Chapter 9. The Ethics of Reading Sahitya

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Ethics and Literature
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But true art is never fixed, but always flowing.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Dissonances are only the remote consonances.
—Arnold Schoenberg

Human life . . . is composed of two heterogeneous parts which never blend. One part is purposeful, given significance by utilitarian and therefore secondary ends; this part is the one we are aware of. The other is primary and sovereign . . . it evades the grasp of our aware intelligence.
—Georges Bataille

The ethics of sahitya (literature) are inscribed in a variety of hunger. Sahitya creates its own hunger, the desire to feed on the “other” and be fed upon. It is formed out of a hunger to explicate ways of human experience and engagements with emotions. It is anchored in a hunger that is its eros, its creative aesthesis, its power of sustenance and motivation. The inherent hunger of sahitya calls for at once imaginative ventures of crossdisciplinarity and the understanding of human values born out of philosophic designs, both conceptual and experiential. Sahitya has the ability to operate beyond the point of a direct act of perception. This is what lends freedom to individual interpretive journeys, furthering intelligible aesthetic experiences. We encounter new interpretive behaviors with potentially realizable values springing out of a certain premise of inheritance, a literary heritage, ideas nourished by a certain intellectual climate, cultural and symbolic accumulation, and also some unfulfillments that keep sahitya alive against the reificatory modes of subjugation. Hunger satiated is hunger generated. Hunger attended is hunger made possible. Hunger is experience realized; hunger is responsibility awaiting fulfillment. The ethics of sahitya argue for various incarnations of hunger, both at the level of the aesthetic and the postaesthetic.
Emotion, Hunger, and (In)fusion

The success of interpretation is most often a lie. The text, in its reticulated existence, brings the disenfranchised others to bear on its signification. For me this “aesthetic of hunger” in sahitya is about forming, foregrounding, and fictionalizing the “other.” This other is born out of an urge and need to feel for a variety of discourses and thoughts across cultures and traditions. Hunger is a “mark,” the “referentiality,” and the otherity that sahitya is possessed by and embedded in. The literary critic as a disciplinary scofflaw, a Barthean “joiner,” appreciates the ineliminable hunger in sahitya to evolve greater modes of meaning and deeper enclaves of sense, and this hunger is integral to sahitya’s survival.

The (in)fusion approach respects both the nontranscendent and the transcendent aspects of what we understand as sahitya, and literarity builds on the intentional acts that, without being merely projective and subjective, can also be figured out within certain networks of meaning and an abiding consciousness of limits and restrictions. In fact, the invention that Derrida looks into in relation to his understanding of literature is somewhere close to what the (in)fusion approach commits to perform—a certain restiveness with essence, a certain restless agony with dogmatism. But in its transdiscursivity and transcultural propensities the (in)fusion approach raises the notion of accountability and responsibility to create and invent hunger in literature. This is a responsibility toward the other that is, as Derek Attridge argues, “also a responsibility towards the future since it involves the struggle to create within which the other can appear beyond any of our programs and predictions, can come to transform what we know or think we know.”1 Looking at a text (in)fusionally does not mean that meaning can multiply endlessly with the promotion of radical linguistic skepticism and textual permissiveness. (In)fusion approach looks at the “reality” of the text and “thinks out” the ways of thought, the intricacies of the concepts, the possibilities of theory to explore this “reality” or the “tissues of textualities.” It is the reality of the theory-paradigm interface, the viability of conceptual trafficking and the interconnectivity among traditions of interpretation or critical thought that concern an (in)fusionist. This spells out a “discretion” which springs from our deep and meticulous understanding of critical paradigms, concepts, or theoretical orientation; the understanding teaches us or validates our interpretative orientation to stretch and extend the “infusionist space” and sanction an awareness of the limit. (In)fusion approach in its acts of
“homecoming festival” cannot oversight a certain submission to tell a truth, an obedience before a law and an acceptance without flagrant contempt of a court of certain receptive modes of acknowledged competences and comprehension. Sahitya then is a “strange coupling, the coming together of two orders, one chaotic, the other ordered, one folding and the other unfolding, one contradiction and the other dilation.” It is a way of forming a “composed chaos.”

The complex dynamics between hunger and the other throw us into the fury and force of literary cannibalism. The Brazilian modernist poet Oswald de Andrade’s “Manifesto da poesia pau-brasil” (1924) (Manifesto of Brazilwood poetry) and *Manifesto Anthropofago* (1928) talk about a deep tension that “challenges the dualities civilization/barbarism, modern/primitive, and original/derivative, which had informed the construction of Brazilian culture since the days of the colony.” The import of modernist aesthetic projects and national and nativist identities are held in a “playful, polemical theory of cultural cannibalism,” where the cannibal metaphor develops the idea of devouring—the consuming of the other—in that one’s literature adapts the strength of the other and incorporates them into the native self. The ethics of anthropophagy bring into play participatory consciousness: “I am only concerned with what is not mine. Law of Man. Law of the cannibal.” An implicit refigurative spirit constructed as a challenge to authority and authenticity is revealed in expressions like “the world’s single law. Disguised expression of all individualism, of all collectivisms. Of all religions. Of all peace treaties.” Kenneth Jackson observes that “from Freud, Oswald absorbed the transformation of tabu into totem and blended the concept with Nietzsche’s metaphor (in *A Genealogy of Morals*) of man as an animal that assimilates interior and exterior conflicts. From Keyserling the idea of technological savagery would be mixed with Spengler’s conclusion about the victory of the machine and lead Oswald to the theory of a ‘revolucao caraiba’ [supernatural and indigenous revolution]. This Brazilian revolutionary synthesis would replace indigenous originality and pau-brasil [Brazilwood] simplicity with the cannibalistic instinct of rebellion.” So anthropophagus reason makes allowance for the continual mastication of the other to produce what I may argue is the regurgitated aesthetics of reading, which is about setting new transpoetical orders, politics of relationality, and planetization. Pointing to the new literary combinatorics, Rachel Galvin notes that “the poetics of cannibalism have pointed politico-aesthetic implications: ingesting and devouring describe the ludic recombination of preexisting cultural elements—or
what might be called, more neutrally, innovation through engagement with tradition.” Anthropophagia disembeds what stays latent in the philosophy of revisionism and the across. The literary capital built out of such transcreative hunger has its own power and politics of insertion, interference, and assimilation. Hunger inspires recycling, reimagining, and recombinatory energy.

