Lubricity
Power, Sovereign Violence and Erotic Hope

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'What’s the most erotic object you can think of’
‘ball bearings’ said FREDA PEACH smiling at TOTO.

Mary Fallon, *Working Hot*
Contents

Images iv
Acknowledgments v
1. Introduction 1

1a. Glossary of Key Terms 26

2. “Force and Facilitation” 29
   Force and Power 36
   Facilitation and Power 43
   The Machine of Power 49

3. “Sovereignty, Bare Life and Governed Violence” 53
   Violence, Sovereignty and Bare Life 55
   Torture, Pain and Violence of Measure 72

4. “Erotics, Facilitation and Consent” 87
   Fisting 97
   Eroticism, S/M and Violence 107
   The Gift and Facilitative Exchange 110
   Consent and Lubricative Power 114

5. “Governed Violence: Formalised Lubricative Channels” 124
   Bureaucracy and Lubricity 126
   Government and Violence 134

6. “Informal Lubricative Power and Erotic Hope” 150
   Informal Lubricative Flows and the Microdynamics of Power 151
   Tiananmen 157
   Beyond Violence: Erotic Hope 170

7. Conclusion 184

Bibliography 195
Images

Page

22  Captured Soldier is Offered Water during the US led Invasion of Afghanistan in 2002.

32  Crankcase of Internal Combustion Engine (Bottom View)

163  Mesh and Concrete Barricades September 11th 2000 Protest

165  Regimented Formation of Police September 11th 2000 Protest
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Rome did not hesitate to have a whole legion put to death according to a judicial decision, or to destroy an entire city, or to send eight or ten thousand men into exile with such extraordinary conditions as could hardly be complied by one man, much less so many. It was thus she banished to Sicily the soldiers that had unfortunately allowed themselves to be defeated at Cannæ, imposing upon them the conditions not to live in any cities, and to take their meals standing. But the most terrible of her executions was the system of decimation in her armies, when by lot, one soldier out of every ten was put to death. It was impossible to devise a more terrible punishment, where a great number were involved, than this.

Niccoli Machiavelli, *The Discourses*. ¹

I. Introduction

It is no secret: the immense civil, technological and organisational achievements of the twentieth century have occurred in the shadow of bloodshed, and this suffering has occurred upon a scale that, in many respects, has been hitherto unprecedented. The details of this violence – the rape / death camps, the genocidal annihilations, the great wars, the day to day acts of brutality – are themselves no secret, and one may easily find libraries of texts devoted to documenting this terrible century of atrocity. While few problems present themselves to scholars in finding information on the horrors of the twentieth century, there remain many unanswered questions around the motivation for this violence. Why is it that the infliction of suffering should have held such a central position within the twentieth century? Why, in an age of apparent civility, should violence have weighed so heavily upon relations of power? Why is it that within a century in which there existed the technological, social and medical resources for the alleviation of suffering, that pain should have been inflicted upon such an unprecedented scale?

The initial thinking for this project began with the latter question. It is difficult to comprehend the logic behind the twentieth century’s apparently contradictory capacity for both the radical alleviation of suffering and the hellish infliction of pain. On the one hand, developments in analgesia and anaesthetics would offer a salvation from suffering to those who had suffered injury and for those who endured surgical

procedures. The emergence of democratic rule, and the diminishing of the formal use of corporal and capital punishment, would offer hope that the violence that maintained the rule of the sovereigns of old would no longer be necessary: citizens of this era claim to rule by the ballot, rather than be ruled by the sword. The twentieth century held the promise of an age where the technical, political and organisational means would exist for the removal of violence and suffering from human affairs. But on the other hand, and in spite of these developments, the twentieth century was also the period in which there were developed the most refined and horrific methods for the infliction of pain, whether in the form of armaments designed to injure or kill, or in technical developments in the apparatuses of torture, or in the assembly of large scale forces across land, sea and air. Despite the promise of a pain-free century, the twentieth would prove to be the most painful yet: hundreds of millions would be slaughtered and maimed in the great wars that plagued the century; millions would be incarcerated; millions displaced; and many, many others would be subject to systematic abuse in camps and detention centres.

Perhaps more perplexing for analysis are those examples of extreme violence that simultaneously reference the elements of “care” or “hospitality” that we would normally associate with human civility. In late 2001, the United States began an armed campaign against Afghanistan with the aim of eliminating Al Qaeda operatives, which it argued had maintained close links with the then ruling Taliban government. This campaign involved both violence and gift giving as integral strategies: the US government deployed not only an unrelenting barrage of explosives and incendiaries, but also “dropped” humanitarian aid in the form of food and medical supplies. Here the paradox of violence and suffering that we find in the twentieth century is encapsulated within the one military operation, where an imperative is demonstrated to both generate pain and death upon a massive scale, yet also, at the very same moment, to provide relief from pain and suffering. And we find this paradox not only in contemporary warfare, but in the practices of incarceration and institutionalised violence that have been exercised vigorously throughout the twentieth century. As I shall discuss below and throughout this work, torture in

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particular highlights this curious relationship between violence and care, where for example, in the modern torture complex the healing hand of medical expertise is increasingly drawn upon “to allow for ‘effective’ torture.” How do we make sense of this strange, indeed unprecedented logic of violence, where violence and care, force and facilitation are ruthlessly twisted together?

In order to come to terms with this paradox, I have provided a metaphor for rethinking political power: namely, the internal combustion engine as the meeting point of frictional force and lubricative flows. This metaphor highlights the role played by lubricative flows within the landscape of power. On the one hand, the image of a complex matrix of tributaries, channels and ducts within the engine – designed to channel lubricative flows – offers a gateway to comprehending the movements of formalised lubricative power, which must incorporate precision, efficacy and predictability. On the other hand, informal lubricative flows, the inconspicuous everyday – unaccounted for – movements of lubricative power may be read through the chaotic flows of lubricants that move backward and forward through the sump, across the walls of moving surfaces, over pistons, cranks and gears. Importantly, this mechanism is not divorced from force. Indeed frictional forces are everywhere enabling a range of macro and micro political movements in power: pistons circulate at thousands of revolutions per minute; valves open and close with precision and determination; cranks, gears and shafts move with immense power and torque. The internal combustion engine is the meeting point for lubricants and force, a grand field within which a multiplicity of force effects, facilitative movements coalesce, where a range of relationships of power flourish, from heat-soaked encounters of extreme friction and violence, to moments of serene unhindered lubricity.

No doubt, some readers will object: surely there is nothing to be gained by proposing (yet) another treatise on power? Political scientists have for centuries taken this somewhat imprecise and shabby political concept into their laboratories, during which time it has been poked and prodded, interrogated and provoked, interpreted and misinterpreted, both glorified and nullified. And the outcome of these ardent investigations has not necessarily been the refinement of the concept. Unlike “power”

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as it is understood in the physical sciences, political science has not yet arrived at a consistent definition for political power: indeed the difference between political worldviews is often defined by a difference in how power – as a base unit of political analysis – is understood. But the lack of agreement on the meaning of political power is not necessarily detrimental to the art of political analysis. Each new perspective on the dynamics of power offers an opportunity to reinterpret social relationships and better understand cultural phenomena that have previously lacked adequate explanation. While each new perspective on power naturally must converse with those before it, and must be subject to argument, contestation, and analysis, it must also be assessed for its utility in shedding new light on the dynamics of the social field.

Thus I confess that the schema of power I propose in this work is not an end in itself, but is an instrument towards a different end. For as I will discuss in this work, understanding the interaction between frictional power and lubricative power provides a gateway to understanding not only the persistence of violence throughout the twentieth century, but its evolving function and logic within existing frameworks of political organisation. In particular two important themes emerge in this work, both of which rely upon the metaphor of power I propose: firstly, the importance of understanding the evolution of sovereignty incorporating biopolitics and Governmentality; and secondly, the refinement within sovereignty of the capacity to measure its violence carefully with regard to the life of its victim, that is, to engage in a governed violence.

While I admit that movements of force – or what I describe as frictional power – are not new to political analysis, lubricative power on the other hand is a novel theoretical concept. My attraction to promoting the lubricant as a metaphor relates to its connection to discomfort and pain. The lubricant possess a capacity, within particular contexts, to mediate, and perhaps even alleviate, pain. The lubricant is, in this sense, an analgesic substance.

One area in which the analgesic potential of the lubricant is revealed clearly is within medical practice. The insertion of the catheter for example, although uncomfortable in practice, would be somewhat more painful, perhaps in some cases impossible, were it not for the development of preparatory techniques to facilitate the insertion of the
instrument into the bodily orifice. Perhaps the most important of these techniques is the use of a fluid lubricant, which when applied to the catheter, and into the passage in which this instrument is to be inserted, allows for gradual, and somewhat eased movement. This is certainly true of urinary catheters, which in order to negotiate the twists and turns of the urethral passage without seriously damaging soft tissue, must be lubricated thoroughly. The fact that the use of the lubricant may ease the discomfort of a procedure (perhaps with enhancement by a local anaesthetic), and in some cases make possible a practice which would otherwise not be possible, suggests something about the relation of the lubricant to pain, possibility and power. I identify two distinctive “powers” of lubrication: firstly, the lubricant eases the movement of bodies against each other; and secondly, the lubricant makes possible what would otherwise be impossible.

More than mere pain relief, the lubricant may also create the conditions of pleasure. The fluid lubricant may enable a multiplicity of movements, situations in which dry frictional affects are rendered intensely pleasurable through the generous application of lubricants. It is this possibility for pleasure that projects the potentiality of lubrication into the erotic space. This, as I shall discuss in Chapter 4, may be seen clearly in the example of the erotic practice of “fisting,” which involves the insertion of a hand, wrist and – for skilled and experienced practitioners – forearm into an anal or vaginal orifice. This practice is only possible, and pleasurably so, through the use of large quantities of lubricative agents. Further, the myriad of strategies employed to allow the relaxation of the body necessary to pleasurably receive the hand of the other rest upon facilitative gestures and assemblies: acts which enable a practice which would otherwise be only possible through a coercive violence. In this sense, the action of lubrication shares a conceptual proximity to the process of consent. Indeed this work defines consent as precisely an active process of engagement that involves the successive laying down of facilitative assemblies and gestures towards the creation of reciprocal relations with another or others. Lubricative power describes the combined effect of a multiplicity of facilitative movements: it is a field of facilitative gestures and assemblies that enable effects of power.

I should acknowledge that facilitation is not a new point of analysis for political theory: indeed facilitation has been incorporated into the political worldviews of a range of theorists. For example, the historically constituted stages of production that are defined in Marxist thought – such as feudalism or capitalism – are essentially facilitative in nature, as these stages provide the structural framework within which the relations of human agents are enabled\(^6\) (e.g. the industrial working class only arises within the context of capitalism). In a similar fashion, technology is commonly perceived as a facilitative medium, often thought of as creating the conditions by which particular human endeavours may be realised. As an example, theorist of power Stuart Clegg describes facilitative conditions as comprising “technologies of production and discipline” and assigns them an instrumental role within his framework of power.\(^7\) The account of lubricative power presented in this work differs from these accounts of facilitation in that it is not solely interested in the material or technological conditions which enable action, but in the multiplicity of facilitative gestures, made by humans and non-humans alike, which animate and invest political structures with living power. Lubricative power is not a passive medium across which relations of force may be enabled, but the active process of facilitative deployment which, like that within the micropolitical space of the erotic relation, enables productive coupling and new forms of organisation.

Lubricative power can be organised on a large scale, and as I argue in Chapter 5, this is exemplified in the functioning of the bureaucracy. It is not incidental that Max Weber suggested that one of the aims of the bureaucracy was the “reduction of friction”: bureaucracy is an elaborate mechanism for the organisation of large scale lubricative flows into a network of predesignated conduits of power. These flows comprise a multiplicity of facilitative gestures and assemblies, designed to enable


organisational tasks and liberate productivities. *Formal lubricative conduits* – fluidic channels which find their way to a range of movements in power – are buried deep in the heart of the functioning and governance of most large contemporary organisations.

Further, as the examples of the catheter and erotic relations demonstrate, we need not look to macropolitical events to find the activity of lubricative power. This power, and the facilitative acts and assemblies that comprise it, may be located in a range of daily social interactions that span the social field. In a bank, the staff decide to work an extra twenty minutes to serve their last customers. Friends walk down alleyways, carrying each other’s shopping bags. A couple make love. In a bar, a man knocks over another’s drink, and quickly offers to replace it. A driver slows down to let a truck move out of a tight driveway. A person at a meeting awaits his turn before speaking. Students urge others to play football on a lawn between classes. A retiree offers her services to a local community organisation. These are day-to-day acts of facilitation; the everyday movements that define lubricative power.

I define frictional power as the field of contesting force effects. Conceptualising the interaction of lubricative power with frictional power within the metaphor of the internal combustion engine, allows us to also consider the relationship between lubricative power and violence. For as this metaphor illustrates, the movements of force are frequently accompanied by lubricative flows: crystallised in those moments where *violence* is accompanied by forms of facilitation.

There are a range of different perspectives on how violence is defined, and the acts that constitute it. Because there is a great potential for an act defined as violent to harm in different ways, there can be difficulties associated with a “simple” definition. For example political theorist Dennis Wrong defines violence as a “direct assault upon the body of another in order to inflict pain, injury or death.”  


Although this definition is uncomplicated, it fails to include other forms of inflicted injury that could easily fall under the auspice of violence: for example, psychological harm.  

> The United Nations, for example, provides a comprehensive definition for “violence against women” as comprising: “(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and

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work I define violence as involving the absence of consent, which is characterised by a failure or evacuation of reciprocal facilitative gestures and assemblies. The question I leave open is what acts (for example murder or assault) may be said to constitute this violence. While it is true that violence necessarily incorporates the physical, the sexual and the psychological (although not necessarily all three), this work does not seek to define violence through a catalogue of acts or effects, but to treat violence as something that entails an absence of reciprocal facilitative engagement. Thus the work of analysis is not to pass judgement on the act itself, but to look for the evidence of the active engagement of subjects in a facilitative process. Nevertheless, while I have refrained from providing a list of acts that constitute violence, I have deliberately drawn from examples of physical and sexual violence in this work, not because I believe them to necessarily be any closer to the heart of violence than other forms of harm, but because they provide an appropriate backdrop through which the reader can better make sense of the lubricative and frictional metaphors I advance.

Violence also has a relationship to power, and there is also variation here in terms of how best to describe this relationship. For some theorists, power is equivalent to force, and therefore the exercise of violence is inevitably linked to understanding the movement of power. Wrong, for example, emphasises that “elements of coercion”…are… “present in nearly all concrete power relations,” 10 while Thomas Hobbes and Robert Dahl, as shall be discussed in Chapter 2, similarly make fundamental links between force and power. Yet other theorists would play down any core relationship between violence and power. Nicolai Machiavelli, for example, devotes a number of chapters in both The Prince and The Discourses to evaluating the respective efficacy of the use of violent as opposed to the use of non violent means, 11 and the value of winning the trust and loyalty of the people is weighed against the

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10 Wrong, Power, p24.
11 See N. Machiavelli, The Prince and The Discourses, (The Modern Library, New York, 1950), especially Ch. XVI & XVII of The Prince (pp57-63); and Ch. XIX - XXII of The Discourses (pp470-482).
expedience of ruling by fear.\textsuperscript{12} For Hannah Arendt, power and violence are so different that they are opposed: she states “power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent.”\textsuperscript{13} In a similar fashion to Arendt, the lubricative power I describe in this work is absolutely opposed to violence. But this does not mean that violence is the opposite of power. The traditional linkage between force and power is still present, and I would agree with Wrong that relationships of violence and coercion are ever-present within the political field. Yet whilst force is the mover of many things within political networks, lubricative networks are also ever-present in the multiplicity of facilitative acts, gestures and assemblies that enable production throughout the mechanism.

The opposite of violence, as it turns out, is not strictly the lubricant, but the gift. As I discuss in Chapter 4, the fundamental distinction between the gift and the act of violence is related to the irrefusability of the latter. Whilst we may be obliged to accept the gift from the Other, we are never compelled by force to accept the gift-giving gesture. On the other hand, violence is characterised by the inability of its victim to refuse its receipt. The erotic lubricant essentially arrives as a gift — a refusable offer from the Other — which when accompanied by violence effectively erodes the terms of its generosity. Yet we may observe that when freely given, the lubricative gesture may open new productive horizons, enabling unimagined pleasures, and unprecedented couplings.

I would like to return to the paradox that initially motivated this study: namely, why should pain and violence have persisted, indeed intensified, throughout the twentieth century, when the means existed for pain and suffering to be significantly diminished? To extend this question further, why would two seemingly adversative capacities — that is, violence and care — be found in such close proximity to each other, as in the case of the simultaneous deployments of bombs and humanitarian aid over Afghanistan in late 2001, or in the persistence of torture aided by medical and scientific expertise, or in the development of more sophisticated forms of incarceration and containment that promise to both punish and protect the body of the

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp60-3.
prisoner? Indeed, of all the methods of violence practised over the last century, it is the predominance of torture that is most unsettling for our contemporary assumptions around the significance of pain within the political field. Yet torture provides perhaps the clearest way to understand the paradox I have alluded to in this work. Certainly, the persistence of torture throughout the twentieth century is troubling. If we are to accept Michel Foucault’s influential account of the emergence of disciplinary power, then institutions like prisons, schools and hospitals should be substituted for the regulatory power of the sovereign sword. Disciplinary networks would replace the torture rack as the mandated method by which the conduct of bodies could be maintained; and as a consequence, the spectacle of public execution, floggings and petty torture would disappear. Today civility implies governance through mechanisms that appear to be painless in operation. Modern individuals learn to regulate their own behaviour through normalised rules of conduct, reinforced by an extensive and encompassing surveillance network that does not rely upon painful coercion as a means to secure performance. It is this apparent distance between disciplinary conduct (the regulation of self according to prescriptive norms) and coercive violence (the threat of pain, injury or death as a means to guide action) that may lead one to assume that disciplinary power has produced the conditions for a reduction in human suffering. While it is true that regimes of disciplinarity and surveillance have created the possibility for conduct to be managed without suffering, it can also be demonstrated that they have simultaneously enabled the conditions for a more exacting and intensified production of pain.

Modern torture is one such example of a painful disciplinarity. Its defining characteristic is its adoption of aspects of modern disciplinary norms as its modus operandi. In his study of torture in modern Iran, Darius M. Rejali observes that torture within the twentieth century was not a consequence of a return of classical forms of punishment, but instead reveals “features of disciplinary society”:

Today, classical torture no longer exists, although torture has returned.
Modern torture is private not public. It takes place in the basements of prisons

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and detention centres. Even the Islamic Revolution has not changed this practice substantively. Modern torture is clinical, not ritual, torture. The torturer operates on his patient. His methods and instruments are drawn from medicine, engineering, psychology and physiology.\textsuperscript{16}

The practice of modern torture emphasises that despite a formal absence of the necessity for suffering, there is clearly an imperative for pain within our era. Yet, the aim of this modern economy of pain is shrouded in mystery: as Rejali observes, “neither Foucault, nor the humanists can advance a satisfactory explanation for the return to torture, much less the features that characterise it.”\textsuperscript{17} If the object of classical torture was – as Michel Foucault argues\textsuperscript{18} – the \textit{body}, then what, may we ask, is the object of modern torture, an art that, if we are to accept Rejali’s analysis, must be considered as an entirely new practice?

In this work, a “satisfactory explanation” is sought, an explanation which, notwithstanding Rejali’s critique, finds part of the solution within the work of Foucault. \textit{Biopolitics}, as it was described in Foucault’s enigmatic final chapter of \textit{The History of Sexuality I}, refers to the focus of political discourse upon questions relating to the biological life of populations. Here Foucault suggests that political discourse is increasingly directed towards a concern for the nature of \textit{life}, its vicissitudes, its requirements, its essence: “For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal, with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question”.\textsuperscript{19} For Foucault, biopolitics shifts the landscape of politics as a whole, including changing the face of political sovereignty. He argues that biopolitical sovereignty is charged with the duty, not merely of maintaining its own power through the sword, but of attending to the needs of the biological populations. Thus, biopolitical sovereignty becomes involved in the deployment of resources for education and training, public health, the facilitation of relationships and organisations, fertility and “family” planning, the management of the economy, and the generalised financial well being of

\begin{flushleft}16 \textsuperscript{Ibid.}, p13. \textsuperscript{17} \textsuperscript{Ibid.}, p15. \textsuperscript{18} See Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish}, p16. \textsuperscript{19} \textsuperscript{M. Foucault,} \textit{The Will to Knowledge, The History of Sexuality: 1}, (Penguin Books, London, 1998), p143.\end{flushleft}
populations. Whilst many of these programs and initiatives may actually benefit, and enhance, the existence of particular populations, we cannot assume that sovereign biopolitics is merely concerned with what has been called the “fostering of life.” For, as Foucault suggests, the power to foster life is connected to a more insidious arm of sovereign power: namely the power to “disallow it [life] to the point of death”.

It is precisely this latter power which bears an uncanny resemblance to torture, since the practice of torture so clearly relies upon the ability to inflict a violence of care that stops short of killing its victim; or, as Rejali poignantly expresses it: “The imperative is not to take life, but to maintain it for as long as possible on the threshold of death.”

It is perhaps not coincidental that the Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, should also locate in sovereignty this strange power to maintain life upon a “threshold.”

Agamben extends Foucault’s articulation of biopower, suggesting that sovereign power rests upon the ability to locate life within a “state of exception,” where this life may be subject to a violence which is simultaneously inside and outside of the regular juridical apparatus. Drawing upon Walter Benjamin’s influential essay “Critique of Violence,” Agamben argues that the life that is subject to the exceptional power of sovereignty is constituted as bare life. For Agamben, bare life is situated most clearly in the camp (i.e. a space of legal exception such as a concentration camp, detention facility), where life may be caught indefinitely, subject to the continuing, and apparently lawless violence of sovereignty.

This work suggests that torture – a violence frequently pursued in the camp – reveals plainly the object of sovereign violence, since its “art” involves the indefinite infliction of a suffering which borders on the periphery of death. This is violence that does not strike down life, but seeks to administer successive attacks upon the body designed to stop short of death (often literally, to postpone death through the extension of dying). This violence is careful, it involves the measuring of suffering, and the ardent deployment of scientific, medical and psychological expertise which

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20 Ibid., p138.
explores with an exacting care the line between the living and the non-living: the “threshold of death.”

This careful, measured violence, I describe as governed violence: a violence that exists at the meeting point of force and facilitation. Governed violence, like other forms of violence, strips life bare stroke by stroke, exercising in its practice an insidious care for the living. But this violence must also draw close to it facilitative means – administrative skills, medical expertise, psychology – to enable the fostering of life at the same moment as it is seemingly diminished. Torture is the meeting point of frictional forces and lubricative energies: violence and facilitation coalesce to enact a care for life that limits its potentiality to the absolute periphery between life and death.

The answer to the paradox of violence in the twentieth century lies here. The biopolitical imperative that has become intense and clear in the twentieth century has both ensured that contemporary violence cannot rid itself of the stain of life, yet at the same time enabled practices of concentrated violence that may have never been previously imagined.

I argue in this work that sovereignty today has a special relationship to governed violence, since sovereign power possesses the technical means, resources and judicial authority necessary to organise this violence on a mass scale. The term sovereignty implies a mandated system of authority, rule or control that provides a nodal point for the organisation of political and social relations. Contemporary understandings of sovereignty are in many ways coloured by the Western – distinctly Hobbesian – conception: namely, the perceived right of a monarch or delegated authority to make a singular, unifying claim to territory and life within a particular domain, and to both organise and exercise legitimised violence. This framework for sovereign power casts a shadow over other possible forms of geo-political organisation, and increasingly we observe that variations of this model of sovereignty are extending their reach into every territorial and biological region of this planet.24 The contemporary nation State – which is legitimised through the sovereign right – embodies many of the generic

principles which defined the rule of the Western sovereigns of old: centralised decision making; a prerogative to lay claim to resources within borders; the fixture (or conversely removal) of populations within territorial domains of power; a monopoly exercised over the mechanisms of violence, and the power to legitimise its own violent acts.

Yet despite its genealogical roots, Western sovereignty has also evolved significantly from the rule of kings that had dominated its history over the last millennium. This has made it difficult to speak of sovereignty without engaging with the range of forces that entangle, mitigate and divest its rule. Sovereignty today is complex. It works in tandem with great bureaucracies; its decisions are frequently enacted through parliaments and executives, and its bounded territories are compromised by flows of people, resources and money. Given this relative sophistication, it is difficult to suggest (as in the kingdoms of old) that the enactment of political decisions by government obey the will of a single person or an executive. One of the flaws of the Hobbesian model of power is the belief that all power is capable of being centralised upon a single agent. Instead, as contemporary government demonstrates, power must flow through a range of conduits. Power is diffracted, delayed, lubricated, and resisted. This work will explore in more detail the contemporary interaction of power, through relations of force and flows of facilitation.

Some may question the significance and relevance of sovereign violence as a topic for contemporary political analysis. After all, do not the debates around sovereignty echo from amidst the antiquated chambers of classical liberal theory, from a time where questions of legitimacy, right and constitution dominated the landscape of political theory? Do we not recognise today that power is as much at home within the cloistered surrounds of the boudoir as in the parliament; that power does not need to be delegated from a singular, legitimised force, that indeed power flows freely throughout a vast expanse of relations that do not necessarily pay homage to the King?

The apparent redundancy of debates around sovereign power is reinforced by the Foucauldian perspective, which calls for an end to political philosophy’s long-standing marriage to sovereignty. In the now famous words of Foucault: “We need to
cut off the King’s head: in political theory that has still to be done.”25 Yet, as will become clear in this work, the King’s head lingered in the background of Foucault’s thinking, and was to become an overt area of concern for him in his later work. Perhaps the most distilled example of this can be found in Foucault’s work on “governmentality,”26 which describes the way in which disciplinary norms and governmental rationality alter, and are altered by, a continuing relation with sovereign power. Foucault identifies a modern shift in the object of the relationship between sovereignty and power: where the classical sovereign could be identified with merely a concern for maintaining rule over his or her territory and resources, the contemporary government of the State (which incorporates sovereign power) is more closely concerned with questions of population and life. Government necessitates complex strategies to analyse, nurture and regulate biological populations within its domain. As I argue in Chapter 5, government may be thought of as an art that seeks to be involved in the management of frictional and lubricative power. Sovereignty is inescapably embroiled in this managerial task and it has an important, albeit frequently veiled and mitigated responsibility.

I believe Foucault’s thinking around questions of governance compels us to exercise care in our discussion of sovereignty and its relation to the exercise of sovereign violence. Agamben narrowly conceptualises sovereignty as involving a single monarch or dictator carrying out the task of deciding upon the exception. In some ways this is a plausible approach for the scope of Agamben’s analysis, since sovereignty in crisis often resorts to this mode of operation. For this work though, I recognise that the sovereign decision is frequently not only made by an individual or an executive, but is more often the product of a complex process involving the interaction of sovereignty with the mechanisms of liberal governance. It is still true that in the moment of crisis it is frequently the “sovereign” – a leader or an executive – who is called upon to declare the exception, but it is also true that for more routine decision making, sovereignty finds itself constrained and diffused within bureaucratic apparatuses, democratic frameworks and the aegis of government. Because of the

dualism of operation, “sovereignty” will thus have a twofold usage in this work: 

*firstly,* as a descriptor of the more traditionally held right of monarchs to command violence and direct resources, populations and territories with a unitary and totalitarian fervour; and *secondly,* as a term for an evolved matrix of power which pays homage to the bureaucratic, the governmental and the biopolitical. In some respects the latter formation corresponds best to what we call the “State”: an assembly imbued with governmental rationality, comprising bureaucratic and administrative apparatuses, parliaments, councils and other democratic mechanisms, a right claimed to land and resources, and the command of military and para-military forces, courts and prisons.

