

4. HISTORY OF TECHNOSEXUALITY

The discontinuity of history, body, power: Foucault describes the transformation of European society in the late eighteenth century from what he calls a “sovereign society” into a “disciplinary society,” which he sees as a shift away from a form of power that determines and ritualizes death toward a new form of power that technically plans life based on population, health, and the national interest. *Bio-pouvoir* (biopower) is his way of referring to this new form of productive, diffuse, sprawling power. Spilling beyond the boundaries of the legal realm and punitive sphere, it becomes a force of “somato-power” that penetrates and composes the body of the modern individual. This power no longer plays the role of a coercive law through a negative mandate but is more versatile and welcoming, taking on the form of “an art of governing life,” an overall political technology that is transformed into disciplinary architectures (prisons, barracks, schools, hospitals, etc.), scientific texts, statistical tables, demographic calculations, how-to manuals, usage guidelines, schedules for the regulation of reproduction, and public health projects. Foucault underlined the centrality of sex and of sexuality in this modern art of government. The biopower processes of the feminine body’s hysterization, children’s sexual pedagogy, the regu-

lation of procreative conduct, and the psychiatrization of the pervert’s pleasures will be to Foucault the axes of this project that he characterized with some degree of irony as a process of sexual modernization.¹

In keeping with the intuitions of Michel Foucault, Monique Wittig, and Judith Butler, I refer to one of the dominant forms of this biopolitical action, which emerged with disciplinary capitalism, as *sexopolitics*.² *Sex*, its truth, its visibility, and its forms of externalization; *sexuality* and the normal and pathological forms of pleasure; and *race*, in its purity or degeneracy, are three powerful somatic fictions that have obsessed the Western world since the eighteenth century, eventually defining the scope of all contemporary theoretical, scientific, and political activity. These are somatic fictions, not because they lack material reality but because their existence depends on what Judith Butler calls the performative repetition of processes of political construction.³

Sex has become such a part of plans for power that the discourse on masculinity and femininity, as well as techniques of normalizing sexual identity, have turned into governmental agents of the control and standardization of life. Hetero- and homosexual identities were invented in 1868, inside a sphere of empiricism, taxonomic classification, and psychopathology. Likewise, Krafft-Ebing created an encyclopedia of normal and perverse sexualities where

1. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité: La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 136–39; see also Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique: Cours au collège de France, 1978–1979* (Paris: Seuil, 2004).

2. Beatriz Preciado, “Multitudes Queer,” *Multitudes* 12 (printemps 2003): 17–25.

3. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

sexual identities became objects of knowledge, surveillance, and judicial repression.⁴ At the end of the nineteenth century, laws criminalizing sodomy spread throughout Europe. "Sexual difference" was codified visually as an anatomical truth. The fallopian tubes, Bartholin's gland, and the clitoris were defined as anatomical entities. One of the elemental political differences of the West (being a man or a woman) could be summed up by a banal equation: whether one had or did not have at birth a penis that was a centimeter and a half long. The first experiments in artificial insemination were accomplished on animals. With the help of mechanical instruments, interventions were made in the domain of the production of female pleasure; whereas, on the one hand, masturbation was controlled and prohibited, on the other, the female orgasm was medicalized and perceived as a crisis of hysteria.⁵ Male orgasm was mechanized and domesticated through the lens of a budding pornographic codification . . . Machinery was on the way. The body, whether docile or rabid, was ready.

We could call the "sexual empire" (if we can be allowed to sexualize Hardt and Negri's rather chaste catchword)⁶ that biopolitical regime that uses sex, sexuality, and sexual identity as the somato-political centers for producing and governing subjectivity. Western disciplinary sexopolitics at

4. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: The Classic Study of Deviant Sex* (New York: Arcade, 1998).

5. For a visual history of hysteria see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); for a history of the technologies of the hysteric body see Rachel F. Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria," Vibrators and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

6. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Paris: Exils, 2000).