It is worthwhile to see how this cannibalistic hunger, in its ways of coupling—folding and unfolding, hiding and revealing—speaks through a poem as well known as Matthew Arnold’s “The Scholar-Gipsy” (1853). V. S. Seturaman points out that Arnold’s mind was preoccupied with thoughts from the Bhagavad Gita (the principles of dwandwas [dialectic, contrariety] and also a state of consciousness which transcends all dualism). Commenting on Arnold’s interests in oriental wisdom, Seturaman observes that for Arnold

the secret of life was not joy but peace. Peace, however, is not sad patience but something that passes beyond the Dwandwas. . . . As for his attitude to Oriental wisdom it must be clear to every reader of his Note-Books that it was one of respect and devotion. The entries in the Note-Books mark, in the words of the editors, “Arnold’s consecration to a life larger than that of the poet and essayist. Whatever one thinks of his studies in religious subjects, few men have tried harder to attend to the great language of faith and to make it the word of their daily lives.”

And there are as many as half a dozen entries from Oriental scriptures like Manava dharma shastra, the Bhagavad Gita, and Buddhist works. The orientalist “tremors” and tendrils are the poem’s inherent hunger. Hunger hides its own hunger. It is a locked away hunger that has always fascinated and fostered crisis. It has made the other feel the necessity of its emergence, the necessity that encourages the strength to break through the lock, the secret of inheritance. The “hiding” is, thus, its own incitement and enticement, too. Working beyond ascriptive modes of interpretative behavior, this poem throws itself in imaginative sympathy into the lives and desires of other disciplinary and discursive formations. Hunger thus invokes traveling theory—its travails and truths—as it moves across cultures and experiential domains inviting channelization and reproduction (all my chapters are a potential mix of hunger and the traveling differential). This is theory as it might exist or configure itself to exist within spatialities determined by the particular effectivities and intensities of different traditions and cultures. There is a mourning over the “loss” of
traditional ideas into a “hunger of a new becoming,” and it is what makes the experience of reading sahitya provocative. The hunger of literature is born, thus, amid the duality of a loss and an excess. This can be what Derrida would call “demi-deuil,” half-mourning, which installs a kind of interruption within the motivation that literary analysis has toward a teleological fulfillment. Half-mourning is about the incompleteness and insatiety of hunger that calls for strife between the imperiousness of ontological questions, established protocols of signification, and what Derrida would ascribe as “commentary.” Alors, qui êtes-vous?

What does the hunger do to the poem? Whom does the poem become? Seturaman points out that Arnold “deliberately calls his poem The Scholar Gipsy—a scholar who has chosen to become a gipsy. He stands surely for a new kind of awareness, a new poise, for such values as concentration, detachment, a unified functioning of the faculties.”12 Arnold’s belief in the “integrated vision” incarnates the gipsy-scholar with a sattvic nature which, thus, empowers him to understand the unity of the world better. He has attached a new meaning to his “wandering.” There is no happiness for the man who does not travel, says the Aitareya brahmana. This is in meaningful contrast to the mad rush of the common Victorians. The Scholar-Gipsy, in a Kierkegaardian undertone, discovers the meaning of walk and with it the possibility of the “spark” falling from heaven. He ensures walking himself into a state of well-being and walking away from every illness. This walk and a certain elusiveness attached to it prepare him for the moment when the spark (“And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall”) from heaven would fall. In a trans-now dynamic, the spark can come to mean the infinite consciousness that is omnipresent, pure and tranquil, an experience after which one stops feeling the “lapse of hours” (“The Scholar-Gipsy”). It is a light without fire, a spirit without body that illuminates our inner being. It is the moment of joy that one experiences by abandoning the transient (the concealed ananda, joy, in the Vedic sense of the term). It is a vision that comes through “inner Emigration” and from this inwardness one gets the glimpse of some abiding reality. So the spark can fall as revelation of truth that might teach the Victorians the precepts of dharma, help them to reach the heart of the matter, establish the supreme necessity of invocation, grow an awareness of the inner being, and emphasize the means of purification of the soul. It can also mean the flame of a single lamp about which the Buddha pontificates in Sutra of Forty Two Sections. I am also tempted to look at this moment as the hour of the “spiritual revolution” that Sri Aurobindo emphasizes. The trouble with the
Victorians has been the defective organization of the inner being. With the descent of the spark, the Victorians would stop being rebellious to the higher law and consent to be spiritualized. Arnold realizes, “More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!” (“The Better Part”). He admits, “The aids to noble life are all within” (“Worldly Place”). So the spark is the “mark of everlasting light” above the ebb and flow of howling senses (“East London”), something that renders worth to one’s labor through the night. It turns man “composed, refresh’d, ennobled, clear” (“A Wish”). He writes: “Leave then the Cross as ye have left carved gods, / But guard the fire within!” (“Progress”). This fire fights against all efforts to obliterate the “unregarded river of our life.” The unspeakable desire resides in the waiting for the moment:

After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course (“The Buried Life”)

The spark is a way of tracking the “original course” within. It can descend as perfect tranquility when one transcends both life and extinction and overcomes the contrary pull of the desirable and the undesirable—the dwandwas of the Gita that Arnold was so interested in. In Hindu religious philosophy, it is the moment when the mind becomes a blank sheet, when one gives himself and demands nothing. It is the inspiration that seeks to assimilate the many. The spark is a possible resolution to the dwandwas, an exit from “anarchy.” I see it as a hope for a new birth among antinomies and existential striations—a lesson that He is in the spark and all sparks are in Him. It is a promise for liberation, a culture of existence when ironically one has been made captive by the “mighty moment.” The spark can also be a divine mandate, a promise to preserve his devotees, an hour to manifest His majesty and a vocation to establish every assembly which stood for Him with “one aim, one business, one desire” (“The Scholar-Gipsy”). It is the hour when our faculties work together in harmony, choosing culture over anarchy. The spark can also mean the moment of peace (seen in keeping with Arnold’s philosophy of integralism) that comes from spiritual rehabilitation and a feeling of oneness with nature, leaving aside a self-gratifying, mechanized existence. Distanced from the spark, the Victorians, as “ignorant armies” clashing by night (the tamasic state, according to the Hindu view of life), keep playing in the three cities of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. They are far away from the state of “unclouded joy” and betray a misconception about the true nature of a spiritual culture.
Miller’s observations on Arnold’s views on idea and fact in the next chapter goad me to see the politics and aesthetics of hunger even further. Not that I have any disagreement with the kind of ethical position that Miller demonstrates; this chapter, as a contrast to his position, is intentioned to explore the other dimensions in which I think sahitya can exist to ethicalize. Miller’s response to my discussion on “The Scholar-Gipsy” invites a dialogic intervention that intends to work out Arnold’s ideas on tradition and comparison. For a man to whom impersonality, disinterestedness, seriousness, and renouncement were significant ideas that went into formulating his ethics of reading and living, the impertinence of individuality and the “saturnalia of personal passions” could never be provinces of art and poetry.13 “Doing as one likes” (the liberty of “ordinary selves”) cannot be the ground and cause for ethical action and thinking. Discipline of conduct is close to Arnoldian ethos. I agree with Miller, as with Arnold, that disinterested endeavor to know the best that has been thought and known in the world cannot be left in the abstract (confined to the “athletes of logic,” systematic philosophy, and dogmatic theologists) but must find a way to connect with life, become a criticism of life, generating a sense of creativity.14 But Arnold was not committed to uphold British civility; instead, he invested his life and thought into creating a culture. Unlike his German counterpart Johann Gottfried Herder (Kulturgeschichte), for whom the self-sufficiency of a nationalist whole dominated the cultural, literary discourse, Arnold thought of a perfection where walking alone was courting anarchy and being with others organically and symbiotically spelled culture. Deep interest in comparative education—Arnold’s reports on the education system in France, Italy, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland are works of an educational prophet—demonstrates his eagerness to know “how others stand” and “to know how we ourselves stand.”15 Arnold writes:

