

The Pain of Abortion & Creating Literature: An American Perspective

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ABSTRACT: *Abortion can be compared with the process of writing, creating literature. I am going to talk about it keeping in mind American literature. What I feel is that we have made 'Abortion' and 'literature' topics of discourse. While doing so, we sometimes forget the pains of the mother and writer. The pain which is not only physical but mental and spiritual also. What do we do while teaching literature? We dissect the literary work into pieces. We divide a poetry into stanzas, rhyme scenes, rhythm, meaning and so on. These are all labels which mar the originality of literature. I will refer to an article 'Giving Death' by Erin Soros. Derrida says "Death is very much that which nobody else can undergo or confront in my place." In the same way nobody can experience other's pain. Yes, one can sympathize and share but can't feel the same pain. I have also referred to the story by Alice walker titled 'Rose lily' taken from her collection 'In love & Truth'. I have also discussed some reasons behind why I relate abortion or the pain of abortion with the pain of writing.*

Key Words: *Abortion, creating, pain*

I am going to talk about abortion relating it to the process of writing, creating literature keeping in mind American literature. What I feel is that we have made 'Abortion' and 'literature' topics of discourse. While doing so, we sometimes forget the pains of the mother and writer.

There may be different attitude to it. But how can we understand the word without experiencing the pains of mother? The pain which is not only physical but mental and spiritual also. In the same way, we do with literature. We explain, argue and discuss but don't feel, understand or realize the pains of restlessness of writer.

What do we do while teaching literature? We dissect the literary work into pieces. If it is a poetry into stanzas, rhyme scenes, rhythm, meaning and so on. These are all labels which mar the originality of literature. Abortion and writing are very similar. When a woman gets her fetus aborted, there is anguish in her. She also feels guilty for killing her own part but she wants to live, wants liberty of choice as a result she is torn within. Can we feel her pain? Only she knows the pain of giving birth to something that is incomplete and guilt of giving death. We forget her anguish, wounds, cuts and scratches. The writer also feels the same mental state of mind when he gives words to his idea, thought feelings and emotions. He bleeds within.

As I am talking about the pain of a woman. I will refer to an article 'Giving Death' by Erin Soros where she describes the pains of her grand-mother in a pathetic way. Florence, her grandmother came in contact with a man named Phil in 1905. She was poor, thin young girl who did not like the man at all but she was taken away forcefully by him. She was raped by him and became pregnant. There she submitted herself to Phil totally, gave birth to Erin's mother but the pain that she had was extreme. She went almost mad. She stared thinking what did not exist. She thought that people were trying to kill her by poisoning food. She stopped eating.

Erin Soros, the grand daughter has a strong reaction against it. She wants to rewrite the history but on her own. So, she decides to get her fetus aborted. She believes that abortion should be the choice of a woman. She is not ready to submit or compromise. She wants to distinguish her history from mother's and grandmother's.

But question is can we feel her pain? Only Florence can or Erin Soros can. People may even criticize her reaction talking about it cruelly. According to the Erin Abortion is both death and life. If she gives birth to the child, she dies means it would be death of her wish. In fact death is personal responsibility. It can neither be given nor taken. Even Derrida says "Death is very much that which nobody else can undergo or confront in my place." In the same way nobody can experience other's pain. Yes, one can sympathize and share but can't feel the same pain.

Another thing is when one speaks out the wish, one loses the identity. She reacts strongly by saying "Abortion is a way-perhaps only way to make oneself a woman. Real women have abortion." No woman can make such a statement without reason.

There is always pain, dissatisfaction which leads one to take such decision.

As we are talking about the pain in woman's life, I would also talk about another story by Alice walker titled 'Rose lily' taken from her collection. "In love & Truth" it is also full of struggle and restlessness of a lady. In Alice walker stories, being in love often means being in trouble. Having struggled for health and wholeness herself, Alice could portray the pain of woman very effectively.

Rose lily is a poor black woman with four illegitimate children. A Muslim man from Chicago is ready to marry her, but she feels neither happy nor triumphant. Instead she feels old and yoked. The story starts with her wedding ceremony. She feels that her marriage veil will merge with veil (purdah) because she was marrying a Muslim man. She is reminded of ropes, chains, hand cuffs and covered head. This shows her mental condition and worries. Even the flowers seems to choke her breath. She feels the sheer weight of conventions. The man feels that marrying is binding not freeing. Her husband had promised 'she will be in home, will not work anywhere, will only rest' but later on, she realized what it meant. It simply meant that she will submit herself fully to his wish and do whatever he likes. What she will do is to bear children. She says "Her hands will be full. Full of what? Babies." Here also we can see her dissatisfaction regarding her future. Only for safety of her children, she is ready to marry.

On one hand, she wants freedom that's why she feels the weight of satin robe. She is not even sure whether he loves or not but she likes him. She knows security may exist for her in Chicago but no personal fulfillment because the husband expects no more of his wife than her stay at home and have babies. There is a denial of psychological freedom and wholeness. She goes on thinking about all these as if she is dreaming and she comes back to her sense and realizes that finally, she had married. She described painfully how she feels his kisses, cars-drive away, and her husband's hand-like the clasp on iron gate. The children looking with distaste mixed hope at their new father. She is anxious, she needed support. She pressed her palm on his hand but he did not even look at her.

So, in this story too we find mental struggle and need for individual freedom.

Now let me come back to my point again. As death cannot be experienced by any one else, nobody can experience others pains. Even after reading these two stories, can we really feel the pain of those women?

How do I relate the pain of abortion or the pain of a woman with the pain of creating literature? When we label something or someone, it dies means it loses its identity. Once we start labeling the literary piece by giving names and cutting it into sections, it loses its originality. Isn't it almost like an abortion? How? Here are some reasons behind why I relate abortion or the pain of abortion with the pain of writing.

- (1) When the author creates any piece of literature, it is transformed into dead letters. Feelings can never be expressed fully through words. Once you accept the medium of language, it changes the whole intention. Beside this, it always remains an incomplete expression. Even after writing 'Giving Death', Erin may not have expressed her grandmother's pain and suffering in totality- it is only she who can feel.
- (2) The other thing is that one is never sure of what the readers would derive out of the literary work. Will it be the writer's meaning, interpretation or readers own? This is once again the death of intention. What the author wants to say may not reach the others and even if it reaches- it is either something more than the original intention or less than the original one.
- (3) When the writer writes, he cuts, scratches and tears himself from within. This is once again like abortion. Both the mother and writer are creators and pass through the pain of killing because mother kills the fetus and writer's intention is killed, he cuts his feeling, emotions into pieces.

This means that the real pain never reaches the readers. Once somebody tries to explain it, it becomes dead because the medium itself is dead. Once we write, Read or discuss, it does not remain the pain of abortion, it does not remain the anguish of Erin's grandmother, it does not remain even the restlessness of a black woman Rose lily. It becomes a dead piece- without originality. The readers always interpret the work alongside his stories and experiences.

Derrida says in context of Gift of Death," Reading is process of approaching the other knowing that it is unreachable. Once again I would like to quote Derrida who said, "When I read Ulysses I don't express the filiations of the author, but fracture it, split it, I give not birth, but death".

Even Barbara Christian asks in criticism of Black feminist writing "To what extent does one expose the pain? Or can one ignore the pain? Which is true and is yes, can readers read if one is really effective in portraying pain? So what I feel is that we have made abortion and literature- the subjects of discourse and while discussing these two we sometimes forget that behind it, there is always somebody either the mother or the writer who must have suffered. "

Bibliography:

1. Soros, Erin 'Giving Death'
2. Walker, Alice 'Rose lily' (In love & Truth)