There remain a number of contemporary political issues that beckon us to revisit the question of sovereign power. Since British invasion and settlement in 1788, Australian politics has been characterised by the contestation of sovereignty. Australia’s long history of dispossession, genocide and displacement of its indigenous population may be understood as the long process of tactical engagement by which white sovereignty sought to uproot, and discard from trace, the remnant memory of a pre-existing claim to Aboriginal sovereignty. The 1992 *Mabo and Others versus Queensland* (no. 2) High Court decision – which recognised that Australia’s indigenous inhabitants possessed forms of “native title” to land prior to the British annexation – is an example of the contemporary poignancy of political sovereignty, even if, by a strange manoeuvre of political reason, pre-existing sovereignty was expressly not recognised by this same decision. In late 2002, the *Yorta Yorta 1998 Federal Court decision* was upheld by the High Court, severely limiting the scope by which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could make future claims to native title. The implications of this decision for political sovereignty were expressed clearly by the co-ordinator of the Yorta Yorta claim, Monica Morgan: “It’s not about native title, it’s about racism…It’s about recognition, it’s about seeing our sovereignty.”

Certainly, the question of indigenous sovereignty has not been resolved in Australian politics today, and as Henry Reynolds indicates, there is no reason to assume that it can easily be removed from the political agenda: “It becomes increasingly difficult to

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sustain the view that the Aborigines were traditionally without sovereignty. Neither our anthropological knowledge nor our contemporary values allow that position to be held indefinitely.²⁹

Another example of the contemporary relevance of political sovereignty may be found in recent discussions around the shifting significance of the nation State within the context of international political formations. “Globalisation” – the process by which capital, markets, governments and authorities, and particular peoples have re-situated themselves within an emerging international perspective³⁰ – raises questions for how we think about sovereign power. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri emphasise, the restructuring of nation states which has accompanied this process of globalisation has not spelled the end of sovereignty, but, on the contrary, has forced a re-negotiation of the terms of its power.³¹

Certainly we are a long way from a vision of “popular sovereignty” or “sovereignty of the people.” The fact that sovereignty may make its presence felt in a totalitarian gesture – the exercise of what could be described as an authoritarian sovereign prerogative – is at odds with any conception of a truly democratic sovereignty, and by extension suggest a certain incompatibility between democracy and sovereign power as we have come to know it. This does not mean that democracy is not able to cohabit with sovereign power. Representative forms of democracy are in many ways a convenient solution to this antagonism between Western sovereignty – which describes an exclusive right to constitute exception – and the possibility of the “rule of mass.” The election of representatives, and the subsequent concentration of ruling power in the hands of an executive, means that even the actions of democratic government may coincide with the essentially totalitarian tendencies of sovereignty: since elected or not, someone is required, in the moment of crisis, to make the decision upon the exception. The truth of this statement is evidenced by at least a hundred years of representative democratic governance, where the decision to plunge whole populations into war and bloodshed, is made frequently without reference to the will of the citizenry, yet paradoxically is made with the upmost legitimacy.

³¹ See Hardt & Negri, Empire.
Torture only reinforces this paradox since, as recent incidences of torture by the United States have highlighted, even democratic regimes may authorise what would seem thoroughly “undemocratic” practices.

Given the limitations of representative democratic regimes, other models of democracy may be said to pose a peculiar challenge to the dominant logic of contemporary sovereignty. It may be asked, for example, whether democracy generates its own competing sovereign vision: whether, in other words, we bear witness to a contestation between an archaic and totalitarian sovereign power and a more democratic and pluralistic conception of sovereignty. Could it be that the real challenge to western sovereignty comes not from its entrenched representative democratic structures, but from participatory formations that gestate, evolve, and dissipate incessantly throughout the field of power, sometimes threatening to crack the formalised channels through which liberal democracies customarily operate? The totalitarian vision of sovereignty that we once associated with the kings of old may be slowly withering under pressure from a sovereignty of the people, which demands the dispersal of sovereign powers amongst a multiplicity. To quote R.B.J. Walker, what “is arguably at stake is not the eternal presence or imminent absence of sovereignty, but the function of disaggregation, proliferation and spatial differentiation of centres of authority…”32 In this case democracy contributes its own sovereign vision – a sovereignty of the people – which may be said to actively contest the space of legitimacy held by more traditional conceptions of sovereign power. I believe the observations I make on pure facilitation / lubricity in this work point to the moments where it is possible to imagine political community without sovereign violence, even if, simultaneously, these examples demonstrate how elusive these opportunities are within the contemporary political landscape.

Debates around indigenous sovereignty, globalisation and democracy offer a challenge to the notion of sovereignty that has dominated political and legal thought over the last century. This sovereignty is totalising in form; it knows no opposition to the supremacy of its rule; it commands the right to pass judgement upon the living; its resists absolutely the possibility of dividing or sharing the responsibilities it claims as

its own. This sovereignty is biopolitical: it seeks to determine and govern the terms of life possessed by all, from the largest living organisms (whales, rainforests, oceans, whole eco-systems), down to the smallest microbes and cells. Above all, this sovereignty commands great violence, and the capacity to inflict pain upon an unprecedented scale. And as I argue, it is the capacity for contemporary sovereignty to measure violence with an exacting finitude, which defines it. Given the technological, medical and administrative innovation that has occurred which has enabled the maintenance of the body in a state of suffering (literally upon the threshold of death), the capacity of modern sovereignty for governed violence is as fearsome as its potential for utter annihilation.

What is the aim of this governed violence? Towards what entity does it direct itself? The aim of frictional violence, like that of disciplinary power itself, is the soul. Of course the soul can mean many things, from that spirit which is detached from the materiality of being, to the essence of self that we sculpt and care for. But, if we assume the definition of soul as Aristotle defines it, that is as “the cause or source of the living body,” then it is clear that the object of frictional violence is to grasp hold of this essence, and wear it down to its barest – its most minimal – state of functioning. And pain is the most direct expression for the phenomenal state of those whose souls have been touched by the frictional whip of modern sovereign violence. Within the contemporary frictional economy, the soul – the life force that animates the body – is all-important, but only in so far as it is contained, classified and its potentiality strictly limited. This may explain the apparent urgency with which Agamben evokes the classical distinction between “zoë, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men or gods), and bios, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or group.” The contemporary political dilemma Agamben poses revolves around the fact that the bare fact of living has become inseparable from the political constitution of that same subject: that the political question irrevocably returns to question of life itself.

Thus, to return to the question of violence, the two impulses for this project meet

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35 Ibid., p188.
resolutely when the gift of lubricity intersects with the act of violence: when power assumes the figure of the Trojan horse (or the act of violence that arrives cloaked as a gift). For in the contemporary era the exercise of governed violence – a measured violence for the living – depends upon vast lubricative channels that facilitate the operation of the machines of force. The bombing of Afghanistan, where humanitarian aid was delivered almost literally one payload in advance of an extreme violence, is explicable when one considers the biopolitical face of violence, serves as an emblematic reminder that modern violence is stained by an implacable concern for life. Today, even the most bloodthirsty quest for annihilation is tainted by consideration for the living (Image 1). Military strategists must contend with not merely the demand for the death of Al Qaeda terrorists, and their Taliban associates, but must also ask how it is that other populations may be fostered, and through what manipulation of resources – political, military and economic – may the future “security” of this population be guaranteed. The aim of governmental violence, in war and peace, is the dual task of both managing frictional deployments, and containing lubricative flows.

If power involves a complex management of frictional force and lubricative flows, then the metaphor of the internal combustion engine is a useful way to conceptualise the interaction of these forms of power. Traditional theories of power have used the analogy of the machine and force relationships as a descriptor of power. This is perhaps seen most clearly in the account given by Robert Dahl, where power can be conceived as describing relations between discrete entities, as if one were watching billiard balls. As I shall discuss in Chapter 2, despite the flaws with this account, and the assumptions that underpin it, it remains compelling. Even in this digital age, the machine continues to whirr itself into our daily lives, in fridges and fans, cars and trains, even in the many moving parts that constitute today’s personal computer. Indeed, if we define the machine as an assembly of parts that, acting in concert, generate production, then it is apparent that we have always lived with machines, long before the industrial revolution pushed their existence into the forefront of our understandings of the world. It is difficult to escape the effects of machines, which are sown into the fabric of our being, and belong to each facet of our material existence.
But rather than argue for a Hobbesian schema of power in which the machine is imagined as comprising only relationships of force and influence, I argue instead that the machine of power must describe a complex interaction between multifarious and complex networks of frictionality and lubricity. Chapter 2 presents this machine of power in the metaphor of the *internal combustion engine*: a device which incorporates all the solid movements of force as described by classical political theorists, yet also involves a network of lubricative channels and flows which, were it not for their dispersion within the field of power, would cause the whole apparatus to stall in its tracks.

This project is divided conceptually into two halves, corresponding to the two forms of power described: the *first* half is concerned with frictional power and violence; the *second* half with lubricative power and its implications for violence. Conceptually, the structure of the chapters follows the *camera obscura* principle, with Chapter 4 ("Erotics, Facilitation and Consent") planted firmly in the centre of the work as the lens that filters the contents of the first half of the work, inverting the image of the world as it were, by the addition of lubricative principles to the analysis of power. This movement is deliberate, as it allows us to move from a macropolitical level of analysis to the micro level, and back out again. I believe our own interpersonal relations and impulses can inform our macropolitical understandings of the world: the structure of this work complies with this conceptual affiliation. The journey from one end of the work to the other generates a range of new concepts that are designed to grasp the issues raised in relation to lubricity, sovereignty and violence. I have included a glossary at the close of Chapter 1 for the benefit of readers, in order to
Image 1: Captured Soldier is Offered Water during the US led Invasion of Afghanistan in 2002.

provide a convenient reference point for the terminology used.

Throughout the work, I interrogate the machine of power: How can we describe relations of power? How do we link power to violence? In what ways do facilitative forms of power interact with relations of force? In what circumstances does lubricative power operate alone? In what circumstances does power operate in exclusion from lubricity? As stated above, Chapter 2 provides an introduction to the metaphor of power I use throughout this work no space: the internal combustion engine. This chapter outlines the respective significance of frictional and lubricative power, and points to their difference.

Chapter 3 explores more explicitly the measuring of violence and its relation to sovereignty, pain and biopolitics. It begins with a reading of Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence,” as an introduction to Agamben’s own reading of Benjamin, Carl Schmitt and Foucault. Agamben provides an understanding of the relationship between sovereign exception, the camp and life. The second part of the chapter compares the work of Agamben to that of Elaine Scarry and her analysis of torture, and draws towards a more complete understanding of governed violence.

The concept of lubricative power advanced in this work is first explored in depth in Chapter 4. As outlined above, this chapter acts as the lens (or “sphincter”) that demarcates the world of frictionality and that of lubricity. Here the groundwork for thinking about lubricative power is established. The starting point for this analysis is within the micropolitical sphere of erotic relations. Understanding the connections of lubricative power to consent, facilitation and erotic relations relies on comprehending the distinction between the act of violence and the gesture of lubricity. The practices of fisting and erotic sadomasochism (S/M) are analysed as examples of lubricated reciprocity. I also discuss in this chapter the relationship between lubricative power and consent within interpersonal relations.

As stated above, part of the object of the metaphor of the internal combustion engine is to conceptualise the interaction between two forms of power: in Chapter 5 the details of an aspect of this interaction are explored. Bureaucracy is examined as a form of lubricative deployment, and its relation to sovereignty and to Foucault’s late
work on “governmentality” is discussed.

Chapter 6, “Informal Lubricative Flows and Erotic Hope” examines the movement of informal lubricities, both within the sphere of formalised lubricative conduits and without. A focus of the chapter is the Beijing uprising of 1989, as a historical locus for both an extreme state violence, but also an immense flood of informal lubricative power. The mass protest reveals the “art of government”: the attempt to manage both frictional deployments and lubricative flows.

This work demonstrates that violence remains a prioritised means of achieving the mass organisation of life itself on the planet. Violence is not merely found in war, or in the actions of militias, or in concentration camps and detention centres, it is also found on a localised scale, in prisons and legislature, in the action of police, who, exercising a violence of care, maintain “law and order” in suburbs and streets. We may also find this same, seemingly benign logic exercised upon a larger scale between sovereign nations, where the police action may be now pursued as a means of securing regional and global “peace” and resources are devoted towards the creation and legitimisation of international juridical apparatuses (such as criminal courts for prosecuting war criminals). In this respect, we must pay some tribute to Hardt and Negri’s argument that globalisation involves not merely the international restructuring of economic relations, but a shift in juridical power: the traditional limits of sovereign power are in the process of extension to encompass “a new global form of sovereignty.”

This evolution of sovereignty calls for a re-appraisal of Kant’s *Perpetual Peace*, in which Kant proposes a global union of nation states which, through the powers vested in an international government, may formally forbid the enactment of war. According to Kant, this requires sovereign states to “renounce, like individuals, the anarchic liberty of savages, in order to submit themselves to coercive laws, and thus form a society of nations (*civitas gentium*) which would insensibly embrace all the nations of the earth.”

The formation of the *civitas gentium* that we are now witness to signals the emergence of a global order of “peace” which is founded upon the careful management of force, substituting the threat of a chaotic

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annihilation for the ongoing government of population by both force and facilitation.

It would be unfortunate if this work, devoted largely to power and violence, could not find solace in sanctuaries that are unaffected by violence: spheres of peace that seek the resolution of conflict through means other than force. A problem which is emphasised in this work is the dubious foundation of peace in the modern era, which is almost inevitably “secured” through State power and, as a consequence, a sovereign monopoly over violence. This benevolent power carries inherent within it the very same paradox discussed above: namely an immense capacity to facilitate, to care, with a simultaneous capacity to inflict large-scale suffering and devastation. Can we escape the relation of the present, where it is impossible to imagine peace without the aid of sovereign power, which carries with it this “caring violence”? The answer provided in Chapter 6 of this work is affirmative. A space of true peace – what will be described in this work as a pure lubricity – can be found in the moments where a relation with the Other is sought without the interference of the “security” of violence or coercion. An example of such an event is the erotic relation, which no matter how clumsy and awkward, and despite many miscommunications, aims at the production of a space of reciprocity and consent, and by default, remains intolerant of the spectre of violence. The same erotic hope is captured in the attempts of political communities to develop new political enclaves that do not rest upon the coercive force of sovereign power. The 1989 encampment in Tiananmen square, for example, which despite enduring a pressing and eventually fatal violence, attempted to produce a political space outside of State power that had hitherto been unimaginable. A pure peace is ultimately fragile, since it lacks the instruments with which to defend itself. Yet the promise held within this true peace is of an unbounded productivity that opens experience to the endless horizon of possibility, founded by a gesture, or series of gestures, that constitute community without the segregating hand of violence. We make these gestures in the dark of night; we open ourselves; we hope; we dare. Perhaps Jean Genet understood this intimately: “I make my way into love as one does the sea. Palms stretched outward, blinded, your presence within me.”

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1a. Glossary of Key Terms

Annihilatory Violence: Violence that lacks all measure in relation to life (as opposed to governed violence, which measures itself in relation to life). This violence does not level itself at the soul of life, but aims at materiality, often entailing the erasure of the corporeality of the living organism.

Bare Life: Agambenian term for the life caught within the sphere of sovereign exception. This term is used in this work to describe the subject and aim of governed violence.

Biopolitics: Foucauldian term for the organisation of contemporary political discourse around questions relating to biological life. Agamben argues, contra Foucault, that biopolitics is not a recent development; rather it was present as the loci of Western sovereignty ‘from the beginning.’

Consent: An active process of engagement that involves the successive laying down facilitative gestures and assemblies towards reciprocal relations with another or others. ‘Giving consent’ often involves facilitating the consent of the other in a reciprocal exchange.

Erotic Hope: An impulse towards a true peace that involves relations of consensual reciprocity with another or others.

Facilitation: Gestures or assemblies that enable forms of productivity and form the basis of lubricative power.

Force: Forms of power that direct (rather than enable / facilitate) action.

Formalized Lubricative Channels: Structures and assemblies within the field of power that contain and direct flows of facilitation in order to generate predictable effects. Bureaucracies are an example of a formalized network of lubricative channels.

Frictional Power: A field of contesting force effects. Reflects a shift from a Hobbesian belief that power is graspable, quantifiable predictable and discrete to a Foucauldian view that power is unpredictable, is non-quantifiable and entails resistance.

Gift: The opposite of violence. A gesture that does not possess a compulsion either to offer or to receive.

Governed Violence: A measured violence that involves the management of both facilitation and force toward an insidious care for life and as such differs radically from annihilatory violence. Governed violence obeys biopolitical imperatives.

Government: The rationality that seeks to manage the movements of frictional and lubricative power. The government of the State incorporates not only the sovereign prerogative to utilize legitimised violence, but the devotion of vast resources to
channelling lubricative power and developing lubricative networks in order to manage the biological populations within its domain of authority.

**Informal Lubricative Flows**: A multiplicity of localized everyday gestures, acts and assemblies of facilitation that are not organized within formal lubricative channels.

**Internal Combustion Engine (ICE)**: A machine that features a re-circulating piston to drive a crankshaft. The use of an extensive lubricative network in the ICE makes it a suitable metaphor for power.

**Law**: In a Western context refers to both a code of regulation enforced by sovereign violence, and the law making (exceptional) power central to the exercise of sovereignty.

**Liquidity / Fluidity**: Supple assemblies that do not have to be fixed in position, and can ‘touch everywhere at once.’ Lubricants do not need to be fluid, although they rely upon a fluidic principle of operation.

**Lubricative Matrix**: A network of lubricative tributaries, channels and flows within a given mechanism of power.

**Lubricative Power**: A field of facilitative gestures and assemblies that enable effects of power.

**Machine(s) of Power**: Assemblies that usually incorporate both frictional mechanisms and lubricative matrices.

**Micro / Macro Politics**: Terms that acknowledge that political analysis must necessarily deal with issues of scale. ‘Molar’ and ‘Molecular’ organization (Deleuze and Guattari) and the ‘black box’ (Latour) are examples of terms used by other theorists to account for the problem of scale in socio-political organization.

**People / Mass**: An non-segmented multiplicity of human agents that comprises a range of un-channelled lubricative flows. The mass of the social protest can be described as both a flood of potential violence and a flood of lubricative possibility.

**Soul**: Described in this work in the Aristotelian sense as the ‘cause or source of the living body.’

**Sovereignty**: A mandated system of authority, rule or control that provides a nodal point for the organisation of political and social relations. Contemporary Westernised sovereignty is defined by a legitimised monopoly right to wield violence, and a governmental concern for the management of biological populations.

**Sphincter**: The muscular surrounds of the bodily orifice. The capacity of the sphincter to contract and dilate lends it facilitative properties in erotic negotiations.

**True Peace**: A space of political community that is unfettered by violence.

**Violence**: A necessarily subjective term used to describe the absence of consent. In so
far as consent is the active laying down of facilitative gestures and devices, violence is frequently associated with a lubricative failure.
“My body shone so brightly in the sun that I felt very proud of it and it did not matter now if my axe slipped, for it could not cut me. There was only one danger— that my joints would rust; but I kept an oil-can in my cottage and took care to oil myself whenever I needed it. However, there came a day when I forgot to do this, and, being caught in a rainstorm, before I thought of the danger my joints had rusted, and I was left to stand in the woods until you came to help me.”

The Tin Woodman in The Wizard of Oz ¹

2. Force and Facilitation

An excerpt from an interview with motor racing driver Mario Andretti, in Practicing Oil Analysis:

Jim Fitch:
Do you recall an instance when good lubrication or bad lubrication directly influenced the outcome of a race?

Mario Andretti:
In 1976 when I was with the Lotus team in Formula One we had some engine failures. It was eventually determined that the oil was foaming because it wasn’t designed to operate at that high level of rpm. When you have foaming you have air. And, when you have air, you don’t have oil. Thus, we had a lubrication failure. When the engine was taken apart a few days later back at the Cosworth factory, it is my understanding that the cam shafts had started to rust, which means there was condensation in the oil which, of course, was caused by air bubbles. ²

Although seemingly mundane, grease and oil keep the world spinning. Lubricative fluids flow between simple mechanical devices, course between bodies, and run in tributaries in complex mechanisms such as turbines, industrial machinery, and the car engine. It is the latter device which is inspiring, if not beautiful, from a lubricative perspective. The complex lubricative matrix within the internal combustion engine enables this sophisticated assembly of moving parts to reliably spin at thousands of revolutions, and do so in most cases day after day. The lubricant makes possible what

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would otherwise be impossible. Were it not for the presence of this medium, valves and rockers would scrape hard against unforgiving surfaces, pistons would weld to the walls of their chambers and main bearings would groan, screech, and wear themselves loose from their points of anchorage. If the lubrication system fails in a car engine, then any movement is only possible with a highly intense friction, which fundamentally threatens the continued operation of the machine itself.

The lubricative fluid mediates surfaces in contact by “introducing a film of lubricating oil between the various bearing surfaces to keep them apart, thereby providing a condition of fluid friction instead of dry friction.” In other words, the process of fluid lubrication involves the placement of a fluidic surface between moving solid surfaces, and therefore, the exchange of one friction condition for another. This process eases the passage of solids across each other and overcomes the resistance between tangential forces. In an “ideal” fluid lubrication situation the lubricant will maintain a (infinitesimal) physical distancing between moving solids, allowing them to touch each other without touching, touching only hot oil and being only touched by hot oil, each stroke mediated through the fluid.

There are also solid devices, which though rigid, perform lubricative acts. Lubricative practice may be said to include the deployment of any device that is designed to mediate friction between surfaces, such as, piston rings, wheels and bearings. The wheel is the simplest example of such a device. The wheel rolls across surfaces, substituting a sliding frictional relation for a rolling friction condition. Bearings too have been a significant development. The internal combustion engine incorporates a number of such bearings. The most predominant of these are the main bearings that support the crankshaft; but bearings of other kinds are utilised throughout the engine, and throughout the vehicle.

The design and development of lubrication systems for engines seeks to strategically organise the placement of lubricant at various points within the mechanism, with the

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4 Dowson tracks the history of the bearing to Potters Wheels dating to 2000 BC, see D. Dowson, History of Tribology, (Longman, London, 1979), p24. A bearing is a device which positions and supports a “revolving or a sliding part” within the machine, neatly described by Kajdas, Harvey & Wilusz in their Encyclopedia of Tribology, as one of the “simplest triboelements,” see C. Kadjas, S.S.K. Harvey & E. Wilusz, Encyclopedia of Tribology, (Elsevier, Amsterdam, 1990), p28.
aim of providing a constant spacing between all moving parts within the machine, and ultimately, to use a lubricant to mediate all touch relations within the assemblage. Thus, some sort of lubricant greases every moving part within the internal combustion engine. Most of this lubricative task is achieved through the circulation of fluid lubricants through moving parts, utilising pump and splash mechanisms, an array of tributaries, oil coolers, filters and feed pipes: an assembly of lubricative devices coupled together and linked by a network of relations throughout the motor.

The precision and architectural beauty of these networks defies their strict functionality of purpose: that is, to deliver oil to designated locations in an accurately timed and coordinated manner. Each component within this network performs a specific task. The oil sump for example is usually located at the bottom of the engine, and is the storage point for the fluid lubricant in the motor (Image 2). The oil pump provides the pressure necessary to move the fluid lubricant through the motor. The pump delivers lubricant to the oil gallery, the chamber where oil flows, providing lubrication to the camshafts, valves, rockers and tappets. Fluid lubricants are also filtered at various points within the internal combustion engine and cooled with cooling devices.

Complex, micro-tributary networks aid lubricative systems, which splash unctuous fluids to cylinder walls. Small diameter precision feed holes are drilled into the connecting rods (which connect the pistons and crankshaft) that are designed to feed oil through “oil-spurt hole[s]…once [every] revolution.” Pistons usually incorporate an “oil-control-ring” to regulate the amount of oil on cylinder walls, and push excess oil back down into the sump. On some designs, small drain passages behind these

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6 Some engines use a “dry sump” configuration- where engine oil is stored in a separate reservoir, adding to the potential complexity of the lubrication system.  
10 Ibid., p86.
Image 2: Crankcase of Internal Combustion Engine (Bottom View)

oil-control-rings feed fluid lubricant directly into the heart of the pistons themselves, lubricating the pins at which they are coupled with the connecting rods.\textsuperscript{11} Oil is also fed and is “splash fed” to the crankshaft and the main bearings which support it, “through communicating ducts in the crankcase webs and bearing housings.”\textsuperscript{12} Such ducts and “webs” form a complex network of precisely drilled and cast conduits that Nunney refers to as an “oil circuit … a network of oilways embodied both in the structure and the mechanism of the engine.”\textsuperscript{13}

The dynamics of lubrication, and the complex tributaries and oil ways that can characterise its movement, provide an interesting way to conceptualise power. In particular, because the engine is a meeting of force and lubrication, the internal combustion engine provides an excellent metaphor for the interaction of different \textit{forms} of political power.

Some may object: why do we need to think about power using an avowedly mechanistic metaphor? Surely the machine is unable to convey all the complexity that characterises the movements of power? Is this noisy, oily, polluting machine – the internal combustion engine – able to provide any new insight into political relationships? Certainly for Stewart Clegg, there can be no return to mechanical metaphors. He imagines a world where political theory has moved away from its entrancement with machine:

\begin{quote}
No more would one anticipate a metaphorical fixation on the ruler of a mechanical universe of obedient subjects. There would be no more metaphorical billiard balls biffing and banging into each other; no more cogs, flywheels, gears, levers and pulleys. There would be an end to the clumsy and obvious machinery of a bygone age in which the scientist was a mechanic, whose inspection of the moving and connected parts was sufficient to establish
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} Nunney, \textit{The Automotive Engine}, pp139-40.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p125.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. Nunney further states here “extensive use was once made of separate pipes and connecting tee-pieces to convey the oil to working parts, but since fracturing and loosening of these components was always a source of unreliability, drilled pressure conduits have long since become established practice.”
linkages. There would be no more mechanicalism, extended and stretched to illuminate those dark dialectical corners where three-dimensional objects might lurk or in which might be found those dualistic structures in which their agency might be trapped.\(^\text{14}\)

The solution for Clegg is to develop a conception of power as electrical current flowing through an electronic circuit\(^\text{15}\): a metaphor which “eschews the merely mechanical metaphors of the past in order also to embrace an imagery more redolent of the post-modern electronic age.”\(^\text{16}\)

Rather than attempt to move technologically “forward,” the machinic model I embrace is more enduring. We have after all, despite all the acclaimed advancement of the today’s age, never really left behind our attachment to the mechanical device. Our bodies are composed of moving parts; we are transported in cars, planes, wheelchairs, boats, bicycles, and buses; in our kitchens may be found blenders and rollers; escalators, elevators, and air-conditioning systems inhabit our buildings; cables, gears, bearings, mills and wheels drive our factories. Even that bastion of the postmodern age, the computer, contains and is connected to a plethora of mechanical devices: cooling fans that buzz and whirr, digital storage devices that constantly spin, and peripheral input devices such as the keyboard and the mouse.\(^\text{17}\)

Neither have we lost the machine as a source of inspiration within contemporary cultural and philosophical theory. Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, for example, describe “desiring machines” in their influential work *Anti-Oedipus*.\(^\text{18}\) Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the machine enables them to think about assemblies working productively in relation to each other. Similarly, theorists who adopt “Actor Network” approaches may also rely upon analogies inspired by machines: Haraway’s cyborg for instance describes the meeting of human and machine; while Latour’s “black box,”

\(^{14}\) Ibid.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., p214.
\(^{16}\) Ibid, p186.
\(^{17}\) Certainly it may be observed that the aesthetic of the computer is precisely to hide its mechanicality under the façade of a svelte exterior. We may note further that this particular aesthetic has crept into the design of motor vehicles, whose engines today lay hidden beneath coverings which belie a complex web of wiring, moving belts, pulleys and shaft, conduits and ducts.
discussed in Chapter 4 of this work, involves a mechanical conception of networks components and micro components.