In short, it is expedient for the satisfactory resolution of these educational questions, which are at length beginning seriously to occupy us, both that we should attend to the experience of the Continent, and that we should know precisely what it is which this experience says. Having long held that nothing was to be learned by us from the foreigners, we are at last beginning to see, that on a matter like the institution of schools, for instance, much light is thrown by a comparative study of their institution among other civilised states and nations. To treat this comparative study with proper respect, not to wrest it to the requirements...
of our inclinations or prejudices, but to try simply and seriously to find what it teaches us, is perhaps the lesson which we have most need to inculcate upon ourselves at present.¹⁶

A critical comparative negotiation between the self and the other, the native and the foreign, the insider and the outsider, is what forms culture. Rhetoric and emotional exuberance over triumphalist, racist, ethnic, and nationalist braggadocio clogs the mind into an unvital space, disabling all spiritual progression. Arnold points out that “everywhere there is connexion, everywhere there is illustration: no single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in its relation to other events, to other literatures.”¹⁷ The ethics of thinking and doing are recognizing the “connection,” the sahit (the other name for hunger), that contributes to the idea of perfection and “modernity,” the intellectual maturity and orientation to observe facts with a critical spirit, not prejudice or caprice. Tradition is the word that holds the desired tenancy. Shirley Letwin explains that Arnold’s thinking in terms of tradition can be illustrated through the example of Palladian architecture. Palladian buildings bear traces of classical tradition but Palladio maintained a certain sense of order, a sense of the parts connecting to the formation of the whole. Palladio learned a “classical theory of proportion through his studies in the circle around the humanist, Trissino.” But he made sure to add his own contribution, supplemented through his reading of Alviso Cornaro, the Bolognese theorist, Sebastiano Serlio, Italian designers like Brunelleschi and Michelangelo, and others. Letwin argues that “all this Palladio absorbed and reformulated so that out of a repertoire drawn from many diverse sources, he produced buildings that look as if they have grown out of the ground on which they stand. Though there is good reason for describing Palladio as classical, he was not classical in the same way as Bramante, Sangallo, Sansovino, or Raphael. He has created a style of his own, the Palladian building.”¹⁸ This accent on comparison and synthesis leaves us to confront hunger in the understanding of art: the hunger that does not stay immured in the nationalist bunkum but develops its traveling potential across systems, cultures, and continents. Hunger is not in being “ought” but is in the “is”; being British is becoming British with the German, Italians, and the French. There is a hunger for the idea of wholeness but formed not with parts that are monochromatic and dogmatically affiliated to an inflexible core. Parts are distinct; they have their own hunger that combines cosmopolitically and transpoetically to produce an idea. This idea is the
“being with”—discovering oneself, not just “how to live” but also what makes living. Tradition is a failure if deemed rigid and transcendental; tradition is life and “sweetness” when it outlives any imposed dogmatism to start believing in incorporation, a connective momentum across borders. Hunger is the propriety of literary conduct that becomes both the authority and the order, transgression and culture.

Literature’s indigence is in ignoring the other. Hunger is literature’s insecurity. It encounters the distress and anxiety of being trapped in the holy (the interpretation of the word spark moves beyond the economy of the sacrosanct meanability of the poem per se), the constrictions of understanding life and its relation to art within certain restrictive paradigms that prevent sublimation and outreaching. Literature “presents” and, at the same time, embellishes the “not-yet-present.” Funded meanings drawn from established codes and motivations are not discounted; rather, the “secondary imaginary” is created with a renewed purposiveness. Hunger, then, is aesthetic reordering, a rapport with disciplines and indispensabilities of the medium without being oblivious to the continual striving to aesthetic re-creation. It is scarcely absolutist (as the interpretation of the poem shows) and makes for a critical intelligence that enhances its sociocultural participation and outdoes the intellectual egoism and immurement. Imaginative and intentional sympathies with the author and his art cannot nudge out values that provide the aesthetic distance required for the interventionist other to function. The exegesis on the spark is a demonstration in that direction. This is the catholicity that hunger in literature is capable of foregrounding, combining fresh patterns of belief, pervasive human attitudes, and also appraisals of a heritage that every work under investigation cannot avoid betraying.

Franz Kafka’s “A Hunger Artist” is an example of literature’s abilities for aesthetic refigurations. Brenda Machosky notes: “Ontologically, literature is present in the very moment of its experience, in reading it. The hunger artist is a figure for the writer, for literature itself, and for the reader, because hungering, even more than fasting, manifests presence. Hungering depends on each moment. It does not matter if you hungered yesterday, or if you will hunger tomorrow. Hungering, unlike fasting, is not a matter of will or desire. In German, there are two verbs for fasting: fasten and hungern. Kafka consistently chooses hungern.” Machosky adds that literature “remains in crisis because it continually poses itself as a question” and to “respond to the question of literature can be terrifying enough to keep us from ever proceeding beyond the practicalities of the institution
of literature. When we sustain ourselves with the question, we hunger. Literature demands hunger, and we cannot fast in the presence of literature any more than we can feast on it.”20 Miller, in chapter 2, through his reading of Blanchot and Iser, reaches at a hunger, too. This is the hunger that produces the critical perspectives on the real, the hunger that makes literature transpose the real into the fictive, and the hunger that makes literature generate the pleasure of going beyond itself. The imaginary that Miller talks about is the hunger both for the materialization of the imaginary and the approach to the unapproachable imaginary which inhere in ambiguity and undecidability. The Iserian imaginary is also a kind of hunger, with its embeddings in human self-cultivation and plasticity. Hunger is also implicated in Blanchot’s “unknown, obscure, foreign, dangerous point from which the récit begins.” Sahitya’s hungry sacredness is the empty space waiting to be rented and stays perennially advertised for repeated occupancy.