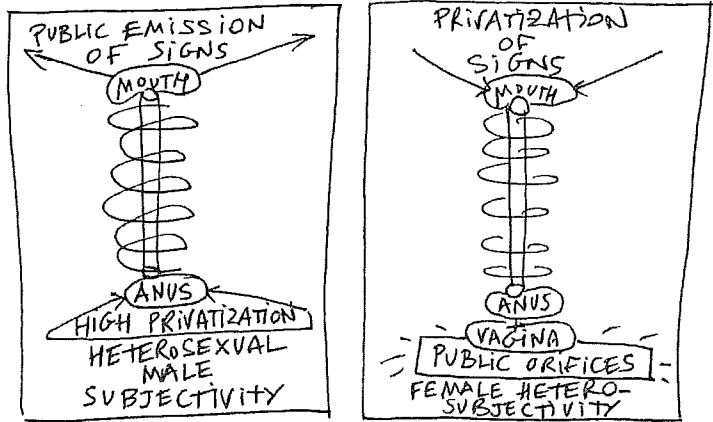
the end of the nineteenth and during a good part of the twentieth century boils down to a regulation of the conditions of reproduction or to those biological processes that "concern the population." For the sexopolitics of the nineteenth century, the heterosexual is the artifact that will rake in the most success for government. The *straight mind*, to borrow an expression developed by Monique Wittig in the 1980s to designate heterosexuality—taken not as a sexual practice but as a political regime⁷—guarantees the structural relationship between the production of sexual identity and the production of certain body parts (to the detriment of others) as reproductive organs. One important task of this disciplinary work will consist of excluding the anus from circuits of production and pleasure. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, "The first organ to suffer privatization, removal from the social field, was the anus. It was the anus that offered itself as a model for privatization, at the same time that money came to express the flows' new state of abstraction."⁸ The anus as a center of production of pleasure (and, in this sense, closely related to the mouth or hand, which are also organs strongly controlled by the sexopolitical campaign against masturbation and homosexuality in the nineteenth century) has no gender. Neither male nor female, it creates a short circuit in the division of the sexes. As a center of primordial passivity and a perfect locale for the abject, positioned close to waste and shit, it serves as the universal black hole into which rush genders, sexes, identities, and capital. The West has

7. Monique Wittig, *La Pensée straight* (Paris: Baland, 2001), 65–76.

8. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Continuum, 2004), 157.

designed a tube with two orifices: a mouth that emits public signs and an impenetrable anus around which it winds a male, heterosexual subjectivity, which acquires the status of a socially privileged body.

2. STRAIGHT SOMATIC FICTIONS



Until the seventeenth century, the sexual epistemology of the sovereign regime was dominated by what the historian Thomas Laqueur calls "a system of similarities"; female sexual anatomy was set up as a weak, internalized, degenerate variation of the only sex that possessed an ontological existence, the male.⁹ The ovaries were considered to be internal testicles and the vagina to be an inverted penis that served as a receptacle for male sex organs. Abortion and infanticide, practices of the time, weren't regu-

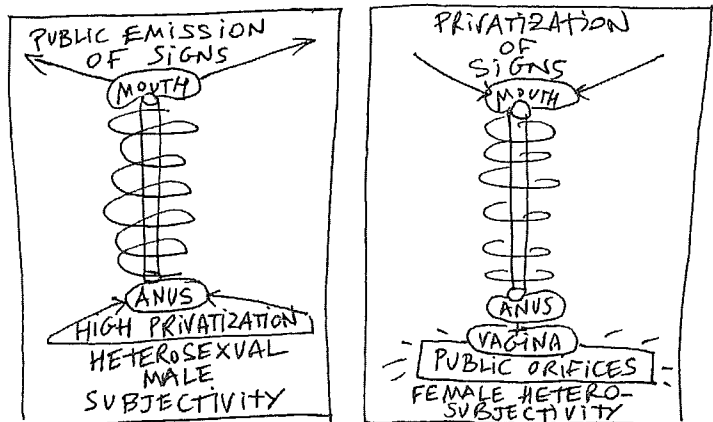
9. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 63-108.