Foucault also cannot escape a certain mechanism in his play of forces that, although complex, appear to have “physicality” to their operations (at least in so far as they draw as their metaphor the theatre of war). Power, “the machine in which we are all caught,”19 is for Foucault necessarily corporeal in its operation and effect:

Thanks to the techniques of surveillance, the ‘physics’ of power, the hold over the body, operate according to the laws of optics and mechanics, according to a whole play of spaces, lines, screens, beams, degrees and without recourse, in principle at least, to excess, force, or violence. It is a power that seems all the less ‘corporal’ in that it is more subtly physical.20

A factor in the persuasiveness of a mechanical model of power has to be its capacity to ground the relations of power in the very real collisions, friction and lubrication of bodies at a micropolitical level. Networks of power alter the deportment of the body: how the flesh is postured, how it breathes, the dangers it embraces, and the potentiality it spurns. The movements of power invariably produce effects within the flesh. Even today, when power appears to take the soul rather than the body as its object, it is the flesh that shapes our existence, and defines our intimate and intractable connection to the world as we experience it.21 The flesh is thrown into situation as an effect of power. It finds itself on buses and walking on pavements, in dentist chairs and lecture theatres, in cells and torture chambers, on plush sofas and in front of computer screens. Power is never merely a description of the big players of politics — the State, the multinational corporation, the bureaucracy, the economy — but is a field of micro effects, which manifests a multiplicity of interactions, contestations, and productivities. Consequently, as I emphasise in a range of situations, from the bedroom to the bureaucracy, political analysis must operate on

20 Foucault, Discipline and Punish.
21 In the words of Maurice Merleau Ponty, “between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is an overlapping or enroachment, so that we must say that the things pass into us as well as we pass into things.” See M. Merleau Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1968), p123.
both a macropolitical, and a micropolitical level.

In the same sense as an engine can be conceptualised as incorporating the movements of frictional force (pistons, cranks, valves etc) within a intricate lubricative matrix, the field of power may be conceptualised as an intersection of forces and facilitative effects and gestures; or as I shall outline in this work, the meeting of two types of power: namely frictional and lubricative. This chapter provides a groundwork for the two forms of power described in this work. Frictional power can be characterised as a field of force effects. The first section of this chapter describes the relationship of the concept of force to political power, utilising the work of Hobbes, Dahl and Foucault. Lubricative power, on the other hand, rests upon the connection between facilitation and power. The second section of this chapter explores this relationship, focusing in particular on Bruno Latour and Actor Network Theory. The final section of this chapter discusses the interaction between frictional and lubricative power.

**Force and Power**

Force can be defined as a form of influence that directs action. We find force where a set of factors or agents compels our actions towards a particular direction, or encourages us to act in ways we would not otherwise act. Violence and coercion are very clear examples of force, but there are other forms of non-violent influence – such as discipline and norms – that act as forces. Thus force may be violent and coercive, although not necessarily so.

I turn now to look at force as seen by three important yet different theorists: Thomas Hobbes, Robert Dahl and Michel Foucault. Why these three theorists? There is good reason to select these theorists because the theories of power they advance have proved immensely influential within their respective time periods. For example Hobbes’ theory of sovereignty is commonly regarded as the theoretical starting point for understanding the juridical power of the modern State; Dahl’s analysis is a pre-eminent work within the annals of North American political science; while Foucault’s work on power is regarded as a significant turning point in contemporary political analysis. Importantly all three theorists provide an account of power that is based on understanding of force and its relationship to political power. There are, as I shall
discuss, important differences between the way that Hobbes, Dahl and Foucault use force as a concept, yet it is no less significant that force features strongly in these three influential accounts.

Hobbes argues, as the central principle of the *Leviathan*, that the transfer of the individual’s natural right of self-governance to the sovereign,\(^{22}\) is founded upon an exchange of force, where the political power of the sovereign is a result of the accumulated force surrendered by citizens. It is the possession of this monopoly of force that arms the sovereign with a mechanistic ability to “bend wills,” and influence the movements of bodies within the sovereign domain.\(^{23}\) Hobbes uses relationships of physical force as metaphors to describe how the connections between the sovereign and each of its subjects are developed: for example, Hobbes defines civil laws as “artificial chains which they themselves, by mutual covenants, have fastened at one end, to the lips of that man, or assembly, to whom they have given the sovereign power; and at the other end their own ears.”\(^{24}\) Within this model, force is exerted purposefully to produce designated effects: the sovereign is compared to “God, the mover of all things…[Who]…produceth effects by the means of secondary causes.”\(^{25}\) Even where the sovereign is not present, the displaced hand of the sovereign may be found in the appointed subject who wields the sword in their stead. Subjects are assigned authority only because the sovereign, through a series of linkages, has granted that authority. Integral to sovereign power is the capacity to delegate: sovereignty delegates to officials, to garrisons and guards, to generals and commanders. Thus power for Hobbes is intimately informed by the principles of mechanical force. Barry Hindess surmises, the Hobbesian conception treats “power as a quantitative and mechanical phenomenon which determines the capacity of actors to realise their will to secure their interests.”\(^{26}\) Further, relationships of causation are


\(^{23}\) Ibid, p114

\(^{24}\) Ibid., p140. In many respects, this conforms absolutely to a classical, Newtonian perspective, a world within which not only modern physics, but modern politics was born. This emphasises the need to acknowledge the historical connections between the natural sciences and the political sciences. See Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer’s compelling account of the relation between Hobbes and Robert Boyle in S. Shapin & S. Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1985).


central to Hobbes’ framework of power. Stewart Clegg argues that “had Hobbes not existed and his texts remained unwritten, it is doubtful whether the predominant view of power as a causal relation would have been so strongly influenced and influentially grounded.”

A similar perspective on force may also be found in the work of political scientist Robert Dahl, within his influential critique of the concept of political élites that emerged in the North American community power debates of the 1950s. Dahl argues that political analysis necessarily involves unearthing the causal forces that motivate political action. This means that power is not necessarily vested in those who would seem to hold authority. For example according to Dahl’s analysis, a monarch may possess constitutional power that is formalised within a legal framework, but exercise little influence over the day to day activities of his or her subjects. Dahl defines influence as “a relation among actors in which one actor induces other actors to act in some way they would not otherwise act.” Influence, Dahl argues, is constituted by the observable effects of one’s actions upon the actions of another. This he encapsulates in the following criteria for the analysis of influence: “An influence-attempt is successful to the extent that the change in B caused by A results in B’s doing what A wanted him to do when A attempted to influence him.” For Dahl, the clearest method of thinking about influence as power is through the analogous case of the motion of solid bodies:

In mechanics, object A exerts a force on object B if A produces a change in the velocity of B. Gallileo’s famous law of inertia states that a moving body left to itself will move with uniform velocity in one and the same direction.

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30 Ibid., p18.
Any change in the velocity of a body, then, indicates the presence of a force. And the size of the force is proportional to the size of the change in velocity. Thus one object exerts more force than another on a third if the first produces a greater change in velocity.\(^3\)

Thus Dahl is not concerned to ask “Who should rightfully hold power?” but instead, “Who is it who has influenced a person to act in a particular way?” and “Who has exercised influence?”\(^3\) Dahl would suggest that one should not assume that power resides only at the top of the chain (in the office of the Chief Executive Officer, for example) but rather that one should look for where actors exert influence on others to act in ways they would otherwise not. Power may be tracked by looking at who exercises force.

There are important similarities between Hobbes’ concept of power and that of Dahl. In a similar fashion to Hobbes, Dahl treats power as a quantitative phenomenon: the analysis of power involves the measurement of not only the presence of power but the quantity of power present within a particular relationship. Further, causality plays a role in the frameworks advanced by both Hobbes’ and Dahl. As discussed above, Hobbes suggests that the sovereign applies force to create effect: a capacity to generate “effects by the means of secondary causes.” Causality is also important to Dahl’s analysis of power, perhaps more so than in Hobbes. Because Dahl’s analysis involves tracing relations of force by looking directly for points of influence, causality becomes a central focus point for his theory of power.

Force is also central to theory of power advanced by Foucault. As stated above, frictional power is defined here as comprising a field of force effects. This draws directly from the definition of power provided by Foucault: in his words power is the “moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly

\(^3\) Ibid., 19-20. Note the similarity to John Locke’s theory that power could be understood through the metaphor of billiard balls colliding. See Clegg, Frameworks of Power, pp42-3.

\(^3\) This focus upon influence would remain central to debates around power: Steven Lukes’ significant “three dimensional” concept of power, for example, would amend Dahl’s concept, but only by challenging the ability of individuals to determine their own interests, and hence determine the extent and terms of manipulation. See S. Lukes, Power: A Radical View, (Macmillan Education, Houndsmills, 1988).
engender states of power.”

Power reflects a series of relationships of force; it involves contestation between different energies. Foucault evokes the theatre of war: power comprises strategy, planning, stealth, skirmish, and a virtual “guerilla war” of hotspots and tensions.

Foucault’s theory of power as force has a number of important implications for how we can understand power. Firstly, Foucault’s account of force considers both the movement force and the resistance that results from this movement. According to Foucault power is always accompanied by resistance, indeed power describes the existence of contestation. Foucault states that power involves “mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remoulding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds.” Thus power is the product of opposing forces rubbing against each other: a frictional tussle of forces.

Secondly, the ability of power to penetrate into the body itself (“furrowing across individuals … in their bodies and minds”) is another important aspect of Foucault’s model. The contestation of forces, the play of resistances, does not stop at the body as a solid object, but affects the body’s internal deliberations, choices, posture and training. It is in this sense that Foucault argues that we are the products of power, that our bodies are mapped with its inscription. The disciplinary models of power Foucault describes in Discipline and Punish — the modes of surveillance, deportment and

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33 Foucault, The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol. 1, p93.
34 Ibid.
35 Note resonances with Max Weber’s definition: “’Power’ (Macht) is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.” See M. Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology Vol. 1, (Bedminster Press, New York, 1968), p53. The difference between this conception of power and that of Foucault is that in the latter model the “will” of an individual has no bearing on the production of power. Our own “will” is itself a product of the relation of power that we are caught in – effects of power are rarely the product of intention.
36 Foucault, The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol. 1, p96.
37 Foucault’s perspective in this instance resonates with Talcott Parsons, who argues that although it may often be the case, there is no reason to assume that power involves what he terms a “zero-sum game,” see T. Parsons, “On the Concept of Political Power,” in Politics and Social Structure, (The Free Press, New York, 1969), pp352-404., pp383-95. Parsons suggests that the flaw in this assumption is in the belief that the amount of power available within a system is limited and may be exhausted. Indeed power may be increased unilaterally if collective associations work to increase the amount of power available, just as, in the money economy, production can generate an increase the net amount of currency available within the economy (see p390).
acculturation that he argues are central to the “carceral system” — belong not only to
the new modes of punishment which Foucault describes as emerging with the
innovation of the prison, but represent literally a “new modality of power.”

This is not to say that the old “modality of power,” symbolically represented by the
sovereign, did not involve the body: on the contrary it is quite clear that the flesh, as
the material focus of the penal apparatus, was the focus of classical sovereign power.
But according to Foucault the body merely serves a mediative function for the new
disciplinary power: the object of this power is not the body, as a sensible and dense
object, but the “soul” that lurks within. The aim of disciplinary modes of conduct is
to reach into and organise the “moving substrate of force relations” that are present
within the very core of the individual, and are definitive of who they are.

The third important aspect of Foucault’s concept of power is that it challenges the
causality normally associated with the exercise of force. In the Hobbesian account,
power is the “mover” of things: power is invested in those that are able to mobilise
effects. For Foucault, although force leads to influence, the dynamics of this force are
difficult to analyse, since the “omnipresence” of power confounds any attempt to
trace cause and subsequent effect. Foucault argues that relations of power:

…are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of
relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations),
but are immanent in the latter; they are the immediate effects of the divisions,
inequalities, and disequilibriums which occur in the latter, and consequently
they are the internal conditions of these differentiations.

Whilst there are relations of force, power operates as the effect of force rather than a
force itself. In this sense there is some affinity between Foucault and Dahl, since both
theorists are interested in evaluating the outcomes of force, rather than merely seeking
to name those who possess formal authority. But Foucault and Dahl also differ: for
Dahl the primary question is “Who exercises influence?”; on the other hand for
Foucault the important question is, “What contestation of forces has lead to this

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38 M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p305.
39 Ibid., p16. Note: we shall return to this point of discussion in Chapter 3.
40 Foucault, The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol. 1, p94.
outcome?” Foucault argues that power is a manifest product of an encapturing antagonism: “One doesn’t have here a power which is wholly in the hands of one person who can exercise it alone and totally over others. It’s a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised.”⁴¹ Power is everywhere in Foucault’s model. It circulates throughout institutions, practices and bodies:

Power’s condition of possibility, or in any case the viewpoint which permits one to understand its exercise, even in its more “peripheral” effects, and which also makes it possible to use its mechanisms as a grid of intelligibility of the social order, must not be sought in the primary exercise of a central point, in a unique source of sovereignty from which secondary forms would emanate; it is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable. The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere⁴².

According to Foucault power arises from the “ground up”: it cannot be bound by contract, or stolen. The movements of power are transient; it flows across political fields without having any sense of ownership attached to it.

These perspectives on force from Hobbes, Dahl and Foucault offer a useful foundation for the discussion of force relationships and their relationship to power to be described in this work. In its simplest form, force operates according to mechanical principles. A gun, for example, can direct the action of bodies by its presence as a threat, or stop the action of bodies dead in their tracks when the trigger is released. When force directs action in this way, then it arguably follows the principles laid down by theorists such as Hobbes and Dahl, for whom political power is equivalent to force or influence. But Foucault provides a more sophisticated account that arguably

⁴¹ Foucault, “The Eye of Power,” p156.
⁴² Foucault, The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol. 1, p93.
more realistically reflects the complexity of power. If power is the “machine in which we are all caught,” then we are captured by a play of forces and the effects they generate, and simultaneously, the agents of force. Force is not only found in direct forms of influence, but in the movements of different elements: violence, coercion, resistance, discipline and norms, knowledge and truth. Power as force – or what I term frictional power – is in actuality a multiplicity of forces, the rubbing together of range of a contesting elements that is constitutive of who we are.

This is not to say that this incessant tussle of forces comprises the total field of power. As I argue there are two distinct forms or pole operative within this field: an interaction of force that I have described as frictional power, and a matrix of facilitative actions and assemblies that I describe as lubricative power.

Facilitation and Power

Unlike force, facilitation is not a measure of influence (either violent or non-violent), but a description of the deployed energies that enable, or make possible, institutions and political assemblages. Facilitation can be defined as gestures or assemblies that makes possible a productive exchange.

Facilitation, at least as it is understood in this work, obeys some distinct principles of operation. Firstly, facilitation is intrinsically non-violent, since violence itself can never be facilitative. What does this mean within this context? Although I argue that violence cannot facilitate, I conceded that an act of violence may nevertheless create the conditions for a future productivity. For example, we could argue that the conditions created by trench warfare in the First World War facilitated the development of certain aspects of modern medicine (eg wound treatment or the use of analgesics). Yet the act of violence itself cannot be said to be facilitative. In so far as a hand grenade, a land mine or a bayonet aim to limit choice or direct outcomes, they can be regarded as radically opposed to facilitation, which aims to enable rather than direct action. Violence does not negotiate over the terms of its receipt. Facilitation, on the other hand, asks: “In what way can we work together to achieve this shared goal?” In this work I explicitly separate force and facilitation as elements that refer to two different forms of power: namely frictional and lubricative power. These forms of
power engender their own productivities, generating whole universes of activity. Thus, whilst effects of power may be generated by violent forces operating in exclusion from facilitation, it is also possible that relations of power may occur solely through negotiation, mediation and communication: in other words through the deployment of facilitative gestures and assemblies. Such techniques make possible productive relations that are not possible through relations of force: for example, as I argue in this work erotic production is an outcome of the deployment of purely facilitative means.

This does not mean that force and facilitation are never found together, indeed as I shall discuss in this work, the reverse is true: more often than not both elements are frequently found in operation together. Force and facilitation are found in Foucault’s models of power, since power, on Foucault’s reckoning, does not merely constrain, but also enables: he states that what “makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourses.”\(^43\) Thus Foucault suggests that power is not only present in the potentially coercive forms of surveillance and entrapment, but also exists as a source of productive energy.\(^44\) For example, Foucault suggests that the production of sexuality, despite resulting in various modes of repression, has also intensified forms of pleasure, and produced (as I shall discuss later) new sexual practices.\(^45\) This points to the cohabitation of force and facilitation within Foucault’s schema of power. But, while these elements are arguably present in Foucault’s analysis of power, they are not analysed as differentiated phenomena. This marks a point of departure between Foucault’s analysis and my own.

Where Foucault does not explicitly separate the action of force and facilitation, I seek to examine their differences and interaction. The two elements – force and facilitation – exist as two poles of political experience. For the most part we resonate between these poles: everyday political relations are characterised by a combination of both these experiences. Driving a motor vehicle, for example, involves a negotiation of

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{45}\) See Foucault, The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol. 1, p101.
force and facilitation; both an obedience to the law (that is the threat of legal violence) and the practice of driving skills (that is disciplinary practices) that enable shared road use. Yet there are moments of lived political experience that move resolutely towards either a seemingly pure force or a pure facilitation. The concentration camp, for example, may be experienced as a site of extreme force, where little is available in terms of facilitative energy; on the other hand, erotic love can reflect a pure facilitation that, by nature of what it is, absolutely rejects the gesture of force. Breaking the analysis of power into these two elements allows us to understand more closely the microdynamics of political relations, and the role that different gestures and assemblies play in the production of effects.

The second important consideration is the role of non-human actors within active processes of engagement with human entities. There is a tendency to think that non-human elements of the world are passive contributors to political processes, as “tools” that human agents appropriate to enable forms of productivity. For example the computer is often treated as a passive device that will only respond to human direction. Yet computer networks have radically transformed social and political organization: they direct action, alter living spaces, and generate new communities. Computers have changed humans: the way they work, love, communicate, think.

“Actor Network” approaches to technology highlight the interdependency that characterises the relationship between human and non-human agents as a consequence of their engaged interaction. For Donna Haraway, the cyborg is a fitting representation of such a “hybridised” entity, which both emphasises the enabling aspects of new technologies, and illustrates the almost irreversible aspect of this process: we are, whether we like it or not, imbricated within an environment in which we constantly interact with and are joined with other entities, human and non-human. Thus Haraway comments that it “is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine…There is no fundamental ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic.”

47 Ibid., pp177-8. See also John Law’s discussion of the development of Portuguese sailing vessels, the training of its human operators, and innovation in navigation as contributants to the success of the
Bruno Latour, in a similar fashion, points out that analyses and debates around technologies frequently essentialise the interaction of human and non-human agents, without recognising the way in which these entities interact. For example, he suggests that the polarisation of the debate over gun ownership in the United States is based upon certain essential assumptions about technology and the human agents who utilise these technologies. Advocates for unfettered gun ownership argue that the gun is a mere tool which is in the complete control of the human who holds it: thus the argument that “Guns don’t kill people, humans do.” On the other hand, advocates for tighter regulations over gun ownership suggest that the gun incites its human owner to a violence which would not be otherwise possible: hence the gun is seen as contributing almost everything to gun deaths. Latour argues that human actors cannot be separated from the technologies they interact with, since human entities must be seen as acting in concert with non-human entities: “It is neither people nor guns that kill. Responsibility for action must be shared among the various actants.” In other words, for the purposes of the analysis of power, there should be no difference drawn between the respective “powers” of human and non-human entities: they both have the capacity to generate effects.

Who (or what) exactly holds this responsibility is, according to Latour, open to variation. Latour suggests that agency is not fixed, but moves between heterogeneous entities that are linked together in a specific network. This means that social action is a product of an assembled network, and can never be the product of a single actor deploying a reserve of force. Latour argues that this model of power is one of “translation” rather than “diffusion” (as it is in the Hobbesian schema). In the translation model of power, each entity within a given network or relation animates the “token” of production:

…displacement is not caused by the initial impetus since the token has no impetus whatsoever; rather, it is the consequence of the energy given to the

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49 Ibid., p180.
token by everyone in the chain who does something with it, as in the case of rugby players and a rugby ball. The initial force of the first in the chain is no more important than that of the second, or the fortieth, or the four hundredth person. Consequently, it is clear that the energy cannot be hoarded or capitalised; if you want the token to move on you have to find fresh sources of energy all the time: you can never rest on what you did before, no more than rugby players can rest for the whole game after the first player has given the ball its first kick.50

This is a transformative process, since each actor adds something to that which is “worked” upon: “instead of a passive medium through which the force is exerted, there are active members shaping and changing the token as it is moved.”51 Note the important difference between this view of power and that of Hobbes: power is not a cascade of force effects emanating from the sovereign, but involves a network of forces mediates by a multiplicity of actants. Further because Latour does not exempt non-human entities from the possibility of exerting energies upon production, “objects” — the tools or technologies which surround human agents — and non-human life (such as animals) are also responsible for the effects of power.52 The fact that power moves by translation, and is never actually held, means that for Latour true “agency” is not possible, since action by human and non-human elements is only possible within matrices composed of other similar components:

There is no sense in which humans may be said to exist as humans without entering into commerce with what authorizes and enables them to exist (that is to act). A forsaken gun is a mere piece of matter, but what would an abandoned gunner be? A human yes (a gun is only one artefact among many), but not a soldier and certainly not one of the NRA's law abiding Americans. Purposeful action and intentionality may not be properties of objects, but they are not the properties of humans either. They are the properties of institutions, of apparatuses, of what Foucault called dispositifs. Only corporate bodies are

51 Ibid., p268.
able to absorb the proliferation of mediators, to regulate their expression, to redistribute skills, to force boxes to blacken and close…Boeing 747s do not fly, airlines fly.\textsuperscript{53}

Power is thus an expression for a multiplicity of actions, all of which have their role in animating a particular relationship. There is an important difference between this form of power and that informed by force. As Latour’s description of the rugby game, provided above, demonstrates, force itself is not the decisive element within a network of power. The relation of power rests upon the capacity for agency to move between the different elements within a network, and thus political analysis does not revolve around measuring the origin and quantity of force, but looking at the responsibility of a network of actants in generating effects of power.

Hence, facilitation is an active process necessarily involving networks of both human and non-human agents. This relates to my final distinguishing characteristic in my treatment of facilitation: namely, I argue that facilitation is a \textit{mode by which agency itself is exercised}. Thus, just as an agent may use an act of force to gain compliance, similarly this same agent may deploy a facilitative act (or lubricative gesture) and produce effects within the field of power. The discussion in Chapter 4 on the erotic relation highlights the importance of facilitative acts by human and non-human agents in the production of the erotic space. Further, as shall be emphasised in later chapters, lubricative power involves not merely the action of non-human entities, but the gestures made — \textit{en masse} — by human actors which enable the operation of large structures of power, and supply the living force upon which such institutions thrive. The nature of agency has a particular relationship to force, facilitation and power: I shall discuss this further in Chapter 4.

In this work I argue that the process of facilitative exchange – the laying down of facilitative gestures and assemblies – is constitutive of lubricative power. Power is not characterised solely by a tussle of force effects, but comprises a multiplicity of\cite{Latour1990}. \textsuperscript{53} Latour, \textit{Pandora’s Hope}, pp192-3. “Black box” is a reference to Latours assertion that assemblies of components close in on themselves and become oblivious to their users: hence veiling the complex interactions of human and non-human actors within the assembly. For further discussions of Latour’s approach within this work see Chapters 4 & 5 below. See also Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in \textit{The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays}, (Harper & Row, New York, 1977), p17.
facilitative acts and gatherings. Just as I have described the effect of multiple force relations as frictional power, we can describe lubricative power as the effect of a matrix of facilitative gestures and assemblies.

**The Machine of Power**

We are now in a position to assess how the internal combustion engine works as a metaphor for power, and how it contributes to our understanding of the interaction between the two forms of power proposed in this work. Large-scale events in frictional power may be described using the image of the recirculating movement of the pistons within the internal combustion engine. These are often grand movements in power, involving the colossal transfer of potentially violent forces which precipitate monumental effects. The State for example possesses sizeable resources, which, when efficiently deployed, may exert influence on the lives of many organisms within its domain. Other “big players” are also present here: large multinational organisations, bureaucracies and global security organisations.

As it stands, this model of power is unremarkable, since it does not necessarily add anything to our understanding of power. This conceptualisation of power becomes more sophisticated though, once a *lubricative dimension* is incorporated. The lubricant is present throughout the power machine, it enables movements, it flows through designated and undesignated conduits; it makes the whole machine possible.

The lubricative dimension of power alerts us to a number of necessary considerations in political analysis. One consideration is the ever presence of the lubricant: it is active throughout the operative field of power. According to the Foucauldian model, power could be understood as an expanse consisting of movements of force and resistance, a field of frictional effects. For Foucault, the effects of contestations of force and resistance – that is power – could be found in everyday practices, in the ways in which people held their bodies, in modes of surveillance, in discourses around life: it was the “machine in which everyone was caught.” We can amend this model to acknowledge that the political field is not only made up of frictional effects but an array of tributaries that provide modes of facilitation that enable effects of power. These oilways are complex and diverse, and form a lubricative matrix, which
encompasses the movements of power. In part, facilitation occurs through the provision of the material environment in which movements of power may occur. For example, the provision of infrastructure (such as roads, or running water), or forms of cooperation within a workforce, or developments in technology, may enable the development of particular modes of industrial production which would be otherwise be inconceivable. But as discussed above facilitation cannot merely relate to the material conditions in which power is enacted. Facilitation is also a tactic of political engagement. The lubricative matrix not only describes the material facilitation of power, but also the multiplicity of facilitative gestures and assemblies made by both human and non-human agents, which usher modes of being into existence.