Sahitya, in its openness to critical understanding, releases a certain amount of energy, an excess that comes from a loss of meaning. This unutilized energy (as evidenced through the potency that the spark sparked off) is what makes sahitya’s hunger continue, defying interpretive, productionist strategies of understanding. The hunger of sahitya, then, is about a complementarity struck between strategies to normalize meaning and becoming-meaning. However, hermeneutic caution calls for a careful understanding of the general economy of hunger. The understanding of the spark shows that hunger reads into the causality of events and emotions, works out a coordination between thoughts and processes, seeks out an understanding of a wholeness, coherence, logic, and yet looks for a suspension of meaning, destabilization, and redefinition. Sahitya, in its general economy, provokes the aesthetics of labor, combining investment with energy, capital with product, force with value, and invention with revelation.

What crisis can this hunger create? Is it about the aesthetic, cognitive, ethical, and the intentional? Is this at once about being-literature and becoming-literature? The hunger is both science and art having an ethics peculiar to its situatedness within certain cultural, political, and historical persuasions and premises. The strict domains of the inside and the outside of textual desire are difficult to pin down. The space of hunger is scarcely neutral. In fact, our inabilities and, hence, frustrations to understand the hunger on several occasions result in fostering a greater set of competences. Is this journey toward unraveling the known and unknown
a kind of religious pursuit akin to man’s fervency to decipher the mysteries in the face of the unknowable and the uncontrollable? Certain hungers mollify further curiosities by getting identified and satiated. But a few of them are tantamount to a tryst with wilderness, and it is in such acts of inconclusive and indeterminable eventualities that surprise and rapture reside.

Hunger not generated is suffering; hunger not met is suffering, too. Does sahitya’s hunger then grow out of a law of love, a love of difference, love of being refuted and polemicized, love of the unreadable, love of being one among many, love of resisting fake, love of inheritance and tradition? Sahitya is a personal act, an answerable act, and yet inscribed in certain notions of irresponsibility. Hunger is desire and love—a catholic agape and eros—which turns into a kind of attention and acknowledges the “composite manifoldness” of an event or a thing. This hunger does not stir all in equal measure for love, like suspicion, varies. (In)fusion-trans-now makes suspicion across borders act as love for neighbors. This is a risky task to perform where hunger cannot be omnivorous in nature but has to be discriminatory, in that the neighbor can shun the love, refuse it, and leave the hunger thwarted. The hermeneutics of hunger cannot be righteousness without trial; it is seldom a ceaseless empowerment to proceed and project—something I would term as “bigotry of écriture.” The negotiation born out of hunger cannot singularly be an endowment in self-knowledge but it has a future in a charitable mutuality that becomes life-giving to both the self and the other. The hunger proceeding from a point for the other mutates into a hunger of the other for the point from which it all began. The happiness in meaning-expansion is salvific. The hunger in Arnold’s poem is an unselfing attention to the kenosis of literary merit: the phenomenon where the sacralization of divine attributes are relinquished by Christ to embrace the experience of human suffering forms a close analogy to the desacralization of literary meaning in “The Scholar-Gipsy,” which makes the poem espouse a suffering in hermeneutic, crosscultural hunger.

Hunger is neither banality nor free love. This is the excitement of sinning on an eroticism where emotions are most often affection, virtuosity, exultation, exchange, and protests. And in a Nietzschean erotic transfiguration, this interpretive eros erupts less out of the attractive and the desirable and more from the unlovable and the unreadable (a deeper understanding of the case study on the spark demonstrates this phenomenon). This hunger is both conditional and unconditional and subjected at times...
to an accountability that requires high proficiency of paradigm and epistemic competence. Paradigms cause each other to appraise sahitya’s hunger, but that does not always typically follow a forwardish accretional or incremental movement in meaning, which we understand as an extension of what existed for us to proceed from. This “causing” upon each other is both backward and forward, where the circumambient and the flitting lock horns amid the interstices of heritage and invention. I would like to see this import of the other through the emotion of sacrifice (from the Latin sacrificium, root of facere, “to do, perform,” primarily used in the sense of “something given up for the sake of another”). Sacrifice would mean giving up on something for the benefit of the other. But here the otherness invested in the trans-now hunger is meant to be a sacrifice whose benefit extends to both the parties in play. It is a hunger (like the meaning of spark that feeds on Hindu, Buddhist philosophy and Arnold’s consciousness of the Victorian spiritual crisis) that is constructed around a sacrifice ranging across ideas, ideology, experiment, perceptions to produce a cosmopolitan experience of intermeshing discourses. This can be argued as being ambitious for each other, being organismic when required, and becoming the health that grows, as Nietzsche would like to see: continually growing because acquirement comes from giving up again and again and the intent to give up to survive and thrive. The health and volume (in the Gadamerian sense of the word) of the poem have grown in a process of giving up or sacrificing reified meaning for the hospitable accommodation of the other, consequently sponsoring role-perplexities between guests (the Hindu and Buddhist intonations) and the hosts (Arnold’s spiritual and cultural figurations). Phenomenologically, this hunger is intersubjective in the sense that the parent and target literature and theory come into a communion where the hunger of one is increased by being hungry for the other, in recognizing and sensing the hunger in the other for oneself. This is collaborative, dialectical hunger, more aggressive and combative than Socrates would have liked. Indeed, my (in)fusion-trans-now is epitomized and conceptualized in a hospitality, which, far from being a snug shelter of established protocols of meaning, provides hospitality to the unsheltered, the “stalking-talking-stranger,” that keeps literary studies alive. This is both conditioned and unconditioned hospitality whose specificities are difficult to determine and that often refuse to work under fettered conditions of signification. It lends dignity to the rights of the stranger, the foreigner: the host text’s hunger is also a responsibility that needs critical attendance and commentary.
Taking a cue from Derrida’s *Monolingualism of the Other* (1992), I would like to argue that the foreigner, which (in)fusionism brings into the court of interpretation of a text, is vulnerable to both exclusion and rejection. The trans-now inputs that invest the reading of the poem are apparently the “absolute other,” which is always under the risk of disenfranchisement under the literary, cultural, and contextual rights that the text under discussion promotes and tries to establish. The hospitality of the hunger legitimizes the right to speak and also a freedom to receive, accept, and suffer. The interpretation that builds on the spark is a kind of pervertibility, a dignity of meaning whose legitimacy rests more on unconditional laws of hospitality. This dignity is not sovereignty, not a Kantian universal, but what (in)fusionism, in a Derridean way, can often do is demi-dignité (the possibility of validating a hunger). Hunger in such cases of unprogrammability becomes an event. In its iterability the thoughts on the spark become an event.

