

CHAPTER TWO

DISCURSIVE BODIES AND POWER

‘Flesh is not an irreducible universal.’ Angela Carter, *The Sadean Woman* ¹

Foucault’s conception of discourse has undergone some changes and transformations during his career related to his strategic needs to elaborate on subjects he analyses in his texts, but the core ideas remain somewhat invariable. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, discourses are autonomous systems of regulations that include strategies, objects, concepts, and subjects for producing scientific statements and domineering generalisations. He substitutes the ideal essence of objects, ‘the enigmatic treasure of “things” anterior to discourse’, with the ‘regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse’.² In supplementation to this constitutive view of discourse that engenders the formation of objects, he later qualifies discourse as ‘tactical elements or blocks operating in a field of force relations’ in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*.³ This chapter will trace the evolution of the autonomous systems of regulations into strategic accretion of ideas within the fraught arena of force relations to locate the body within discourses and its transformations through the technologies of power.

From the perspective of strategising technique, competing forces use discourse as effective means to expedite their agenda and objectives, and, at the same time, providing space for counter-strategies to operate in opposition to these forces. Discourses constitute practices, alliances, institutions, foundations, and methodologies, but are also distinct from these in the sense that they are strategies to maintain, perpetuate, and sustain these various institutions and alliances, and these strategies are analysable. Foucault points out in an interview that the

‘bringing to light, the “clarification” of sexuality, did not happen only in discussions, but in the reality of institutions and practices’.⁴ In his early books on madness and the clinic, Foucault treats discourse restrictively as autonomous systems producing scientific statements to provide conceptual frameworks to delineate their emergence, formation, and functionality.⁵ In his later works on sexuality and punishment, power relations and knowledge formation play a larger role in the production of discursive systems that legislate subject positions.⁶ Thus, one finds two significant phases in the development of Foucault’s formulation of discourse: the concept of discourse as archaeology, that focuses on relations of discursive objects, and the genealogically driven analysis of discourse in his later works influenced by Nietzsche. As David Howarth notes, ‘archaeology describes the rules of formation that structure discourses, genealogy examines the historical emergence of discursive formations with a view of exploring possibilities that are excluded by the exercise of power and systems of domination’.⁷

To conceptualise the archaeological model of discourse, Foucault rejects the traditional humanistic accounts of discourse, like Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, or other traditional history of ideas, because such ideas presuppose a human subject at the origin of discourse to advance its continuity and identity. The notion of a ‘book’, the output of an ‘author’, the dispersal of influence of one author over another, the making of traditions — these ideas are, Foucault argues, not self-evident or unproblematic, and cannot provide stable answers to describe or analyse discourse. Foucault also rejects an originary point, a secret waiting for revelation, as the real cause of discourse. ‘As against the Marxist search for material determinants of ideology’, Howarth points out in *Discourse*, ‘or the hermeneutical quest to uncover the true meanings of texts, Foucault advances a resolutely anti-reductionist programme in which discourse is a positive and material realm of “manifest appearances” to be described in its own terms’ (p. 51). And, as Foucault himself notes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, his method stands opposed to neutralising the discourse to make it appear coherent, ‘to make

it the sign of something else'; on the contrary, he strives to 'maintain it in its consistency, to make it emerge in its complexity' (p. 47). Opposed to the traditional models of analysing history, Foucault puts forward his archaeological model to analyse the formation of systems of disparate and heterogeneous statements that are the outcome of discursive practices regulated by historically conditioned rules of formation, while the rules and regulations are not essentially available to the practitioners who are articulating them. In the 'Foreword to the English Edition' of *The Order of Things*, Foucault says, 'I should like to know whether the subjects responsible for scientific discourses are not determined in their situation, their function, their perspective capacity, and their practical possibilities by conditions that dominate and even overwhelm them [...] I tried to explore scientific discourse not from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal structures of what they are saying, but from the point of view of the rules that come into play in the very existence of such discourse'.⁸

The category of discourse deals with enunciations, with 'things said', in the practical application of language, with language as practised in everyday life. It is composed through 'the difference between what one could say correctly (under the rules of grammar and logic) and what is actually said', and the 'field of discursivity' arises out of this difference.⁹ 'We shall call discourse', Foucault says in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 'a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, might be explained); it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined'.¹⁰ For discursive practices, Foucault goes on to say, '[i]t must not be confused with the expressive operation by which an individual formulates an idea, a desire, an image; nor with the rational activity that may operate in a system of influence; nor with the "competence" of a speaking subject when he constructs

grammatical sentences; it is a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of enunciative functions' (*ibid.*).

Discourses are constituted with four basic elements: the *objects* about which statements can be made, the *location* or *places of speaking* from where statements are articulated, the *concepts* involved in the formulation of discourse, and the *themes* they generate. Foucault's focus is on the rules that regulate the production of statements and how they organise the constitution of objects, on the ways of articulation or enunciation about those objects, and the concepts and strategies of discourse. He refuses any foundation or grounding of the objects, and relates them to the rules that constitute the context of their historical appearance: 'To define these *objects* without reference to the *ground*, the *foundation of things*, but by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse and thus constitute the condition of their historical appearance' (p. 47-48). Instead of restricting discourse to a pre-existing foundation where the curiosity about an object generates subsequent discourses, and resisting the realist or positivist account of the object, Foucault emphasises the constitutive role of discursive practices in the construction and determination of objects by correlating them to the corpus of rules and regulations that sanction their existence as objects. He differentiates three rules that regulate the existence of the objects of discourses: the 'surface of their emergence', 'the authorities of delimitation', and 'the grids of specification' (p. 41-42). The first is set up within the social context where individual differentiation, certain social practices and symptoms become the object of scientific queries. The second is related to the regulatory authority capable of sanctioning the categorisation of the objects into particular discursive formation. The third specifies the way how these objects are installed on grids of specification that operate to categorise and relate disparate objects by grouping their properties or symptoms. These regulations cannot operate independently, and Foucault stresses the intricate

transpositions and interactions of these regulations, the complex conjunction of these rules to constitute the specific objects of discourse.

Foucault also says that ‘the subject of the statement should not be regarded as identical with the author of the formulation — either in substance, or in function’, thus, in keeping with the Nietzschean tradition of maintaining that there is no doer behind the deed and the ‘deed is everything’,¹¹ the subject is ‘not in fact the cause, origin, or starting point of the phenomenon of the written or spoken articulation of the sentence’.¹² This is what Foucault calls the ‘enunciative function’ of discourse. Human subjects are given the right to enunciate by authoritative agencies because they occupy subject positions in the institutional sites from where they choose to speak, and the institutional sites legitimise the validity of their enunciations. Thus, Foucault locates another set of regulations that govern the production of concepts. These rules determine if the enunciative statement can be accepted into a discourse, and they also determine, through what Foucault calls ‘procedures of intervention’ (p. 58), the policies where certain operative processes can be applied to statements to produce newer statements by way of translation, transcription, and reinscription. And, again, Foucault rejects the idea that presupposes a transcendental subject behind the formation of concepts, or the idea that concepts are formed by and the result of progressive collection of empirical knowledge that is projected into an external reality: ‘to analyse the formation of concepts, one must relate them neither to the horizon of *ideality*, nor to the empirical progress of *ideas*’ (p. 63). Discourses like economics, medicine, grammar, and the social sciences ‘give rise to certain organisation of concepts, certain regrouping of objects, certain types of enunciation, which form, according to their degree of coherence, rigour, and stability, theme or theories’ (p. 64), and Foucault calls these themes or theories ‘strategies’. In contrast to the idea of the emergence of theories as simply a contingent formation or due to the individual brilliance of geniuses, Foucault analyses the development and constitution of theories in relation to the regulations

that govern discourses without presupposing human subjects behind these theories or strategies. He also refers to ‘points of diffraction’ in a discourse — the existence of contradictory statements that are both permissible yet incompatible — and ‘equivalent’ strategies where the underlying rules of a discourse do not favour one strategy over another even though all strategies cannot be accepted.