Further, this model of power draws attention to the effects of the interaction of frictional power with lubricative power. Power is not merely characterised by movements of force, neither is it of facilitation. Rather politics is the description of the interaction of these two modes of power within global, local and micro economies. The clearest example of this interaction may be found in the government of the State, which incorporates both the right to wield a frictional violence, and the ability to facilitate and enable productivity. As I shall discuss in Chapter 5, government describes the rationality that seeks to manage frictional and lubricative power, a rationality increasingly that extends from the State, to the corporation, and to the small community organization, home or individual.

Although lubricity moves through certain fixed channels (the State, bureaucracies etc), its fluidity ensures its movement outside of these channels, in turbulent, non-specified flows that intervene into a variety of localised contestations, intersections of tangential movement, and frictional “hot spots.” Power is present in local everyday interactions. At this level of interaction, the lubricant does not negate conflict, but provides opportunities to mediate potentially contesting desires by means other than force. The lubricant floods between various struggles, it eases existing relations. At other points, it enables as possible what would otherwise be impossible. “Get an oil-can and oil my joints,” instructs the Tin Woodman. This interaction is an everyday one, and is applicable to most social interactions that shape our lives. We find these

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54 Baum, *The Wizard of Oz*, p22
interactions wherever a reciprocal relationship of facilitation enables productivity between agents: when cars drive down busy freeways, when we make love, when bodies engage together to complete work tasks, in smoky karaoke bars on Friday evenings, on netball courts, in swimming pools and on soccer fields, as I sit at this keyboard.

The account of power I advance also provides a way to conceptualise the failures of lubrication within the machine of power, and the effects this generates. Throughout the mechanism there are points of heightened frictional interaction, where consent has run dry, where the oil circuit has become blocked and further acts of facilitation appear impossible or are refused. Such points generate intense energy, as naked forces come into contact with each other. These are represented by the many acts of violence and coercion that spread across the general economy of power: acts of torture, sexual violence, penal violence and localised hostilities. Such outbreaks may be only temporary failures, where the means of a seemingly peaceful resolution are soon to be “splashed” into being. More troubling are those sections of the political field devoted solely to the enactment of violence. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the torture complex or, in the rape / death camp. Such institutions are not temporary incursions into frictional space – brief eruptions of violence – but rather sustained friction engines, built from “the ground up,” as it were, to wear down the life contained within. Like any part within a machine exposed to intense rubbing and wear, these frictional centres require careful monitoring, and the frequent replacement of worn internal components. Truly sustained violence requires planning and strategy, an attention to detail, a true governance of violence that erases all possibilities for unplanned lubricative intervention. The machine accounts for a mixed power strategy that may introduce the most extreme moments of annihilation, and yet create opportunities for the most serene lubricity.

If frictional power is a description of a “substrate of force relations” then lubricative power describes a delta of facilitative exchanges. It is this role within the machine of power that makes lubricative power distinctive. The lubricative relation enables action in the political sphere. It facilitates political relations on both a macropolitical and micropolitical level and makes possible what would otherwise be impossible, or possible only with great violence. The lubricative dimension of power describes our
own imbrication within the various locales of life; the ways in which the deployment of our own bodies facilitates the micro political relations that we engage in, and by extension, enable the macro relations of power into which our actions become organised. Further, as I shall discuss, it is our everyday resistances – the evacuation of lubricative power – that are the means by which we condemn institutions of power, in the words of Arendt, to “petrification and decay.” For as the analogy of the internal combustion engine implies, a discussion of power should address the ways in which violence and coercion (or frictional power) and consent and facilitation (lubricative power) interact within the sphere of politics.

I turn now to two limit cases that illustrate the workings of frictional and lubricative power. The two forms of power examined in this work refer to two poles of experience – a seemingly unmediated force, and a pure facilitation – both of which are active in the constitution of everyday (even mundane) assemblies of power. In Chapter 3, I introduce the concept of governed violence, its relationship to sovereignty and frictional power. I argue that this “governed violence” holds the key to understanding the characteristic relationship of sovereignty to violence, and in turn forms the centre of frictional power. In Chapter 4, I turn to erotic relations and their relationship to lubricative power. There I will describe erotic relations as involving a successive deployment of facilitative gestures and assemblies, and expand upon the relationship of facilitation to lubricative power.

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If the whole lower grade of this organisation were scoundrels, why should the Whipper, who had the most inhuman office of all, turn out to be an exception? 
Franz Kafka, *The Trial*. 

3. Sovereignty, Bare Life and Governed Violence.  

I have described two forms of power: namely *frictional power* (which describes force effects), and *lubricative power* (which describes the movement of facilitative gestures and assemblies). The movements of frictional and lubricative power are informed by the dynamics of the practices that sit at their heart (and in some respects, represent their idealised, most “pure,” functioning). Thus I argue in Chapter 4 that reciprocal facilitative exchanges – best exemplified in erotic practices – sit at the core of lubricative power, since they represent examples of a “pure” facilitation that is unsullied by force. Conversely, it is *violence* that sits at the heart of frictional power, since violence represents an undistilled exchange of force.  

Power invests itself in entities that possess some form of self-animation or soul: that is *power implies life*. We see this clearly in exchanges between human actors, where the continued relationship of power necessitates the continued existence of humans themselves. The “machine in which we are all caught” includes effects that are inscribed into the corporeal matter of the living bodies around us: tissue, muscle and souls that are the components of this machine. But we should not make the mistake of arguing that power is human, since, as I have discussed in Chapter 2, non-humans are necessarily core constituents within the machine of power. Despite the reluctance of philosophers to award these entities their own “souls,” non-humans can be said to possess their own animation since they are actants within relational networks of power. Indeed the continued “life” of these entities is seen as immensely important to the continuation of human political networks: whether in the form of computerised networks that facilitate human production, plantations that supply wood and grain,  

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motor vehicles that enable the mass transit of bodies, or factory farms and slaughterhouses that enable large scale food supply for human palates. Power rests on networks of activity, animation, life: power cannot function through corpses alone, human or not.

If power rests upon the continued existence of “living bodies,” then violence directs itself towards a care for life: indeed, as I argue, violence is frequently aimed at “sustaining” life. The whip is an example of an instrument that can be used for precisely this purpose: it does not aim to kill; rather it is measured to ensure a continued relationship with the living.\(^3\) Whipping or flogging was indeed used significantly as a means of punishment and discipline prior to the twentieth century, and was a notorious form of punishment practised in Australia, from the time of the establishment of the British penal colony in 1788. Flogging was chosen over prison or hard labour as a quick and severe method of dealing with disobedience. Its advantage lay in its ability to inflict pain without posing an immediate threat to the life of the hapless person who received the whipping. It is true that sentences of flogging could occasion death, particularly in those cases where the lash dug too enthusiastically into the flesh or if the injuries led to an infection that the prisoner could not overcome. But the careful measuring of this violence, and the involvement of medical personnel in the conduct of flogging (as a means to assess damage inflicted, direct the blows of the whip, and treat the senseless prisoner after the completion of punishment), increased the chances that the prisoner would survive the ordeal, and could return to regular duties quickly. This violence had to be carefully governed. Force of this kind holds a desire to maintain a relation of power with the living; it guards and measures itself, stopping short of death and ensuring the painful continuation of life. This chapter is an exploration of the potential and limits for a governed violence; a violence which may be described, oxymoronically, as a violence with care.

Violence, Sovereignty and “Bare Life”

\(^3\) Note that whipping is still practised as a form of punishment in some jurisdictions, such as Iran. See an expanded discussion of flogging and biopolitics in D. Wadiwel, “The Sovereign Whip: Flogging, Biopolitics and the Frictional Community,” pp117-125.
In the twentieth century, governed violence was most visible and perceptible in concentration camps, cell blocks and detention centres, where violence was carefully organised in such a way as to maintain the lives of inmates in an indefinite state of suspension. Even at the close of the twentieth century these spaces of horror would continue to haunt us, from the rape / death camps of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the United States run Guantanamo Bay detention facility.

Sovereignty – described in the introduction to this work as the system of authority, rule or control that provides a nodal point for the organization of political and social relations – is absolutely implicated in the exercise of measured violence: it is within the basements, prisons and camps of sovereign power that the most advanced developments in the practice of this violence have occurred. Indeed sovereign violence is everywhere: police, prisons and law inhabit civil spaces, regulating day-to-day behaviour; while outside of these spaces government auspiced interstate and intrastate violence has a devastating influence upon the daily lives of the majority of the world’s inhabitants. The violence of this sovereignty has never really left us. In fact, as I argue in this work, sovereign violence has grown more complex, and has increasingly, and intractably, become connected with human conduct.

The pervasiveness of sovereign power does not mean that sovereignty should be regarded as central to all movements of power. Certainly if we take seriously Foucault’s observations on power, it is clear that power is everywhere and multifarious, it does not rest with the sovereign State, but circulates throughout the political field. But, despite his resistance to centring political analysis on sovereignty, Foucault does offer two important insights into the way in which sovereignty is woven within existing relations of power, and consequently provides some insight into the contemporary relationship between sovereignty and violence. Firstly, Foucault suggests that today sovereignty must be considered within the context of emerging discourses that meet at the point of intersection between politics and biology. In the final chapter of History of Sexuality Part 1, Foucault argues that the association of sovereign power with the rule of the sword (“the right to kill and let live”) has been replaced by a biopolitical concern for populations, races, and “life”
itself (“the power to make live, and disallow to the point of death”). Today sovereignty is embroiled in the management of the life of the organisms that lie within its domain: for example, governments seek to “foster life” through health promotion campaigns that encourage regular medical screening, or through advertising campaigns that persuade people to adopt particular practices — such as “safe sex” — to prevent the spread of disease; or alternatively, to render publicly political what was previously individual or familial (the issues of abortion and euthanasia are examples). Biopolitics does not issue solely from sovereignty, rather it is an organising rationality that is present throughout heterogeneous political formations, from local communities which launch campaigns encouraging particular nutritional habits in their children, to governmental policies offering supports for people with disability, to whole wars that are waged on the basis of race or ethnicity. In this sense, biopolitics shifts the ground upon which political discourse occurs. In most cases the effects of this shift appear relatively benign, such as in the formation of social policies that actively foster the wellbeing of populations (public hospitals and nutritional standards being examples). Yet there are more worrying outcomes of biopolitics, particularly where it is accompanied by the force of sovereign violence. Racism, for example, when practised by a population may lead to discrimination, alienation and interpersonal violence, but when administered through the framework of sovereignty is capable of systemic attacks upon populations, mass incarceration, torture, and genocide.

The second important insight Foucault offers is that sovereignty has a relationship to government and governmental rationalities. “Governmentality,” Foucault argues, is an “art of government” that develops in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which places demands upon the sovereign State to not only manage its power for its own sake, but also to turn its attention towards the conduct of populations within its domain. Where sovereign rule traditionally demands a concern for territory and security (and the continuity of sovereignty itself), government also fosters a desire to manage resources, attend to populations, and deploy discrete interventions into the economic life of the citizenry: Foucault remarks that “population now represents more the end of government than the power of the sovereign.” In so far as the object of

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4 Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p138.
5 Foucault, “Governmentality.”
6 Ibid., p100.
governmental power is population, governmentality can be regarded as a further extension of biopolitics, where biopolitical motivations for the management of the State and population take precedence over the more traditional practices of sovereignty. This does not mean that Foucault disposes of the concept of sovereignty. On the contrary, he incorporates it into a trinity that represents the extension of State power: “sovereignty-discipline-government.” Each entity in this trinity acts with reference to the other: so for example, sovereignty finds itself “governmentalised” by a concern for population and resource management, while the fostering of individual disciplinary practices becomes incorporated within the overarching principles of good governance and connected to questions of security (for example in the myriad of disciplinary norms that have been created as a result of the present “war on terror”). Sovereign violence has also become governmentalised. The insidious care that characterises governed violence is a consequence of the application of governmental principles to the exercise of violence. Chapter 5 will provide an extension of the analysis found in this Chapter.

In many respects sovereignty has a foundational relationship to violence. Walter Benjamin argues that jurisprudential debates over the legitimacy or non-legitimacy of violence inevitably point to a distinction of ends: between those ends that are “legal” and those ends that are “natural.” Legal ends coincide with the ends of the sovereign and therefore sanction violent means that achieve these ends. For example, the State reserves the right to command police violence (capture, incarcerate, utilise “reasonable force” etc) in an effort to punish, deter and “reform” those who commit crime. Thus, Benjamin states that all “violence as a means is either lawmaking or law-preserving” in other words, the State uses authorised violence to either make its own authority or continue it.

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7 Ibid., p102.
8 Ibid., p238.
9 W. Benjamin, “Critique of Violence”, Selected Writings Volume 1 1913-1926, (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1996), pp236-52, p243. Benjamin is not thinking of statutes and decrees when he speaks of law, but of the law as simply legitimating power in the company of force, which is only possible through the infliction of violence as a means to that power. Thus violence pursued as a means, whether in the guise of prisons, the police or the military or in the “extreme” scenario of torture, always maintains a “law making” aim.
Natural ends, on the other hand, represent purposes that are pursued by individual interests, which are not necessarily subject to authorisation by the law. The State can act to enclose or contain the violence of individuals by providing a degree of legitimisation for natural acts of violence. 10 Benjamin argues that strike action by organised labour is an example of this sort of violence, 11 since it is a violence ordered towards natural ends (those which lie outside of the aims of the law) yet is tolerated within particular bounds by the State, and may even be enshrined in certain cases as a “right.” 12 Yet, right or not, the State reserves its own right to respond to the strike with violence. Such violent reactions by sovereign power, though presenting an apparent contradiction in what the law does or does not permit, do not necessarily contradict principles of legal rationality, 13 since the State manifests forms of violence which it itself prohibits. 14 Debates that occur around the ethics of capital punishment

10 The State may authorise, in particular circumstances, the use of corporal punishment against children by their parents, elders and teachers. In New South Wales, statutory limits are placed upon the kind of violence which may legitimately be used by certain adults against children, as stipulated by the Crimes Amendment (Child Protection – Physical Mistreatment) Act 2001. This details the persons who have a right to use force against a child, the parts of the body that may not be subject to violence, and regulates the degree and duration of harm inflicted. This violence is “natural” in the sense that it lies outside the scope of the formal delegation of the law, but it has been, and may in certain circumstances continue to be, tolerated by the State.

11 Benjamin argues that the strike is an example of violence, even when it is itself non-violent, because of its extortive character: “the omission of an action, or a service, where it amounts simply to a "severing of relations," (p239) can be an entirely non-violent, pure means. And as in the view of the state, or the law, the right to strike conceded to labour is certainly not to exercise violence but, rather, to escape from a violence indirectly exercised by the employer, strikes conforming to this may undoubtedly occur from time to time and involve only a "withdrawal" or "estrangement" from the employer. The moment of violence, however, is necessarily introduced, in the form of extortion, into such an omission, if it takes place in the context of a conscious readiness to resume the suspended action under certain circumstances that either have nothing whatever to do with this action or only superficially modify it. Understood in this way, the right to strike constitutes in the view of labour, which is opposed to that of the State, the right to use force in attaining certain ends.” Ibid., p239.

12 Ibid., p239-40. Benjamin argues that “organized labour is, apart from the state, probably the only legal subject entitled to exercise violence” (p239). This assertion may be questioned, firstly to the extent that the State has historically tolerated a range of violent acts by individuals, often within the private sphere, particularly that directed by adults towards children, and men towards women. Whilst the State does not explicitly legitimate these acts, the toleration of these forms of violence by the state could arguably amount to legitimation. Recent cases in law, both in Australia and abroad, which have found some acceptance for the use of lethal force in “self defence” against homosexual advance, are particularly powerful examples of individual acts of violence by parties other than the state, which have been at least partially legitimised by the State. Secondly, The right to strike has in many ways been replaced by a generalised right to protest, something that, from the civil rights era onwards, has taken a central position in public politics. Thirdly, western sovereignty has provided uninterrupted support for the use of violence by humans towards animals, a “right” which has only recently come under some scrutiny, particularly in the context of the horrific conditions maintained by modern meat production industries. See Wadiwel “Cows and Sovereignty.”


14 The connection of violence to law that founds western sovereignty is not necessarily replicated in other visions of sovereignty. Irene Watson, for example, suggests that Indigenous Australian conceptualisations of law differ from those in the West: “In imposing sovereignty over indigenous
often highlight this contradiction. In capital punishment, the law may punish murder with its own legalised murder, and it is possible — and lawful — for the State to execute a person who is subsequently deemed “innocent.” Indeed, according to Benjamin, capital punishment reveals most clearly the seemingly primordial relation of violence to law:

For if violence, violence crowned by fate, is the origin of law, it may be readily supposed that where the highest violence, that over life and death, occurs in a legal system, the origins of the law jut manifestly and fearsomely into existence. In agreement with this is the fact that the death penalty in primitive legal systems is imposed even for such crimes as offences against property, to which it seems quite out of “proportion.” Its purpose is not to punish the infringement of law but to establish new law. For in the exercise of violence over life and death, more than in any other legal act, the law reaffirms itself. But in this very violence something rotten in the law is revealed, above all to a finer sensibility, because the latter knows itself to be infinitely remote from conditions in which fate might imperiously have shown itself in such a sentence.15

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15 Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” p242. See also Benjamin’s explicit discussion of fate in W. Benjamin, “Fate and Character” in P. Demetz (ed) Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings, (Schocken Books, New York, 1986), pp304-311, especially pp306-8. The link between life and death, supposedly made clear in “primitive systems” need not be limited only to these systems, since capital punishment is still practised in the same “disproportionate” sense in “civilised” nations, including, as the pre-eminent example, the United States. Further, the contemporary State still reserves the right to kill, both in the form of military intervention and in the role of the police force, which whilst not having a legitimised right of execution, can find legal sanction for their own use of “lethal force” where this action conforms to ends which have been deemed legal. (Hence, cases of police shootings will not focus purely upon the “guilt” of the officer in question, but whether his or her action was “in the line of duty”). The link between the police (as executioner) and the sovereign is an important one for Agamben, something that he suggests has been obscured in the modern context: “The troubling contiguity between the sovereign and the police function is expressed in the intangible, sacral character that in ancient societies and political systems linked the figure of the sovereign to that of the executioner. This proximity was perhaps never revealed so clearly as by the fortuitous meeting on July 14, 1418, on a Paris street between the Duke of Burgundy, who had just entered the city as a conqueror leading his troops, and the executioner Coqueluche, who had been working for him night and day. The blood-splattered executioner approached the sovereign and, taking his hand, cried “My dear brother!” See G. Agamben, “The Sovereign Police,” in B. Massumi (ed) The Politics of Everyday Fear,
In this movement the law unveils its own investment in its use of violence — its own “natural” ends — since its own preservation will drive it to act violently (and apparently legally) against any predator, even if this predator appears to be acting within the law. Thus, as Jacques Derrida observes, the law possesses a tendency to hide the violence of its own origins.¹⁶ This is a propensity to hold at a distance its own natural ends, or make it appear that the natural ends of the State coincide seamlessly with its own legal ends.

Benjamin contrasts the violence of law — directed towards the maintenance of a relation of power — to “divine violence,” which he argues breaks the movement or oscillation between a violence that makes the law and that which maintains it. Benjamin suggests that the violence of God’s judgement does not aim at maintaining or re-instating God’s law (since God’s power is absolute, and therefore beyond challenge), but at cleansing or purifying the world of the law itself. The great flood of the Old Testament is a poignant example of such expiatory violence: the flood sweeps the world clean, and seeks justice by purging, wholesale, life on the surface of the world. We find the following key distinction in Benjamin’s text between the violence of law and that of the God:

> The dissolution of legal violence stems … from the guilt of a more natural life, which consigns the living, innocent and unhappy, to a retribution that “expiates” the guilt of mere life — and doubtless also purifies the guilty, not of guilt, however, but of law. For with mere life, the rule of law over the living ceases. Mythical violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake: divine violence is pure power over all life for the sake of living. The first demands sacrifice: the second accepts it.¹⁷

Because of its power to rupture absolutely the rule of law, divine violence is invested by Benjamin with a momentous significance, since it appears to hold one of the keys

¹⁷ Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” p250. Benjamin argues that the violence of law is “mythical” in character.
to suspending legal violence. This conception of a divine, expiatory violence is no doubt ambiguous, and remains a controversial assertion within Benjamin’s critique.\(^{18}\)

We shall return to Benjamin’s critique of divine violence in Chapters 6 and 7, in relation to the general strike, and in the discussion of peace.

Benjamin’s concept of “mere life” (“For with mere life, the rule of law over the living ceases”) indicates the specific relation of life to sovereign violence, and to power. “Mere,” “bare” or “naked” life (\textit{bloße Leben}\(^{19}\)) expresses the concern of sovereign violence, not for a life that is experienced in full bloom within the context of justice, but a life that finds simple expression as a bare existence, over which command is exerted. This can be clearly contrasted with the power of God, for whom mere material existence has never been enough. Whilst the divine soul can be freed from its corporeal shell, the soul subject to law remains resolutely connected to a living corporeality. It is this “mere life” (or “bare” / “sacred” life) that Giorgio Agamben suggests is the subject of modern sovereignty.

Agamben argues that sovereignty has a dual capacity to determine what is both “inside and outside” the law.\(^{20}\) Drawing from Carl Schmitt’s \textit{Political Theology},\(^{21}\) Agamben argues that the decision upon what is both inside and outside the law is the constitution of exception. The sovereign power of exception is best exemplified in the \textit{ban}. The power to ban involves a declaration of what exists, yet is forbidden to exist within the legal sphere: “it is literally not possible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order.”\(^{22}\) The banned book, or video, for example, occupies an indefinite breach within relations of power. It is recognised and held within the grasp of the sovereign, yet at the same time it does not circulate, it is refused “classification”: in the words of Agamben “it is delivered over to its own


separateness and, at the same time, consigned to the mercy of the one who abandons it — at once excluded and included, removed at the same time captured.”

Agamben differs very clearly here from Benjamin in his conception of sovereign power. Whilst Benjamin views sovereignty as defined by its connection to legal violence, Agamben argues that the primary activity of political sovereignty is the constitution of exception:

The statement “The rule lives off the exception alone” must therefore be taken to the letter. Law is made of nothing but what it manages to capture inside itself through the inclusive exclusion of the *exceptio*: it nourishes itself on this exception and is a dead letter without it…The sovereign decision traces and from time to time renews this threshold of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion, *nomos* and *physis*, in which life is originally excepted in law.

This is not to say that the exceptional space is not also a space of violence. Indeed violence remains inextricably linked to the law in Agamben’s thinking, since the legitimation of violence can only arise through the zone of exception that is constituted by the sovereign. The moment of exception is the point at which the decision to use violence is enacted. For this reason, this decision is equivalent to the “law-making” violence that Benjamin describes: it entails an unprecedented violence that creates the future precedent for new law. By constituting exception, the legal code is generated.

According to Agamben, life is given both place and meaning within the domain of sovereignty through its position of vulnerability in relation to sovereign power: that is, by being situated in close proximity to *exception* itself. Following Benjamin, Agamben defines the life constituted by exception as “mere life” or “bare life” (or *homo sacer* / “sacred life”), which he identifies as the “bearer of the link between life and law.”

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23 Ibid., p110.
24 Ibid., p27.
sovereign ban, a life which is neither constituted by law, nor by divine justice: “The sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life — that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed — is the life that has been captured in this sphere.” Killing perpetrated by the State, either through capital punishment, or as a result of police or military intervention, operates almost purely within this sphere of indistinction. For such deaths it is possible for the State to legitimate lethal force, without reflecting divine purpose (that is, as Benjamin would define it, violence that is not expiatory in character).

Bare life involves exposure to not only the constituting and constituted violence of the law, but a precise and exacting management of this same life as a social and biological entity: a deployment of forces defined by Foucault as belonging to the sphere of “biopolitics.” According to Agamben, biopolitical rationales are inseparable from the exceptional character of sovereign power, since the constitution of exception itself necessarily entails the constitution of life. The concentration camp is the most potent symbol of this nexus between bio-power and sovereign exception: indeed, for Agamben the camp is the sovereign space of exception par excellence. Agamben describes the camp as “the hidden matrix and nomos of the political space in which we are still living.” Within the concentration camp it is possible for sovereign power to enact what would otherwise, by its own juridical norms, be legally impossible. In the camp the ordinary conventions of law may be suspended. According to Agamben, it is within the camp that an indistinction is reached between “fact” and “law.” Here the regular processes of law are interrupted as life is subject to the sovereign exception. The juridical norms of the camp imply that law may be applied “indiscriminately” without reference to fact: indeed, as is

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26 Ibid., p83.
27 See Foucault, The Will to Knowledge, pp135-59.
28 Agamben, Homo Sacer, p181.
29 Ibid, p166.
30 At the time of writing, the Australian government has established camps for “illegal refugees” (asylum seekers) in neighbouring territories, at the same time enacting legislation that would suspend the operation of regular immigration law upon particular islands within Australian territory (Christmas Island being one of these areas). Without seeming contradiction, the Australian government is seeking to create a zone that is both inside and outside Australian jurisdiction, both subject to the law, in its full force, and yet at the same time excluded from ordinary legal “right”. A similar situation has occurred in the insidiously named “Camp X-Ray,” a detention centre used by the US Government to intern suspects in the “war on terror,” which is located outside US territory, and simultaneously, is excised from regular juridical process.
frequently the case in the camp, there may be no difference in treatment between those held on suspicion of committing a crime and those actually committed for a particular crime. Yet the reverse also holds true: the smallest fact (for example not standing correctly, or failing to awake at an allotted time) may be enough to unleash the most “disproportionate” measure of the law.  

Within this zone the most intricate and imperious maintenance of nutrition, movement, sleep and work occur. The question of life itself becomes the focus of sovereign power.

This does not mean that death is not an outcome of sovereign violence; indeed the camps that have haunted the twentieth century are as synonymous with death as they are with holding life in suspension. Death plays an important role within the logic of sovereign violence as the encircling periphery and limit of its activity. Agamben suggests that bare life carries a correspondence to existence as expressed in Heidegger’s Dasein. Agamben argues that whilst for Heidegger the experience of death (as the possibility of the impossibility of existing and existence) provides the sitedness of Dasein’s future possibilities, the camp makes defunct any such possibility for being, since the ever-present fact of dying consumes being.