Hunger is the potency that sahitya possesses where affirmation is both conservation and the expenditure of energy. But the (in)fusion approach, despite the kind of reflexivity that it whips up, admits the possible confrontation with a “sacredness” of meaning (it is not necessary that all acts of interpretation become sacrifice or subversive). So the (in)fusion approach, despite being aware of its limits (head-brushing with sanctioned significance of the sacred), justifies a “will”—a will to empower, otherize—and an erotic dynamics (corresponding with Derrida’s “re-mark”) for a general economy of discharge and energetic dissipation. The critical exposition centering on the spark lives on a hunger that functions transpoetically but cannot sever its inherent connection with the context that gave birth to it (the Victorian malaise that Arnold was deeply troubled by). It is an example of interpretive hunger that expires and yet saves what it emerges from. The conditional commitment to Arnold’s originary intentions are not discounted; rather, the (in)fusionized progression calls for an articulated desire to move beyond Arnold’s predictable and established conventions of thinking and belief into the moment of a pregnant neighborhood of the other. This is the name-calling of the other, the other’s ability to write the event.

**Hunger, Ethics, and Things**

Sahitya, in its creation and in the construction of the life-worlds, is never closed off from the “things” that constitute it. On one hand, we have things represented as literary, in the form of a plant, a table, a piece of wood, a
hammer, a stone, and many other things; on the other, there is the unrepresented matter in the form of things that preexist sahitya but exist, as I shall argue, in the making of sahitya. For instance, while writing this chapter I encountered things like the table and the chair that I sat and wrote on, the window, the curtains, the floor, the décor, the lights, the wood, the dust, the breeze that blew across my study and so on. The ethics of creativity address both states of things, the classical and the quantum, one that is visible in its representation (the intended, conscious encounters), and the other that is invisible and imperceptible (unintended) because they go unrepresented in the final form of a text. Sahitya would know its matter (substance), the things (here meant as objects, ārāvyā) that help make it matter (the subject, visaya), but most often fails to be distinctly conscious about the materiality (how matter matters both in the sense of how it is made to matter—the “pressure of prejudice,” as Edmund Husserl points out, and how matter matters on its own) that contributes to its “coming into being.” I am not arguing for a state of postrepresentationalism, rather, a state of invisible representation, a material ontology of creation whose uncanny worth lies in a disturbing dialectic where not being represented is not about undermining its significant contribution to the processes of literary production or representation. Sahitya is not just a construction of the mind created out of the writer’s imagination, emotions of wonder, curiosity, and private considerations and perspectives. There are ways sahitya is “thingized” in its formation and finality. Sahitya is obtained out of a complexity that is built on how a writer reacts to the things around him (the mentalization of matter as revealed through the writer’s use of the narrative, images, metaphor, and rest) and how things in their independence and necessity serve to form the writing. This, I argue, is an entanglement where the mind and the body come into a complex play: the writer thinks through the faculties of his mind and is also affected by the things he uses or accesses to make his thinking find shape and consequence, an ethics of copresence meshed in invisibility.

Sahitya thus begins in a chaos of things, chaotic in its undetermined and underdetermined patterns of interaction in which the computer, its battery, its memory, the power connection, the strokes on the keyboard, the mouse, the light on the screen, the display of the text on it, do not additively contribute to the writing material but combine and recombine every moment in the growth of the matter as a manuscript. The materiality of the matter is not intrinsically chaotic and the apparent order, as represented in the coherence of sahitya itself, does not arise magically.
Rather, there is a pattern in the intra-actions that is not “relata” but an intricate combination that we struggle to make much sense of, where our accountability fails and intuitive knowledge takes over. It is here that the “bottom of things” surface: when things are seen beyond their anthropocentric utility and understanding. There is a butterfly effect (in the words of chaotologists) in sahitya—order, but not preordained, at the edge of chaos, not what Ian Stewart has described as “cake-mix periodicity/apperiodicity.” The chaos that sahitya has to negotiate is not about knowing a preconceived order, but knowing a law that apparent lawlessness conceals. Something happens on a minor scale (the flapping of the wings of the butterfly) to effect a dramatic change or event later (for instance, a storm off the coast of India). In the course of the construction of a text, there are chances that one of my paragraphs can hurry into emergence under the pressure of a failing battery found reeling under a sudden power cut. It is highly likely that this paragraph that I hastily script will have forgotten its point of origin when the text becomes finally ready. There are no disputes as to the contribution of the mind toward the construction of this paragraph, which we might eventually judge as extraordinary. But this extraordinariness, I would like to argue, results from an entangled effect of a dwindling battery and the sudden shift, probably intensification, in the levels of my concentration because I did not want to lose out on my thoughts under the specter of the computer’s dying on me any moment. These things undoubtedly contribute to the making of sahitya (dravya-visaya, coconstitutive enactments). The chair I sit on to write is the welcome support I need to make my writing progress comfortably; it, like the table or the other objects associated with my writing, adds to the security and convenience of my literary business, which is tagged irreversibly to constructions within finitude. That the object we designate as a chair affects my thoughts through its principled contribution in the form of comfort and convenience cannot be denied because writing without a chair like object or an object like a chair is not an easy deal—sitting on the floor or on the bare earth may not always be gleeful alternatives. The object as chair is coextensive with the processes of my writing: dravya in imperceptible ligatures with visaya, a kind of processual relating, an unavoidable mangle.

Although I call these thing-forces and thing-effects the order on the edge of chaos, they cannot become fixed determinants in the corpuscular growth of the text. Things working independently and in their particular order can influence their human other in a variety of ways. Sahitya, as
a kind of order, is constructed through a force field of things that does not have any visible and formal contribution to make (within the ambit of human comprehension, the sinking battery or the power cut or the display on the screen will suffer from an indifference, not considered as ever having a role to essay in the formation and existence of sahitya). The subjectivity of objects is lost out to the autonomy of things resulting in, to appropriate John Casti, nothing less than a “surprise.”