‘In every society’, Foucault says, ‘the production of discourse is controlled, organised, redistributed, by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and damages, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its materiality’.¹³ The first type of control is constituted in the social and political mode of exclusion that Foucault examines in his early works on madness and the clinic, where specific discourses are suppressed or excluded, or splintered into uneven components, imposed with value judgments, and either privileged or devalued according to what the regulatory regimes deem permissible or not permissible. Foucault also points to an internal mode of constraint, a process of what he terms as ‘rarefaction’, where for certain statements to be accorded with privileged status an internal hierarchy of institutional discipline, commentary, and authorisation comes into play. Chosen and privileged statements are systematically and methodically reinforced by discursive mechanism like interpretation, reinterpretation, and explanation. Perpetual reiteration of these authoritatively sanctioned mechanisms functions as a form of legitimation of statements that are finally perceived as transcendental truths which effectively erase the contingent nature of their formation, the contingency of the discourse, as well as limiting the author-position to particular subjectivity. Finally, a set of various gestural mechanisms — ‘gestures, behaviour, circumstances, and the whole set of signs which must accompany discourse’¹⁴ — that are related to the discourses neither externally nor internally, shape the production of discourse by effecting the conditions of their relevance. As Howarth notes in *Discourse*, ‘all these seemingly

unimportant “background” forces are vital for Foucault in explaining who is respected and approved of within a particular “discourse community” (p. 58).

While Foucault’s earlier studies mark a focus towards the structural shifts or differences within discursive formations that legitimise ways of speaking about particular subjects, in *Discipline and Punish* he begins to describe, expanding his emphasis on the structure of discourse, the nature of the magnitude and continuity in the exercise of power, the relational aspects of the regulatory forces of power within institutional norms, and the constraints imposed on the body, individually, to imprint it through the exertions of power. The human body, now, is admitted into the apparatus of power that reconfigures it, and ‘breaks it down [...] [to delineate] how one may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency’ of the disciplinary apparatus to produce ‘subjected and practised bodies, “docile” bodies’.¹⁵ The new architecture of power, its mode of surveillance and confession, subjects the body into a malleability that conforms to the regulations of power, but this mode of structural constriction must include the possibility of the intervention of a refusal to conform, not to be docile, especially with regards to its sexuality, not to be subjected as such, and that would be a *flaw* inscribed onto the body, the emergence of an event that surpasses and exceeds its causes,¹⁶ which would require a newer set of constrictions to segregate a whole set of perverse and deviant subjects to appropriate them. This ‘perverse implantation’ and its ‘incitement to discourse’ is explored in *Volume 1 of The History of Sexuality*, and the following segment of this chapter will focus on that in detail.

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, intended as an introduction to a series of studies on sexuality but remaining unfinished after the publication of two more due to his death,

Foucault begins with contesting a common idea that in the nineteenth century there is a prevalence of the mentality of a Victorian regime, a prudish attitude with high moral overtones, that barred people from discussing sexuality and matters regarding sex frankly and honestly. Before this, there was a basic frankness, a medieval openness that greeted sex with knowing obviousness and condescending laughter. And, after the Victorian regime, the modern era reintroduces frankness about sex and sexuality. Foucault rigorously contests this notion of ‘repressive hypothesis’ during the so-called nineteenth century Victorian regime; instead of a confidential and clandestine attitude, Foucault contends that the entire network of the discourse of sexuality was in fact created during this regime.¹⁷

During the Victorian regime sexuality was regarded solely as the domain of reproduction. In the nineteenth century, ‘[a] single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parent’s bedroom’ (p. 3). Nothing was deemed permissible and sanctioned unless it resided firmly within the domain of biological reproduction, and the failure to adhere to it elicited affliction and strict penalty. The aberrance, the deviations, would be ‘driven out, denied, and reduced to silence’ (p. 4). This denial, banishment, and compulsory silencing reflected how the repressive regulation of the domineering regime was enacted, and it was differentiated and made distinct from the constraints imposed by penal law, because this repression ‘operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know’ (*ibid.*). If repression is considered to be the dominant and basic link between power, knowledge, and sexuality, then a complete restructuring of the regulatory systems is to be effected to allow for ‘a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an irruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure’ (p. 5). This is the modern discourse of sexual repression Foucault wants to contest to eventually displace it with a new notion of positive power that focuses on

life rather than the punitive exactitude of sovereign power that invests all its energy on death and silence.

When one defines the relationship between sexuality and power in terms of repression, it benefits, Foucault says, the speaker, who proclaims its regulation from a political point of view. ‘If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression’ (p. 6). This energises one’s desire to speak about sexuality in terms of repression, because invoking the repressive aspect of power one is effecting small-scale insurrections that create the illusion of an equivalence with the presupposed emancipatory power of enlightenment. This is, as Foucault impishly points out, ‘the longing for the garden of earthly delights’ (p. 7), and talking about sexuality as volubly as the repressive regulatory regime permits is tantamount to an evangelical sermonising which remains merely subservient to the regime. And that ultimately amounts to the creation of a new religion reverential to the edifice of the same regime that forbids its candidness. Foucault’s aim ‘is to examine the case of a society which has been loudly castigating itself for its hypocrisy for more than a century, which speaks verbosely of its own silence, takes great pains to relate in detail the things it does not say, denounces the power it exercises, and promises to liberate itself from the very laws that have made it function.’ (p. 8) In other words, Foucault’s emphasis is not on the question of why one is repressed, but why one consistently insists, creating a host of astonishingly detailed commentary about it, that one is repressed.

Before embarking on an analysis behind this insistence about the ‘repressive hypothesis’, Foucault charts three preliminary doubts about it. a) Is this hypothesis a historical fact? b) Do the mechanisms of power — prohibition, censorship, and trial — belong to the category of repression? Does power only work through these mechanisms? c) Whether the critical discourse of repression is not a part of the same historical network that it denounces by calling

it repression? ‘Was there really a historical rupture between the age of repression and the critical analysis of repression?’ (p. 10) Foucault’s objective is to describe and explain ‘the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality’ (p. 11). The central issue here is to account for its strange garrulousness and grandiloquence, the extraordinary accumulation of commentary, to discover the agency of the speaker, its position and viewpoints, the institutional frame that allows for this volubility, and the mode of its distributory power and framework, i.e., to account for the discursive nature of speaking about the unspeakable characteristics of sexuality. In other words, Foucault’s history of sexuality is a study that tentatively tries to show how sexuality is made into a discourse, or rather how it is assimilated into an amalgamation of a network of differentiated discourses. Also, it is expressly *not* about the truth and falsity about sex and sexuality, but about the ‘will to knowledge’, a substitution of the Nietzschean notion of the will to power, that serves both as the support and instrument of the discourses regarding sexuality.

