

The Fact of Pain or the Idea of Pain: Science, Objectivity and the Question of the Body

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Abstract

The paper attempts to problematize the relations between pain and writing by drawing attention to the idea/matter division that shapes the realm of commonsense reality. Tracing a brief history of the development of 'modern' science as a discipline, the paper attempts to locate pain in a contradictory zone where the idea/matter division that has been haunting western philosophy since classical times leads towards the competing contradictions between science and humanities (especially literature and philosophy) as disciplines in terms of their relation to the question of the "real". As such the concept of "pain", and writing *about* pain, also faces a contradiction in terms of the claims of authenticity and actuality. The development of statistics provides science with tools and language which claims to capture chance and deviations also within the structure of its (objective) knowledge. Medical science and pathology develops in this scene in the marking of the "other" zones: the diseased, the deviant and the abnormal. The idea/matter division now moves towards the idea/fact division, and it is the body of the diseased, patient and the sick that medical science and pathology aims at regulating through its claims of "knowing better". When seen in this light, where and how does pain operate, as an idea or fact? Aiming to show the co-constitutive and co-constraining realm of the binaries characterizing idea/matter, real/unreal, normal/abnormal division, the paper briefly attempts to show how these changes and developments enter into each other's zones affecting and shaping the modalities of their own operations and conceptualizations. Placed in this context, the paper aims to raise two broader and related questions: whose pain matters? And, can we use the pen for writing (pain) without any set of *a priori* ideas shaping our conceptual frameworks and constructing the realm of the "commonsense", however (f)actual they may appear?

Keywords: Pain, Writing, Science, Objectivity, Body

The question of the "subject" has always been central, be it directly or indirectly, to the concepts of "knowledge", "truth", "representation", and the category of the "social" itself. A crucial area that has always haunted these concepts since classical times is the division of idea and matter. Idea is always seen to reflect a transcendental realm whereas matter reflects something more "grounded" in everyday reality. As such, it becomes obvious that the division plays a crucial role in the shaping of our conceptual framework of the "real" itself. This paper attempts to problematize the relations between pain and writing by drawing attention to the idea/matter division that shapes the realm of commonsense reality. Tracing a brief history of the development of 'modern' science as a discipline, the paper attempts to locate pain in a contradictory zone where the idea/matter division that has been haunting western philosophy since classical times now leads towards the competing contradictions between science and humanities (especially literature and philosophy) as disciplines in terms of their relation to the question of the "real". As such, the concept of "pain", and writing *about* pain, also faces a contradiction in terms of the

claims of authenticity and actuality. The development of statistics provides science with tools and language which claims to capture chance and deviations also within the structure of its (objective) knowledge. Medical science and pathology develops in this scene in the marking of the "other" zones: the diseased, the deviant and the abnormal. The idea/matter division now moves towards the idea/fact division, and it is the body of the diseased, patient and the sick that medical science and pathology aims at regulating through its claims of "knowing better". When seen in this light, where and how does pain operate, as an idea or fact? Does science have anything to do in this relation? What role does "modern" science play in this relation? To extend the question a bit, it can be asked, how does science as a discipline assert its superiority over other disciplines and claim its authenticity in terms of the knowledge it produces? Aiming to show the co-constitutive and co-constraining realm of the binaries characterizing idea/matter, real/unreal, normal/abnormal division the paper briefly attempts to show how these changes and developments enter into each other's zones affecting and shaping the modalities of their own operations and conceptualizations.

Placed in this context, the paper aims to raise two broader and related questions: whose pain matters? And, can we use the pen for writing (pain) without any set of *a priori* ideas shaping our conceptual frameworks and constructing the realm of the "commonsense", however (f) actual they may appear?

Exploring such questions call for a reconsideration of the conceptual framework of science itself. To begin with, one needs to realize that 'science' as a disciplinary subject seems to enjoy today a certain degree of autonomy, distinctness and superiority over other disciplines. It distinguishes itself from humanities, which it casts aside as dealing with metaphysical illusions compared to science's promise of dealing with the "truths" of reality. It claims to endorse certain values such as objectivity, authenticity, legitimacy, truthfulness, righteousness and exactness. However the evolution of science as a discipline can be historicized whereby its earliest roots can be traced back to what is 'marked' today as humanities (especially philosophy, literature, arts and aesthetics). To provide one small example, among many others, one can go back to the classical philosophy of Plato and Aristotle which stressed, though in a different style and manner, on distinguishing the forms of approximate and exact reasoning and set out a threefold scheme of abductive, deductive and inductive reasoning, but simultaneously relied heavily on metaphysics.