Sahitya is not magicalized into being but it has its own encounters of surprise. As a product of entangled fields—within principles of quantum understanding there is a demon in the atom—sahitya is thingized. Metaphorically, the bibliography does not produce a book; it is just a part of the creation (the mind that reads and processes) and the other part owes to the book’s being produced by a variety of things. So the book is both a literary thing and a thing.

I would like to identify in sahitya a different consciousness that tries to find the link between form (configurations that develop through interactions with matter) and empiricism (direct contact with things). The consciousness that develops the form or the content or the aesthetic of sahitya changes our awareness of the physicality of sahitya’s formation. This calls for a unique participation in the nature and configuration of reality and matter. To think of sahitya as emerging separately from mind and matter is to miss the character of entanglement I am arguing about. Ralph Waldo Emerson is right to note that “every property of matter is a school for the understanding—its solidity or resistance, its inertia, its extension, its figure, its divisibility. The understanding adds, divides, combines, measures, and finds nutrient and room for activity in this worthy scene. Meantime, Reason transfers all these lessons into its own world of thought, by perceiving the analogy that marries Matter to Mind.”

The ethics of sahitya develop in the convergences that differential forces of the mind and matter effectuate, a kind of “holography” or “sympoesie.”

Ethics of sahitya are not always manifest in the represented, because sahitya has always had her trouble with the external world, the trouble being in its agental dynamicity to annihilate or consume the world through representation and normativism and, again, its subsequent, niggling failure to remain content with the represented congeries of knowledge. With the slant on Descartes, we can argue that although our claim to a privileged access to ideas is confident, our communication with material objects is constricted and inscribed in a “deficit making” (we understand things in a reality we are generally confident about), resulting in asymmet-
ric understanding that is quintessential to sahitya. The ethics of sahitya inhere in a materiality whose possibilities or conditions of emergence are not necessarily prefigured in the politics and poetics of linguistic representations. The problematic of critical understanding, then, is hubbed in an entangled creativity whose points of origin are difficult to locate and whose represented product—genetic and constellative through factors that are human, nonhuman, materialist and nonmaterialist—is challenging and intriguing in its pretense to an integrated wholesomeness of meaning.

There is a fullness of materiality whose presence and imperceptible presence (not a real absence) contribute to the performativity of sahitya. Barad observes:

It is difficult to imagine how psychic and sociohistorical forces alone could account for the production of matter. Surely it is the case—even when the focus is restricted to the materiality of “human” bodies—that there are “natural,” not merely “social,” forces that matter. Indeed, there is a host of material-discursive forces—including ones that get labeled “social,” “cultural,” “psychic,” “economic,” “natural,” “physical,” “biological,” “geopolitical,” and “geological”—that may be important to particular (entangled) processes of materialization.

If we follow disciplinary habits of tracing disciplinary-defined causes through to the corresponding disciplinary-defined effects, we will miss all the crucial intra-actions among these forces that fly in the face of any specific set of disciplinary concerns.27

Sahitya is a phenomenon that is ethicized through “agentially intra-acting components.”28 Its boundaries of ethics are not created through the influence of preexisting relations; rather, they are created through agential intra-actions, “relata-within-phenomena,” which result in an “interdeterminacy” that is not fully linguistic.29 The table is not simply the cause that supports the writing pad or the computer of the author; its exteriority to the subject does not limit its function and agency. The table undergoes agential cuts in presencing entanglements that are local in nature, which is about taking its causality beyond what we think a table and the author are connected and mediated by. This increases the possibility of the table as an object and aggravates its contribution toward the ethics of writing and experiencing literature. An ethics of literature is produced, then, through the nonhuman, without the relata and with the materiality of the matter. They are not, as Barad argues, “set in place” before the constitutive
mechanisms of sahitya begin, the matter as phenomena. “Boundaries do not sit still.” And the intra-actions result in the cultivation of the immanence through a separate understanding of time and space:

The world is a dynamic process of intra-activity in the ongoing reconfiguring of locally determinate causal structures with determinate boundaries, properties, meanings, and patterns of marks on bodies. This ongoing flow of agency through which “part” of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another “part” of the world and through which local causal structures, boundaries, and properties are stabilized and destabilized does not take place in space and time but in the making of spacetime itself. The world is an ongoing open process of mattering through which “mattering” itself acquires meaning and form in the realization of different agential possibilities.

The ethics, then, are in feeling the materiality of experiencing sahitya: reading literature through the materiality of matter and the workings of the body. Reading literature matters in how the body of the reader reads it—a book in hard and paperback, the cover design and its affects, the font size, read in iPad or PDF (the electronic aesthetics of reading), the position and state in which the reading was conducted (reclining on an armchair or standing with the book kept on a high table or sitting on a chair with the book on the table or sitting on a quiet park bench). It is significant for us to realize how a pathographical treatise or pathography read by a patient recuperating through her illness in the hospital bed and read again when she is home in her armchair, cheerful in body in its post-illness state, deliver differing levels of affect. Such soma-humanist ways of reading are loyal to intra-active formations, reject relata but are sensitive to sahitya’s reception and experience dwelling both in the materiality and biologics of the body and what supports the body through a chair, a bed, a writing table, the lamp, the décor and state of the room, the windows and carpet and other equipmental impingement.

So sahitya is produced through entanglements in the nonhuman: Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” owes its creation as much to his creative imagination as to the Hellenic frieze that he saw. Tagore’s poems are produced through a contribution of the table he worked on, the windows that allowed gusts of summer breeze to blow across the room, the other equipments that his room had, the door that he ensured was locked to seal him off from human contact when he was writing, and the arrangement or décor of the room that Tagore is known to have changed very often to
stave off boredom. A poem on a tropical, subcontinental summer, written in the intense heat and dust of Santiniketan during his time, with no facility for electricity, cannot be similar semantically, imagistically, and affectively to another poem on summer unleashed, for instance, within the confines of a snug room powered by an air conditioner or soothed by the blessing of ceiling fans. This is what I argue is the intrusion of the non-human on the human body to produce art (the nonhumanization of the human)—a fact that, most often, theories of aesthetic production ignore. Tourists visit Tagore’s house at Santiniketan to see where the poet might have written his poems and stories but invariably miss how the materiality of his writing-space contributed to the production of art. There is a disjunction in the history of the setting and the aesthetics of production (the things around and with which the book got written and the book as a work of art): the ethics of sahitya are about making a critical call on this disjunction, trying to see how the material history of writing contributes to the aesthetic history of literary production.