Instead of a presupposed reticence or silence about sex and sexuality, Foucault notices a remarkable incitement to discourse about it, an inducement to talk about it in a circumlocutory and peripheral manner, in the nineteenth century, and asks what makes it possible to talk so much about sexuality, even though this volubility is quite different from talking directly about sex, naming it candidly and openly, and describing its different manifestations. In Europe, after the seventeenth century, talking directly about sex became more difficult. ‘As if in order to gain mastery over it in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present’ (p. 17). And yet, one finds a ‘veritable discursive explosion’ around sexuality, that operated with expurgated vocabulary, using allusions and metaphors, and exercising control over its enunciative function: ‘where and when it was not possible to talk about such things became much more strictly defined; in which

circumstances, among which speakers, and within which relationships’ (p. 18). Foucault says that within discourses and their domains something opposite to the prohibition and silence regarding sexuality has begun to take place from the eighteenth century. ‘There was a steady proliferation of discourses concerned with sex — specific discourses, different from one another both by their form and object: a discursive ferment that gathered momentum from the eighteenth century onward’ (*ibid.*). A plurality of discourses exploded around sexuality within the purview of power itself, and there was an institutional and bureaucratic instigation to speak about it to formalise its enunciation. This was a ‘determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail’ (*ibid.*). In other words, with the help of a language that expunged sexuality from its vocabulary, ‘sex was taken charge of, tracked down as it were, by a discourse that aimed to allow it no obscurity, no respite’ (p. 20). In due course, therefore, an authoritarian mode of specific injunctions was established — ‘Not only will you confess to acts contravening the law, but you will seek to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse’ (p. 21).

The gradual expurgation of words explicitly related to the manifestations of sexuality and the authoritative purification of its verbal expressions are only the peripheral techniques of the regulatory system of subjugating sexuality by means of making it ‘morally acceptable and technically useful’ (*ibid.*). And, so it was for the increasing prolixity of the act of talking about sexuality. Victorian puritanism and reticence regarding sex was a digression, while the directness and equitable candidness of the anonymous author, ‘Walter’, of *My Secret Life*¹⁸ represented an exemplar ‘in the great process of transforming sex into discourse’ (p. 22). And it eventually becomes an apparatus that produces more and more discourses about sexuality, and these discourses engender ‘multiple effects of displacement, intensification, reorientation, and modification of desire itself’ (*ibid.*), which is why such a deployment of sexuality cannot be explained by only through the law of prohibition.

This incitement to talk about sex — according to Foucault this incitement is political, economic, as well as technical — emerges not in the desire of formulating a theory of sexuality to capture its essence once and for all, but ‘in the form of analysis, stocktaking, classification, and specification, of quantitative or causal studies’ (pp. 23-24). This is a process of not just defining sexuality and to account for it from the confines of morality, but from the strictures of rationality as well. Therefore, one had to speak publicly about sexuality in a way that was not determined by what was considered licit and illicit, in a way that was not determined by what the authorities deemed sanctioned and unsanctioned, but ‘one had to speak of it as of a thing to be not simply condemned or tolerated but managed, inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, made to function according to an optimum’ (p. 24). Thus, ‘sex was not something one simply judged, it was a thing one administered’ (*ibid.*), it was something one *managed*, in order to be able to utilise it for the greater common good. And because of this, it has to be governed and supervised, to be taken charge of, to be administered and taken control of, using administrative apparatuses, and it has to be technically analysed. Thus, according to Foucault, in the eighteenth century, ‘sex became a ‘police’ matter [...] not the repression of disorder, but an ordered maximisation of collective and individual forces’ (pp. 24-25).

It is a ‘policing of sex’, but not the ‘rigour of a taboo’, guarding it and protecting it in order to ensnare it through regulatory and administrative control that is necessary for ‘regulating sex through verbal and public discourses’ (p. 25). Although explicit enunciation about sex was stifled and ultimately silenced, it was not a simple imposition of silence. This complex enforcement was part of a ‘new regime of discourses’, where ‘things were said in a different way’ by different people ‘from different points of view’ to obtain ‘different results’ (p. 27). Silence here does not indicate the limits of discourse; it is rather ‘an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies’ (*ibid.*).

Foucault rejects the binary of what one says and what one does not say; he emphasises the multifarious ways of not saying what one does not say. ‘There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses’ (*ibid.*). Since the eighteenth century in the West, instead of imposing silence on the subject of sex, a whole new set of institutional mechanism was at work, through medical advices and opinions, clinical cases, deliberate and expensive plans of reform, that ‘multiplied the forms of discourse on the subject’, and established ‘various points of implementation of sex’ (*ibid.*), along with codifying its contents and qualifying the speakers who were allowed to deliberate on the subject. The silencing and stifling of a direct, blunt way of speaking about sex was a necessary condition for the various interconnected discourses that were hierarchised and were ‘highly articulated around a cluster of power relations’ (p. 30). Instead of silence, then, sexuality transmogrifies into an object that compels one to talk about it comprehensively and inexhaustibly. ‘Whether in the form of subtle confession in confidence or an authoritarian interrogation, sex [...] had to be put into words’ (p. 32). This discursive proliferation is generated not ‘apart from or against power, but in the very space and as the means of its exercise’ (*ibid.*). In other words, the discourse of sexuality is not separate from power, but it is inextricably affiliated to it to multiply within the confines and interstices of power, as well as being an instrument, a necessary tool, for the implementation of power. This incitement to deliberations about sexuality, as opposed to the repressive hypothesis, is coordinated through various apparatuses — listening, recording, observations, questionings and formulations, and thus, sexuality is ‘driven out of hiding and constrained to lead a discursive existence’ (p. 33). Instead of an overpowering prohibition and censorship, as the repressive hypothesis would suggest, ‘what was involved was a regulated and polymorphous incitement to discourse’ (p. 34).

The domain of reproductive sex is the area where the regulations and constraints converge to exert their power. This is a reflux movement that ultimately gives rise to peripheral sexualities: sexuality of children, the incomprehensible insanity of men and hysterical women, sodomy, etc. As the conjugal domain is made submissive and subservient and is eventually quietened down by observing strict codes of regulation, these peripheral forms are forced to come forward and speak up, and they are listened to more rigorously. This induces, in turn, a ‘setting apart of the “unnatural” as a specific dimension in the field of sexuality’ (p. 39).

What are the functions of power in the proliferation of perverse sexualities? One immediate function would be a stricter control, regimentation, and appropriation effected by this power over these perverse sexualities by medical and legal experts that consolidates the intensification and multiplication of these perversions ‘to persevere to proliferate to the limits of the visible, rather than to disappear for good’ (p. 42). With this mechanism of support, ‘power advanced, multiplied its relays and its effects, while its target expanded, subdivided, and branched out’ (*ibid.*). The second effect is that this regimentation of peripheral sexualities created ‘an incorporation of perversions and a new specification of individuals’, where the homosexual, for example, ‘became a personage [...] in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology [...] the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species’ (p. 43). The homosexual was categorised as not someone who practises deviant and despicable sexual acts, but having ‘a certain quality of sexual sensibility’ (*ibid.*). The mechanism of power did not suppress it, but sought to analyse it in a way that made it permanent and visible. This new execution of power ‘was implanted in bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made into a principle of classification and intelligibility established as a *raison d’être* and a natural order of disorder’ (p. 44). Thus, the strategic aim behind the diversifications and categorisations is

to incorporate the deviations into the surface of the body to analyse it and make it part of its schematics.