The word "science" (from Latin '*scientia*' meaning 'knowledge') was used before 19thC in a general sense to mean 'knowledge'.¹ For example in Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*, in Act-V ceneiii we find the lines "...hath not in nature's mystery more science/ Than I have in this Ring".² It was also distinguished from *conscience* in relation to knowing something theoretically (science) and knowing it with conviction and commitment (conscience). However, it was from 17th century onwards that there developed a tendency to separate science from what was called 'art' and the word 'science' came to be applied to a whole body of regular and methodological observations and propositions concerning any subject of speculation. Therefore, the concept of 'speculation' was added with the general concept of 'knowledge' (i.e., 'science'). In the 18th century a crucial distinction was brought, within the general concept of 'knowledge', between

¹ Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

² Shakespeare, William. *All's Well That Ends Well* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 146.

experience and *experiment*, and, between *theoretical* and *practical* knowledge, whereby the concept of 'theory' was then used not simply to mean 'speculation' but rather implied a specific type of knowledge gained through certain methodological demonstrations. Added to these, changes in ideas of *nature* also encouraged the further specialization of ideas of method and demonstration towards the 'external world', and the conditions for the emergence of science as the theoretical and methodological study of 'nature' was then complete.

This marks the moment when science started claiming its autonomous identity and separated itself from other disciplines of knowledge. It is based on this logic of a specific and specialized methodological approach of observation and calculation that science went on to draw a line of demarcation between "natural science" and "natural philosophy", where despite having the common adjectives "natural" it was the concept of what it means to be "scientific" (in relation to "scientific method" and "scientific truth") that differentiated the disciplines. Similarly, at the turn of the 20th century, with the emergence of 'logical positivism', the reality of 'real' objects also was called to be judged in terms of its 'verifiability' (Wittgenstein especially), and the "context" of discovery faded away, giving way to the "justification" of discovery as the central focus. Although certain thinkers, such as Popper, Kuhn, Lakatos and Quine to name only a few, have attempted repeatedly to expose the constructed character of science as a discipline,³ even today 'science' continues to hold a privileged position that not only dominates the questions of representation and reality but our thinking itself.

I have attempted briefly to give an overview of how the concept of 'science' came to acquire its autonomy and privileged position despite its overlapping associations with humanities and metaphysics; however, the brief summary I have attempted to trace, and the points that I am going to develop regarding the development of modern science, are only partial perspectives; there may be, and there sure are, many other perspectives, other genealogies whereby the structure of science can be questioned and problematized. It becomes clear that the very concept of 'knowledge' becomes a problematic and ever shifting concept, and it is these shifts in the conceptual understanding of 'knowledge' that contributed in the development of the concept of 'science'. The shifts clearly mark an element of inconsistency in the field of science as well. It is in tandem with this inconsistency that statistics as a discipline emerges with newer possibilities of even capturing the element of 'chance'. This new field of mathematics therefore added an extra potential to science's claim of superiority since it was able to grasp even inconsistency and chance by means of probability and deviations.

All these changes in the field of science also shape the discipline of medical science and pathology by giving way to a new form of autonomy of knowledge which is specialized in the rooms of the clinic and spatialized in the body of the patient. Thus, specialization of the discipline of medical knowledge operated in terms of a new discourse of normativity, in this case that of defining the norms of the deviant and the diseased, and it is the body which is the site for the location of the disease. Thus it operates in a dual manner: a) of the *identification* of the problem (which only those who are specialized in medical sciences have the "right" knowledge

³ Popper, Karl. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

Especially, in this context, Popper's concept of the logic of "falsification" by means of which science claims its truth value and Kuhn's concept of the 'paradigm' of science emerge as crucial developments reflecting the debates and contradictions operating within the discipline of science itself.

to do), and b) the *spatialization* of the problem within the body of the "sick" and the "patient". The task also accompanies an ethical duty: it is not simply a discovery of the disease but also a restoration of health. This requires a setting up of the parameters of not only the disease but also of health itself, of not only the deviant but also of the "normal" as well. Statistics provided medical science with a tool in the constitution of the discourse of sickness by enabling it to verify, quantify and predict even the chances, and thus to justify its claims to *know* the body better.