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31 Agamben, Homo Sacer, p170. Agamben states that the “camp is a hybrid of law and fact in which the two terms have become indistinguishable.”
32 I have argued elsewhere that the intensity of biopolitical control exercised by the concentration camp is rivalled, and perhaps exceeded, by the mechanisms of power that are involved in livestock maintenance and meat production. See Wadiwel, “Cows and Sovereignty.”
33 Dasein or “being there” / “there being” is an expression used by Martin Heidegger to express the ontological basis of [human] being; see M. Heidegger, Being and Time, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1962). See also Agamben’s discussion: Agamben, Homo Sacer, pp150-3 & p188. Agamben draws a clear and perceptive distinction between Heidegger’s conceptualisation of Dasein and the “bare” life of the Nazi camp. He argues that it is at the point of biology and destiny that Heidegger and Nazism part ways. Agamben argues that for Heidegger, Dasein is always thrown into the factical situation, but experiences freedom in its emergence as ever-present possibility from this situation. Agamben suggests that Nazism views the political being in the same manner, as that which emerges from the here and now of the world, does not overcome biology, and thus transforms facticity into fact- as the destiny of blood and race. Agamben states that Nazism “determines the bare life of homo sacer in a biological and eugenic key, making it into the site of an incessant decision on value and non-value in which the camp, consequently, becomes the absolute political space” (Agamben, Homo Sacer, p153). Where bare life is the “absolute” meeting point of biology and law (“biopolitics and thanatopolitics”), Heidegger’s Dasein is Being which decides its own mode of being in the very moment of its Being (“being for whom its being is itself at question”), and therefore evades actively the possibility of presentation as “mere life” (as simply being-in-itself). See especially pp152-3.
34 See Agamben, Remnants of Auschwitz, pp74-5. For Heidegger, death is “anticipated” by Dasein as the “possibility of the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself towards anything, of every way of existing.” See M. Heidegger, Being and Time, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1962), p307; H p263. Heidegger states that “being-towards-death is the anticipation of a potentiality-for-Being of that entity whose kind of being is anticipation itself. In the anticipatory revealing of this potentiality-for-Being, Dasein discloses itself to itself as regards its uttermost possibility. But to project itself on its ownmost potentiality-for-Being means to be able to understand itself in the Being of the entity so revealed- namely, to exist”. Ibid.
Consequently, death does not exist as the experience of “inauthentic” experience of the “possible impossible,” but limits the “authentic” experience of potentiality to dying itself. In other words, within the camp, death cannot function as the horizon to existence that is occasionally glimpsed, but as the inescapable eventuality that shapes every moment of being. Agamben states:

…just as in Being-towards-death, the human being authentically appropriates the inauthentic, so in the camp, the prisoners exist **everyday anonymously** toward death. The appropriation of the improper is no longer possible because the improper has completely assumed the function of the proper: human beings live factually at every instant toward their death\(^{36}\).

The “death” camp, which organises life in resolute expectation of death, fails to provide a distance in which the prisoner can spring away from an experience of death (as possible impossible being) since death is everywhere in actuality, and presents itself voluminously as dominating possibilities. Death is presented as not one possibility, but as many possibilities in concordance with the many opportunities offered within the death camp for **dying**.\(^{37}\) The internees of the camp experience life in close proximity to death, as an ever-present, “bureaucratic,” day to day event: not as an abstract reminder of what life has to offer in all its potentiality, but simply as a daily eventuality which dominates the activity of the here and now. Death here relies

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37 This, Agamben suggests, is another point of indistinction in the camp: that is between death itself as a possibility, and ways of dying. Ibid. p76. It is possible to suggest that Heidegger would not necessarily see this as a challenge to the possibility of “authentic Being-towards-Death” because, as Agamben notes earlier in relation to Heidegger, it is “precisely in the extreme situation of the camp appropriation and freedom ought to be possible” (p75). Undoubtedly if a certain existential logic is followed, then every situation, even the camp, opens the field of choice up to Being, and in Heidegger’s conception, as failure of Dasein to acknowledge its “possibilities of Being…ensnares …[it]…in inauthenticity” (see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p312; *Hp*268). Nevertheless, one cannot help but sense a sinister aspect in Being-towards-death which is revealed in the camp. Heidegger provides the following definition of “authentic Being-towards-death”;

*anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concernful solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned freedom towards death- a freedom which has been released from the Illusions of the “they”, and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious. (see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p311; *Hp*266)*

What is the anxious certainty of the self in the camp, and how is it possible to figure an impassioned “freedom towards death”? In a certain sense, it is possible to diagnose “the will to survive” as an impassioned “freedom towards death” – that is as the frank seizure of the “totality” on one’s “potential – for Being (see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p311; *Hp*266-7). Yet it would be correct to interrogate the extent of this “potentiality-for-Being” as presented by the death camp, and the challenge this poses even to an existential concept of freedom.
upon a sovereign decision. This is a decision that can be made arbitrarily, quickly, without process, warning or recourse. Yet perversely the sovereign can almost perpetually extend living, and thus expand the process of dying, as we shall find below in relation to torture.

Perhaps a powerful contemporary example of the camp as a nexus point for sovereign violence, biopolitics and the production of “bare life” are the Serbian-run “rape / death” camps, established during the period of Balkan “ethnic cleansing” that occurred at the close of twentieth century. Within these camps sexual violence was a daily aspect of life: it is estimated that there were between 20,000 to 50,000 women assaulted.\(^{38}\) Life was of paramount importance within these zones of sovereign exception. We must once again exercise caution here: to argue that sexual violence “cares” for life does not imply that sexual violence may not precipitate death, or that in some cases death may be its explicit aim.\(^{39}\) Indeed the Serbian rape death camps very clearly reflected a practice of sexual violence that was inseparable from death.\(^{40}\) The lives of the women who were interned in these camps were only maintained in so far as they were physically able to withstand repeated, daily sexual violence. When this capacity was exhausted in camp inmates, then they were summarily put to death.\(^{41}\)

Yet an insidious “care” was shown towards the living. This is not a care for life as one cares for a family member, or a friend, rather it is a care for life in so far as that life

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\(^{39}\) See C. Roberts, *Women and Rape* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York, 1989), pp78-9 & *Speaking the Unspeakable: Nature, Incidence & Prevalence of Sexual Assault in Victoria*, (CASA House, Melbourne, 1999), p48. In David M. Heilpern’s study of sexual assault of young male prisoners, inmates reported accepting sexual advances to avoid severe injury or death: “His threats and intimidation succeeded in frightening me to the degree I only wanted to survive with the least amount of pain possible” [see D. M. Heilpern, *Fear or Favour: Sexual Assault of Young Prisoners*, (Southern Cross University Press, Lismore, 1998), pp36-7]. In the case of other prisoners, an extreme sexual violence precipitates an ongoing coercive sexual relation. In this sense, an originary violence may be used as a strategy to secure a continuing relation of power: after a brutal beating and rape, accompanied by threats of further violence or death, a prisoner in Heilpern’s study states: “I was just like a robot and did what they said. Going along was better than being beat or killed” [p2].


may continue to serve as an instrument over which domination may be exercised. Every living moment presents an opportunity for further sexual violence: MacKinnon describes an example where a woman “was allowed to live only as long as she kept her Serbian captor hard all night orally, night after night, from midnight to 5.00am.”

It is true that death may border upon such violent practices, or may, in some instances, make these practices possible, but the imperative shown by the rapist in maintaining life, for at least a short period of time, demonstrates the functionality of life for sexual violence. In this sense the horrific acts of sexual violence which take place in the rape / death camp, where women are raped and killed, and then their dead bodies are raped once again and mutilated, demonstrates the perverse difference between a violence inflicted against the living and the mutilation of the dead. If frictional power relates to a play of forces — of the inevitable meeting of force and resistance — then sexual violence reflects a desire to hold life, kicking and screaming, within a relation of power. Perhaps, we may speculate this “thrill” is crystallised in a desire of some rapists for an encounter that involves physical struggle: for example, a woman recalls that her “rapist had complained about her lying too still and not trying to enjoy it or help him to enjoy it more;” and in another example, a prisoner who is beaten unconscious, is then “slapped awake” by his rapists and told “I want you to feel this.”

The premature extinguishment of life “robs” the rapist of the prerogative exercised over the living body, in much the same fashion as the death of the tortured ends the hold which torturer exerts over the tortured. The rapist creates the circumstances by which a continuing daily violence may be exacted, one which holds life in its grasp, often at the threshold of death.

The Serbian rape / death camps also reinforce the close connection between sexual violence and the biopolitical prerogative of sovereign violence. Rape is a biopolitical strategy utilised by an aggressing force for not only the capture and conquest of territory, but the creation of new citizenry. The classical example of such violence was that visited upon the women of Sabine, who were captured by the invading Roman force and subject to forcible intercourse as a stratagem for the breeding of a

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42 Ibid., p50.
43 Ibid.
44 Quoted in C. Roberts, Women and Rape, p74.
45 Heilpern, Fear or Favour: Sexual Assault of Young Prisoners, p2.
new generation of Romans, a strategy which it is said to have resulted in the “founding of Rome.” The rape / death camp functions in a similar way, since the policy of “ethnic cleansing” was achieved not only through wholesale slaughter, but through the forced impregnation of Croatian and Muslim women. For the women who had been made pregnant through this ordeal, it was customary “to hold them in custody until it ...[was]... too late for the victims to get an abortion.

The imperative to contain, regulate and direct the intimate and familial biological functioning of those caught within its domain emphasises the immense capacity for sovereignty to exercise “care” in its violence. The machine of power rests upon the living subjects that compose its internal dynamics. Hence death represents a limit for power, something which did not escape Foucault’s notice. Indeed, Foucault, in his discussion of sovereign power in relation to the death penalty, makes a significant observation that is of relevance not only to the present discussion, but this work in general:

One might say that the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live was replaced by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death. This is perhaps what explains that disqualification of death which marks the recent wane of the rituals that accompanied it. That death is so carefully evaded is linked less to a new anxiety which makes death unbearable for our societies than to the fact that the procedures of power have not ceased to turn away from death. In the passage from this world to the other, death was the manner in which a terrestrial sovereignty was relieved by another, singularly more powerful sovereignty; the pageantry that surrounded it was in the category of political ceremony. Now it is over life, throughout its unfolding, that power establishes its domination; death is power’s limit, the moment that escapes it; death becomes the secret aspect of existence, the most "private."
According to Foucault, the shift from this model of “sovereign power” to modern biopolitics is marked by an evolution in the significance of death to sovereignty. The shift in focus of sovereign power marks an evolutionary development in the instruments and aims of that power. That death should present the limit of power over life, is something that is only perceptible because of a refinement in the sensitivity of sovereignty with regard to the maintenance of life. For a life which exists at the pleasure of the sovereign, subject to the threat and/or actualisation of legitimised violence as a means, is a life upon which a relation of power may be maintained in a way that cannot be offered by a mere corpse. This does not mean that death is no longer a viable strategy for exercising legitimised power. As Foucault argues, war became a predominant means of State killing, a movement that coincided with a concern of sovereignty for government and “the function of administering life.”

Thus, there is a duality of character in sovereign violence: an ability to take life (administer death), and a great expertise directed towards the maintenance of biological populations subject to a continuing violence. The latter aspect of sovereign violence may be equated with the power to “disallow life to the point of death.” Life is maintained in minimal conditions, violence is carefully governed, and the possibility of death is resolutely held at a distance. Yet despite the apparent value life has, the passing of this life is no sacrifice, since it was itself a mere token (“not worth the three pfennig of the bullet”). Bare life is both invested by immense sovereign attention, yet simultaneously may be discarded without due ceremony.

If, as I argue, governed violence sits at the heart of frictional power, then it is the production of bare life which sits at the very core. As stated above, life is the dwelling point for power. It rests upon entities that possess animation, that are capable of being engaged within networks: entities that may be said to possess a soul. Bare life raises questions around the nature of living, and the constitution of life in its essence: indeed the category “bare life” demands some contemplation of its relation to the soul itself.

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50 This is a point of distinction between Foucault’s treatment of biopower and that of Agamben. According to Agamben biopolitics is not a new development, but has been inseparable from Western politics “from the beginning.”
51 This is an idea, as discussed above, that Benjamin suggests lies behind the treaty, as an agreement upon sanction which dictates the terms of existence for the “losing state” in relation to the victor. See Benjamin, “Critique of Violence”, p249.
52 Foucault, The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1, p138.
According to Foucault, disciplinary power affects a change in the object of punishment, from that of the body (as a site for the infliction of pain) to that of the soul: “The expiation that once rained down upon the body must be replaced by a punishment that acts in depth on the heart, the thoughts, the wills, the inclinations.”

This gives the impression, at least within the context of the history of modern punishment, that the soul should be regarded as an entity that has a life separate from the physical body. This soul is portrayed as the seat for the control of an individual’s conduct: the point at which training, discipline and surveillance aims, and the means by which, through the training of the soul, the body’s conduct may in turn be regulated. If the soul is the object of modern power, then how do we explain the apparently paradoxical focus of contemporary violence upon the biological body? Does the violence of the camp still claim the soul as its object, despite addressing the body as its immediate concern? And how, may we ask, does biopolitics relate to the soul?

These questions do not prove as perplexing if we look towards the Aristotelian tradition, where we find a more resolute connection binding the soul to the biological functioning of the body. According to Aristotle, the soul is not an essence or spirit that is distinct from, and may survive the extinguishment of, the biological body. Instead, the soul is presented as the living presence of the biological organism: in Aristotle’s words “the soul is the cause or source of the living body.” Aristotle states that there are three properties that may belong to a fully formed soul: thinking; perception; and generation / nutrition. It is the latter property that refers to the minimal condition of

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54 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p16. Note, it is certainly not clear what Foucault defines as the “soul” or whether he personally believes in the concept of a “soul”: indeed, in many respects his analysis of the soul from his earlier to later works characterises a genealogy of the soul and its relationship to the self and power rather than an attempt to pin down a definition.

55 Arguably this conception of the soul, as fundamentally distinct from the body, more closely ties with a Platonic definition. Socrates’ discussion in *Phaedrus*, for example, highlights this distinction: “The soul in her totality has the care of inanimate being everywhere, and traverses the whole heaven in divers forms appearing—when perfect and fully winged she soars upward, and orders the whole world; whereas the imperfect soul, losing her wings and drooping in her flight at last settles on the solid ground—there, finding a home, she receives an earthly frame which appears to be self-moved, but is really moved by her power; and this composition of soul and body is called a living and mortal creature. For immortal no such union can be reasonably believed to be; although fancy, not having seen nor surely known the nature of God, may imagine an immortal creature having both a body and also a soul which are united throughout all time.” See Plato, *Phaedrus*, B. Jowett trans., text available online at [http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/texts/phaedrus.html](http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/texts/phaedrus.html), accessed July 2005.


57 Ibid. (Bk II, 4, 414b)
functioning for any biological organism, and acts as its baseline principle for living in its barest sense. This proves to be most revealing for an understanding of bare life, since it expresses the most basic essence held by all living creatures. As Aristotle exhorts, it “follows that first of all we must treat of nutrition and reproduction, for the nutritive soul is found along with all the others and is the most primitive and widely distributed power of soul, being indeed that one in virtue of which all are said to have life.” Where the other components of the soul — perception and intellect — do not belong to all living things, it is the capacity to reproduce and to nourish which is held central to each biological organism, human, animal or plant. Yet, we may observe by a curious reversal any biological organism, no matter how cultivated or advanced their soul, retains the ability to be reduced to a bare state of functioning: to seek, in the face of adversity, that which sustains the living organism in exclusion of other capacities. Thus, it is perhaps most clearly through Aristotle that we can make sense of Agamben’s assertion that today “bios lies in zoë exactly as essence, in the Heideggerian definition of Dasein, lies (liegt) in existence.” For Heidegger, Dasein expressed the fact that existence itself, and no other quality, defined our being. With similar simplicity, bare life is a representation of the coincidence of our political being with the mere fact of our living. The challenge of biopolitics is the meeting of the cultural and political life of being (bios) with the fact of living contained within it (zoë), a meeting which transforms the political question into a discourse centred around the question of life.

Can we suggest therefore that the aim of contemporary power is in fact the soul, but the soul seen as the bearer of the key to the core elements for the operation of the living body? Whilst disciplinary arrangements, and perhaps ethics, aim at the

58 Ibid.
59 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p188.
60 Ibid., p1.
61 We find an expression of this within Aristotle’s commentary on the soul, in a passage which resonates with both Agamben and Heidegger: “for in everything the essence is identical with the ground of its being, and here, in the case of living things, their being is to live, and of their being and their living the soul in them is the cause or source. Further, the actuality of whatever is potential is identical with its formulable essence.” Aristotle, *On the Soul*, p645 (Bk II, 4, 415b). It is interesting in this regard that Heidegger, in what must be regarded in this context as a key passage, states that “Life, in its own right, is a kind of Being; but essentially it is accessible only in Dasein. The ontology of life is accomplished by way of a privative Interpretation; it determines what must be the case if there can be anything like mere-aliveness [Nur-noch-leben]. Life is not a mere Being present-at-hand, nor is it Dasein. In turn, Dasein is never to be defined ontologically by regarding it as life (in an ontologically indefinite manner) plus something else.” Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p75 H p50.
acculturation of the soul – the fostering of the conditions of intellect and knowledge which direct and constrain, train and enable the body – there remains in biopolitical violence the capacity for the soul to be merely the life force that sustains the living body in the most minimal condition of functioning. In this sense biopolitical violence seeks both body and soul in one grasp, since at this level of functioning the soul is absolutely inseparable from the fact of living present within the body. This, as we shall see in the following section, is the secret behind the effectiveness of torture: a set of strategies designed to wear the being of the living organism down to that point where it possesses its life only and nothing more.

**Torture, Pain and Violence of Measure.**

Within the exceptional space of the camp, pain would be the primary expression of bare life. In particular *torture*, as the concentrated infliction of pain upon the body, is the perfected art of bare life production, and corresponds absolutely to the structure of a life “disallowed to the point of death”.

A potential difficulty arises in the discussion of the connection between contemporary torture and sovereignty and law, since twentieth century torture has been by its very nature clandestine, resisting codification by law. Torture appears today as an extraordinary form of violence that is strictly extra-legal in character. The principles of international law would certainly appear to reflect this: Article 5 of the United Nations resolution 217 A (III) of 1948 (“Universal Declaration of Human Rights”) declares a principle that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”; while sections 18 and 19 of the 1996 Draft Codes of Crimes Against the Peace and Security of Mankind similarly express the unlawfulness of “torture or inhuman treatment.” Yet, despite international principles that would appear to indicate otherwise, I would argue that the violence of torture is closely connected to the violence of law, and that further, torture lies close to the very heart of contemporary sovereign power.
The close relationship between torture and sovereignty is evidenced by the seemingly anomalous persistence and development of torture throughout the twentieth century. Despite a clear jurisprudential movement against torture in most parts of the world, we have simultaneously witnessed the continued and evolved use of torture in the twentieth century, which has arguably resulted in more bodies being tortured during this period than in any other century in human history. Many States utilise torture as an instrument of power, whilst at the same time denying its existence. An Amnesty International report observes “while governments universally condemn torture, more than a third of the world’s governments have used or tolerated torture or ill-treatment of prisoners in the 1980s.”

Even those States which may not practice torture themselves within their own territories, are complicit with regimes which are involved in its practice; and further, as is the case with the United States, many nations have been involved with the training of torturers, and the practice of torture in other States. It is perhaps no accident that commentators, notably Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz, have called for legal statute to bring torture within the regulatory scope of public policy, to ensure accountability for what is in actuality being practised. In some respects this reflects the fact that torture persists but lacks codification, but as I shall discuss, also points to the emergence of a new logic for torture that relies on both exception and disciplinary power.

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62 As Kate Millet wryly observes, given “the widespread renunciation of torture at the beginning of this century and the general revulsion against it following the discovery of its use in World War II, the spread of torture throughout the world at the end of that war is somewhat of an anomaly.” K. Millet, The Politics of Cruelty. (Penguin, London, 1994), p78.

63 Amnesty International, Torture in the Eighties, (Amnesty International Publications, Sydney 1984), p2. In the case of Turkey, for example, Millet states “Turkish authorities consistently deny allegations of torture. Turkish attorneys charge that torture is routine in 80 to 90 percent of political cases and 50 percent of criminal cases.” Millet, The Politics of Cruelty, p292.


65 Recent allegations of torture practised by US officials in Baghdad have only reinforced this connection, where, in the case of Iraq, a regime notorious for its own use of torture has been replaced with a new regime which has sanctioned its own use of “inhuman treatment.” See “New Torture Images Disgust US Politicians,” in The Sydney Morning Herald, May 13, 2004. Since the attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, there has been public discussion within the United States media over the possible use of torture to extract information from detainees about terrorist activities. See S. Zizek, “Are We in a War? Do We Have and Enemy?” in London Review of Books Online, 23 May 2002, Vol. 24, No. 10, web address <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v24/n10/zize2410.htm>, date accessed: 14 June 2002.

66 See Mark Davis interview with Alan Dershowitz, “Dateline,” Australian Broadcasting Corporation, March 31, 2004. Transcript available at <http://tinyurl.com/2zaeb>, date accessed 15 April 2004. Although Dershowitz’s views are concerning, they do acknowledge what is perhaps a lost “legal” understanding of torture, which, to quote George Riley Scott, could be defined as “a form of cruelty or method of tormenting sanctioned by the State, and executed by duly accredited or appointed officials, through its judicial authorities.” See Scott, A History of Torture, (Senate Press, Guernsey, 1995), pp2-3.
The key to understanding the persistence of torture throughout the twentieth century and beyond lies in the radical powers inherent in sovereignty. Agamben’s concept of the exceptional space is important here, because the troubled relation between torture and legitimacy can only be made sense of through an understanding of exception. The decision to use torture is the decision on the exception: that is, the decision on those extraordinary means that will be employed in response to the situation of crisis. Indeed, recent discussion in the media on the use of torture as a means to extract “vital” information on terrorism reinforces the exceptional character of torture: the use of otherwise prohibited means is afforded a degree of legitimacy through the power of sovereignty to grant exception when the circumstance appears to demand it. In so far as sovereignty is founded upon its capacity for exception, torture remains a possible and attractive strategy.

Elaine Scarry’s compelling investigation of torture offers a useful intersection with Agamben’s description of the bare life of sovereign exception. In particular, Scarry’s account provides a phenomenological perspective on torture, which resonates very powerfully with Agamben’s discussion of “witnessing” in Remnants of Auschwitz. I should note a point of difference between Scarry’s analysis and my own: Scarry explicitly distances torture from law, where I seek to demonstrate their implicit connection. Scarry argues that the relation of torture to the law is one of “inversion,”

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67 As Agamben notes, the substitution of “crimes against humanity” as a charge for “murder” or “assault” (such as those charges at the Nuremburg trials) represents a legal attempt to outflank the exceptional power of the State: an attempt to overcome the difficulty in charging the torturer or the murderer within the “conventional” criminal code since these acts — genocide, mass murder, atrocity — were carried out strictly within the legitimate confines of the law. The torturer holds up his hands and says “I have committed no crime! I have all the paper work… I was simply following orders!” See G. Agamben, The Coming Community, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993), p87.

68 See for example G. R. Scott, A History of Torture, pp v-vi. Millet indicates that the absolute power to torture, and perhaps the reason for the increase in the use of torture in the twentieth century, is linked to the power to incarcerate. Millet argues that given the State’s “unquestioned powers to incarcerate— which is everything, or nearly everything: sequestration and secrecy, physical restraint and the shaping of physical and psychic experience (expanded by detention, particularly if detention is clandestine)— given these powers, the exercise of torture is only a logical extension of power itself”. Millet, The Politics of Cruelty, p308. Indeed we are reminded that prison, though an apparently benign institution, is ultimately constructed to inflict continued suffering upon its inmates. A US prisoner describes his circumstance: “I have been in prison for 35 years. Prison is the only place I know of where individuals are hired, trained and paid to mentally and physically abuse others. Prisons by their design, obliterate kindness.” Quoted in A. Roddick (ed), A Revolution in Kindness, (Anita Roddick Books, West Sussex, 2003), p132.


70 See Agamben, Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive.
in so far as torture upsets the regular operation of juridical rule. Thus, to illustrate her point, she suggests that torture reverses the “usual” role of cause and effect in the trial, where in regular law “one studies evidence that may lead to punishment,” instead creating the opposite situation of the use of “punishment to generate evidence.” In a similar fashion, Scarry’s concept of unmaking in torture involves an “inversion” of those aspects of “civilisation” (which includes law as an institution) which would otherwise offer a sanctuary or home to the prisoner, but are transformed radically in meaning through torture (for example, the home becomes a cell). As I shall discuss below, disruption (and even inversion) of the regular operations of law is inherent to the juridical functioning of sovereign exception: that is, the use of torture has a specific and characteristic connection to sovereignty.

Scarry describes torture as the unmaking or deconstruction of the self and world. She divides this “unmaking” into three stages. The first stage is the moment of physical violence, where the torturer inflicts pain upon the prisoner. This moment, though simple enough to describe, is complex in that it is not realisable without the organisation of the immediate world around the prisoner as mechanisms of constraint, and as potential objects for the infliction of violence. Thus the prisoner is confined in a prison or a room, and various instruments of torture are presented to him or her. The second stage of torture, which Scarry describes as the objectification of the pain of the prisoner, is achieved through the reassignment or transformation of seemingly everyday objects as instruments of pain. For example, the room becomes a cell, the bed is electrified, or the telephone book is used as an object for battering the prisoner’s head. But this objectification of pain does not offer an avenue for the prisoner to appeal to the torturer with regard to the intense suffering experienced. Any

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71 Scarry, The Body in Pain, p41.
72 Ibid., p44
73 Scarry states: “Civilisation itself in its language and its literature records the path that torture in its unconscious miming of the deconstruction of civilisation follows in reverse: the protective, healing, expansive acts implicit in “host” and “hostel” and “hospital” and “hospital” all converge back in “hospes”, which in turn moves back to the root “hos” meaning house, shelter or refuge; but once back at “hos,” its generosity can be undone by an alternative movement forward into “hostis”, the source of “hostility” and “hostage” and “host” — not the host that willfully abandons the ground of his power in acts of reciprocity and equality but the “host” deprived of all ground, the host of the Eucharist, the sacrificial victim.” Ibid., pp44-5. As Agamben highlights, the protectorate powers of sovereignty effectively rely on the two aspects of “host” — as an entity that is owed hospitality, yet may be attached to by the parasite.
74 Scarry’s use of the word “deconstruction” has no relation to Derrida’s usage of the same term. Instead Scarry equates deconstruction with “de-civilisation.” See Scarry, The Body in Pain, p145.
appeal made through screams, grunts and cries, remains unanswered. Instead the
torturer demands of the tortured “information” that is deemed necessary to the world
of the torturer, and substitutes for the appeal made by the body in pain. As such,
Scarry describes the *third* stage of torture as that which establishes the relationship of
power between the tortured and the torturer: “the objectified pain is denied as pain
and read as power, a translation made possible by the obsessive mediation of
agency.”75

The voiced communication between the torturer and the tortured “mediates” their
relationship.76 The torturer inflicts pain and asks questions, the prisoner suffers pain
and attempts to answer them as a means to avoid pain. (In this sense, the conversation
between the torturer and the tortured challenges a more conventional understanding of
“dialogue”). But as Scarry makes clear, the words “confessed” by the tortured have no
necessary meaning in themselves. The agonised words spoken by the tortured may or
may not reveal something to the torturer, they may be accurate, they may constitute
“intelligence gained,” yet on the other hand they may simply be words uttered in
desperation to avoid the infliction of even more pain. The potential guilt of the
prisoner is not measured by his/her relation to a specific crime, but to a more general
sense of guilt that the tortured submits as owing to the torturer. The interrogation is
intimately bound with the pain suffered by the prisoner, as a dialogue that explicitly
seeks to map the pain suffered by the prisoner into a relation of power.77 For Scarry,
the verbal communication between the torturer and the tortured is important, since it
achieves a displacement of the intense pain suffered by the prisoner. Thus she argues
that the torturer will use “the question,” urgently put to the prisoner, to nullify his or
her experience of the tortured’s pain.78 The tortured, on the other hand, experiences
the absolute insignificance of the question — indeed of any question — in the face of
the intense pain suffered.79 The intensity of pain suffered renders the answering of the
question as urgent and pressing: thus, as Scarry observes, “It is for this reason that

75 Ibid., p28.
76 The term “mediate” must be utilised with care in this situation, since in torture the communication
between tortured and torturer has a strictly non-reciprocal, singular character Scarry identifies as one of
the differences between war and torture the fact that war has a uni-directional commitment to injuring,
whilst torture is “one-directional injuring”. Ibid., p78.
77 Ibid., p29
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
while the content of the prisoner’s answer is only sometimes important to the regime, the form of the answer, the fact of his answering, is always crucial. The response of the tortured in this situation is read as a “betrayal”: as the surrender of friends, family, relations, self.