Another effect of this new form of power demanded constant attention and presupposed proximities to exercise its function. The medicalisation of the sexually deviant people was both the effect and apparatus through which bodies of the degenerate became inscribed and marked, manifested in the characteristics of the individual, and this mechanism ‘relied on a technology of health and pathology’ (*ibid.*). As sexuality became medicalised, its detection was possible ‘on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of the behaviour’ (*ibid.*). And, power ‘operated as a mechanism of attraction; it drew out those peculiarities over which it kept watch’ (p. 45). Power dissected, categorised, and amplified the dissemination of perverse sexualities, and, in the process, grew through the very analysis it fostered on them. It is power that takes delight and pleasure by bringing out the perverse subject discursively; it is also a particular pleasure of that power that strives to evade such discourse, so that its own mechanisms of construction and reconstruction of the perverse subjects remain hidden. This power, through enticements, evasions, and constant incitements, is ‘traced around bodies and sexes’, and Foucault calls it the ‘perpetual spirals of power and pleasure’ (*ibid.*). Finally, power provides spaces for maximum saturation. The power that acts on the body and sexuality is ‘neither the form of the law, nor the effects of the taboo’ (p. 47), and this is what makes it entirely different from the inexact and simple concept of repression or prohibition. It is generated and made possible by the proliferation and multiplication of sexualities. It extends the boundaries of them, and spills over these boundaries instead of constructing limits and borders. ‘It did not exclude sexuality, but included it in the body as a mode of specification of individuals’, and ‘it attracted its varieties by means of spirals in which pleasure and power reinforced one another’ (*ibid.*). Instead of barricading and putting up boundaries and setting up insurmountable blockages, this power-pleasure nexus becomes the producer and regulator of the variegated

mosaic of sexuality. Foucault points out that the inculcation of perversion ‘is an instrument-effect: it is through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure branched out and multiplied, measured the body, and penetrated modes of conduct’ (p. 48).

Foucault says that by speaking about sexuality so much, engaging into a loquacity surrounding it, what one is trying to do is to conceal it, to efface the construction of its discursive production, and he calls it ‘a screen discourse, a dispersion-avoidance’ (p. 53). It is an attempt to avoid dissipation, and a ploy to counter disappearance. One claims to talk about sexuality from the neutral point of view of science, but that science is ‘made up of evasions since, given its inability or refusal to speak of sex itself, it concerned itself primarily with aberrations, perversions, exceptional oddities, pathological abatements, and morbid aggravations’ (*ibid.*). Science reiterates the moral divisions, and is deferential to the power that regulates sexuality. It is in absolute complicity with the regulatory power, coming to the aid of medico-legal discourses. ‘In the name of biological and historical urgency, it justified the racism of the state’, and ‘grounded them in truth’ (p. 54). The medical discourses are complicit in the construction of sexuality as a way of producing the truth of it, because ‘sex [is] constituted as a problem of truth’ (p. 56). But this postulation of truth about sexuality extracted through *confession* — Foucault considers this as part of *scientia sexualis* as opposed to *ars erotica* — is imbued with and constructed by power relations. ‘[T]ruth is not by nature free — nor error servile — but that its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power. The confession is an example of this.’ (p. 60) Transformation of sexuality into discourse through ‘dissemination and reinforcement of heterogenous sexualities’ (p. 61) are deployed through the apparatus of confession, the specific mode of articulation of an individual’s sexual peculiarities. The confessor always needs an authoritative presence for her or his articulation, an ‘authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order

to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile' (pp. 61-62) in order to modify the body of the confessor. The dominating agency is within the listener who remains silent. And the discourse of truth takes effect on the person from whom the confession/truth is extracted. In the modern age, according to Foucault, confession is transformed from a mere confession of the act of sex to 'reconstructing, in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desire, modulations, and the quality of pleasure that animated it' (p. 69).

Through dissemination, multiple localisations of constraints, and a continuous process of expansion of domains, then, 'a great science of the pleasure of sex was constituted' (p. 63). Medicine, psychiatry, and pedagogy aided this mechanism and congealed its production. Foucault locates five techniques of how science codified the uncomplicated mode of confession about sex into a discourse of sex and sexuality. a) The establishment of a clinical system that encouraged and favoured speaking up, and the deployment of a structure of decipherable signs and symptoms. b) By postulating a causality, where sexuality became a cause from which everything can be traced back, from minute deviation in behaviour to children's bad habits. Sex was established as the cause for everything. 'The limitless dangers that sex carries with it justified the exhaustive character of the inquisition to which it was subjected' (p. 66). c) It was also codified through the implicit potential of sex, the yet-to-be manifested quality of sexuality, the latency intrinsic to it, its obscurity and elusive nature that were thought to be harnessed by scientific temper to grasp the hidden mechanism of it. 'The principle of a latency essential to sexuality made it possible to link the forcing of a difficult confession to a scientific practice' (*ibid.*). d) It was systematised through the method of interpretation: the hoarder of private confidences had to assimilate, analyse, and decipher the hidden truth of sexuality. The listener, on the other hand, had a therapeutic function. '[B]y making sexuality something to be interpreted, the nineteenth century gave itself the possibility of causing the procedures of

confession to operate within the regular formation of a scientific discourse' (p. 67). e) And finally, it was structured through the ordering of the effects of confession into a medical system, which later codified it into therapeutic operations. Sexual domain became a pathological domain, and that implied 'sex would derive its meaning and its necessity from medical intervention' (*ibid.*).

So, there is this proliferation of discourses about sex and sexuality that are shaped and adapted to the requirements of power. One must therefore look into the 'strategies of power that are immanent to this will to knowledge' (p. 73). 'One day' a certain mechanism captured sex, and, 'in a game that combined pleasure with compulsion, and consent with inquisition, made it tell the truth about itself and others as well' (p. 77). Foucault uses 'one day' figuratively, of course, otherwise it would be the task of a history to look for the origin of this mechanism. But the very invisibility of the mechanism pre-empts the futility of the search for an origin. This mechanism delineates the truth of sexuality for us — 'our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history' — and 'whenever it is a question of knowing who we are', this hidden mechanism of appropriating sexuality into rationality, this whole deployment of sexuality 'serves as our master key' (p. 78). This is the key one would assume that would unlock one's identity.