All these changes in the discipline of science was reflected in many works of literature written during that time, be it the relation of the fragmentation of atoms and relativity of space-time in post-Newtonian physics with that of the move towards fragmentation in modernist art and literature, or in the turn towards scientific objectivity and mechanical technology in the call for an objectivity of approach and detachment in arts and literature during that time. The scene and debate can be seen reflected in D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915) in a conversation between the heroine Ursula Brangwen, a biology student at Nottingham University College, with a woman doctor of physics, Dr Frankstone. Dr Frankstone is a materialist who believes that there is no special mystery to life. Life is simply a 'complexity of physical and chemical activities, of the same order as the activities we already know in science', which Ursula doesn't agree with.⁴ Dr Frankstone seems, after all, to restate the conventional outlook of nineteenth-century scientific Positivism – and Ursula, for one, is not convinced. The conversation, however, ends on a note of uncertainty. Dr Frankstone seems to speak for the so-called 'classical' Victorian physicists, who would be fundamentally challenged in the early twentieth century by Einsteinian relativity, quantum theory and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. Classical physics derives from Newton, but in the late nineteenth century its most influential figure was Lord Kelvin, whose Laws of Thermodynamics had led to a conception of the physical universe in which everything could be charted and everything was predictable. In what H. G. Wells mockingly called the 'Universe Rigid', a universal space-time diagram was theoretically possible in which all past and future events would find their appointed place.⁵ To picture the Positivist conception in this way was, however, to demonstrate its absurdity. While Lawrence's Dr Frankstone is anxious to assimilate biology to physics, Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) had suggested that 'life' had its own laws of reproduction and variation, leading to an endless prospect of dynamic change.⁶ Thus Wells, a Darwinian and a former biology teacher, argued in his essay 'Scepticism of the Instrument' (1905) that logical analysis could never keep pace with the natural world's ability to throw up new and surprising forms.⁷

The philosopher T. E. Hulme accused the scientific Positivists of trying to 'hold water in a wire cage'. The universe was not a 'chess-board', but a 'chaotic cinder heap'; and Hulme cited the radical scepticism of Friedrich Nietzsche, who had argued that 'What can be conceived is necessarily a fiction.'⁸ Ursula Brangwen, too, rejects the physical materialist outlook in which

⁴ Lawrence, David Herbert. *The Rainbow* (New York: Random House, 1915), 424.

⁵ Wells, Herbert George. "Scepticism of the Instrument" (*Mind*, New Series 13, no. 51, 1904).

The "Universe Rigid" is an article written by H.G. Wells in his early years. Wells sent the manuscript to *Fortnightly Review* but it was rejected by the senior editor Frank Harris. The manuscript was lost but Wells developed the concept later in his 1895 novel *The Time Machine*.

⁶ Darwin, Charles. *The Origin of Species* (England: Penguin Group, 1895).

⁷ Wells, Herbert George. "Scepticism of the Instrument". *Mind*, New Series 13, no. 51 (1904): 379-393.

⁸ Parrinder, Patrick. "Science and Knowledge at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century: Versions of the Modern Enlightenment". *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*. Edited by Laura Marcus and Peter

everything can be reduced to matter and energy, like the movements of billiard balls. But she goes further than this. Studying an organism under the microscope, she cannot believe that its 'life' is a mere blind struggle to adapt and survive, as Darwin's evolutionary theory had seemed to imply, and like her creator D. H. Lawrence, Ursula too is drawn towards religious mysticism rather than philosophical scepticism or some form of biological materialism. For Lawrence and for other modern writers such as W. B. Yeats, science was no longer opposed to orthodox religion as it had been in the nineteenth century. However, it also becomes significant to note that Lawrence locates Ursula's rejection of nineteenth-century forms of scientific certainty within a vividly realized portrayal of the experience of modern higher education, which now oscillated between scientific truth and transcendental faith.