The unmaking of the world is characterised by the piecemeal surrender of the objects of the world – the cell, the bed, the telephone book, the body – and their transition to instruments of torture. Thus, as Scarry suggests, the tortured feels his or her world contracting, at the same moment, as the torturer’s appears to expand, as the world external to consciousness becomes complicit with pain. The disassembly of the objects of the world transforms everything around the prisoner:

Just as all aspects of the concrete structure are inevitably assimilated into the process of torture, so do the contents of the room, its furnishings, are converted into weapons: the most common instance of this is the bathtub that figures prominently in the reports from numerous countries, but is only one among many. Men and women tortured during the period of martial law in the Philippines for example, described being tied or handcuffed in a constricted position for hours, days, and in some cases months to a chair, to a cot, to a filing cabinet, to a bed: they describe being beaten with “family-sized soft drink bottles” or having a hand crushed with a chair, or having their heads “repeatedly banged on the edges of a refrigerator door” or “repeatedly

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80 Ibid.

81 Aristotle defines the “incontinent man” as “knowing that what he does is bad, does it as a a result of passion,” see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* in *The Works of Aristotle*, Vol 11 (Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc, Chicago 1952) Bk VII, I, 1145a. There is a symmetry between this and the confession of the tortured, as there is a tendency to read the confession as an act of weakness, where the tortured gives up information despite understanding what is the [morally] “correct” action in the same situation. The compelling and stoical image of the prisoner “who will not break,” as is frequently depicted in film, errs around a misunderstanding of the dynamics of torture, and fantasises that it is possible for the tortured to be able to withstand torture without losing anything or betraying anyone, and that indeed the information surrendered in torture is of significance — of a significance which is in some way equivalent to the violence endured by the prisoner. The fantasy of the heroic character who steadfastly refuses to “spill their guts” not only unrealistically depicts what is inevitable in torture, but also gives credit to the seriousness of the torturer’s “enquiries” which are, after all, only occasionally directed towards information, but wholeheartedly interested in pursuing a relation of dominance through violence as a means


83 Ibid., p27.
pounded against the edges of a filing cabinet”. The room both in its structure and its content, is converted into a weapon, deconverted, undone.\textsuperscript{84}

These objects do not simply dissolve: their transition transforms their meaning as objects in the world for the tortured, and they assume the form of the weapon, which carries a singular, and powerful, reference to pain. According to Scarry, the body of the tortured itself becomes a weapon: in a graphic demonstration of her point, Scarry observes that is only “when a person throws his head back and swallows three times does he begin to apprehend what is involved in one hundred and three or three hundred and three swallows, what atrocities one’s own body, muscle and bone structure can inflict upon oneself.”\textsuperscript{85}

We can recognise the relationship between Scarry’s analysis of torture and Agamben’s bare life, since the unmaking of life that Scarry describes at the same time represents the making bare of life. The tortured resides within the sovereign ban. He or she is subject to an exceptional violence: a violence that measures itself, that ruthlessly maintains life at the same time as it diminishes it. This does not mean that the threat of death does not figure in torture, since the threat of death itself may be presented to the prisoner as an instrument of torture, but that torture reveals an insidious attachment to life, even if this is life in its barest form. It demonstrates a commitment of sovereign power to the resolute maintenance of life, a life that can be subjected to more pain without the threat of interruption by death, a life that is ruthlessly suspended upon the threshold between living and dying.

The insidious care towards life displayed by the torturer is evident in the various strategies engaged, not only to avoid at all costs the unplanned death of the prisoner during torture, but to ensure that the prisoner remains conscious during the procedure. Torture teases the periphery of death, always exerting energies to pull the prisoner back from “the brink.” The graphic account given of the “submarine” (or submarino) in \textit{The Body in Pain}, a procedure where the prisoner is held down in a bathtub up until the point of drowning, and then yanked back to life, is exemplary of this movement in

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., pp40-1.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p48.
torture. Thus perversely, while the prisoner is maintained at the absolute point of bare life, the torturer simultaneously demonstrates a “care” for this same life.  

The fact that medical personnel may be present at the scene of modern torture adds a new dimension to the insidious care for life, since it allows for an all the more accurate determination of the threshold between life and death. As an Amnesty report bluntly observes, the presence of a medical apparatus ensures “that the victims can survive to be tortured further and that they do not ‘escape’ through unconsciousness or death”; similarly, a British Medical Association report observes that a doctor’s examinations “appeared to note conditions which could be seriously aggravated by torture,” and “suggested (and subsequent events confirmed) that the main function of the medical examination was to allow for “effective” torture.” The admission of medical practitioners into the sphere of torture, as a means of both determining the point where life is in danger of being extinguished, and as a means of determining the future ability of the prisoner to withstand further torment, appears a seemingly natural step for the biopolitical regime and the exercise of the power to “make live.” The involvement of medical personnel in the practice of torture, whether as merely present to diagnose the ability of the prisoner to be tortured, or to assess the condition of the prisoner after torture, or even to be directly present and active during the torture itself, can be understood as progression in the biopolitics of torture, which aims increasingly to discern, with ever more accuracy, the point at which the life of the organism

88 British Medical Association, Medicine Betrayed, p43. Agamben makes note of medical attempts to define the point of death in twentieth century, and the way in which these have coincided with a legal need to also find this point of death- particularly in relation to determining the legal bounds of responsibility around patients in critical life conditions, such as those in protracted states of coma. (Agamben, Homo Sacer, pp160-65). He states that:

The hospital room in which the neomort, the overcomatose person, and the faux vivant waver between life and death delimits a space of exception in which a purely bare life, entirely controlled by man and his technology, appears for the first time. And since it is precisely a question not of a natural life but of an embodiment of homo sacer (the comatose person has been defined as an intermediary between man and an animal), what is at stake is, once again, the definition of a life that may be killed without the commission of a homicide (and that is, like homo sacer, "unsacrificable", in the sense that it obviously could not be put to death following a death sentence).

This is why it is not surprising that some of the most ardent partisans of brain death and modern biopolitics propose that the state should decide on the moment of death, removing all obstacles to intervention on the faux vivant (pp164-5).

In this sense Agamben suggests that such decisions are not merely informed by the spirit of scientific enquiry, but constitute political deliberations in so far as they constitute the limits of life within the space of the law (p164).
becomes threatened. That the involvement of medicine in torture should extend to 
include a veritable medical apparatus — clinics, medical administrations etc — 
should therefore appear as a seemingly “natural” step in the evolution of 
contemporary violence. In Chile for example, it was reported that there was “an entire 
clinical structure in place with specialists, resources, shifts, joint consulting, and 
“even emergency call” to respond to any imprudence or over-zealous action by other 
officials that put the life of the detainee in danger.”

The involvement of medical expertise in the conduct of modern torture raises 
questions around the place of disciplinary power in relation to the infliction of pain, 
and its relation to sovereign power. Rejali’s recent work on torture in Iran is an 
important contribution in this regard. He finds that despite the fact that 
contemporary instances of torture appear, in practice, to resemble the classical 
tortures that were the preserve of an archaic sovereign power, the torture practised 
today obeys distinctly modern imperatives: “modern torture takes place in the context 
of policing operations and discipline.” Further, modern torture is no longer found at 
the scaffold, rather it has become an institutional practice that takes place within the 
apparatus of disciplinary power: in Rejali’s words, modern torture “takes place in 
the basements of prisons and detention centres.” Thus, as Rejali’s analysis indicates, 
disciplinary power did not so much remove torture from the penal apparatus, as 
reinvest it within a new context.

What then is the connection of disciplinary power to torture and the modern exercise 
of violence? The answer to this lies in the close connection of disciplinary and 
biopolitical networks associated with contemporary sovereign power. As discussed in 
the previous chapter, Foucault argues that power is not held solely by sovereignty, but 
is dispersed throughout the political field. This is particularly true of disciplinary 
regimes, which are not contained within, or directed by, particular institutions, but 
rely upon their effective diffusion within a vast array of mechanisms: “‘Discipline’ 
may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of

89 British Medical Association, Medicine Betrayed, p44. This is an excerpt from a report from the 
Chilean Medical Association (The Participation of Physicians in Torture, 1986).
90 In Rejali’s words “Neither Foucault, nor the humanists can advance a satisfactory explanation for the 
return to torture, much less the features that characterise it,” see Rejali, Torture and Modernity, p15.
91 Ibid., p16.
92 Ibid., p13.
power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a ‘physics’ or an ‘anatomy’ of power, a technology.” Yet sovereignty may itself both deploy, and inculcate, disciplinary regimes. As discussed in Chapter 2, sovereignty is considered by Foucault to belong to a trinity of power, comprising sovereignty, disciplinary power and government. In a broad fashion, sovereign power has affected the direction and form of disciplinary networks but, in the same sense, disciplinary power has altered the nature of sovereignty’s endeavour. Thus, not only are the actions of citizens acculturated through disciplinary norms, but the modi operandi of governments are also inevitably shaped by disciplinary organisation. This is apparent in the case of the police force, which embodies disciplinary forms of organisation and, through its powers of surveillance, engages in the regulation of the conduct of the population.

Biopolitics too, as we have seen, has altered the landscape of sovereign power, and subsequently our understanding of torture auspiced by sovereignty. The object of biopower, to both foster life and disallow it to the point of death, results in the investment of sovereign energies into a wholesale, and far-reaching, micropolitical management of the populations within its domain. As extensively as this biopolitical imperative has infiltrated the contemporary exercise of sovereign power, there has also been a simultaneous expansion, and diffusion, of the sovereign imperative within the social body. In this sense, the law as the sovereign arm of legitimised violence becomes embedded in an ever expanding yet seemingly benign network dedicated towards the everyday regulation of life. As shall be discussed in Chapter 5, this is one consequence of the “governmentalisation” of the State: not only have the governmental and disciplinary norms — which are routinely found within the locales of everyday life — acculturated the practices of sovereign power, but the scope of sovereignty has infused itself more deeply into the social structure. Thus Foucault suggests that today the law is not in decline, but that it retains an intimate connection to normative regulation:

93 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p215.
I do not mean to say that the law fades into the background or that the institutions of justice tend to disappear, but rather that the law operates more and more as a norm, and that the judicial institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative, and so on) whose functions are for the most part regulatory.\(^95\)

There is a connection here between biopolitical and disciplinary regulation and contemporary torture: since torture today is, in the most undiluted sense, the extreme meeting point of the violence of law and the force of the regulatory norm. If as Foucault states, the “ideal point of penalty today would be an indefinite discipline; an interrogation without end,”\(^96\) then we must acknowledge that the insidious face of modern torture is the end product of such an endless interrogation, carried out in concert with all the violent potentiality of sovereign power.

Further, there is a fundamental relation between sovereign exception and disciplinary power, since it is in the camp that the law meets the norm; where the everyday regulation of movement, nutrition, reproduction, and sleep is maintained through the unwavering force of law. This is not to imply that Foucault and Agamben have the same understanding of biopolitics. The two thinkers differ in the use and understanding of the role and history of biopolitics within the West. Where Foucault implies that biopolitics is a relatively new modality of power, Agamben argues that it has always been close to the heart of sovereignty. In his words, “the fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as originary political element and as a threshold of articulation between nature and culture, \(\text{zoë}\) and \(\text{bios}\).”\(^97\) This essential relation between sovereignty and biopolitics— the fact that “Western politics is a biopolitics from the beginning”— reformulates the problem of sovereign power. Sovereignty is revealed to have always maintained a connection to biopolitics, and the constitution of the life of those beings within its domain.\(^99\) While

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95 Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p144.
97 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p181. This is evidenced in some respects by the Hobbesian account of sovereignty, which as described in Chapter 2, is seen as offering a reprieve from “the state of nature.” In this sense sovereignty at its very foundation aims to establish a zone of exception through an explicitly biopolitical violence.
98 Ibid.
99 The legend of the rape of the women of Sabine – discussed above in this Chapter – is an example
it is true, if we accept Agamben’s reasoning, that the biopolitical potential has always existed in Western sovereignty, it is today that we find the most intense examples of the meeting between disciplinary surveillance and normative regulation: literally at the point at which the law becomes indistinguishable from the norm. This is, I believe the significance of Foucault’s concept of governmentality: namely an evolved framework of power within which violence itself incorporates governmental rationality, and assumes biological populations as its “primary target.” The emerging significance of governmental reason coincides with the intensification of biopolitics as an organising rationale, and makes possible an apparently seamless merger of law and norm, where the most intimate functionings of life may become subject to legal jurisdiction. Within this economy of power, where life is paramount, even the most extreme forms of violence may still pay homage to the living.

Apart from prompting us to consider the relation of violence to sovereignty, torture also allows us to reconsider the relationship of sovereign violence to the soul. If we accept that the soul is inextricably linked to the biological function of the body, then torture aims to grasp the most primitive aspect of the soul, to reduce it to its barest, “nutritive” capacity. The torturer “goes to work” on the body of the tortured, and uses violence as a means to progressively strip the world of the tortured, and reconstitute the being of the tortured strictly within a space where political questions are posed in terms of biological life (questions such as “Will the prisoner be able to withstand torture?”; “How can we aid the recovery of the prisoner so that he or she may be able to withstand further torture?”; “How much will the prisoner be able to take?”).

In some respects the end point of this violence finds form in figures such as the Muselmänner (or “Muslims”) of the Nazi concentration camps, the term given to the “walking dead” of the camps, who due to the infliction of continued violence — malnutrition, sleep deprivation, extended work, psychological trauma etc — were reduced to a bare state of biological functioning. As Agamben observes, “the Muselmann is an indefinite being in whom not only humanity and non-humanity, but

that I believe very clearly demonstrates Agamben’s assertion that Western sovereignty was biopolitical “from the beginning.” See D. Wadiwel, “Governmentality and Violence: Agamben, Biopolitics and the Camp,” unpublished paper delivered at the Italian Effect Conference, Sydney University, October 2004.

Foucault, “Governmentality,” p102.
also vegetative existence and relation, physiology and ethics, medicine and politics, and life and death continuously pass through each other.”\textsuperscript{101} The Muselmann appears as the extreme figure of contemporary biopolitics, as a life that has been reduced to that point at which it appears to reach an absolute limit: to be pushed further would be to cross into death. This is also, we may observe, a life whose soul has been grasped, and reduced to the barest state of unitary biological functioning; where the \textit{bios} of life has been indefinitely captured and is worn down.

It is also possible to consider the bare life in the context of non-human life. This line of thinking is certainly not incompatible with Agamben’s thinking on bare life,\textsuperscript{102} something that is to a certain extent confirmed by recent work that suggests that biopolitics itself relates to the task of determining the threshold between the human and the animal.\textsuperscript{103} The concept of bare life is applicable to animal life, particularly in the case of the billions of animal life forms held in factory farms, as well as those which are subject to scientific experimentation. The life of particular non-humans, such as that of battery hens, involves the careful management of the life of the hen, where a balance is struck between achieving maximal profit through the imposition of the most minimal conditions for life: “on a sloping wire floor (sloping so the eggs roll down, wire so the dung drops through) the birds live for a year or 18 months while artificial lighting and temperature conditions combine with drugs in their food to squeeze the maximum number of eggs out of them.”\textsuperscript{104} These intensive practices are mirrored for young cows raised for veal production: consider the following passage from Peter Singer’s \textit{Animal Liberation}:

> Without any iron at all the calves would drop dead. With a normal intake their flesh will not fetch as much per pound. So a balance is struck which keeps the flesh pale and the calves — or most of them — on their feet long enough for them to reach their market weight.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{102} See Wadiwel, “Cows and Sovereignty.”
\textsuperscript{105} P. Singer, \textit{Animal Liberation: Towards an End to Man’s Inhumanity to Animal}, (Thorsons
The short life of the veal calf is one that is determined strictly within the coordinates of domination. Calculations made around nutritional and fluid intake, lighting levels, stall size and flooring are directed towards the maximisation of market profit from the production of the correctly coloured and textured flesh of the animal. But the priority of the life of the veal calf, no matter how short or painful, is apparent in this process. The life of the calf, maintained in a bare, weak state, is maintained scrupulously to prevent a premature death; a death that threatens the profitability of that life for the livestock complex. Thus a “balance” is struck, where life is held at a point that borders upon death itself.

The horror of such a life is only imaginable when one considers the human equivalents of such shrewd and calculating management of life, which of course can be found most clearly in the camp. It is therefore not without significance that Isaac Bashevis Singer states that in “relation to them [animals], all people are Nazis: for the animals it is an eternal Treblinka.”

In this sense extreme biopolitical violence finds itself situated as comfortably within the slaughterhouse as in the concentration camp.

Do we suggest therefore that there is some inherent relationship between bare life production, including the extreme figures of bare life – the Muselmänner, veal calves – and the field of force effects – that is, frictional power – that enable its production? Certainly it would be incorrect to say that force always aims to produce a threshold between life and death. But, in so far as frictional power seeks to organise and constrain the potentiality of living entities, it may be regarded as inseparable from the project of bare life production. The whip demonstrates the fundamental aim of force – to command production through the strategic and often detailed constraint of entities to their core aspects of functioning. Force does not ask how we can creatively achieve a reciprocal and mediated outcome, but seeks to control precisely the movements of entities within a relational field in order to direct outcomes. Force constrains the functioning life; it is incapable of enabling life to occupy its own trajectory. It is only

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sustained reciprocal exchanges of facilitation that are capable of enabling life beyond a bare existence: it is these relationships to which I shall turn in the next Chapter.

We are now also in a position to more precisely imagine the kind of violence specified within Foucault’s phrase “disallow to the point of death.” Sovereign power can be characterised, not merely by its traditional power to condemn to death (a power which is fading from view, although not extinguished), or by its power to make life flourish (to “make live”), but also by a power to capture and subject life to a governed violence. In this violence the sovereign reveals a commitment to a life whose time is measured by pain. Whilst governed violence always holds death as the limit of its power (a limit, both in the sense that this is the ultimate power of sovereignty over life, and in the sense that the sovereign’s power over that life literally exhausts itself after the death of its subject), pain is the medium through which violence exerts itself as power up until the point of death. If the symbol of the traditional sovereign was the sword (as the symbol of death), and if the contemporary sovereign may be characterised by a hand outstretched offering bread (a symbol of life), then sovereignty today can be fully rendered through the image of a figure clasping bread in one hand, a sword stowed in a scabbard at its side, and raised above the shoulder, a bloody whip. For the whip serves as a symbol of measured violence, a frictional instrument which maintains life in a reduced form, and increases the possibilities for domination over that life; a violence which painfully “unmakes” the world of its subject, and produces life in a bare state. The whip — the symbol of slavery — remains a distinct instrument within the arsenal of the sovereign, as it neither seeks strictly to end life through violence, or foster it through care, but to miraculously do both.
Will the machinic model of our erotics prevail among us as long as the ecological, demographic, political, and economic conditions of our existence are those of disciplinary biopolitics? Will an electromagnetic model of our erotics prevail in our advancing post-industrial revolution, driven with electrical and nuclear energy, under electronic, self-regulating surveillance, programmed cybernetically? Might our own erotics elaborate something like a perception of our orgasmic bodies as conduits of fluids?

Alphonso Lingis, Foreign Bodies.

4. Erotics, Facilitation and Consent

We have so far examined frictional and lubricative power, and discussed measured violence, a pure force that I have argued sits at the heart of frictional power. This leaves us to analyse the corresponding heart of lubricative power, the facilitative reciprocity that may be located in erotic relations.

There exists a sizeable distance between erotic exchange and relations of violence. It is true that both erotic act and the act of violence often involve an inter-subjective bodily relation, and that both acts frequently, although not necessarily, involve touch. But the erotic touch differs from the touch of violence in so far as the former occurs within a space of agreement. The erotic is characterised by a pure facilitation, a space which is noticeably uncluttered by gestures of coercion and force. Indeed the erotic gesture by necessity cannot arrive with force: the erotic act is folded and contained by lubricity; it is received as a gift that may be cherished or, alternatively, refused if undesired.

The conceptual difference between the erotic and the violent has some connection to how we understand consent. Whilst one may consent to the erotic relation with the other, one cannot consent to violence, since violation, by its nature, is a one-way relation of non-agreement. This view of consent is identical to that forwarded by Catherine MacKinnon, embodied in her principle that “Force is present because consent is absent.” This simple statement provides a guideline for the separation of...

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violence from non-violence, a principle maintained throughout this work as a whole. But, where this thesis differs from the theoretical stance offered by MacKinnon is precisely in the extension of this guiding principle and its relation to the nature of consent. As shall be discussed in relation to erotic sadomasochism (S/M), violence is recognisable, not by the form of the act, but by the absence of the contextual, facilitative acts which constitute consent. It is these gestures and assemblies of facilitation that enable one to consent to be flogged, for example, and find this act pleasurable, despite the fact that, in another context, this same act could only be understood as constituting an act of violence.

There are some further guiding theoretical principles that influence the direction this Chapter takes in relation to the erotic. We shall continue to explore the machine of power; examine how this impacts upon interpersonal relations of power; and, how the interpersonal in turn impacts upon large-scale relations. The account that follows draws from Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s conception of “desiring machines” as expounded in Anti-Oedipus4. Deleuze and Guattari’s model involves the de-segmentation of the self into partial functioning objects which couple with other organs, bodies and objects in the world. In traditional psychoanalytic accounts the unconscious is constructed as a set of drives which produces a relation of attachment between the self and one’s parental figures, expressed by Deleuze and Guattari as the “Oedipal triangle.”5 Deleuze and Guattari offer an alternative explanation for the unconscious, by suggesting that it is an open, dynamic and expansive energy that continually moves towards the formation of new productive couplings in the world. Thus, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the relations which are formed between the self, objects and organs need not relate to a symbolic and repressed libidinal attachment to the mother or the father, but a creative assembly of a machinic relation in the world:

The satisfaction the handyman experiences when he plugs something into an electrical socket or diverts a stream of water can scarcely be explained in terms of “playing mommy and daddy,” or by the pleasure of violating a taboo.

5 Ibid., pp51-137.
The rule of continually producing production, of grafting producing onto the product, is a characteristic of desiring machines or of primary production: the production of production\textsuperscript{6}.

\textit{Anti-Oedipus} was an important work because it provided an alternative way to approach analysis that did not carry with it an overdetermination of familial relationships in the formation of self, since, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, the immense social symbolic value that is placed upon the figures within the Oedipal triangle inevitably underpins the logic of social repression.\textsuperscript{7}

This work will not provide a critique of the usefulness of this model for a psychoanalytic conception of the self. Rather I utilise the machinic schema advanced by Deleuze and Guattari to understand the micro-political relations of physical bodies in the world. This approach is productive for a number of reasons. \textit{Firstly}, it gives a sense to the fact that the erotic scene is an \textit{active} creation of its participants. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that production involves the continuous arrangement of “desiring machines,” that is assemblies of objects and parts coupled together:

…every machine is a machine of a machine. The machine produces an interruption of the flow only insofar as it is connected to another machine that supposedly produces this flow. And doubtless this second machine in turn is really an interruption or break, too. But is such only in relationship to a third machine that is ideally – that is to say, relatively – produces a continuous, infinite flux: for example, the anus-machine and the intestine-machine, the intestine-machine and the stomach-machine, the stomach-machine and the mouth machine, the mouth machine and the flow of milk of a herd of dairy cattle (“and then…and then…and then…”). In a word, every machine functions as a break in the flow in relation to the machine in which it is connected, but at the

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., p7.
\textsuperscript{7} Deleuze and Guattari state “the family has become the locus of retention and resonance of all the social determinations,” ibid., p 269. The emphasis of power upon the family generates forms of oppression that centre along lines of gender and sexuality: “We have not finished chanting the litany of ignorances of the unconscious; it knows nothing of castration or Oedipus, just as it knows nothing of parents, gods, the law, lack. The Women’s Liberation movements are correct in saying: We are not castrated, so you get fucked,” see p61.
same time is also a flow itself, or the production of a flow, in relation to the machine connected to it. This is the law of the production of production.\textsuperscript{8}

Bit components are constantly remoulded and redeployed to create different macro-machines that follow lines of desire and generate pleasure. Erotic encounters may be described in a similar fashion. Bodies are touched and re-touched, pressures and positions are renegotiated, and intensities, rates and flows are varied. In each moment, components within the erotic assemblage are altered, withdrawn, re-configured and reinserted, as if these were parts of a computer that were being upgraded, ingredients added to bubbling stew, or parts being bolted onto motors.

\textit{Secondly}, it makes it possible to consider a range of other components as part of the erotic assemblage. These can include objects that physically interact with bodies at play (a dildo, a carrot, a whip, a bed) and other incidental objects and events that make an erotic scene (wallpaper, a smooth Marvin Gaye record, a thunder storm). The erotic relation, like any other relation, is contextual: it is a theatre of actors, supporting actors, props, dialogue and scenery.

\textit{Thirdly}, this model is capable of shifting discussion of the erotic away from the traditional concerns (for example, the penis) and oppositions (for example, male/female) that dominate many analyses of sexual relations, particularly those emanating from psychoanalytic accounts of desire and eroticism. This account requires a fresh take on the body and its relation to other bodies in the world.\textsuperscript{9}

The machinic connections described by Deleuze and Guattari may be developed further by consideration of “Actor Network” accounts of power.\textsuperscript{10} These accounts

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., p36.
\textsuperscript{9} As Elizabeth Grosz indicates, the potential of Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of “desiring machines” and “assemblies” may be the fact that it is distanced from more traditional discourses: “[Deleuze and Guattari’s] notion of the body as a discontinuous, nontotalizable series of processes, organs, flows, energies, corporeal substances, and incorporeal events, speeds and durations, may be of great value to feminists attempting to reconceive bodies outside of the binary oppositions imposed on the body by the mind/body, nature/culture, subject/object and interior/exterior oppositions.” See E. Grosz, \textit{Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism}, (Allen & Unwin, Australia, 1994), p164.

emphasise the need to analyse production not simply by focusing upon the final product, but by examining the involvement of various entities and forces upon the trajectory of production, including those non-human actors such as technologies, discourses and contingencies.