lated by the legal apparatus of the state but economic-political micropowers to which profound themselves affixed (the tribe, the *paterfamilias* . . .). Two hierarchically different and political expressions divide the surface of the "sexual" model: "man," the perfect model of the human, and "woman," a reproductive receptacle. In the sovereign regime, masculinity is the only somatic fiction with political power. Masculinity (embodied within the figures of the king and the father) is defined by necropolitical techniques: the king and the father are those who have the right of giving death. Sex assignment depended not only on the external morphology of the organs but, above all, on reproductive capacity and social role. A bearded woman who was capable of pregnancy, of putting a child into the world and nursing it, was considered a woman, regardless of the shape and size of her vulva. Within such a somato-political configuration, sex and sexuality (note that the term *sexuality* itself wouldn't be invented until 1880) do not yet amount to categories of knowledge or techniques of subjectivization that are likely to outdo the political segmentation that separates the slave from the free man, the citizen from the metic, or the lord from the serf. Differences between masculinity and femininity remain, as well as between several modes of the production of sexual pleasure, but these do not yet determine the crystallizations of sexopolitical subjectivity.

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lated by the legal apparatus of the state but by different economic-political micropowers to which pregnant bodies found themselves affixed (the tribe, the feudal house, the paterfamilias . . .). Two hierarchically differentiated social and political expressions divide the surface of a “mono-sexual” model: “man,” the perfect model of the human, and “woman,” a reproductive receptacle. In the sovereign regime, masculinity is the only somatic fiction with political power. Masculinity (embodied within the figures of the king and the father) is defined by necropolitical techniques: the king and the father are those who have the right of giving death. Sex assignment depended not only on the external morphology of the organs but, above all, on reproductive capacity and social role. A bearded woman who was capable of pregnancy, of putting a child into the world and nursing it, was considered a woman, regardless of the shape and size of her vulva. Within such a somato-political configuration, sex and sexuality (note that the term sexuality itself wouldn’t be invented until 1880) do not yet amount to categories of knowledge or techniques of subjectivization that are likely to outdo the political segmentation that separates the slave from the free man, the citizen from the metic, or the lord from the serf. Differences between masculinity and femininity remain, as well as between several modes of the production of sexual pleasure, but these do not yet determine the crystallizations of sexopolitical subjectivity.

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inversion or interiorization of the male sex and becomes an entirely different sex whose forms and functions proceed from their own anatomical logic. According to Thomas Laqueur, the invention of what could be called the aesthetic of sexual (and racial) difference is needed to establish an anatomical-political hierarchy between the sexes (male, female) and the races (white, nonwhite) in the face of upheavals resulting from movements of revolution and liberation that are clamoring for the enlargement of the boundaries of the public spheres for women and foreigners. It is here that anatomical truth functions like a legitimization of a new political organization of the social field.¹⁰

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The change that will give birth to the disciplinary regime begins with the political management of syphilis, the advent of sexual difference, the technical repression of masturbation, and the invention of sexual identities.¹¹ The culmination of these rigid and cumbersome technologies of the production of sexual identity will come in 1868 with the pathologizing of homosexuality and the bourgeois normalization of heterosexuality. From then on, abortion and postpartum infanticide will be subject to surveillance and punished by law. The body and its products will become the property of the male/husband/father and, by extension, the state and God.

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Inside this system of recognition, any corporal divergence from the norm (such as the size and form of the sex organs, facial pilosity, and the shape and size of the breasts)

10. Ibid., 149–92.

11. See Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2003).

will be considered a monstrosity, a violation of the laws of nature or a perversion, a violation of moral law. As sexual difference is elevated to a category that is not only natural but even transcendental (going beyond historical and cultural contexts), differences between homosexuality and heterosexuality appear as both anatomical and psychological, and so do the differences between sadism, masochism, and pedophilia; between normalcy and perversion. Considered simple sexual practices until this moment, they become identities and conditions that must be studied, recorded, hounded, hunted, punished, cured. Each body, as Foucault tells us, becomes an "individual to correct."¹² Invented as well are the child masturbator and the sexual monster. Under this new epistemological gaze, the bearded woman becomes either an object of scientific observation or a fairground attraction in the new urban agglomerate. This double shift toward medico-legal surveillance and mediatic spectacularization, intensified as it is by digital and data-processing techniques and communication networks, will become one of the characteristics of the pharmacopornographic regime, whose expansion begins in the middle of the twentieth century.

