

Editorial:

Pen, Pain and Writing: (Re)Thinking Links, Connectives and Negotiations

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The concept of writing, be it in the Indian or European context, has gone through many significant changes since its inception and so its role, significance and relation to society has also altered. Similarly, its conceptual relation to the use of pen has also changed. When writing was seen as an attempt at creative act(ion), the pen was considered to be the enabling medium through which one achieved such creational power. However, with the shift from the humanist trend towards post-structuralism the concept of such creational power has come under critical enquiry and the same concept of writing has emerged in newer ways, altering the concept and role of the pen as well. The meeting of post-structuralism and feminism has enabled the pen to be seen as a metaphorical phallus, and such writing has come to be seen as a creational act(ion) through which autonomy of self-expression is claimed beyond the phallogocentric structures of literary production. Thus, the French feminists were able to develop the concept of *écriture féminine* with the aim of shifting the focus from the structures of male literary production and claiming an autonomy of women's writing; the same pen is now being used to disrupt the phallogocentric values associated with it. Similarly, with the move towards postcoloniality, writing comes to be seen as inextricably linked with the dominant power structures, the circulation, recognition and dissemination of which, remain linked with the empire itself. Thus, 'writing-back' becomes a crucial concept and a strategic move for the postcolonial nations as an attempt at re-defining, re-framing and re-claiming the canon itself. The entry into the neo-capitalist structures of global market economy enabled one to view writing and pen in terms of the concepts of ownership, property and consumption, whereby the creative act(ion) of writing was also seen as a part of production, inextricably linked with the dominant reiterative structures of market economy. In the contemporary times also, when the boundary between the real and the virtual seems to have been blurred, writing has shifted into a realm of hyper-real simulative act(ion) where the pen itself has been digitized into mouse, pointer and keyboard. Writing in such a new world of techno-science and cyborgs thus becomes a problematic memory to be re-membered

in the sense it was conceptualized in the previous ages, since it suggests a future too alien to be anticipatable in the here-and-now. The continuously shifting trajectories that the history of writing reflects, thus problematizes any attempt at writing about "pain", since the concept of "pain" also emerges as something which cannot be limited within any singular definition but remains always shifting, always contingent.

Any attempt at thinking about "pain" always remains linked with the thinking of "body", and the thinking of body remains an attempt that is always eluding. Thinking of "pain" also involves the thinking of "experience" that comes to signify the pain in terms of the specificity and expectations of "what matters?". "Experience", when seen as a decisive category in terms of reflecting the specificity and immediacy of "what is" here-and-now, comes to acquire a force of the visible and normative that shapes the "real" itself. However, "pain" remains operative with a certain invisibility. As such how can one re-present the invisibility of the experience of "pain" through the structures of visibility and intelligibility that shape any attempt at writing?

Such contingencies and paradoxes, that any attempt at re-presenting "pain" through writing always involve, thus raise certain crucial questions, some of which can be partially framed in the following manner: How can the concept of "pain" be (re)presented? Can the concept of "pain" be seen as enabling, as something positive, or as something which can also be desired? How can writing, with its own structure, rules and regulations, capture or reflect the experience of pain? What are the limits of such conceptualizations, links, connectives and negotiations?

Such questions, which always haunt the inquirer and emerge from within any discourse involving "pain", thus not only forces us to re-think the links, connectives and negotiations through which writing and pain are brought together, but also to re-think the structures of our thinking itself. Such call for re-thinking, reflecting a search for newness, alterity and difference, not only forces us to re-consider the existing structures of thinking but also cautions us with the paradoxes such attempts at re-thinking may involve.

In the inaugural paper titled 'The lady Vanishes: Sexual difference and the Politics of Writing Pain' Anirban Das interrogates into the possibility of graphing pain in writing, which is the central concern of the journal. Das, investigates into the ethics which are functional in the representation of pain and tries to discursively formulate a methodology for graphing pain while being aware of the problems which are faced by any instance of co-habitation of singularity of pain and the politics of representation in writing. He investigates into the politics of feminism and talks about "pain as a metaphor" for an alterity.

Subro Saha, in his paper attempts to trace the genealogy of scientific discourse in the western metaphysics and understand the pain as located in the liminal space in between the idea/ matter binary. His paper tries to problematize the relationship between pain and act of writing it down through an understanding of the idea/matter binary.

