

# **INVESTIGATION INTO TIME AND LANGUAGE: TOWARDS THE ONTOLOGY OF THE LITERARY**

**By**

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***Dedicated to my late grandfather  
Surendra Narayan Dwivedi  
whom I never met, whom I tried to know through his  
library, who would have been proud of this***

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## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that this thesis entitled **“Investigation into Time and Language: Towards the Ontology of the Literary”**, being submitted by Divya Dwivedi to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, is a record of bonafide research work carried out by her. She has worked under my guidance and supervision and has fulfilled the requirements, which to my knowledge, have reached the requisite standard for the submission of this thesis. The results contained in this thesis have not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

**Prof. Sanil V.**

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## ABSTRACT

Within dominant approaches like genre theory, deconstruction and cultural studies, the notion of literature's specificity has become impossible. The lack of a concept for literature and the deconstruction of specificity itself has led to pronouncements that: literature does not exist; everything is literature; there is very little literature. Nevertheless, 'literature' is registered in formal, theoretical and philosophical discussions which have offered complex insights into the literary but primarily to illuminate philosophical problems. This thesis explores these very insights for the possibility that ontology, as the inquiry into Being as such, can also comprehend literary specificity, and undertakes a reconsideration of what is ontology itself. Rather than a single definition or concept of literature, the ground of its specificity is offered in the proposed ontology of the literary, which is not a regionalization of the fundamental question of metaphysics. Being's coming into specificity is a 'transitivity' through which an originary act or 'primitivity' becomes a work-being, whose 'stratification' simultaneously sustains primitive and presentational strata. The literary is not a thing or property but work-being; its specificity is not generic but ontological.

I elaborate specificity with respect to temporality, implicit in the concept of being, and to language, the material of verbal art. Investigating Kant's transcendental aesthetic; its significance for the impasse of Jena Romanticism as 'literary absolute'; and Heidegger's four-dimensional temporality of the 'event of appropriation', contrasted with temporization in Derrida, I delineate this ground as a creative temporality defined by transitive tension rather than presence or succession. The literary is the work of a transcendental transitivity which is the creative power of language lodged at its limit, explored through Heideggerian 'rift-design'; Deleuzian 'agrammaticality'; Blanchot's 'void'; Foucaultian 'outside'; and Agamben's 'thing itself'. Using Jakobson's analysis of shifters in which discourse ostends itself, I call it 'transcendental deixis'. From this asignifying ontological stratum of language a specifically literary space arises, in which literature says what it alone can say. I explore the transitivity of literary techniques in setting forth this space.

## Table of Contents

|                         |           |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Certificates</b>     | <b>i</b>  |
| <b>Acknowledgements</b> | <b>ii</b> |
| <b>Abstract</b>         | <b>iv</b> |

### **Introduction.....1**

|                                                                                                        |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| i. The Exiguous Attention to the Basis of Literary Specificity<br>in Extant Literary Theories.....     | 6  |
| ii. The Ancient Quarrel of Literature and Philosophy,<br>and the Rise and Rise of Literary Theory..... | 26 |
| iii. The Questions of Ontology and the Question of Literature .....                                    | 35 |
| iv. Time and Language.....                                                                             | 40 |
| v. The Literary.....                                                                                   | 49 |

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **Ontology and The Literary: Essence, Existence and Time.....53**

|                                                                                                                                |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1.1 Essence and Existence: Representational Approaches and Their Limits.....                                                   | 58 |
| 1.2 The Transcendental: Concerning Kantian Time as a<br>Questioning of Representational Approaches.....                        | 65 |
| 1.3 Approach to the Literary From Essence-Existence to Act:<br>Heidegger's 'Essencing' .....                                   | 69 |
| 1.4 Time Understood as Act in Contrast to Temporizing in Derrida.....                                                          | 77 |
| 1.5 Creation as Act Composed in Techniques Leading to the Specific<br>Technicality of the Literary: Deleuzian Athleticism..... | 88 |