The sexopolitical devices that develop with the nineteenth-century aesthetics of sexual difference and sexual identities are mechanical, semiotic, and architectonic techniques to naturalize sex. And here we can list a loose collection of the resulting phenomena: the atlas of sexual anatomy, treatises on optimizing natural resources com-

12. Michel Foucault, *Les anormaux: cours au Collège de France (1974–1975)* (Paris: Seuil, 1999), 53.

mensurate with the growth of population, legal texts on the criminalization of transvestism or sodomy, the tying of little girls' masturbating hands to their beds, irons for forcing apart the legs of young hysterics, silver nitrate photographic prints that engrave images of the dilated anus of passive homosexuals, straitjackets immobilizing the uncontrollable bodies of masculine women . . . These devices for the production of sexual subjectivity take the form of a political architecture *external* to the body. Their systems have a firm command of orthopedic politics and disciplinary exoskeletons. The model for these techniques of subjectivization, according to Foucault, could be Jeremy Bentham's architecture for the prison-factory (panopticism, in particular), the asylum, or the military barracks. If we think about devices of *sexo-political* subjectivization, then we must also speak about the *expansion of a network of "domestic architecture."* These extensive, intensive, and, moreover, intimate architectural forms include a redefinition of private and public spaces, the management of sexual commerce, but also gynecological devices and sexual orthopedic inventions (the corset, the speculum, the medical vibrator), as well as new media techniques of control and representation (photography, film, incipient pornography) and the massive development of psychological techniques for introspection and confession.

If it is true that Foucault's analysis up to this point, although not always chronologically exact, seems to have great critical acuity, it is no less true that his analysis loses intensity the closer it gets to contemporary society. Foucault neglected the emergence of a group of profound trans-

formations of technologies of production of the body and subjectivity that progressively appeared beginning with World War II. They force us to conceptualize a third regime of subjectivization, a third system of knowledge-power that is neither sovereign nor disciplinary, neither premodern nor modern. In the postscript to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari, inspired by William S. Burroughs, use the term "control society"¹³ to name this "new monster" of social organization that is a by-product of biopolitical control. Adding notions inspired by both Burroughs and Bukowski, I shall call this the "pharmacopornographic society." A politically programmed ejaculation is the currency of this new molecular-informatic control.

After World War II, the somato-political context of the body's technopolitical production seems dominated by a series of new technologies of the body (biotechnology, surgery, endocrinology, genetic engineering, etc.) and representation (photography, cinema, television, internet, video games, etc.) that infiltrate and penetrate daily life like never before. These are biomolecular, digital, and broadband data-transmission technologies. This is the age of soft, featherweight, viscous, gelatinous technologies that can be injected, inhaled—"incorporated." The testosterone that I use is a part of these new gelatinous technologies.

These three regimes of production of sexual bodies and subjectivities should not be understood as mere historical periods. The disciplinary regime didn't erase the sovereign-necropolitical techniques. Likewise, the pharmacoporno-

13. Gilles Deleuze, "Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle," in *Pourparlers* (Paris: Minuit, 1990), 241.

graphic regime has not totally obliterated biopolitical disciplinary techniques. Three different and conflicting power regime techniques juxtapose and act upon the body producing our contemporary subject and somatic fiction.