The 'principle of power-as-law' is the 'fact that there is no escaping from power, that it is always already present, constituting that very thing which one attempts to counter it with' (p. 82). Foucault repeatedly stresses the notion that power is not repressive or a form of censorship or prohibition, and he also realises the sterilising consequence of 'power-as-law' that effectively stymies any attempt to overthrow it. This theoretical construction of power, or, as he says, the 'analytics' of power, that is always already present, creates the subversive possibilities that ineffectually attempts to overthrow it. The possibility of a counter-revolution, therefore, is the very product of the revolution itself; power constitutes the challenge to itself,

in effect creating newer modes of power configurations, newer and wiser and better stratagems of dominations. The ‘analytics’ of power to explain the domains that are formed by the relations of power and identifying the instruments of it is only possible if it is freed from the ‘juridico-discursive’ model of power. The juridico-discursive conception of power ‘governs both the thematics of repression and the theory of the law as constitutive of desire’ (*ibid.*). Psychoanalysis conceives of power in terms of the repression of instincts; juridical power is conceived in terms of the law of desire. ‘They both rely on a common representation of power which [...] leads to two contrary results: either to the promise of a ‘liberation’, if power is seen as having only an external hold on desire, or, if it is constitutive of desire itself, to the affirmation: you are always already trapped’ (p. 83).

Foucault’s point is that this *juridical representation of power* does not only apply to the relationship between power and sexuality, but it is much more general, and one ‘frequently encounters it in political analyses of power’ (*ibid.*). The principal features of this representation of power are: a) It always establishes a *negative* relation between power and sexuality in the form of refusal, exclusion, and blockage. It always says ‘no’ to sexuality and pleasure. ‘Its effects take the general form of limit and lack’ (*ibid.*). b) Juridical power imposes its regulatory structure on pleasure and sexuality as law and rule, thereby placing sexuality in an enforced binary: the licit and the illicit, the permitted and the forbidden. Also, juridical power masks itself as a form of intelligibility that imposes ‘order’ for sexuality. ‘And finally, power acts by laying down the rule: power’s hold on sex is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates, from the very fact that it is articulated, a rule of law’ (*ibid.*). This structure of power is legislative, and therefore, its mode of operability in relation to sex is ‘of a juridico-discursive character’ (*ibid.*). c) Moreover, this representation of power is prohibitory: it imposes a law of prohibition, to the effect that sex must renounce itself, and its instrument is punitive because it always carries the threat of punishment that aims for the

suppression of sex. d) There is also a system of censorship that affirms what is forbidden, prevents unworthy utterances, and effects a denial of sex and its existence. This logical system of censorship mechanism ‘links the inexistent, the illicit, and the inexpressible in such a way that each is at the same time the principle and the effect of the others’ (p. 84). This logic of power is ‘the paradoxical logic of a law that might be expressed as an injunction of nonexistence, nonmanifestation, and silence’ (*ibid.*). e) And then there is this assumption that the apparatus of power is uniform. That this ‘power over sex is exercised in the same way at all levels’ and ‘it operates according to the simple and endlessly reproduced mechanisms of law, taboo, and censorship’ (*ibid.*). Once again, it creates a simple binary: ‘[a] legislative power on one side, and an obedient subject on the other’ (p. 85).

With so many negatives, a power that is only capable of saying no and restrictive in its scope and mechanism, Foucault considers this form and representation of power as basically ‘anti-energy’, since, once again, ‘it is a power whose model is essentially juridical, centred on nothing more than the statement of the law and the operation of taboos’ (*ibid.*). In its place Foucault would conceive of a power that is positive, effective in a productive way, and manifested in myriad strategic resourcefulness. And he asks, why do we choose the former manifestation of power that is merely prohibitive and repressive as opposed to its forthright resourcefulness and positivity: ‘[w]hy are the deployments of power reduced simply to the procedures of the law of interdiction?’ (p. 86). This is because power masks its operations and its mechanisms to make itself tolerable to us. Power is seen as a limit set on freedom, because unless there is a limit set to freedom, one cannot aspire to transgress it, and thus it derives its allurements for us, and this is the ‘general form of its acceptability’ (*ibid.*).

Historically, Foucault says, the great institutionalised powers ‘were able to gain acceptance’ because ‘they presented themselves as agencies of regulation, arbitration, and demarcation, as a way of introducing order [...] of establishing a principle that would temper

them and distribute them according to boundaries and a fixed hierarchy' (pp. 86-87). These great powers were historically evolved into a monolithic regime at the expense of a variety of heterogenous voices, and began to act through a 'mechanism of interdiction and sanction' (p. 87). The manifestation of this power operated through strategies and techniques instead of divine rights; it worked through a normalisation of its apparatuses but not by law itself, and used a regulatory process instead of punishment. For Foucault, the project of analysing power in relation to sexuality is to 'construct an analytics of power that no longer takes law as a model and a code' (p. 90), i.e., an analysis of power that rejects its juridical structure and its negative representation that has been handed down historically, as well as rejecting also the concept of it 'in terms of law, prohibition, liberty, and sovereignty' (*ibid.*).

In place of this juridical conception of power, Foucault prefers a 'technology' of sexuality that is more complex and positive than the juridical model of power governing sexuality. His methodology for conceiving this technology of power is a genealogical enquiry to excavate 'a certain form of knowledge regarding sex' that rigorously emphasises an analysis not in terms of repression or law, 'but in terms of power' (p. 93). By 'power' he does not mean an institutional mechanism that ensures the subservience of its subjects through law and punitive threats. Also, he does not mean power as a 'general system of domination exerted by one group over another' (p. 92). Foucault conceives of power 'as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation' (*ibid.*). These force relations work through adaptation and modification; they change shape, strengthening, weakening, and reversing through perpetual struggles and confrontations, and they form a system. Finally, power is conceived 'as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallisation is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies' (pp. 92-93).

Power, therefore, is a multiplicity of force relations to configure a system which creates its own constitution and organisation. It is also marked by ‘disjunctions and contradictions’ (p. 92) that differentiates it from the others. It is also seen as a strategy to be effected on institutions to create the state apparatuses, to create rules and regulations to form regulatory social structures. To acknowledge the existence of power’s exercise and manoeuvre, to realise the ‘use of its mechanism as a grid of intelligibility of the social order’, one must not look for an origin, or ‘a unique source of sovereignty’ (p. 93). Power, then, ‘is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engenders states of power’ (*ibid.*). And it is omnipresent, ‘because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another’ (*ibid.*). In other words, ‘power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society’ (*ibid.*).

These, therefore, are the characteristics of the conception of power that Foucault theorises in opposition to the juridical notion of power: a) Power cannot be stored, hoarded, seized, or shared. It is generated in the interaction between uneven and constantly shifting relations, and as such it can be exercised from numerous points. b) Relations of power are coterminous with other types of relationships like economic processes and sexual relationships. They are also immanent and inherent in other types of relationships. The divisions, disjunctions, and disequilibrium within these other types of relationships *effect the generation of power relations*, and these power relations play, therefore, a productive role which is in stark opposition to the negative effect of a repressive mode of juridical power. c) ‘Power comes from below’ (p. 94), i.e., the binary of the ruler and the ruled, the oppressor and the oppressed is denied altogether. Foucault proposes that ‘the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production [...] are the basis for wide ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole’ (*ibid.*). These forces redistribute,

realign, homogenise, and converge among each other. ‘Major dominations are the hegemonic effects that are sustained by all these confrontations’ (*ibid.*). Instead of a simplistic binary, then, there is a multiplicity of force relations that compete for supremacy. d) Foucault contends that power relations are intentional, i.e., they always have aims and objectives. They are also *non-subjective*, i.e., they do not originate from the choices or decisions of an individual subject. The intelligibility of power is defined by tactics, that are tethered to one another, but have ‘their base and support and their condition elsewhere’ (p. 95), to produce extensive and overarching systems. But there is no individual subject who has initiated or invented or formulated the system. e. ‘Where there is power, there is resistance’, but, yet again, Foucault maintains that ‘resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power’ (*ibid.*). One must always remain inside power, and there is no escaping it, since ‘there is no absolute outside where it is concerned’ (*ibid.*), and one always remains subject to the law of power. The existence of the ‘relational character of power relationships [...] depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance’, and ‘these points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network’ (*ibid.*). Foucault, therefore, denies the exteriority of counter-revolutions, the soul of rebellion itself, as there cannot be a ‘great Refusal’ (*ibid.*) that stands outside the system.

