstein, *The Realistic Spirit* (1991), is mistakenly given as *The Realist Spirit*. This is a case in which a typographic error can make "all the difference," to quote Frost—in this case, to our understanding of two important words: *realist* and *realistic*.

If Diamond's book had been titled *The Realist Spirit*, it might have had more to do with realism, with the modern argument that material objects exist independent of any perception of them and with the traditional scholastic claims—against nominalism—that universals exist independent of any ideas about them. Diamond's correct title—*The Realistic Spirit*—suggests, in my view, that Wittgenstein's goal was to be realistic, to offer a philosophy that was not philosophy at all, in any traditional sense. Wittgenstein provides a way of doing philosophy that corresponds to what Bertrand Russell called "a robust sense of reality," to words as

they are used by speakers and writers, not as they are confined to meanings we imagine or have learned from some one book or teacher. Diamond is interested in realism in its philosophical senses, but her emphasis is always on a realistic spirit in Wittgenstein, on a spirit that tilts the balance toward everyday uses of words, toward ordinary-language philosophy.

Diamond is an important philosopher in her own right: see, for example, her classic essays "Eating Meat and Eating People" (*Philosophy* 53.206 [1978]: 465–79) and "What Nonsense Might Be" (*Philosophy* 56.215 [1981]: 5–22). She has been arguing for decades about the anti-metaphysical, we might say commonsense, element in Wittgenstein's writing, especially in his cryptic and complicated later works. In recent years she has sought to connect his early *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) more closely with his later *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). She has been associated with a group of thinkers who have put forth a "New Wittgenstein"—that is, Wittgenstein as an anti-analytic philosopher whose work sees philosophy as linguistic therapy, as a realistic approach to the problems traditionally posed by abstract thought and idealized rationality.

This information all stems from a typo, or a misprint, in Furlani's Works Cited list. Furlani applauds Diamond for taking Wittgenstein "at his word" (54n14); such applause seems particularly appropriate in this case.

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*Reply:*

I am obliged to Ashton Nichols for noting my typographic error and for drawing attention to the stature of Cora Diamond's work, from which my understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy has indeed benefited.

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