Latour argues that the interaction of humans and non-humans in networks or collectives may be described organisationally as a system of “black boxes.” Complex organisations are by and large anonymous in their operation: collections of entities usually do not reveal themselves until the moment in which they break down, when the “black box” must be opened: “Consider how many black boxes there are in the room. Open the black boxes, examine the assemblies inside. Each of the parts inside the black box is itself a black box full of parts.” This approach to the interaction of various entities is similar to that of Deleuze and Guattari in that both accounts emphasise the relative complexity of socially productive assemblies, at any given level of analysis. Where Latour differs from Deleuze and Guattari is in the emphasis of a constitutive role for non-human actors within socio-technical networks. Latour argues that non-human delegates exercise agency within a network by “standing in” for human actors: for example, Latour suggests that the speed hump, or “sleeping policeman,” is a non-human entity which quite literally acts as a delegate for a real policeman to slow traffic. These “technical delegates” have become irreversibly imbricated within the productions of the social field: “Humans, for millions of years, have extended their social relations to actants with which, with whom, they have swapped many properties, and with which, with whom, they form collectives.” The body may be conceptualised in this sense as a network itself, one that involves a complex interplay of flesh and nerves, an assemblage that the mind only imagines itself as commanding. The importance of such an approach will become apparent in the discussion of the sphincter below.

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11 Latour, Pandora’s Hope, p183-5.
12 Ibid., p185.
13 Ibid., p189.
14 Ibid., p188.
15 Ibid., p198.
Further, such an approach enables an analysis of actors, not as they are in themselves, but as agents within a contextual sphere. Zoë Sofia argues that the entity may be understood as a gathering point of different forces; similarly, the actor also emerges within a context of an environment or network.\textsuperscript{16} In this sense, actors “are to be understood in their specificity, characterised not in terms of the entity’s peculiar properties examined in isolation, but rather as spatially and temporally contingent manifestations that are part of a whole environment, field or network.”\textsuperscript{17} This is important in relation to an analysis of the erotic that is attentive to contextual relations of power, rather than the apparent significance attached to the form of the act.

Although I am sympathetic to Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of the “desiring machine” and the “assemblage,” it is necessary to distinguish between Deleuze’s understanding of \textit{pleasure} and that I use in this work. Whilst it is clear that desire, as an open-ended and creative drive, is important for Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical framework, their concept of pleasure appears to be less useful for this framework. Deleuze in particular views pleasure antagonistically as a “\textit{reterritorialisation}” – a looking backwards and finding one’s self – which is antithetical to the project of desire that he conceives of as purely creative and fundamentally involved in production.\textsuperscript{18} This tendency is present in Deleuze’s analysis of masochism\textsuperscript{19} where Deleuze draws a distinction between the masochistic desire and the arrival of pleasure:

The masochist waits for pleasure as something that is bound to be late, and expects pain as the condition that will finally ensure (both physically and morally) the advent of pleasure. He therefore postpones pleasure in the expectation of pain which will make gratification possible. The anxiety of the masochist divides therefore into an indefinite awaiting of pleasure and intense expectation of pain.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, p190.
For Deleuze pleasure is conceived of as an endpoint or goal. The masochist endures pain because within it there is held the promise of pleasure. Such a view of pleasure appears to be centred around the orgasm: that moment when pleasure that is waited for arrives. This is a view of pleasure that does not recognise the possibility of a pleasure found in erotic practices in themselves; rather erotic practice is a process towards that “final” pleasure.

Patricia MacCormack, in her doctoral thesis “Pleasure, Perversion and Death: Three Lines of Flight for the Viewing Body,” offers an interesting critique of this Deleuzian view of pleasure. MacCormack suggests that pleasure, far from being a conservative reaction aimed at re-finding the self, involves instead a radical displacement of the self, “even when a repetition of feeling is aimed for.”

MacCormack observes: “Pleasure is deterritorialising for me because it is a change in the state of being, or a forcing into something different from the moment before.” She further insists: “I am adamant pleasure forces an individualisation of moments rather than an establishment of a recognisable place within the strata.” This makes sense on an intuitive level: erotic pleasure in particular can be delightfully disorientating, and in some senses appear to disassemble the body in perverse ways. This will become apparent in the discussion of erotic fisting below, since the pleasure of this erotic practice rests upon a certain “deterritorialisation.” MacCormack is critical of many theories of pleasure, Deleuze’s included, which view pleasure as something of a “solid” object. The excerpt from Deleuze’s introduction to Venus in Furs above demonstrates this: Deleuze conceives of pleasure as a goal or trophy which is achieved after the production of couplings by desire. MacCormack suggests instead that pleasure should be conceived of as more fluid in nature:

Pleasure’s slippery definition, its very slipperiness, its fluidity (rather than the solid object science fantasises it to be) is the matrix of the joy it causes. Pleasure is slippery because it defies singular or objective definition, it is

22 Ibid.
inarticulate-able, defying language and it defies bodily sanctioning, in that all bodies may experience pleasure despite their cultural status or order. 23

Again this idea appears intuitive. Pleasure is experienced as a flood or as a steady stream, as an aching dribble or a drought, but rarely as a clearly bound, solid, or graspable package. For example MacCormack uses an example of the pleasure one can take in digging a hole, where pleasure flows through the practice in a way that is subtle, undefined and often bears no relation to the pain involved with the physical demands of the task. Other activities relate to pleasure in a similar fashion. Swimming, for example may be pleasurable, although the practice itself can be dully painful. The pleasure of swimming is ongoing: a combination of fluids running over the skin, the feeling of stretching out and using one’s body physically, even the slow creeping fatigue of lap swimming may be experienced pleurally. 

Pleasure is a stream that engorges practices.

The connection between pain and pleasure is further expanded in the psychoanalytic work of Leo Bersani, who explores what he describes as the essentially masochistic pleasures of the sexual relation. Bersani, in The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis & Art, argues that sexuality arises out of a schism between two kinds of pleasure.24 Drawing on Freud’s Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality25 he elaborates upon a distinction between “fore-pleasure,” which results from stimulation of an erotogenic zone, and “end pleasure” which is related to the “discharge of the sexual substances.” What Bersani highlights is the strange dynamic between these two pleasures, particularly in light of the goal of “end-pleasure” that it appears, is a pleasure in abruptly ending the excitation of “fore pleasure.” This provides “end-pleasure” with the somewhat ambiguous goal of pleasurably concluding sensations that were already pleasurable:

… in end-pleasure there can be strictly speaking, no relation at all between satisfaction and excitation since that form of pleasure consists in the extinction

23 Ibid., p74
of excitement. And this leads us to ask if the end of sex, the goal of sex, could also be its end, its disappearance.  

Ultimately end-pleasure seeks to radically cease the increase of a tension that threatens to derail or, in Bersani’s term “shatter”, the subject. This rising tension initially emerges within the organism as unpleasurable, but may simultaneously be felt as that which is pleasurable (hence Freud’s somewhat exasperated and “pained” response to this problem: that everything “relating to the problem of pleasure and unpleasure touches upon one of the sorest spots of present-day psychology”). This problem is further complicated by the strategy engaged in by the organism to remove this unpleasurable pleasure, by substitution of another potentially unpleasurable tension:

Freud admitted to finding it “somewhat strange” that in order to remove one stimulus, it seems necessary to adduce a second one at the same spot. How are we to understand this exceptional way of dealing with stimuli, as well as the wish to repeat and even intensify an unpleasurable tension? What would it mean to say that in sexuality, pleasure is somehow distinct from satisfaction, perhaps identical to a kind of pain.

Thus Bersani suggests that sexuality represents a struggle with the self that involves contradictory attempts to find pleasure in unpleasure, a satisfaction in the postponement of satisfaction, and the intensification of the pleasurable unpleasure of waiting for pleasure. Bersani concludes that “sexuality – at least in the mode in which it is constituted – could be thought of as a tautology for masochism,” since sexual pleasure refers in actuality to a play of painful intensities which are pleasurably endured. We thus find that sexuality aims to rupture the unity of the self: in Bersani’s words sexuality “would be that which is intolerable to the structured self…The mystery of sexuality is that we seek not only to get rid of this shattering tension, but also to repeat, even to increase it.”

This offers an interesting account of pleasure

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29 Ibid., p39.
30 Ibid., p38
(and by extension, that of masochism), in so far as pleasure is not only found in the
orgasmic cessation of sexual tension, but in the prolonging of this very tension as a
form of pleasure itself.

Yet what is more interesting here, is the relation of sexual practices to pleasure;
practices, which we have no reason to assume, are necessarily pleasurable in and of
themselves. The “mystery of sexuality” is located in the emergence of practices which
would otherwise be considered uncomfortable, painful, unpleasurable, and violent, as
practices which in a context of consensuality, are rendered pleasurable. In this sense,
the erotic aims at the production of a pleasurable friction. Potentially painful acts,
such as erotic fisting or flogging, are rendered pleasurable through a facilitative
transformation. Lubricative power describes the facilitative deployments by which a
reciprocal, non-forceful, production may be achieved.

The relationship Foucault posits between pleasure and power also provides some
background to understanding erotic facilitation, and its role within lubricative power.
For Foucault, as we have seen, power is always characterised by a relational struggle,
involving tactics, pursuit and resistance. The situationality of power is also its
productive element. Not only do lines of contestation produce the constraining forces
which limit movement, they also almost invariably produce avenues for resistance.
For example, the medical categorisation of homosexuality, whilst perhaps functioning
in some senses as a strategy to identify and repress homosexual relations, also formed
the basis for its legitimation. Foucault observes “in the gay movement the medical
definition of homosexuality was a very important tool against the oppression of
homosexuality in the last part of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth
century. This medicalization, which was a means of oppression, has always been a
means of resistance as well – since people could say, "If we are sick, then why do you
condemn us, why do you despise us?" And so on.”

Power does not only offer avenues for resistance, but through that process opens new
possibilities for pleasure. Foucault noted for example that S&M was one form of

31 M. Foucault, “Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity,” an interview with B. Gallagher & A. Wilson
sexual experimentation in which resistance to dominant forms of sexuality was capable of creatively exploring forms of pleasure that had not previously been conceived. In particular, some of these new practices were capable of shifting the focus of pleasure away from the sexual organs through the eroticization of parts of the body other than the genitalia: “inventing new possibilities of pleasure with strange parts of...[the]...body.” The inventiveness which springs from resistance to norm in many ways touches upon the distinctly ethical stance of Foucault’s later writing. In Foucault’s words “what we must work on, it seems to me, is not so much to liberate our pleasures but to make ourselves infinitely more susceptible to pleasure.” It is this potential creativity that I describe as distinctly lubricative, that is the facilitative process by which the impossible is made possible and the potentially painful is made pleasurable.

**Fisting**

Given the capacity of the lubricant to ease the tangential movements of bodies, it is no surprise that many sexual practices involve the deployment of lubricative mediums. These fluids are often auto-manufactured by the erotic bodies, gently flowing from the passages and ducts of bodies at play. Lubricants are also deployed consciously by erotic participants in the form of manufactured products external to the erotic body (such as jellies or oils) that either aim to lubricate areas where there is no “natural” lubricant, or to supplement an existing supply of lubricative fluids. There is a temptation to think of the lubricative fluid as facilitating penetrative sexual practices, although there is no reason for this to necessarily be considered as the primary site for lubricated movement. Wherever the sexual relation involves touch, then the lubricant is an agent that renders possible the pleasurable embrace, by altering the frictional passage of sensitive skins over each other. The lubricant makes possible what would otherwise be impossible. The merest hint of grease in a hinge, for example, may mean the difference between the ability of a door to open, or in the absence of such lubrication, the failure of that same door to budge. In this sense, in the physical world

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33 Ibid., p165.
the lubricant has a transformative capacity, an ability to make work what would otherwise fail to work.

The capacity of the lubricant to make possible what would be seemingly impossible is most graphically portrayed in erotic situations that stretch and contort the body beyond imagined physical boundaries. The erotic practice of fisting (or “fist-fucking”) is an example of such an art. Fisting involves the insertion of a hand (or hands) / forearm, into a vaginal or anal orifice. The practice is by nature gentle and despite the apparent implications of the name it is described as “a downright tender sexual activity that requires great patience and trust on the part of its practitioners.” The patient and gentle introduction of the hand into the orifice is accompanied by the use of fluid lubricants to ease the passage of fingers, knuckles and wrists, sliding between the hand and flesh to “prevent tearing of skin and abrasion.” Lubricants are essential to making this practice physically possible, and practitioners of fisting must make use of large quantities of fluid lubricant in order to ease the passage of the hand. (The “Catacombs,” a San Francisco sex club operating during the late seventies and early eighties, was famed for the large pots of lubricant that hung from the ceiling, adjacent to every sling). Lubricant is liberally applied as it is splashed into the orifice before the hand is inserted, and is continually reapplied during the unfolding of the erotic act.

The lubricant prevents the painful wearing away of interacting surfaces in motion and creates the conditions by which sliding becomes possible. Movements of bodies and components, which otherwise would scrape painfully against each other, bruise or tear flesh, may be rendered pleasurable, and prolonged by the presence of the lubricative fluid. Thus, the fluid lubricant has a role to play in both facilitating the possibility of inserting the whole hand into the orifice, and facilitating the possibility that this practice is pleasurable.

Yet the art of fisting is more than a science of good lubrication. Fisting involves an elaborate web of communication strategies and the often painstaking process of

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“coaxing” the body into a position of comfort where this practice may become possible. Gayle Rubin notes with reference to anal fisting, this “is an art that involves seducing one of the jumpiest and tightest muscles in the body.”³⁸ The erotic space has to be carefully constructed by the participants to facilitate this “seduction:” a process that may require a great deal of preparation, and patience. One of Gary Dowsett’s interviewees in his study, Practicing Desire, reported that his initiation into fisting took four days: “It was done slowly, it was done properly.”³⁹ These slow, patient practices which aim to coax and render the body “susceptible to pleasure” (*pace* Foucault), necessarily involve a range of facilitative gestures and assemblies, including, but not exclusively so, fluid lubricants.

There are a number of facilitative gestures, devices or assemblies, which could be described as conceptually lubricative, as opposed to merely physically lubricative. For example, the use of amyl nitrate by some fisting practitioners, as a sexual aid to loosen muscles, is facilitative in its ability to ease the passage of objects moving in relation to one another. The use of props and devices, such a slings, music, uniforms etc, may also facilitate the enactment of the erotic practice. I would also include here a whole range of physical and non-physical markers that construct the erotic scene and facilitate the erotic relation, through the development of a facilitative context surrounding the erotic participants.⁴⁰ One fistee notes that behind the tough black leather facade of the fister, and amidst hard slaps and rough talk, that he only needs to look into his lover’s warm eyes for reassurance: “His eyes say “I want you to feel real good, you can trust me buddy. I want to love your soul where I can really grab onto it.”⁴¹ These loving eyes, and a range of other gestures and devices, transform a situation that would otherwise appear quite painfully impossible into an act of reciprocal pleasure.

The practice of fisting emphasises not so much a dialogue between whole erotic bodies, but a connection and synergy between individual body organs. Lines of

communication need to proliferate between coupled body parts. The sphincter (anal, or the ring muscles around the entry to the vagina) must be relaxed by the hand so that they are wide open enough to allow passage. Pat Califia, in her collection of erotic stories *Macho Sluts*, describes this as if one were sending messages to the sphincter in some form of muscle dialect:

Little messages ran up those busy, delicately searching fingers, through forearm and bicep, to the shoulder, jogging it, keeping up a minute series of rhythmic movements designed to coax the arsehole, the mouth of the great snake, to unlock its jaws and swallow its meal, Kay’s folded over, pointed, pared down, and slicked up hand.\(^{42}\)

The “slicked up” hand that couples with it speaks to the bounded muscular surrounds of the orifice: their production rests upon the dialogue that ensues.

The practice of fisting challenges the ways in which the body parts such as the sphincter, usually treated as a somewhat inane or superfluous participant in the erotic exchange, is considered. The sphincter is a headstrong muscle, not the closure to a passive receptacle, but the entrance to a dynamic, active space. Simon-Astley Schofield opens the way for such a reconceptualisation in the paper “Newly Desiring and Desired: Queer Man-Fisting Women” through an analysis of the ambiguous figures of “the man penetrating woman and the woman penetrated man.”\(^{43}\) Here Schofield re-reads of the activity of the male anal sphincter, contesting Germaine Greer’s suggestion that for gay and queer [male] cultures the rectum is popular because it is a “tight and narrow” space, offering “more character” than a vagina. Schofield suggests an alternative explanation:

For an increasing group of queer men and women it seems, contra Greer, that the most desirable male anus stretches as loose and wide as a birthing vagina and that the most desired phallus is the female fist. Greer also declares that many people wrongly believe that “it is the rectum not the vagina that leads to

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the heart of a person, male or female”. However, if the (male) rectum leads to the heart of a queer man, it is understood in gay slang as ‘backpussy’ or ‘boypussy’ through vaginal metaphors.44

Schofield here creates the space for a reconsideration of the male anal sphincter as a “non-genital sexual” organ.45 By implication we may extend this analysis, and reconsider as active those spaces – anal, vaginal, oral, both male or female – which are traditionally represented as passive, inert, as mere “receptacles.”

I would like to broaden our understanding of the sphincter from Schofield’s contemplation of the male anus, to a more generic understanding of “sphincters” as the sensitive, sensual, pleasured and pleasing, muscular openings to the body. These organs actively negotiate the erotic, and may be physically and conceptually represented as a flowing, arousing, slippery space, both renowned as “tight and narrow” and “loose and wide.” These organs are agents of erotic production, they are “demanding” and actively negotiate the outcome of erotic encounters. In this sense I would agree with the thesis, as advanced by Actor Network theorists, that the non-human entity (or in the case of the sphincter, an entity detached from strict voluntary control) may exert agency, shaping human actions with as much zeal as the human users claim to control the movements of the objects at their “command.” Erotic production involves a negotiation between various entities which inevitably configures the actions / movements of bit-parts of assemblies in relation to each other. Like the traffic signal, which demands, within a particular social and juridical context, the attention of the motor vehicle operator, the sphincter requests its own forms of action, its own dialogue. Bodies and organs must be moved in relation to it: operators must respond to its demands (trim finger nails, exercise care and stealth), whilst recipients must resist and dislocate. In this sense, like many non-human entities, the pleasurably fisted sphincter may be said to command the actions of its human operators.46

44 Ibid., p4
45 Ibid.
Thus Califia is not engaging in a metaphoric displacement when she says that Kay is “coaxing the asshole”: it is the sphincter which is being talked to, a communication which occurs intimately with the sphincteral muscle, away from the seemingly inquisitive and authoritarian gaze of the mind. Indeed, the act of fisting is pleasurable precisely because the practice defies the belief of the brain: that is, in some ways, the success of fisting is only guaranteed by the successful disconnection of the mind from the relay between the fist and the anal sphincter. The women at work on Roxanne, in Califia’s short story, have to fight to maintain the disconnection between the mind and the body, coaxing and talking to the fisted body, distracting her mind from the buzzing hum of chatter between the sphincter and the hand. This process, which includes the use of amyl nitrate as a coaxing tool, aim to temporarily sever the link between the mind and the muscle:

Under the magical assault of the poppers, she felt no need to lift her littlest finger. Since she couldn’t act, she could yield herself totally, pinned to the sling by her internal sensations. She need not cooperate or assist the implacable beings manipulating her flesh.

EZ was laughing at her. “Wild isn’t it?” she said. “What d’you think we could do if we were all too fucking stoned to worry?”

The idea seemed to be a profound insight, and she let the anxious part of her mind play with it like a difficult knot. She wanted desperately not to think, not to fight. She was frantic to succeed. 47

The fact that it is the sphincter that is coaxed, and not necessarily its owner, offers a challenge both to a contemporary conception of the body, and to the philosophical understanding of the meaning of consent. The challenge this poses to the body is levelled at the belief that it is the brain that is the control centre of the body. It is not the rational mind that guides the action of the body, but it is the flesh, bones, muscle and organs, within which the mind is encased, that also have a stake in organising movement. This does not mean that the mind is distinct from the body, rather that the

47 Califia, Macho Sluts, p133
actions of the “self” involve a collaboration of an expanse of autonomous and semi-autonomous zones that cross mind and body. Our actions are thus a process of mobilising, coordinating and engaging sensation, cognition, flesh, nerves, and sinew.

This account emphasises a need to think about the erotic, not as the meeting of minds attached to potentially sensual bodies, but as the active deployment of components – organs, flesh, narratives, props etc – within the context of a scene. All these components may be regarded as possessing “agency” in so far as they exert influence upon the progress and outcome of the erotic practice. We are situated amidst sensual possibility, and it is through our negotiations with the surrounds of our fleshy locales that we can occasionally yield pleasure. In this sense erotic (and other) production is necessarily an outcome of collective processes, composed of hybrid assemblies of sentient tissue and technologies caught within a particular frame or context.

The sphincter embodies the lubricative principle, since by its dilations and its contractions it invites creative possibility. The sphincter emulates the operation of a fluid lubricant, both easing the dynamics of those objects with which it moves in touch relations with, and opening the possibility of that which would not otherwise be possible. The dilations of the sphincter, in concert with the operation of other facilitative gestures and assemblies, make possible and pleasurable an act that would otherwise only be painful and / or violent. It is through modulation of the walls of the sphincter that the sensations of pleasure and pain are produced. If the lubricative / friction device is that mechanism which regulates the production of sensation, then the sphincter is the perfect, semi-autonomous, flexible embodiment of this technology: since the sphincter may both intensify friction to such a degree that the passage becomes dry, hard and bloody; or alternatively, ease itself to such a degree that it might be possible to accommodate a fist. Or even two. Pleasure and pain are interspersed throughout the various frictional states of the sphincter, intensifying at various points, joining hands at other moments, differing from body to body, adapting to new conditions at every new moment.

An experience of such a violence is described in J. Dowdeswell, *Women on Rape: Firsthand Feelings, Attitudes and Experiences from the Women Involved, Backed up by the Facts*, (Thorsons Publishing Group, Wellingborough, 1988), p35.
Traditional images of heterosexual eroticism have defined gender in terms of the perceived positioning and action of genitals. The penis is defined as active, as the penetrator, as deriving pleasure through its use in this mode. The vagina has been defined as the opposite: as a passive receptacle for the penetrating male organ (a “lodging” space⁴⁹), and female pleasure has accordingly been cast around this penetrative act. Yet there is no imperative for the relations of penetrated / penetrator to be cast into the seemingly auto-categories of passive / active; nor any reason to assume that, as Bersani appears to suggest, that to “be penetrated is to abdicate power.”⁵⁰ On the contrary, it is possible to render the penetrated / penetrator scenario outside of the confines of this economy. Catherine Walby suggests, for example, that heterosexual penetrative sex “need not be fantasized, either by feminist theory or by sexual partners, as powerful male penetration of soft womanly interior space, but rather as the vagina’s embrace or grasp of the penis…The penis does not act the phallus in sex unless it is lived by one or both partners as the phallus. If mutual erotic fantasy involved the penis’ surrender or engulfment, then this counts also as a description.”⁵¹

Such re-designations of the body are useful because they challenge a traditional assumption that to be penetrated means to surrender to domination or passivity. For surely, to abdicate power is to be overcome by violence, since powerlessness indicates the failure of consent (again, to evoke MacKinnon’s principle: “Force is present where consent is absent”). Dowsett notes, in his study of gay male sex practices, that a number of men did not “automatically collapse into the taken-for-granted analogue that penetrator / penetrated equals active / passive, or powerful / powerless” and that “to fuck” someone could often mean both penetrating and being penetrated.”⁵² For receiving from others or giving to the others both involve activity; neither need involve the negation of power.

⁴⁹ L. Irigaray, “This Sex Which is Not One” in This Sex Which is Not One, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1985).
The sphincter is oblivious to the active / passive, powerful / powerless categorisation. This is not to suggest that it is inherently resistant to domination, and by extension, the sphincter is not impervious to passivity. Rather, the conventional (and dominant) symbolic logic does not unilaterally define the meanings of the organs / body parts. The sphincter occupies a uncertain position within this logic. The sphincter may be open to penetration, but it is as unconvincing to suggest that it is a passive receptacle as it is to suggest that the function of the vagina is simply (in the words of Irigaray) “to offer lodging for the penis.”53 The sphincter gives as much as it takes. Pleasure is gained, not simply through lodgement, but through the micro-dynamics of the relation that occurs between the ring muscle and the objects that it seeks. Production is occurring on many levels, facilitated by the activity of the ring muscle: the local production of sensation, the renegotiation of the terms of operation of the lubricative device, the regulation of friction, the production of pleasure.54 Symbolically one may want to ask: What threat will the sphincter pose to our traditional logic?: the organ which is both hard and soft (like the penis), giving and taking, wilfully self motivated, the thinking muscle, both tight and narrow, and loose and wide, both [in] male and female?

Fisting as an erotic practice involves analysis of a broad range of strategies that are utilised prior to and during the passage of the hand into the orifice. As stated above, the use of a large quantity of fluid lubricant is one important strategic element in the negotiation of this practice. This fluid lubricant physically creates the conditions by which the hand may be eased into the passage, and in the process makes pleasurably possible what would otherwise be impossible. Equally as important, are a range of facilitative practices which are deployed at the same moment as the fluid lubricant; practices which share the same aims as that of the fluid lubricant: to ease passage and to make possible what was formerly impossible. Such facilitative practices exist a great distance from violence, and the measured violence that has so far been described

53 L. Irigaray, “This Sex Which is Not One,” in This Sex Which is Not One, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York), pp23-33, p23.
54 I would suggest that we could define the sphincteral zone an example of a “smart” space that is active and exerts agency within the erotic scene. Sofia argues that enveloping or containing systems are often overlooked as technologies, and that “holding” need not be regarded as a passive activity; rather as “a complex action” (see Sofia, “Container Technologies” p191). In this sense, the sphincter, as a stretchable, pleasurable container, may be regarded as an intelligent facilitative system, and the gateway to other containment technologies (as a link in a process of “supply”).
in this. The fist offered to a lover is, of necessity, a radically different fist from that which is offered without possibility of refusal in violence. Paul Virilio makes the following observation:

Speed is violence. The most obvious example is my fist. I have never weighed my fist, but it’s about four hundred grams. I can make this fist into the slightest caress. But if I project it at great speed, I can give you a bloody nose. You can easily see that it’s the distribution of mass in space that makes all the difference.\(^{55}\)

We may add that physical violence need not only be understood through the mass and velocity, but, through the absence of lubricant. For the lubricant may alter the frictional effects of the solid mass at speed, so much so that a fist may, when suitably greased, pass at a vigorous pace through the relaxed sphincter without injury to flesh.

Thus, we discover the potentially long road between the violent and the erotic is paved by facilitative practices, which have the capacity to create a transformative bridge between these two points. And as is demonstrated by the practice of fisting, such transformations have the capacity to radically alter the boundaries of the body and its relation to the erotic.\(^{56}\) Fisting is an example of how advanced facilitative practice can alter flesh, mind, sinew and the meaning of the erotic act itself. Indeed fisting is a contemporary product of advanced collaborative experimentation with the body, its limits and its pleasures. Dowsett comments that to “attain that skill [“being fisted”] is no simple matter of drive or instinct. Fisting is a very clear example of the progress of sexual practice and the transformation of desire and pleasure again through a social process.”\(^{57}\)


\(^{56}\) It is perhaps no surprise that this erotic practice should have also caught the attention of Foucault: “Physical practices like fist fucking…make of one’s body a place for the production of polymorphic pleasures, while simultaneously detaching it from the a valorization of the genitalia.” Foucault quoted in Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, pp266-7.