Foucault and a coterie of post-structuralist thinkers have variously attempted to make us aware how all forms of knowledge remain always already linked with dominant structures of power, and similarly, when seen through the lens of post-structuralism, 'science' too cannot be seen as "innocent"; in fact, in the Post- Enlightenment 'modern' world it becomes the dominant tool for shaping and controlling the masses in terms of the hegemonic structures. This 'scientific ideology' or the ideology of the scientists operates by means of creating, firstly, a 'fundamental gap', a 'lack', or a mystery within nature and universe so as to be able to discover it, fill it and map it within its own definable limits. It assumes its authority and hegemonic character, therefore, by means of obtaining our *consent*. Like 'culture', which relates to the norms of behavior dominant in a society, the teaching of the sciences therefore also appears as a site of similar 'cultural' training, although it takes a more subtle, infinitely less visible form. Science, especially biology and pathology, for example, formed the crucial tool for addressing the question of homosexuality in the 19th century by means of creating and legitimizing the binaries of normal/abnormal, natural/unnatural. At the same time, production of scientific knowledge also remains equally dependent on dominant socio-political discourses, whereby, concepts of "development" and "rationalization" of society become inextricably linked to the institutionalization of scientific and technological developments. Similarly, Abha Sur notes in the "Introduction" to her book *Dispersed Radiance*, how, in the Indian context (specifically in relation to C.V. Raman and Meghnad Saha), a confluence of caste system, nationalism, gender issues and colonial circumstances affect the production, organization and examination of the scientific knowledge in terms of which, one is to be accepted as authentic and the other to be rejected as non-sense.⁹ The 'context' of discovery therefore becomes equally significant behind the production of 'scientific' knowledge. The concept of 'objectivity' therefore, emerges as one of those tricky terms which are used in certain specific contexts in certain specific ways for certain specific results.

'Science' becomes a crucial ideological weapon in the production of 'docile' bodies that is marked as 'social', 'normal', 'productive', 'natural', and so on. This marking and subjectification¹⁰

Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 12.

⁹ Sur, Abha. *Dispersed Radiance: Caste, Gender and Modern Science in India* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2011).

¹⁰ As Foucault cautions us, power must not be thought of as negative, as repression, domination, or inhibition; on the contrary, it must always be seen as a "making possible". 'Discourse', in this sense, enables us to understand how society operates in forming and shaping humans as "subjects"; 'power' through its discursive and institutional relays "subjects" us and makes us into "subjects", it "subjects" us to the rule of the dominant disciplines which are empowered in our society and which regulate its possibilities for human freedom and "subjugates" us. By "subjectification" Foucault refers to this entire process of transforming humans into "subjects".

of bodies operates by the production of space itself as empty, as a vacuum or a mystery which science goes on to identify, fill and reveal. The project of producing "social" space therefore, operates by means of creating and separating, first of all, the "imagined" and "real" spaces, whereby though every "real" space is after all a product of the "imagined" space, yet is presented in such a manner that we believe them to be separate. Therefore, the repeated return to a Baconian emphasis on the detailed study of nature and casting off of 'the darkness of antiquity', or the Cartesian split, can be seen as a product of such a thinking that searches for 'facts' to prove 'science', and a certain established scientific-method as best knowledge, however misappropriated and forceful such interpretations, emphasis and claims may be.

The bio-medical sciences of the late 18th century also started using the concept of mind/body separation as a judgmental parameter for defining and limiting one's position in the 'social' space by developing a model of health and illness based on lifestyle and social roles. Biology, physiology and medical sciences came to define and justify the 'social' identities and roles of both men and women. However, it did so with different implications, whereby a tight linkage was assumed between jobs performed in the social arena (for women, the production, suckling and care of children, the creation of a natural morality through family life), and health and disease. Similarly, concepts such as 'temperament', 'habit', 'constitution' and 'sensitivity' were bridged and seen as products of biological, psychological and social interactions, whereby these were seen as affecting the nervous system. Further, the nervous system was itself seen as a physiological system which, because it brought together physical and mental dimensions of human beings, expressed most precisely the total state of the individual, especially with respect to the impact of social changes. All these views emerge, on closer inspection, to be apparatuses operating towards the legitimization and continuous re-production of patriarchy, and its obligatory structure of heterosexuality, by inscribing every individual body with a specific 'social' identity and role. Women, therefore, were defined as highly *sensible* (in the sense of sensitive, or even sensitized) like children, and more passionate than men due to 'the great mobility of their fibres, especially those in the uterus; hence their irritability, and suffering from vapours.'¹¹ This peculiar sensibility of women was seen as contributing to their greater life expectancy, a view which Barthez, a prominent 18th century French physician, for example, attributed to their own body:

"...the softness and flexibility of the tissue of their fibres... their periodic evacuations... each month, renew their blood, and re-establish their usual freshness... another important cause of women living longer than men is that they are usually more accustomed to suffering infirmities, or to experiencing miseries in life."¹²