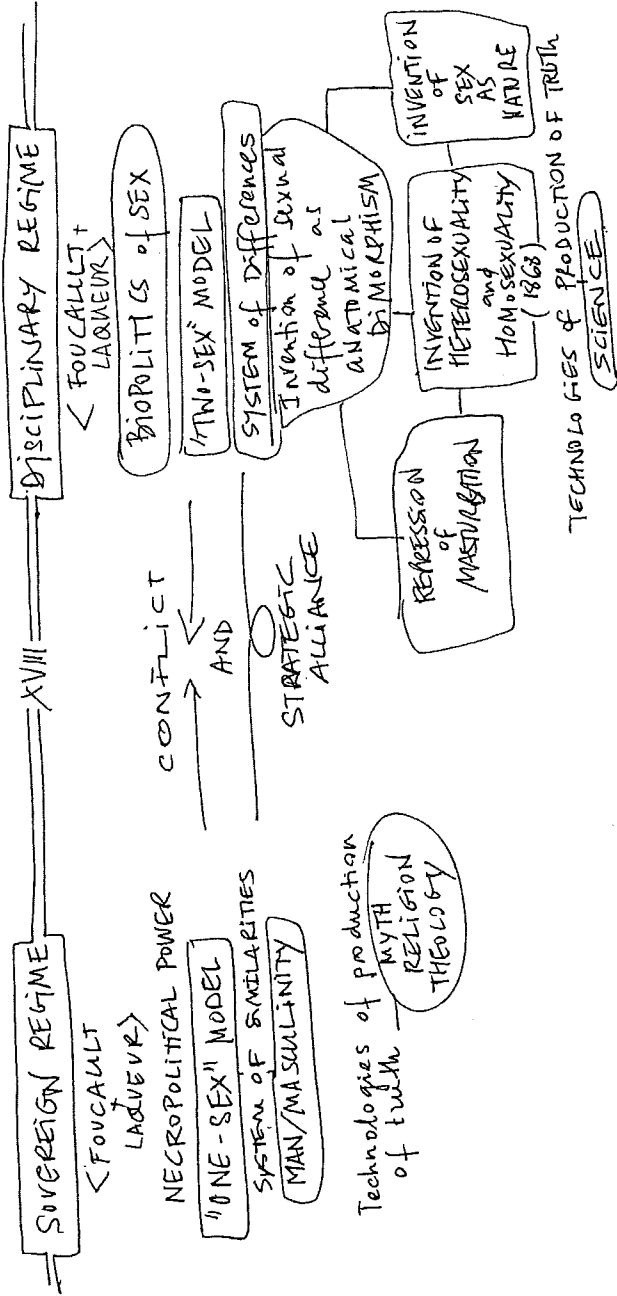
In disciplinary society, technologies of subjectivization controlled the body externally like orthoarchitectural apparatuses, but in the pharmacopornographic society, the technologies become part of the body: they dissolve into it, becoming *somatechnics*.¹⁴ As a result, the body-power relationship becomes tautological: technopolitics takes on the form of the body and is incorporated. One of the first signs of the transformation of the somato-power regime in the mid-twentieth century was the electrification, digitalization, and molecularization of these devices for the control and production of sexual difference and sexual identities. Little by little, orthopedic-sexual and architectural disciplinary mechanisms were absorbed by lightweight, rapid-transmission microcomputing, as well as by pharmacological and audiovisual techniques. If architecture and orthopedics in the disciplinary society served as models for understanding the relation of body to power, in the pharmacopornographic society, the models for body control are microprosthetic: now, power acts through molecules that incorporate themselves into our immune system; silicone takes the shape of our breasts; neurotransmitters alter our perceptions and behavior; hormones produce their systemic

14. In the early 2000s, a group of academics at Macquarie University, including Susan Stryker, coined the term "somatechnics" to highlight the complex relationship between body and technology. Technology does not add upon a given body, but rather it is the very means by which corporeality is crafted.

effects on hunger, sleep, sexual arousal, aggressiveness, and the social decoding of our femininity and masculinity.

We are gradually witnessing the miniaturization, internalization, and reflexive introversion (an inward coiling toward what is considered intimate, private space) of the surveillance and control mechanisms of the disciplinary sexopolitical regime. These new soft technologies of micro-control adopt the form of the body they control and become part of it until they are inseparable and indistinguishable from it, ending up as techno-soma-subjectivities. The body no longer inhabits disciplinary spaces but is inhabited by them. The biomolecular and organic structure of the body is the last hiding place of these biopolitical systems of control. This moment contains all the horror and exaltation of the body's political potential.

WESTERN SEXUAL EPISTEMOLOGY



TECHNOLOGIES OF

WAR 1950s
 NUCLEAR ENERGY
 PLASTIC ENVIRONMENT -
 TIMES