There can only be a ‘plurality of resistances’, that are ‘possible, *necessary*, improbable’ (p. 96, *emphasis added*). And, ‘by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations’ (*ibid.*). Resistances, as flaws within the system, are the atypical and anomalous elements in the relations of power, as ‘they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite’ (*ibid.*). They are unevenly distributed as disagreeable and discordant ligatures, ‘inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behaviour’ (*ibid.*). Just as the interconnected network of power relations form an internecine web that envelops institutions, and apparatuses that the institutions establish ‘without being exactly localised in them’ (*ibid.*), the legion of resistive points, too, pass through ‘social stratifications and

individual unities' (*ibid.*). And a revolution, an apparent culmination of the frictions of those resistive points, is only possible with the 'strategic codification of these points of resistance' (*ibid.*). In other words, in keeping with the positive aspect of his conception of power, Foucault does not deny the possibility of resistance and revolutions; only, these are not in an exterior relationship to power. The resistance, the revolution, resides within the grid of intelligibility that is power itself.

Instead of pontificating about an over-arching domination, or why power needs to establish a knowledge of sexuality, or asking about the laws that regulate sexual behaviour, Foucault is concerned about the immediacy and locality of power relations at work in specific types of discourses about sexuality. 'In a specific type of discourse on sex, in a specific form of extortion of truth, appearing historically and in specific places (around the child's body, apropos of women's sex, in connection with practices restricting births, and so on) what were the most immediate, the most local power relations at work?' (p. 97) In other words, in this Foucauldian paradigm, instead of searching for a monolithic, unique, and unitary form of a great Power, one must analyse the 'expanding production of discourses on sex in the field of multiple and mobile power relations' (p. 98).

Foucault charts four 'methodological imperatives' for seeking out these fractious, mobile, multiple, local, and immediate power relations at play, although he denies the exigencies of these, as he calls them 'cautionary prescriptions' (*ibid.*). a) *Rule of immanence*: Sexuality as a field of enquiry is constituted 'only because relations of power [has] established it as a possible object' (*ibid.*). There is no exteriority between the technology of sexuality, the technique of knowledge about sexuality, and the strategic dissemination of power. b) *Rules of continual variation*: Instead of looking for the subject who wields power in the presupposed binary of the oppressor and the oppressed, one must look for the dissimilitude of power relations, along with 'the pattern of modifications which the relationships of force imply' (p. 99), and seek out

the modes of power distributions, the subsequent production of knowledge, and its eventual appropriation. Relations of power-knowledge are not unitary and monolithic; they are, as Foucault calls it, ‘matrices of transformation’ (*ibid.*). c) *Rule of double conditioning*: Local centres and transformational patterns cannot function unless they are co-opted into an overall strategy; and conversely, strategy cannot function without the support of these centres of power relations. So, ‘one must conceive of the double conditioning of a strategy by the specificity of possible tactics, and of tactics by the strategic envelope that makes them work’ (p. 100). d) *Rule of tactical polyvalence of discourses*: Power and knowledge are formed together in discourse, and therefore, one ‘must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither unique nor stable’ (p. 101). In other words, there is no overarching, dominating discourse that rules over the subjugated discourses; instead, there are a ‘multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies’ (*ibid.*). The task of the genealogist is to reconstruct the distribution of the variable discourses that are set off against each other in a Brownian motion, to look for their enunciative patterns, to account for ‘the variants and different effects’ (p. 100). ‘We must make allowance’, Foucault says, ‘for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it’ (p. 101).

One example of a compromising *reverse discourse*, a stumbling block, a *flaw*, would be sodomy, the twofold operation of extreme severity and leniency. The emergence of a host of specialised discourses about homosexuality made it into a species, and also ‘made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of perversity’, but it also initiated a ‘reverse discourse’ that made it possible for homosexuality to ‘speak in its own behalf’, to ask for legitimacy ‘often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically

disqualified' (p. 101). This is why Foucault rejects the possibility of a binary of one discourse of power and another discourse that opposes that power. 'Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can [...] circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy (pp. 101-102). Foucault's conception of power, therefore, rejects the privilege of law, the privilege of prohibition, and the privilege of sovereignty, to replace them with the 'viewpoint of the objective', the 'viewpoint of tactical efficiency', and the 'analysis of a multiple and mobile field of force relations' that produce shifting and unstable effects of dominations.

Foucault also delineates four 'strategic unities' that comprise 'specific mechanisms of knowledge and power, centring on sex': a) Medicalisation of women's bodies. The female body was qualified and disqualified as saturated with sexuality, and therefore integrated into the medical discourse by means of an intrinsic pathology, and finally placed into the social fabric, the familial space, and the reproductive sphere. '[T]he Mother, with her negative image of "nervous woman" constituted the most visible form of this hysterisation' (p. 104). b) Pedagogisation of children's sexuality that was evident in the strictures against masturbation. c) Socialisation of reproductive behaviour that centred on the fertility of couples, and along with it a political integration was achieved through the codification of responsibilities of the couple, as well as a 'medical socialisation' that included the strategy of birth control. d) A psychiatrisation of perverse pleasure, where the 'sexual instinct was isolated as a separate biological and psychical instinct' (p. 105). Diagnostic analysis of anomalous and unnatural pleasures made it possible to pathologise these behaviours in order to implement a corrective procedure. Thus, these are the four figures that emerged from the engagement with sexuality: 'the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, and the perverse adult' (*ibid.*). And the aforementioned four strategies were responsible for the production of sexuality.

Sexuality, therefore, is not something given or natural that power tries to repress, and it is not an 'obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover' (*ibid.*). Sexuality is a historical artifice, a construct, 'a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power' (pp. 105-106).

This strategic deployment of sexuality works through a fluid, shifting, and many-faceted techniques of power. It necessitates a perpetual broadening of domains and modes of regulation. It is concerned with the 'sensations of the body' and the 'quality of pleasures' (p. 107). This deployment of sexuality, instead of reproducing itself, proliferates, innovates, creates, seizes, and penetrates bodies with remarkable thoroughness, and succeeds in controlling the population comprehensively. And, 'it has been linked from the outset with an intensification of the body — with its exploitation as an object of knowledge and an element in relations of power' (*ibid.*). In a parenthetical note one might also add that Foucault does not altogether negate the possibility of prohibition, or the concrete fact of it; he only negates the interpretation and primacy of prohibition as the central force in studying the domain of sexuality, simply because prohibition cannot satisfactorily explain the explosion of discourses around and within sexuality.