## CHAPTER 2

### **Primitivity: From Time to Tension.....97**

- 2.1 Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic and the Power of the Ensuing Crisis.....99
- 2.2 German Idealism: The Event of the Crisis and the Quest for Primitivity in it.....110
- 2.3 Romanticism, the System-Programme, and the Presentation of the Idea.....119
- 2.4 The Romantic Impasse: The Work of Primitivity as Fertile Dispersion leading to Literary Transitivity, Contrasted with Derridean Dissemination.....136

## CHAPTER 3

### **Transitivity: Tension and the Relation of Language and Time.....145**

- 3.1 The Examination of Grammatical and Linguistic Transitivity Leading to Transcendental Transitivity .....147
- 3.2 Transcendental Transitivity as the Giving of Being and Time.....155
- 3.3 The Sustenance of Primitivity in Transitivity: Waiting in Samuel Beckett's Waiting For Godot.....159
- 3.4 The Literary While: Kantian Time Succession Contrasted with Heidegger's Transitive Fourfold temporality and Herder's Dramatised Tension .....163
- 3.5 The Blockage of Difference: Quasi-transcendental Nontransitivity.....168
- 3.6 Nontransitivity and Modalities of Representation and Presentation: Derridean Possibility and Agamben's Potentiality.....173
- 3.7 Tense System and Temporal Displacements Within Literary Discourse.....184

## CHAPTER 4

### **Stratification: Word, Thing and Language .....192**

- 4.1 Stratification and the Transitive Relay of the Primitive: O. V. Vijayan's



|     |                                                                                                                                                                                            |     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
|     | Girl of the Doggerel in <u>The Saga of Dharmapuri</u> .....                                                                                                                                | 194 |
| 4.2 | The Transitive Thing, The Worlding of the World<br>and Their Stratificatory Relation.....                                                                                                  | 201 |
| 4.3 | Stratification of Language: the Tension of the Verbal Work .....                                                                                                                           | 207 |
| 4.4 | The Vanishing Language and the Showing of The Word-Thing Itself .....                                                                                                                      | 214 |
| 4.5 | Deixis in Relation to Shifters Contrasted with Transcendental Deixis:<br>Literary Space as Foucault's Outside and the Work of Calvino's<br><u>If on A winter's Night A Traveller</u> ..... | 219 |
| 4.6 | Literary Space as the Span of Stratification: Gabriel García Márquez's<br><u>One Hundred years of Solitude</u> .....                                                                       | 229 |

## CHAPTER 5

### **Literary Sense: Language, World and Discourse.....240**

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |     |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 5.1 | The Image-Thing: The Sensible Presentation of Idea and<br>Literary Sense, Contrasting the Error of Wordsworth's Lyric<br>"Tintern Abbey" with the Beautiful Appearance of Browning's<br>Drammatic Monologue "My Last Duchess" ..... | 243 |
| 5.2 | Genres and the Problem of the Origin of Literary Sense: The<br>Contrasting Approaches to Genre in Derrida and Todorov.....                                                                                                          | 256 |
| 5.3 | The Literary Mirror, Literary Space and the Vanishing Language<br>of Discourse: Literary Sense in Foucault and Nabokov's <u>Lolita</u> .....                                                                                        | 262 |
| 5.4 | The Transitivity of Sense: and the Strata of Being:<br>The Sense of the World in Jean-Luc Nancy.....                                                                                                                                | 281 |
| 5.5 | The Transitivity of Sense: The Stratification that Makes the World—<br>The Fourfold .....                                                                                                                                           | 288 |
| 5.6 | The Separation of Discourse and Literary Sense:<br>Edward Lear's Limericks and Nonsense Poetry.....                                                                                                                                 | 296 |

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Technique: Literary Creation.....302**

- 6.1 Towards a Conception of the Literary Work: Primitivity of Transcendental  
Deixis, Dramatization, and Stratification of Work as Image.....307
- 6.2 Fragmentation and Thinging: The Machinic Conception of the Literary.....312
- 6.3 Machine and The Relation of Techne and Poiesis.....318
- 6.4 Preparatory Work as the Deformation of Sedimented Works.....325
- 6.5 Transitivity of Work: Techniques of the Literary .....332
- 6.6 Transcendental Deixis and the Specific Techniques of the Literary.....340

### **Conclusion.....357**

### **Bibliography.....365**

### **Brief Bio-data of the Author.....381**