The famous Indian scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858–1937) is quoted to have said that when we eat vegetables we also eat the sun. This comment is relevant to what I am trying to argue. We cannot eat the sun and can enjoy eating the vegetables only; but in a deep entanglement the sun as the nondiscursive and the nonrepresentational other is inscribed in the discursive and the real (vegetables). This is a complicated version of the material that is not merely the vegetable but the sun-installed and sun-inscribed materiality of eating. Much in the same way, literature cannot be a mere vegetable but has a sun to it, in the form of the nonhuman and the material that contributes to its making. When we eat, rather annihilate, consume, and experience literature, we just don’t stay confined to the aesthetic, the social, the cultural, and the imaginary; we also consume the nonhuman that went into its making. Intra-action in sahitya is not just in seeing the background or the historical, aesthetic conditions of productions but in trying to experience the diffractive materiality, a vibrant presence in absence beyond the humanist center of literary production. Unfortunately, sahitya veils a continent while offering it to be experienced, because sahitya does not know how its acknowledgment of things in their nonanthropomorphized reality can be manifested or represented. This is the disjunction (sahitya’s mattering as against matter needs rethinking) that our ethics of reading sahitya has to identify. The ethics of sahitya are about this awareness, this continent of things that does not illuminate any area of our consciousness beyond disciplinary and normative categories of
understanding. To miss understanding this disjuncture is to miss reading the surplus that things imperceptively generate in their production of sahitya. The art historian and artist James Elkins, in his book *What Painting Is*, writes:

But I know how strong the attraction of paint can be, and how wrong people are who assume painters merely put up with paint as a way to make pictures. I was a painter before I trained to be an art historian, and I know from experience how utterly hypnotic the act of painting can be, and how completely it can overwhelm the mind with its smells and colors and by the rhythmic motions of the brush. Having felt that, I knew something was wrong with the delicate dry erudition of art history, but for several years I wasn’t sure how to fit words to those memories.32

In the entangled relationship of paint and painting the paint loses its thingness to structures of understanding, the planes of transcendence, the foundations of thought that exist external to paint as a thing and consider it as the means to painting. Elkins pans across 8,900 books catalogued in the Library of Congress on the history of art, art criticism, and techniques of painting to discover that less than six “address paint itself, and try to explain why it has such a powerful attraction before it is trained to mimic some object, before the painting is framed, hung, sold, exhibited and interpreted.”33 Losing sight of this disjuncture means we are handed a lost game, a missed encounter, between matter and materialization, thing and thingification.

**Hunger and the Postaesthetic**

The ethics of sahitya has a postaesthetic hunger: a hunger for and in the postaesthetic. It is like looking into the picture and getting arrested by an uncertainty; it is about a failure to methodize the experience of seeing; it is a wrestle with an indefinable, secret understanding, the nature of which is rarely in the loop of interpretive modes. My understanding of this secret is at the level of the ineffable and the asymmetrical understanding of literary experience: a negotiation between the emotive, reflective, and the intangible. This speaks of the inability to hermeneuticize hunger definitively, becoming “for once, and then something.”

Once, when trying with chin against a well-curb,
I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,
Through the picture, a something white, uncertain,
Something more of the depths—and then I lost it.
Water came to rebuke the too clear water.
One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple
Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,
Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?
Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.34

I am tempted to see such experience and discernment as something close to Husserl’s epoché, the suspension of existence, which leaves the object as existing independent of the perceiver and external to the domain of universally presupposed interpretive factor. This experience is about the transport and the delight that certain conditions of understanding lend to the constitution of the self. It has a strange quality beyond the presuppositionalness of methodicity. An investiture that cannot decide between the pebble and the quartz and yet tenaciously delights in the ripple that blurs and blots is once something and then becomes something else: “I lost it.”

This experience inaugurates without a method, a flighty, spontaneous emanation, expiring in a hint of a structure that is dourly loose at its ends and impermanent in nature. The postaesthetic of sahitya, for me, is deeply invested in emotion, its speaking, and its ability to draw narration out of the self.

What happens, for instance, when one reads the first two stanzas of Wordsworth’s “By the Sea” with no knowledge of the poet and his aesthetics, staying oblivious of all the conceptual parameters informing a tradition that can help one to prise the poem open methodologically? Expressions like “the holy time is quiet as a nun” and “the gentleness of heaven is on the sea: / Listen! the mighty Being is awake” can put the whole economy of sahitya to test, igniting an experience that moves and defies all explanation framed through the metaphoric of interpretive boundaries and conceptual structures. What ethics of sahitya am I talking about if I say, “I don’t know why it feels this way?” What happens when a universe of discourses fail to “horizon” my literary experience? Here the hermeneutical and heuristically unutilized, rather, never-to-be-utilized energies are losses that write off a gain whose emergence is clearly out of step with conventional means of understanding and intellectual consumption. Literary worlds are also produced beyond what I have come to see as the (in) fusionized domain of literary hunger: experiences relished in the tremble, the unperceived undulation of the text, and the resonant volume that it silently mounts on us.
If Graham Harman’s “object oriented ontology” is brought to bear on our understanding of the ethics of sahitya, we are faced with seeing a text as neither getting dissolved “upward into its readings or downward into its cultural elements.” There is no access to a method, whether New Critical, feminist, or poststructuralist. If all reading is a method, then such an approach is always a countermethod, in the sense that the experience of a text becomes a resistance to any such dissolution or annihilation within the bounded frames of analysis. Harman writes:

All efforts to embed works exhaustively in their context are doomed to failure for some fairly obvious reasons, though one usually avoids stating them because they are often associated with people whose motives are viewed with suspicion. One of those obvious reasons is that to some extent, the social conditions under which authors produced The Epic of Gilgamesh or Frankenstein are not entirely relevant to these works themselves. For one thing, these works travel well across space and time—and generally the better the work, the better it travels. If literary canons have been dominated by white European males, then this may be cause for shaking up the canons and reassessing our standards of quality, not for dissolving all works equally into social products of their inherently equal eras. We are all at our best not when conditioned by what happens around us, but when an inner voice summons us to take a courageous stand, walk in a different direction, or do the most outstanding work of our lifetimes.35