Exploring the poetic output of Thom Gunn particularly his 1992 anthology *The Man with Night Sweats*, Niladri Chatterjee in his article explores questions such as: Is there any alternative to phallogocentricity apart from *écriture féminine*? Does gay male writing also

uphold patriarchy? What are the literary expressions of pain experienced by homosexual men? Is the very acknowledgement of pain a mark of effeminacy? Homosocial tactility along with homosexual desire is an area of great anxiety for patriarchy. Chatterjee also explores the performative politics of homosexual men, against patriarchy.

Amrit Sen in his article titled *Widows and the Pain of Indenture: Writings from Mauritius* makes a historiographical study of colonial space of Mauritius in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. His paper explores narratives of migrant labourers as well as those women who experienced widowhood post migration. The paper not only tries to wrestle with the various socio-political reasons of migration but also tries to understand the effects of such migration on the cultural event of widowhood. The paper discursively explores how migration altered the state of widowhood in a liminal migratory space.

'In Qur'an and Divine Writ: Islam in the Writing Process' of Contemporary British Muslim Fiction', Rafat Ali takes as his primary text various contemporary British Fiction. Through a close reading of texts such as *Satanic Verses* (1988) and *The Road from Damascus* (2008) he seeks to explore the Kulturkampf between the West and Islamic world. At the same time he suggests in agreement with Claire Chambers that the emergent sub-genre of British Muslim Fiction challenges the stereotypical views concerning Islam and Muslims.

Pratibha Biswas in the paper titled 'Signifying Pain, Signifying Self: Reading Autobiographical Narratives by Dalit Women' attempts a psychological reading of the autobiographical narratives. Engaging with by Dalit women, namely, *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) by Baby Kamble, Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* (2008) and Bama's *Sangati* (2005) Biswas attempts to articulate how experience of stigma, oppression and pain are re-presented in these narratives. Biswas also tries to elaborate how the act of writing mirrors the process of erasure yet also allows for an emancipatory space.

Saunak Samajdar's short outline of a presentation 'The Kathartic Pen: Writing And Painlessness' is concerned with ontology of writing as a process and possibilities of Barthesian *joissance* it holds. Strategically engaging with Shakespeare, Joyce and Keats he hints at the double intent of pleasure and pain operational in writing.

Paromita Sengupta through her reading of Revd. Lal Bihari Day's novel *Bengal Peasant Life* tries to examine the relationship between the author-language-subject-reader. Her paper is an attempt to engage with the narrative formulations used by a colonial subject using the language of the colonized, to write about the pain of colonial lived experience.

The central thematic of Surojit Kayal's paper is to explore the possibilities of visualising history or rather historiography as a spatial discourse, particularly engaging with J.M Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*. His paper offers an alternative mode of engagement with history, exploring the fissures of history and identifying them as the channels

through which the pain of the marginal identities flow. His paper explores the white marginality as depicted in *Disgrace* in post apartheid South Africa.

In their paper, *Pain, writing and the problems of Thinking Time*, Bedika Rai and Swagata Singha Ray critically engage with writings of Virginia Woolf and Jane Austin and trace each character in *Emma* and *Mrs. Dalloway* through the parameters of changing time and how they act out in his/her own pace, and the disparity in the occurrence of events between them that would contribute to a fresh perspective, hitherto overlooked by the critics.

Racial misrepresentation and the pain of such an epistemic violence on the figure of 'the Jew' in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* concerns Bhaskar Lama. In his paper Lama tries to understand the politics of representation in Marlowe's drama and tries to unravel the dramatist's inner-self. He suggests that the Marlowe mitigates the pain of misrepresentation of the Jews by conceiving the act of writing as a painful act.

In her paper 'Exorcising Pain Through Pen And Writing: A Case Study of Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*' Kasturi Ghosh explores creativity as a therapeutic process. Through her reading of *The Vampire Lestat* by Rice she examines how the authors own atheist tendencies are reflected in the textual space along with the trauma such view lead to in a postmodern Godless world.

The last article of the journal brings the pain of writing closer home with delineation of trauma of Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi from 25th June 1975 to 1977. In her paper Gunjeet Aurora explores the trauma of emergency through a close reading of texts like *Midnight's Children*, *Rich like Us*, *A fine Balance* and *Infinity of Grace*. Her paper reflects on the contemporary socio-political trends and manners during the period of emergency using such readings as subtext to read the literary representation of the trauma of Emergency.