In the nineteenth century, in the West, then, a completely new technology of sexuality emerged. It was new in the sense that it broke away from ecclesiastical institutions. From the confines of the church, sexuality liberated itself only to be confined into a concern of the secular and the state. '[S]ex became a matter that required the social body as a whole, and virtually all of its individuals, to place themselves under surveillance' (p. 116). It spread through three axes: a) pedagogy, whose object was the sexuality of children; b) medicine, whose objective was to map feminine physiology; c) and demography, whose objective was to regulate reproduction.

And ‘the technology of sex was ordered in relation to the medical institution’, and, eventually, ‘[t]he flesh was brought down to the level of the organism’ (p. 117)

The previous centuries’ moralistic categories of debauchery and excess are now supplemented with the medical discourse of ‘perversions’. The deployment of sexuality is not established to limit or hinder the pleasure of others; it is not a refusal of pleasure, or negation of carnality; instead, it was ‘an intensification of the body, a problematisation of health and its operational terms: it was a question of techniques for *maximising life*’ (p. 123, *emphasis added*). The purpose of this deployment of sexuality, therefore, ‘has to be seen as the self-affirmation of one class rather than the enslavement of another: a defence, a protection, a strengthening, and an exaltation that were eventually extended to others — at the cost of different transformations — as a means of social control and political subjugation’ (*ibid.*). And, that produced a ‘political ordering of life, not through an enslavement of others, but through an affirmation of self’ (*ibid.*).¹⁹

According to Foucault, the bourgeoisie does not represent the annihilation of the body and repression of sexuality. Instead, its primary objective is to equip itself with a very tangible physicality, a body and sexuality to gather strength, endurance, and a proliferation of the body beyond the binary that is secular through the means of a strategic organisation of a deployment of sexuality. This process engendered the movement through which ‘it asserted its distinctiveness and its hegemony’ (p. 126). Foucault rejects two popular conceptions of hypocrisies concerning the bourgeoisie and the proletariat: that the bourgeoisie denies or represses its sexuality, and the proletariat rejects its own sexuality by accepting the hegemonic ideology of the former. The bourgeois embraced, through a defiant and affirmative political ideology, a sexual garrulity, a loquacity that the proletariats doubted and refused to accept for a long time ‘since it was foisted on them for the purpose of subjugation’ (p. 127). Foucault contends that as ‘sexuality is the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours, and social

relations by a certain deployment deriving from a complex political technology [...] [then] this deployment does not operate in symmetrical fashion with respect to the social classes, and consequently, that it does not produce the same effects in them' (*ibid.*). The conclusion that Foucault comes to is that 'sexuality is originally, historically bourgeois, and that, in its successive shifts and transpositions, it induces specific class effects' (*ibid.*). Once again, there is a reversal of cause and effect at work here: class effect or division does not produce different strategic deployment of sexuality; instead, the deployment of sexuality with its circuitous transpositions and changeability produces the class effects or divisions.

For a long time, the sovereign or juridical authority held the power to life and death, to take life away, or to let life on, in a subtractive way. It worked along a process of deduction, of taxes, properties, and of life itself. When a sovereign felt threatened, it reserved the right to eliminate the threat by way of obliterating the hostile elements. But it has undergone a profound change since the classical age in the West. This preclassical form of deduction or elimination of life is 'no longer the major form of power but merely one element among others, working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimise, and organise the forces under it' (p. 136). This new form of power, as Foucault points out, generates newer forces, nurturing them and expanding them, as well as reordering their proliferation. Unlike the juridical form of monolithic power of the previous ages, it does not impede these newer forms of power, or vanquish these forces to their death. Power over death merely became one extension, a subsidiary form of power 'that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimise, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations' (p. 137). '[O]ne has to be capable of killing in order to go on living — [this] has become the principle that defines the strategy of states' (*ibid.*). Instead of a juridical structure of a sovereignty regarding the right to death, we have moved on to a biological model of a population. 'If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent

return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population' (*ibid.*). So, when this version of power's role — Foucault's rendition of 'bio-power' — is to sustain life, to enhance the positive aspect of it by prolonging life, ensuring biological longevity, to multiply life, how can it reconcile itself to the negative aspect of it by condemning the life form to death? This is the reason why, Foucault says, 'capital punishment could not be maintained except by invoking less the enormity of the crime itself than the monstrosity of the criminal, his incorrigibility, and the safeguard of the society. One had the right to kill those who represented a kind of biological danger to others' (p. 138). It is a case not of state power, of course, but of that of the sovereign. The power over life expanded in two forms: one interpreted the body, the biological body, as a machine to be disciplined and optimised, mapping its usefulness to integrate into systematic economic controls; the other focused into the particular body as a biological entity capable of regular biological processes like multiplication, birth, and mortality, and the medicalisation of it regarding its health, and '[t]heir supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population*' (p. 139).²⁰

Drawing on this bifurcation of management, anatomy and biology, Foucault argues that the sovereign power that reigned over death was 'gradually supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life' (p. 140). Foucault calls this the 'era of bio-power', where a plethora of diverse techniques are employed to achieve 'the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations' (*ibid.*). These two forms of firmly established arrangements constituted in creating what Foucault terms as the 'great technology of power in the nineteenth century' (*ibid.*). The deployment of sexuality was one of the most important aspect of it. When the juridical mode of power is supplanted by a power that emphasises the sustainability and the positive aspects of life, then that power needs 'continuous regulatory and corrective mechanism' (p. 144). It does not highlight death as the ultimate weapon of

sovereignty and juridical power, but the distribution of ‘the living in the domain of value and utility’ (*ibid.*) The law in this alternative mode of power ‘operates more and more as a norm, and that the juridical institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative, and so on) whose functions are for the most part regulatory’ (*ibid.*). Thus, Foucault could proclaim, at the risk of a magnificent generalisation, that a ‘normalising society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centred on life’ (*ibid.*).

The matter of sexuality was employed both at disciplining the body, and the regulatory process aimed at the population; it gave rise to systematic methods of surveillance, rigid controls, careful distribution of spaces, and also statistical assessments, and thus it became ‘a standard for the disciplines and as a basis for regulation’ (p. 146). And thus, also, it became the signature of individuality. At the sites of body and population, the deployment of sexuality became a crucially powerful tool of a power that operated with the aim of *managing* life rather than the punitive threat of death. In this new age of sexuality, ‘the threshold of modernity’, as Foucault calls it, sexuality is not a mark or symbol, it is an object and a target of power. And this power ‘delineated it, aroused it, and employed it as the proliferating meaning that has always to be taken control of again lest it escape; it was *an effect with a meaning-value*’ (p. 148) Foucault’s introduction to this account of sexuality is an attempt to understand why sexuality, far from being repressed or suppressed, became voluble and garrulous to the extreme from the nineteenth century onwards. This is an analytics of sexuality that tries to show that the deployment of sexuality, and the deployment of power that sustains it, are inextricably linked. Far from effacing the body, this analysis submits that the biological and the historical analyses of sexuality are ‘bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power that take life as their objective’ (p. 152).