Any courageous stand resulting in an unconditioned reading of a text is hunger of a different level, generated both by the text on the reader and the reader’s “innocent” desires on the text. Hunger is not merely the generative and productive index of certain social, historical, materialist, cultural, and traditional forces subservient to a certain period in time and space; it is also the product of forces that are never registered or recorded in our formal understanding of a text’s travel down the ages and times. Harman is right to note that more than connection it is the “nonconnections” that can be considered as influences on literature. Instead of proposing that since a text is demonstrative of a certain aspect in cultural history or political thought or social discourse, let us examine where and why is the connection. We must ask why there is no connection between a text and another segment of history or culture.36 Precisely what we consider as nonconnection is what Harman considers the premise to begin with.
What interests me about nonconnections is the way a text withdraws from itself. Deconstructionists would see a text as withdrawing from the reader every time he wants to conquer it with an irrefutable sovereignty of meaning. This results in the text’s slipping away from the reader and emerging in a variety of meaning-experiences. But here the argument is about making the text withdraw from being a text, disclosing an experience that does not stay limited to what the text has to offer. “Beauty is truth, truth beauty” is a text that withdraws from Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” per se: a withdrawal that indicates that the ontology of the line has a unique indifference to the poem as a whole, neither making the line emerge as a kind of mounting conceptual climax nor making the line take the poem climactically to a different altitude. The line’s ontological value is in redundancy, a recurrence in meaning even outside the poem’s intended or established meaning, a retrojection whose void is in fullness.

So why are we prodded to explain things always or provide heuristic frameworks for all experiences? Can’t experiences cease, impermanently though, to be agential, intentional, and moralistic? What is the goodness of being “good for nothing?” Jerry Foder writes:

It’s very hard to get this right because of our penchant for teleology, for explaining things on the model of agents with beliefs, goals, and desires is inveterate and probably itself innate. We are forever wanting to know what things are for, and we don’t like having to take Nothing for an answer. That gives us a wonderful head start on understanding the practical psychology of ourselves and our conspecifics; but it is not of the (no doubt many) respects in which we aren’t kinds of creatures ideally equipped for doing natural science. Still I think that sometimes out of the corner of an eye, “at a moment which is not action or inaction,” we can glimpse the true scientific fission: austere, tragic, alienated and very beautiful. A world that isn’t for anything; a world that is just there.37

The ethics of sahitya are in realizing that literary experiences are sometimes austere, bare, and alienated. It redefines the understanding of the beautiful by offering “nothing” in response to any interrogation as to what makes something beautiful. There is an indifference to the principles of aesthetic formations and understanding, dropping the coins of “how” and “why” deep down into the well of non-reckoning. This surely is also a way to rethink nonconnections.

If one, instead of describing space as “the boundless, three-dimensional extent in which objects and events occur and have relative position and
direction,” writes, “space is a doubt,” what kind of an experience does that project?38 The words space and doubt ooze a thought, leaving behind room for reflection that is unstructured, most often method-defying, and more in the nature of a provocation. This provocation does not prod one to labor on theories of space; rather, it becomes an experience that settles on our self and grows on us with a sense of confusion and ignorance that we may take delight in and very rarely feel embarrassed about. This is about “feeling” the thought out, implicating a difference that we make between the delight of the odor of a rose and a high fashion perfume with an inscription of its chemical composition. Sahitya frees itself up in the postaesthetic when the trenchant rigor and regimes of aestheticization are discounted in favor of a pretheoretical state. The experience of the postaesthetic signifies a mobility beyond a given horizon of expectations, vectoring into an excess, discoursing about which is, most often, difficult. I would like to term this phenomenon as “becoming aesthetic.” This tendency to conjoin with the habits of the postaesthetic is what sahitya provokes us to salvage, a bargain power that supposedly was lost on literature in the compulsive duress of interpretation. If écriture has made deeper inroads into sahitya’s manifestation of its hunger, the postaesthetic has its phantom presence, feeding on its own uncanny ability to salvage experiences beyond what methodological stridency and (in)fusionist astuteness allow. It is about feeling the hunger and not rationalizing, logicalizing, and historicizing it. Becoming aesthetic is when sahitya speaks, speaking from an indwelling power (its sacredness) whose nature is unstructured, unpredictable, asymmetrical, and yet uninterruptedly provocative. Sahitya, on such occasions, moves rather than constructs and signifies. Becoming aesthetic owes to sahitya’s ability for deviancy, detouring competences in the form of an “imposed aesthetic” or trained habits of aesthetic response. Sahitya makes itself vulnerable in the premises of the literary, and vulnerability is its fate in the postliterary, also.

The postaesthetic of hunger is the excess of energy that leaps beyond the interpreter’s mortal, limiting abilities to submit to a signification; it is a separate sort of uselessness that sahitya exudes without the slightest aim to become ascribed and inscribed. Uselessness is a hunger whose manifest gain is in a senseless loss, in being unremarkable to a sensus communis (common sense). It emerges in a moment of readerly transaction without being obligated to reemerge in a similar way to the following reader or any succeeding readerly intervention. Sahitya has its own unreserved expenditures in the sense of the prelogical and pretheoretical as distinguished
from the preontological. The postaesthetic is built around a “coyness” with no apotheosis of meaning or determined identity. This is the zone of the “radical aesthetic,” which is an experience where torture is mixed with the delight of having felt something and yet not being able to unveil what it felt like. It is an experience that sahitya grows on us where even a mild, probing spirit can expire into a helpless smile of inexplicability. This is “becoming aesthetic,” whose constituents and experiential relish are ever so elusive and, at best, translucent.

Is the secret of the aesthetic and the postaesthetic of sahitya integral to its own survival? Does it make sahitya unique in its democratic forbearance and endurance, letting upon itself multiple discourses in a carnival of power and knowledge? What is it that makes sahitya readable, yet intangible, sometimes unreadable and, hence, provocative and rapportable and yet not wholly presentable? In sahitya’s strangeness lies its hunger. The mystery is its hunger. In a way, its hunger mystifies it. Miller and I have been left troubled in this book by sahitya’s hunger—one in a dominantly rhetorical way and the other (in)fusionally caught within the trans–now phenomenon of literary experiences. Committed to our contrastive habits of doing literature, we found our own aesthetic and politics of reflection within a canvas that did not allow antagonism but sponsored a rhythm, a rhythm both in contrariety, rupture, and samandha in much desired and inevitable estrangement. We walked across each other in nodding acknowledgment of our distinctness of thought and literary habits and settled on the across to rediscover together the changing climate of values, affect, hunger, and ethics around us—a sahit across continents that I hope the reader will discover and appreciate.