Their individual body parts were emphasized separately for establishing different 'facts' about their 'social' existence. For example, one view was that the separation of their hips itself made walking more painful for women, and therefore, always made them feel weak

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ludmilla, Jordanova. "Natural Facts: A Historical Perspective on Science and Sexuality". *Nature, Culture and Gender*. Edited by Carol P. MacCormack, Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). From Barthez's *Nouveaux Elements de la Science de l'Homme*, as cited by Ludmilla Jordanova in "Natural Facts: A Historical Perspective on Science and Sexuality", 48.

and dependent.¹³ Ludmilla Jordanova notes that while the uterus and ovaries interested 19th century gynaecologists, the breast caught the attention of the 18th century medical practitioners, who were concerned with moral philosophy and ethics, thereby defining women's role in the family through its association with the suckling of babies, and limiting their identity only to the private space.¹⁴

Science had always been a powerful ideological weapon in establishing and justifying men as the potential members of the broadest social and cultural groups by comparatively placing women within the private space of home and family: be it by presenting women as the passive object of study by the (male) scientists, by relating female with nature and vice versa (as exemplified in Louis-Ernest Barrias' sculpture "Nature Unveiling Herself Before Science"¹⁵), by presenting male "sperm" as active and female "egg" as passively waiting for the sperm to give life to itself,¹⁶ or by regulating sexuality by privileging male spermatoc economy and heterosexuality over homosexuality which they marked as 'perversity.'¹⁷ When seen in this light, the question of "objectivity" too emerges as a problematic concept in relation to the concepts of "scientific duty" and "empirical exactitude". It was mainly in the 19th century that concepts like verifiability, objectivity, experimentation, computation were introduced within the concept of 'knowledge', with the clear aim of "mapping" reality and knowledge itself within certain definitional frameworks, enabling the "making up"¹⁸ of a certain type of *known* or *knowable* subjects. In a similar manner a logic self-elimination came to be popularized in the 19th century as a parameter for the production of objective, scientific "knowledge."¹⁹ These reveal how scientific production of "truths", with its claim of verified, objective knowledge, affect the very meaning of what it is to be human, by setting up categories and parameters of what is to be considered as livable and the meaning of life itself. When Irigaray uses the term "scientific imperialism"²⁰ she thus reflects on such totalizing tendencies inherent in science as a discipline. The "subjectification" that science performs operates not by repression, domination or inhibition but rather by a certain "making possible", a certain type of enabling, and a claim to *know* better.

¹³ From J. Cabanis's *Oeuvres Philosophiques* published by Presses Universitaires de France as cited by Ludmilla Jordanova in "Natural Facts: A Historical Perspective on Science and Sexuality", 49.

¹⁴ J. Cabanis, 49.

¹⁵ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 244.

¹⁶ Martin, Emily. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles". *Signs* 16, no. 3, 1991.

¹⁷ Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998). Richard von Krafft-Ebing's pathological analysis of sexual perversity, for example, formulated an entire pathological definition of perversion whereby he defined that "...every expression of it [sexual instinct] that does not correspond with the purpose of nature — i.e. propagation— must be regarded as perverse... The aim and ideal of woman, even when she is sunk in the mire of vice, is, and remains, marriage".

¹⁸ Hacking, Ian. "Making Up People". *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality and the Self in Western Thought*. Edited by T. C. Heller et al (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986). In his essay "Making Up People" Ian Hacking notes how a concept of perversion as disease was constructed so as to "map" individuals in terms of certain dynamic nominalism.

¹⁹ Lorraine Daston. "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective". *Social Studies of Science* 22, no. 4, 1992. In the essay "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective" Lorraine Daston notes how the very concept of "Objectivity" is a confused one, which once was used to refer to metaphysics, to methods, and to morals, but comes to designate all that is empirical (or, more narrowly, the factual) and includes a logic of "impartiality-unto-self-effacement".

²⁰ Irigaray, Luce, and Edith Oberle. "Is the Subject of Science Sexed?", *Cultural Critique*, no. 1, (1985): 75.