Foucault also points out that sexuality is something that is treated both as intrinsic and an absence. It is situated within the bodies, organs, its functions, pleasures, and sensations, yet it is something more than intrinsic properties, marked by an absence, an 'other'. The idea that was gradually established was that sexuality was characterised 'essentially by the interplay of presence and absence, the visible and the hidden' (p. 153). Sexuality 'was defined by the interlacing of function and instinct, finality and signification' (p. 154). This idea of sexuality was mapped by various strategies of the deployment of sexuality, and this was 'governed by the interplay of whole and part, principle and lack, absence and presence, excess and deficiency, by the function of the instinct, finality, and meaning, of reality and pleasure' (*ibid.*). This theorisation of sexuality and its deployment 'made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this *fictitious unity as a causal principle*, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified' (*ibid., emphasis added*). This idea of sexuality also performed a crucial and fundamental reversal. It inverted the 'representation of the relationship of power to sexuality' (p. 155) that masked its essential and positive correlation to power, and made it appear as something impregnated with law and taboo, something that 'power tries as best it can to dominate' (p. 154). Foucault denies sexuality of an autonomous agency that, interacting with power, causally constructs and produces the effects of sexuality. 'On the contrary,' Foucault says, 'sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organised by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures' (p. 155). And through this notion of sexuality determined by the deployment of sexuality, an individual acquires his or her intelligibility and identity, since sexuality is both the hidden part of that individual being and 'the generative principle of meaning' (*ibid.*), symbolically constituting her or his being. 'Hence the importance

we ascribe to it, the reverential fear with which we surround it, the care we take to know it' (p. 156).

As the deployment of sexuality produces the fictitious and imaginary entity of sex, it also creates one of its basic internal principle: 'the desire for sex — the desire to have it, to have access to it, to discover it, to liberate it, to articulate it into discourse, to formulate it in truth' (p. 156). This desirability of sex makes it possible for us to think that we are capable of liberating sexuality, 'affirming the rights of our sex against all power' (p. 157), but we are chained to the entire systematics of the deployment of sexuality aligned to the networks of power. In conclusion, Foucault, once again, re-emphasises the crucial reversal of cause and effect of his analysis of sexuality: 'sexuality is a very real historical formation; it is what gave rise to the notion of sex, as a speculative element necessary to its operation' (*ibid.*). For an emancipatory politics, one cannot get away from the positive grip of power by assenting to sexuality; instead, one must break away from the agency of sexuality 'through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality — to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance' (*ibid.*). Therefore, '[t]he rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasure' (*ibid.*).

Apart from unshackling itself from the structuralist binary — the conception of power as representing the oppressor and the oppressed, the empowered and the subjugated — how is Foucault's conception of power different in its insistence on a positive reliance on life? It is not intuitively liberatory or emancipatory, since the notion of liberation is constructed and embedded within and into the discourse of power itself. As such, an emancipatory power is located within the grid of intelligibility, a node within the field of forces, a point within the network of variant powers, and therefore cannot claim supremacy over others. Historically, its claim might become significant enough to proclaim a hegemony, but like any other hegemonic

forces of power, it is a claim among many, and therefore, it is not the most crucial aspect of Foucault's conception of power. One cannot get outside power to become liberated from it, simply because one is always already situated within the discourse of power itself. One might call it positive if one could think of it as a force that has the power of *intervention*, being a *flaw* in the general system, a power that intervenes, a power that disrupts other hegemonic formations of power, and has the potential for replicating itself, proliferating the possibilities of its network. The network of forces that Foucault calls the grid of power cannot be avoided, but conceiving this network of power demolishes the simple binary of the oppressor and the oppressed, the powerful and the powerless, as well as rejecting the human subject as the agency of power. Since this network of power has a multiplicity of intersections, no particular intersection, no specific and distinct nodal point, can dominate and exercise its control forever; no nodal power has the capability of becoming monolithic, as the formation of a hegemonic power will always be challenged from below, from competing networks of power. As power proliferates and expands its domains constantly, their points of contacts also undergo constant changes, and newer forms of dominations emerge, eclipsing, briefly, for a while, the other forms of power. This is a perpetual cycle.

NOTES

1. Angela Carter, *The Sadean Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago, 1979), p. 9
2. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A M Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 47
3. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978, 1990), pp. 101-102
4. Michel Foucault, *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989, 1996), p. 215. See also, Michel Foucault, 'The History of Sexuality: An Interview with Michel Foucault', *Oxford Literary Review* 4 (2), pp. 3-14, quoted in David Howarth, *Discourse*, (London: Open University Press, 2002), p. 49, where he says basically the same thing: '[the] highlighting, spotlighting of sexuality didn't happen only in discourse but in the reality of institutions and practices'.
5. See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 1967, 2001); and Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A M Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1973, 2003)
6. See Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978, 1990) and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977, 1991)
7. David Howarth, *Discourse* (London: Open University Press, 2002), p. 49
8. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1970, 2002), p. xv

9. Michel Foucault, 'Politics and the Study of Discourse', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. G Burchell, C Gordon, and P H Miller (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 63, quoted in David Howarth, *Discourse*, p. 52
10. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 117
11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Modern Library Edition, 2000), p. 481
12. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 95
13. Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse' in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. R Young (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 52, quoted in David Howarth, *Discourse*, p. 56
14. *Ibid.*, quoted in David Howarth, *Discourse*, p. 58
15. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 138
16. See Slavoj Žižek, *Event* (London: Penguin, 2014), p. 3
17. See, especially, Part II, 'The Repressive Hypothesis', in Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, pp. 15-49
18. Anonymous, *My Secret Life: An Erotic Diary of Victorian London* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2007)
19. cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, pp. 472-473. The deep-rooted hatred characteristic of slave morality, what Nietzsche calls *ressentiment*, is a creative one that eventually 'gives birth to values', which is an inversion of the dominating structure of aristocratic hegemony. The enforcement of valuation of the nobility, the production and interpretation of the value system and the deployment of it, was organic in its spontaneity, and it demarcated its negative — the low and the plebeian — 'to affirm itself gratefully and triumphantly'. Thus formulated, the hegemonic domination created by the nobility constructed and reinterpreted its binary opposite to affirm itself, but as evaluated by Nietzsche, this affirmation is itself a positive life force, whereas slave morality springs from an extreme negativity, as 'its action is fundamentally reaction'. The plebeian hegemony, the domination of the slave morality, the instigation of

the priestly class, the proprietors of the production of *ressentiment*, begins from an antagonistic reaction to the already existing power structure of the aristocracy. While extolling the life-affirming positive qualities of the nobility-imposed hegemony, Nietzsche nevertheless points out its own structural weakness: '[w]hen the noble mode of valuation blunders and sins against reality', a reality that it is not familiar with and looks down upon it with contempt, when it misapprehends 'the sphere it despises', the act of 'looking down from a superior height' distorts and *misrepresent* 'the image of that it despises' (*ibid.*). Perhaps Nietzsche is not oblivious of his own attempt to posit a constructed method of establishing a value system where despising a particular class for its narrow-mindedness is *valued* at a higher level than that of the *ressentiment* of the same directed against the former class, because he consistently creates a hierarchy within the binary of the noble and the lowly, even though the 'happy' nobility 'did not have to establish their happiness artificially by examining their enemies, or to persuade themselves, *deceive* themselves, that were happy' (Sec. 10, p. 474). Being active is happiness, and the opposite of happiness is passivity, 'at the level of the impotent, the oppressed, and those in whom poisonous and inimical feelings are festering' (*ibid.*).

20. See, also, Michel Foucault, 'The Birth of Biopolitics', in *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954 – 1984, Volume 2*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 73-79