

[The Portrait of an Artist as a Pathographer: On Writing Illnesses and Illnesses in Writing](#)

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Health is silence, illness voice. The lived-body (leib), the body as it is lived and the body which is not merely a corporeal body (korper), speaks through illness (Sarkar, 2019). The latter is a 'psychosomatic' condition of not being at ease with-the-world and is, both pathologically and conceptually, different from disease and sickness (Aho & Aho, 2008). This then becomes insignificant whether that illness is the illness of the mind or the body— as the body which is lived is beyond the Cartesian dualism. It is more of an ambiguous continuum of mind-body entanglement rather than the more simplistic mind/body binary. Mental illnesses, therefore, are as much as of the body as physical illnesses are of mind.

Illnesses, as opposed to diseases, are incommensurable in medical terms. These are generally voluntary or involuntary responses/signals which we give to ourselves and the world around in a sort of 'metalanguage' that something somewhere is not quite right. All illnesses may or may not turn out to be a disease; the latter is a sort of categorization, diagnosis followed by prognosis, based on existing medical episteme. An illness, on the other hand, is very difficult to locate and describe as it defies any form of causality. Disease is geometrical, illness topological. The language of medical science with its jargon and the language of the everyday with its emphasis on utility prove equally insufficient and futile in capturing the pain and suffering of illness. It is this insufficiency or futility that makes us turn towards literary works which over the years have been able to capture this cryptic language and present before us a tradition of 'writing pain' ("pathography"): either from the point of the sufferer (à la John Keats, Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka) or the healer (à la William Carlos William, Anton Chekov, Miroslav Holub). Besides this, we now have the 'care narratives' which tries to understand the pain from the point of a caregiver (Charon, 2006). All these varied experiences of illness— ontological, phenomenological and/or epistemological— have been dealt and re/presented in different forms of literature: such as poetry, drama, fiction, letters, etc. quite effectively. This volume seeks to understand how pathological condition of being ill (the sufferers), as well as the pathologists dealing with the ill (the healers and care givers) have shaped literary works.

We seek chapter abstracts (not more than 300 words) along with a short bio-note (not more than 100 words) for the aforementioned title on different encounters between illness and literature across time and space: of how an individual writer or a poet has been able to capture the poetics and ethics of illness or, for that matter, disease in his or her narrative. The volume intends to deal with these narrative aspects of illness while focusing on this novel genre called pathography (Hawkins, 1999). The deadline for submitting the abstracts is 30 April 2020. Abstracts may be sent to either jayjitsarkars@gmail.com or dyukrish@gmail.com. Notification regarding the acceptance of the

proposals would be communicated by 15 May 2020. This edited volume will be published from Vernon Press, Delaware (<https://vernonpress.com/>).

The following areas may be explored while submitting your proposal for the volume:

- literature and physical illness
- literature and mental illness
- literature and epidemiology
- literature and pathological condition
- literature and pathologists
- care narratives in literature
- literature and medical ethics
- literature and pain
- the role of literature in medical humanities
- literature and contagion

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