When seen in this way, the discipline of medical science also emerges to share some of the concerns already discussed in relation to its functioning as a therapeutic science that aims at the *restoration* of the "health". However, internal contradictions characterize this discipline as well. Anirban Das in his essay "Medical Knowledge of the Body: Colonial Encounters" presents medical science also as a shifting concept in terms of its conceptual and operational modalities, and traces how a certain dialectical relation marks this discipline through the colonial encounter.²¹ While the western theories of medical science affect medical sciences in India, at the same time (though not in the same visible manner), Indian medical practices (especially *Ayurveda*) also affect many of the traditional practices in western medical knowledge about the body. He traces the contradictions, ambivalences and shifting modalities of practice in medical sciences by using a quite popular section from Rushdie's *Midnight Children*:

"Dr. Aadam Aziz has reached the patient's room, a spacious, ill-lit bedchamber. The landowner Ghani asks him to examine his daughter. Dr. Aziz looks around. In front of him is an enormous white bedsheet, held on by two "lady wrestlers," with a crude circular hole about seven inches in diameter. Through that hole, in the months to come in his recurrent visits, Dr. Aziz would inspect various parts of the body of Naseem Ghani, his patient. In his mind, he would form a "badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts," that would haunt him day in and day out, until one day he proposes and marries that girl. He comes to own that body. Yet, is it he who gets that girl, or is it the 'sly civility' (a term used elsewhere in a different context) of the landowner Ghani that procures the eligible young doctor for his daughter? And does Aziz really own that body? Did he win the battle?"

The battle against her purdah, against the religious tutor of their children, the battle that started on their second night when he asked her to move "like a woman." The shriek, the terror, the weeping trickled down the fissures of his victory. Is Dr. Aziz his own liberal, Western self anymore? Doesn't it fracture when he violently removes the purdah or drives away the tutor by his ears?"²²

Though this passage has been used in many ways to highlight many issues, Das decides to use it to explore the dialectical nature of practicing medical science, where "As Naseem Ghani's body gets marked by the doctor's gaze, the doctor himself undergoes transformations that (re) define his "self".²³

In relation to the thinking of 'pain' the question that emerges then is: Where can we *locate* pain? In the doctor's gaze or in the patient's experience? Can the objective observations of the doctor ever realize the intensity of the pain experienced? Is the "medical knowledge", with its essential facts, the only discipline that can remain operative by means of some approximation of the "idea" of pain that is suffered by the body? If so, then isn't it that science's claim for objective facts remains always already haunted by ideas. The question becomes further problematic in relation to the issues of rights over the body of the sufferer. Foucault, in his *Birth of Clinic* and *History of Madness*, has already made us aware how the development of medical science as a discipline, in terms of its claims to know the body "better", invests it with an *enabling* power

²¹ Das, Anirban. "Medical Knowledge of the Body: Colonial Encounters". *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture and Society* 13, no. 2 (2001), 109-131.

²² Das, Anirban. "Medical Knowledge of the Body: Colonial Encounters". 109

²³ Das, Anirban, 110.

that gives it certain authority and right over the body of the sufferer even more than that of the sufferer itself.²⁴ Perhaps an example from Audre Lorde's account of her own experience of breast cancer can illustrate it better:

"(The doctors said) Lots of blood vessels in it means it's most likely malignant. Let's cut you open right now and see what we can do about it. Wait a minute, I said. I need to...see what's going on inside myself first...that simple claim to my body's own processes elicited such an attack response from a reputable specialist In Liver Tumors...What he said to me was, "If you do not do exactly what I tell you to do right now without questions you are going to die a horrible death"...I felt the battle lines being drawn up within my own body"²⁵

The extract clearly reflects how the body becomes the site where competing authorities, power-structures, discourses compete for control, where sometimes, even the person whose body it is, is denied claim over his/her own body. This experience leads Lorde to realize how bodies are turned into commodities by dominant power-structures, and she links the two arguing that, "Battling racism and battling heterosexism and battling apartheid share the same urgency inside me as battling cancer...And power is relative"²⁶. Now, in all these contexts, the question of thinking about 'pain' requires us to think about the problem of *locating* "pain"; and any attempt to *locate* pain, I propose, remains operative in the contingent movements that shape our thinking itself. In other words, thinking *about* pain remains always already involved with the task of thinking about the body itself, and thinking about the body remains a task that is always partial, always shifting. Thus, any attempt at writing *about* pain, I humbly submit, remains operative in a zone of contingency and continuous (trans)formation, that always remains connected with both ends of the binaries that haunt our *thinking* about pain itself: of observation and experience, idea and matter, imagination and real.

²⁴ Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*. Translated by A.M. Sheridan (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989).

Foucault, Michel. *History of Madness*. Translated by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

²⁵ Lorde, Audre. *A Burst of Light: And Other Essays* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 110.

²⁶ Lorde, Audre, 115.