Erotic S/M and Violence

Fisting is not the only example of a lubricated transformation that has generated innovative new pleasures. Erotic S/M practices also demonstrate a creativeness that has shifted the potentiality of sexuality as it is conventionally understood. These erotic practices are in many ways more challenging to analyse, since they appear as acts of violence to those who are not familiar with their context.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there has been a great deal of confusion over the meaning of S/M practices. John Stoltenburg, for example, argues that erotic S/M practices are in essence valorised acts of violence: he describes “sadism” – in his words, the “causing of pain, suffering, or death [that] is experienced by the person who commits those acts as genitally stimulating and orgasmically gratifying” – as the “eroticization of violence”; and masochism – “a drive toward pain, abuse, degradation, and annihilation” – as the eroticization of powerlessness.”58 The perception that the S/M is equivalent to violence has resulted in legal challenges to consenting practitioners. For example, in a 1993 British criminal trial, Lord Templeman ruled that “sadomasochism is not only concerned with sex. Sado-masochism is also concerned with violence…Society is entitled and bound to protect itself against a cult of violence.”59

In a similar sense, MacKinnon argues that S/M replicates masculine power: “the relation dynamics of sadomasochism do not even negate the paradigm of male dominance, but conform precisely to it.”60 For Mackinnon, masculine power revolves around the “eroticization of dominance,” something which, for her, problematizes the of issue of consent:

The deeper problem is that women that are socialized to passive receptivity; may have or perceive no alternative to acquiescence; may prefer it to the escalated risk of injury and the humiliation of a lost fight; submit to survive.

58 J. Stoltenburg, “Sadomasochism: Eroticized Violence, Eroticized Powerlessness” in Against Sadomasochism: A Radical Feminist Analysis (Frog in the Well, San Franscisco, 1982), pp124-130, p126, (see also, Millet, The Politics of Cruelty, p115). Stoltenburg’s definition can be compared to Foucault’s own definition; “One can say that S&M is the eroticization of power, the eroticization of strategic relations,” in Foucault, “Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity,” p169.


60 MacKinnon, Toward Feminist Theory of the State, p142.
Also, force and desire are not mutually exclusive under male supremacy. So long as dominance is eroticized, they will never be. Some women eroticize dominance and submission; it beats being forced.\(^{61}\)

The perception, or as I argue here, the misperception that violence may be consented to, that true domination may be eroticized, involves the assumption of equivalence between the act of violence, and an act which only bears the external façade of violence. As will be argued below, an act emerges as violent not because of the guise of the act, but because of a failure to deploy facilitative gestures and assemblies into the context of the act.

Nevertheless, the apparent similarity of form between acts of S/M eroticism, and those of violence, presents a seemingly beguiling problem for an analysis of the consensual infliction of pain. In Chapter 3, it was suggested that the penal practice of flogging was an example of the exercise of a \textit{measured violence}: that is, a careful violence aimed at maintaining relationships of domination. The practice of erotic flogging is not dissimilar to flogging that occurred, and continues to occur, as a penal measure. \textit{The clear line which separates the two practices is that of consent}; yet the meaning of this consent, and its relation to pain, pleasure and violence are yet to be analysed.

The aim of penal flogging is to inflict a measured amount of pain onto the body. The penal flogging involves the infliction of measured strokes across the bodies of prisoners, utilising a whip. Erotic flogging may entail the use of a similar device, and involve strokes of measure that generate substantial pain; but this act also induces pleasure: while the aim of penal flogging is only to produce pain, the object of erotic flogging, is to create pleasure through the measuring out of pain.

Pain holds a different significance in the practices of erotic flogging and penal flogging. Penal flogging involves the articulation of authority through the infliction of pain. Penal flogging reduces the world of its recipient to pain. The measured violence of the flogging reduces the flogged to a bare or mere life, since it is an insidious care

\(^{61}\) Ibid., p177.
for life which maintains this life in the face of violence. The defining aspect of this pain is its inescapability: it cannot be refused and it does not admit pleasure. The power of frictional violence is undermined by any possibility of pleasure, and although the torturer may taunt his or her prisoner with the prospect that the torture may be pleasurable (“you are enjoying this,” or “women like it rough”), such tactics serve only to reinforce the inescapability of pain as the only sensation experienced by the tortured.

Erotic flogging differs markedly from this. As stated above, the erotic involves the deployment of objects, bodies, lubricants, etc in relation with each other. What characterises the role of pain is the fact that it is a component of the erotic assemblage that, in the presence of a range of other facilitative practices and assemblies, is capable of sustaining a flow of pleasure. Further, pain is a component of the erotic assemblage that we may choose not to accept, or play with in different ways. The pain of the erotic flogging itself is not pleasurable, but the resignification of the sensation of pain within the erotic assemblage may be experienced as intensely pleasurable and continuously so. In some respects, this is the same pleasure that accompanies many other potentially painful practices. For example, the pleasure of swimming, or of digging a hole, is related to the peculiar assembly of the body, the water, the soil, the tool, and the pain, which are all engorged by a stream of pleasure. The context in which the erotic act occurs, the particular assembly of components, provides the possibility for the advent of pleasure in a situation that would otherwise be experienced as only painful.

Again, the view of pleasure forwarded here requires some distance from that developed by Deleuze in relation to his analysis of masochism. Deleuze states that we should not mistake the masochist as “a strange being who finds pleasure in pain,” and that pain is the precondition to pleasure. Deleuze takes this strategy in order to distance pain conceptually from pleasure, thus forcing a cleavage between the frequent conjoining of sadism and masochism that occurs in traditional accounts (for example, that of Sigmund Freud or Kraft-Ebbing). Yet where Deleuze marks a

temporal distance between the advent of pain and that of pleasure, there is no reason to imagine that the painful act itself cannot be rendered pleasurable at the point of its creation. The erotic flogging, though perhaps more intensely painful than digging or swimming, has a similar structure, in that pleasure is gained, not only after the flogging is completed, but during the enactment of the practice, where each stroke of the whip, though producing a sting of pain, is attached to the feeling of pleasure. It is true that masochism involves a waiting. But the masochist does not have to wait for the advent of pleasure; pleasure is experienced in the pure act of waiting. Similarly, it is not correct to say the masochist experiences an essential pleasure in pain, for the masochist, like anyone, would experience displeasure in a painful violence (that is, in a situation where an undesired and painful event occurs). The masochist feels the pain of the whip, but what differentiates this pain from that of the tortured is the possibility of attaching pleasurable sensation to pain, something which is impossible in torture. What facilitates this possibility is the intervention of a range of devices that enable the transformation of a situation that would otherwise be only accessible as painful, and as violent: in other words, it is the transformative capacity of facilitative gestures and assemblies which enables even painful sensation to be encapsulated by intense pleasure.

The Gift and Facilitative Exchange

The inescapability of the pain of torture, and by contrast the fact that pain within the erotic sphere is not inescapable, provides a philosophical basis to assess the meaning of the act of violence. The violent act is inflicted; it cannot be “given” as one gives a “gift”. Alison Moore highlights this difference in her analysis of the practice of erotic S/M:

Sexual sadists enjoy giving pain to others, with emphasis on the word ‘gift;’

Why give something to someone who won’t appreciate it? Wouldn’t we all...
rather offer our gift of pain to someone who will cherish our wrathful generosity?\textsuperscript{64}

In this context it is worth contemplating what may be described as the phenomenology of the gift, and its relation to violence.

The gift is essentially opposed to violence. In his analysis of the act of gift giving,\textsuperscript{65} Derrida argues that the gift poses itself as “impossible,” since to give with authenticity requires the absolute removal of the gift from economic exchange.\textsuperscript{66} For example, one cannot give because of an indebtedness to others; nor can one give and gain credit by this act of giving. Similarly, when one receives the gift, it cannot be considered as grounds for an indebtedness to the giver, since it is a requirement of the gift that it appear to be surplus to economic exchange. In this sense, the gift demands a forgetting of its occurrence as an event, which collapses the gift into a state of nothingness:

…the gift not only must not be repaid but must not be kept in memory, retained as symbol of a sacrifice, as symbolic in general. For the symbol immediately engages one in restitution. To tell the truth, the gift must not even appear or signify, consciously or unconsciously, as gift for the donors, whether individual or collective subjects. From the moment the gift would appear as gift, as such, as what it is, in its phenomenon, its sense and its essence, it would be engaged in a symbolic, sacrificial, or economic structure that would annul the gift in the ritual circle of debt.\textsuperscript{67}

Derrida’s observation of the perplexing “impossibility” of the gift points to the stringent demand for the gift to appear as superfluous. The gift is not superfluous because it is essentially meaningless or trivial (although, as may be observed in


\textsuperscript{66} Derrida’s work on the gift is a response to the seminal account of Marcel Mauss, in which a connection was proposed between the gift and economic exchange. See M. Mauss, \textit{The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies}, (Routledge, London, 1997).

\textsuperscript{67} Derrida, \textit{Given Time: Counterfeit Money}, p23.
relation to Derrida, the demand placed upon the gift is that it approach a meaninglessness or nothingness\(^{68}\), rather the gift is superfluous because it lacks necessity; it is always additional rather than intrinsic to the general economy. The gift is in this sense always “too much.” In the words of Alphonso Lingis, the “term gift designates events, apparitions and things whose grandeur and graciousness remove them from practices of appropriation — from measurement, categorization, and seizure."\(^{69}\) This sense of superfluity with regard to the gift is reinforced by the daily expressions that the gift giver or the gift receiver make with regard to that which is given from one to the other. It is common, for example, for the gift receiver to say to the gift giver: “That [the gift] was not necessary”. And the gift giver will cordially respond: “It was nothing.”

It is this very lack of necessity which is significant for a discussion of the erotic and its relation to violence, since the erotic act is characterised by a lack of necessity or force: its failure to meet this condition collapses it into violence. It is possible to extend an understanding of the nature of the gift by consideration of its relation to violence. The gangster’s refrain, which has been popularised since Mario Puzo’s novel *The Godfather*, is the “offer that cannot be refused.”\(^{70}\) To make an offer to others which they cannot refuse is to transform the act of giving into the act of violence, since it is in reality *an act of coercion*. Above it was stated that the difference between the pain of the erotic flogging and that of the penal flogging was the inescapability of the latter: it is this same structure that constructs the relation between gift and violence. For when one receives the gift, it is precisely an offer that *can* be refused. This is reinforced once again by the day-to-day language of the gift that affirms the possibility of such a refusal. For example, when one receives the gift one may protest: “I cannot accept this.” And although one may feel obligated by the giver to receive the gift (“Please accept this…I insist”), this obligation maintains a conceptual distance between that which we *ought* to receive (and may even be said to

\(^{68}\) Note that although Derrida acknowledges that the gift has impossible conditions placed upon it, he argues that this does not mean that the gift is not possible. He states that “I never concluded there was no gift. I went on to say that if there is a gift, through this impossibility it must be the experience of this impossibility, and it should appear as impossible.” See “On the Gift: A Discussion Between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion,” in J. D. Caputo & M. J. Scanlon (eds.), *God, The Gift and Postmodernism*, (Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1999), pp54-78, p57.


have a responsibility to receive) and that which we have no option but to receive. The classical legend of the sacking of Troy serves as an example of the inescapability of the violent act: the moment when Greek soldiers poured out of the large wooden horse is representative of that point where the refusability of the gift is annulled and the act of giving transforms into coercion. In this situation it was not possible for the citizens of Troy to announce the refusal of the gift (“We could not possibly accept this”): the act of violence refuses negotiation over its receipt.

The gift provides a useful understanding of the erotic act, since it must be given without the compulsion of force and is received upon the proviso that it may be refused. It is a superfluous act, both because it is absolutely not necessary, and because it is at all times refusable. Of course, as Derrida emphasises, the pure gift remains, in many respects, an impossibility. Within the erotic this presents itself in situations where obligation, either to give or receive (to incur debt or expend credit) muddies an idealistic concept of giving. Nevertheless, the conceptual breach between violence and the gift is fortified by the inescapability that surrounds violence. Obligation only becomes violent force when one is given no other choice but to submit to the will of others, or, if the possibilities for a failure to accept the offer of the other lead only to harm. In a discussion of the relation of S/M to violence, Carol Truscott makes clear the connection between non-refusability and violence: “Violence is the epitome of non-consensuality, an act perpetrated by a predator on a victim. A rapist lurking in the bushes is not going to ask me if I want to be raped. A person bent on killing me is not going to ask whether I have any objection to dying at her or his hands.”

Facilitative gestures and assemblies create the conditions for existence of the erotic assembly; an assembly which would not be possible as pleasurable and erotic in the absence of the assemblies and gestures. This understanding of facilitation can extend to encompass the concept of the gift: for the lubricant may be said to arrive as a gift, as the offer which may be refused; as that which creates the conditions of possibility, but does not present itself as a compulsion to fulfil the possible. The difference between the erotic flogging and the penal flogging is found in the presence of

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facilitative practices within the erotic act, not as the means to force, but as the noncompulsive resources which capture the erotic space. Both erotic flogging and penal flogging involve the construction of a “scene:” in the case of the erotic, this is a scene of possible pain and pleasure; in the case of torture, this is a scene that attempts only to enable domination and produce pain. The theatre of the penal flogging involves the arrangement of objects, props and actions to limit the experience of the prisoner to pain. The theatre of the erotic flogging also maintains these props (often with hyperbolic extremism) but also deploys facilitative gestures and assemblies – gifts – within the scene to affect a dynamic change in the assembly that may produce pleasure. These facilitative practices create the conditions of consensuality, which allow for the experience of pleasure to arise in what would otherwise be only painful. The erotic relation may be characterised precisely as the consecutive and reciprocal laying down of facilitative gestures and assemblies.

**Consent and Lubricative Power**

The nature of the facilitative gift and its relation to violence raises questions around consent and its meaning. It is true that “force is present because consent is absent.” But consent in this instance must be appraised as not merely a singular and instantaneous submission to the will of the other, but as the investment of the self within a relation of power. It is in this sense that consent is an active process of engagement that involves the successive laying down facilitative gestures and assemblies towards reciprocal relations with another or others.

Patricia Kazan argues that models of consent, at least those with a view to law, may be divided between an “attitudinal” model and a “performative” model. The attitudinal model attempts to determine the attitudes and feelings of the subject, in order to ascertain whether they would or would not have consented to sexual relations. Historically, this model of consent has resulted in the trial of rape victims as opposed to rapists, since the law is asked to determine whether the victim, given their sexual history and attitudes, is likely to have consented within a given situation. Arguably this approach in law still predominates and colours the outcomes of sexual assault trials.

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73 Arguably this approach in law still predominates and colours the outcomes of sexual assault trials.
performative model of consent, which has been argued for by feminist legal critics, relies on established indicators of agreement to the sexual act. In the performative account, “consent is characterised as an objective question concerning the external acts of the agent, not her mental states, subjective feelings, and attitudes; it is not to be identified with subjective willingness or approval.” Such a model has provided the means to “objectively” judge consent, through determination of words and acts, and application of criteria for the failure of consent (such as the utterance “no”). Whilst such an approach possesses a strategic efficacy, it is not unproblematic. For example, Kazan argues that judgements upon consent, based purely on behavioural or performative data, may fail to account for actions that occur as a result of coercion. Kazan states that coerced consent “is a mere performance, that is, it consists of behaviour lacking the requisite mental state to transform it into an act of normative significance. We may be coerced through threats of violence to behave or perform as though we consent, but because we do so unwillingly our attitudes put the lie to our performance.” Similarly, it is possible for a situation of consent to appear as if it were one of violence. The latter situation is not a reference to the regular fantasy offered as defence by the rapist – that the victim “liked it rough” – rather to practices of consensual “sadomasochism” (S/M) that, as argued above, have presented their own challenge to legal interpretations of consent.

In many ways the problem of consent has been clouded by law. Whereas there exists a potential to understand consent as the means by which we all deploy our bodies in the everyday world (that is, as an expression of a kind of power), within the law consent is construed as the mere expression of compliance that by and large remains insensitive to the distinction between submission and active engagement. In a legal setting, consent appears as a form of contract: the court is charged with the task of determining whether the agreement was made in “good faith”; or whether a

For example in as sexual assault case of 1991 a Victorian Judge deliberated that the “likely psychological effect on the victim” was “much less a factor” because the victim was a sex worker; the implication being that a person who is more sexually “experienced,” is more likely to encounter violence, and would thus be less sensitive to the psychological effects of rape. See R v Hakopian 1991a quoted in J. Scutt, “Judicial Vision: Rape, Prostitution and the ‘Chaste Woman,’” in P. W. Eastel (ed.) Without Consent: Confronting Adult Sexual Violence, Conference Proceedings, (Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, 1993), pp173-87, p179.


“reasonable” person would have assumed that the conditions of consent were satisfied. Thus, within the law consent operates as the simple dividing line between violence and non-violence.\textsuperscript{76}

Consent is not a mere submission to violence, but a particular mode of power that transforms the substantive interior of practices, even if, as outward appearances would indicate, the form of the practice appears unchanged. The erotic involves the assembly of facilitative gestures and assemblies that peg out the terrain of consensuality. Within this space human organs and tissue embody lubricative principles: the dilations and contractions of the sphincter may enable the production of pleasurable sensation, not as a forceful or frictional device, but as active giving and receiving to and from others, as a possibility which may be fulfilled. The trajectory of the erotic lays in the joint creation of the erotic assembly by its participants, involving the deployment of openings or possibilities.

The erotic involves the consensual management of that which would otherwise be unpleasurable. As Bersani observes, sexual pleasure may be described as a pleasure attached to what would otherwise be an unpleasurable “tension”; a tension that can be described as a friction.\textsuperscript{77} The facilitation functions to mediate relations of touch; this mediation enables participants to control the distribution of gestures and assemblies within the erotic scene, thus placing the frictional dynamics of the erotic assembly within the control of its participants. It is the management of these frictional effects — the effects of touch — which creates the possibility of pleasure from those acts that would otherwise only bring displeasure. In many cases, facilitative agents, including lubricants, do not flood between erotic bodies; rather they are sparingly spread through erotic relations to manage frictional surfaces. In these cases, including in many erotic S/M practices, the erotic scene hinges upon the achingly slow, teasing


\textsuperscript{77} See L. Bersani, Homos, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1995), p100. Bersani states, in reference to Foucault, “power moves toward and against its objects, it inevitably produces frictions that thwart its movement.” On the same page, with regard to the development of masochism, and its relation to the dissolution of the ego which he argues is intrinsic to masochistic subject, he states that “Appropriation has been transformed into communication, a non-dialogic communication in which the subject is so obscenely “rubbed” by the object it anticipates mastering that the very boundaries separating subject from object, boundaries necessary for possession, have been erased.”
dribble of facilitation into the erotic relation. Between strokes of the whip, the dominatrix deploys facilitative gestures to intensify pleasure: for example, a whisper in the ear, a gentle touch, or a loving kiss. The submissive (the receiver of her attentions) also lubricates the assemblage with smiles between blows, “safe words” spoken, or covert hand signals. Sex involves the successive laying on the table of lubricative devices by erotic participants; at each point pleasure is electrified and escalated (“ok I have laid one of my cards down, now it is your turn”). Consent in this sense can never be approximated by submission to a contractual agreement. Rather it involves an intersubjective relay between different erotic participants, that is ongoing, always negotiable, each gesture to the other lacking necessity, and refusuable.

This differs markedly from situations of violence which involve the withdrawal, or perhaps more accurately, the radical evacuation of facilitative practices. The scene of violence is one where consent is denied, resistance is broken, and nothing is going to give way. If the facilitative space enables the possibility of negotiating desire, the opening of pleasurable possibility and the ongoing potential for refusal, then violence may be described as a relation with the other which is literally frozen shut like a rusty hinge: any movement is only possible with an extreme, painful, grinding friction. Violence is one sided, it does not involve negotiation, there are few prospects for escape. For this reason, any pleasure gained in violence can only be one sided. The Nazi camp commander, who openly masturbates whilst looking on at the flogging of camp inmates, clearly gains an erotic pleasure from the exercise of violence. Yet this eroticism can in no way be said to include as an active participant the prisoner who is being flogged. For the tortured does not have any possibility of deploying his or her own body for the sake of pleasure; no ability to arrange the props, or direct the actions of the one who holds the whip; nor an ability to refuse the offer of the whip. The tortured must simply accept the action of the torturer, and the terms of his or her pleasure. Assault or violence involves the withdrawal of all facilitation, the scraping of hard surfaces, the closure of all possibilities for mediation, of reciprocation. This is

79 Above it was suggested that the warm eyes of the fister could be described as facilitative, since these warm eyes, which reflect trust and love, could maintain the situation as erotic and pleasurable. If one were to define violence in this context then, it would involve the closure of warm eyes (or the hardening of the gaze). Ralph Waldo Emerson observes: “A eye can threaten like a loaded and leveled gun, or it can insult like hissing or kicking; or, in its altered mood, by beams of kindness, it can make the heart dance for joy” quoted in Roddick (ed), A Revolution in Kindness, p119.
perhaps why pain looms so dominantly within the relation of violence: the withdrawal of facilitation closes off all affective possibilities except that of suffering. Sites of atrocity, such as the systematic torture machines, the Nazi orchestrated Holocaust, the crushing of students in Beijing, represent a political strategy that calls for the absolute withdrawal of lubricative devices, accompanied by a political logic which reduces the world of the living to the singular sensation of pain.

Even if the facilitative practice is brought to the scene of violence, it cannot be assumed that the mere presence of a facilitative gesture or assembly signals the advent of consent. One of the prisoners interviewed in *Fear or Favour* describes a “gift” that is made to him by the inmate who is about to rape him: he is offered some lubricant (“Vaseline”) to make the assault less painful.\(^8\) Such a gesture, an apparent act of kindness, must be considered carefully in relation to violence. In this case the offer of a lubricant does not affect the inevitability of the violence that is to come, inflicted by the same agent that had made possible the “gift” of the lubricant. The lubricant may reduce the pain of the violence that is scheduled to arrive, but it cannot be said that this same lubricant affects any transformation of the violent act. Since there is no active and reciprocal deployment of facilitation, consent is simply not present.

S/M points to the necessity for an analysis of violence that is attentive not only to the physical form of the act, but the lubricative context of the act. For, whilst S/M may reproduce the form of an apparent violence, the consensual process involved in the erotic act – which I have analysed in this work in terms of the deployment of lubricative devices — negates the potentially violent frictionality of the act. Certainly I cannot claim this observation on the contextual difference between S/M and violent acts, is novel. For example, in Jeffrey Weeks’ classic study of sexuality, we find the following observation of S/M practices: “it is no longer *the* act and its perversions that is the object of concern but the context and relational forms which allow erotic practices to multiply. In S/M it seems to be the ritual as much as the zone of the body that matters, the eroticisation of the situation as much as the organisation.”\(^8\) Nor is

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\(^8\) Heilpern, *Fear or Favour: Sexual Assault of Young Prisoners*, p3.
\(^8\) J. Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths & Modern Sexualities*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1985), 240-1. Weeks states further: “The whole body becomes a seat of pleasure, and the cultivation of roles and exotic practices the key to the attainment of pleasure. A degenitalisation of sex and of pleasure is taking place in these practices which disrupt our expectations about the
this need for a contextual analysis of the act – erotic or violent – confined to the analysis of S/M. For, as noted in reference to Bersani, sexuality as a whole may be considered as a set of practices emerging from the resignification of acts that, in another context, would only be capable of the production of displeasure.\(^8^2\)

The significance of the act or practice, whether it is violent and potentially painful, or erotic and pleasurable, or erotic and pleasurably painful, depends upon the arrangement of the scene, the meaning of the act, the lubricative gestures deployed, and the relative choices exercised by the participants within this context. In this sense, MacKinnon’s stance on consent – that dominance may be “eroticised” thus negating the possibility of true consent – must be questioned. MacKinnon’s view of consent is problematic, not only because it presents difficulties in determining at what point consent becomes authentic, but because it denies the ability of the subject to determine for themselves whether they have indeed consented. Cahill observes:

> If we are to give women’s experience any credence in a theory of rape, it must be acknowledged that for most women, in most cases, to be raped is a strikingly different experience than to engage in voluntary heterosexual sex. Even women who are involved in relationships that have consistently included forced sex can, for the most part, conceive of heterosexual encounters that are enjoyable and centred around their sexual pleasure.\(^8^3\)

This suggests a need to approach the issue of consent through the subject who consents. For the apparent form of the act does not coincide with the feelings of those who are party to the act, nor does it relate to the claim of consensual pleasure that is made by the participants to the act. For this reason, the extension of MacKinnon’s principle – that force can only be present where consent is absent – must be applied

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\(^8^2\) Gary Dowsett for example suggests that: “Sex practices and sexual relations are mutually constitutive. Practices may be segregated, that is, devoted to one type of relations and not another (“I never fuck in beats”) or they may be practised across relations of many types. They carry meanings constructed in those particular relations or carried to them from elsewhere (“I loved being sucked off by blondes”). The same practice, for example, anal intercourse, may be vastly different in sensation and meaning.” G. Dowsett, *Practicing Desire: Homosexual Sex in the Era of AIDS*, p156.

\(^8^3\) Cahill, *Rethinking Rape*, p43. See also p3.
with a consistency that is only possible through an analysis of power, and of necessity must include the subjective perception of those involved within the relation of power.

Consent in this context is the way in which we open and transport ourselves in relation to others who are situationally positioned in our world. Consent is represented by the gestures, the positioning and assembly, and the arrangement of the scene around the self, which creates the ground of potentiality and pleasure. Consent is the process of distribution of facilitative assemblies and gestures, which through their deployment, indicate the investment of the self in the scene. In this sense, consent cannot be understood as being signified by a simple “yes” or “no,” for consent involves the incremental folding out of the self and other(s) into practices, through successive deployments. Consent cannot be bought through coercive means: it must, at all times relate to the imbrication of selves within political relations. Consent does not rest on the application of force to create conditions of domination, but the deployment of modes of facilitation to make situations of intersubjective participation possible.

Consent enables the radical reconstitution of the context and dynamics of the act, effecting a reorganisation in power that shifts the dynamics of relation between participants in a practice. S/M practices involve overt scenes that seek to replicate the external form of the violent act, whilst renegotiating the context of power in which this act is performed. This dynamic is not limited to the erotic; such renegotiations are present in any re-imagining of the present space as a space that is free from domination. The deployment of facilitative acts and assemblies generates a delta of lubricative power, which in turn enables possibility. Lubricative power can make possible subtle effects within the machine of power (many of which are barely discernible), yet on the other hand, this same power can enable massive transformation. Consider, for example, a phrase from a North American folk song “Big Rock Candy Mountain,” in which a prison – the site of a concentrated measured violence – is re-imagined:

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains the
jails are made of tin,
You can slip right out again as soon
as they put you in.\textsuperscript{84}

A jail that is made of tin, which you can walk out of as soon as you are in, would be in many respects a deeply pleasurable jail, because the meaning and power of that jail would have shifted so as to make incarceration within it something of a game. Significantly, the jail on the Big Rock Candy Mountain is presented as a gift, as that which is refusable. Those who are put into this jail could linger for a while, look out at the world from behind tin bars, and then “slip right out again.” This follows a similar trajectory to an S/M fantasy: pleasure is gained through maintaining the scaffold and fascia of domination, whilst affecting a massive reorganisation of the internal dynamics of the practice. The jail on Big Rock Candy Mountain is effused with lubricative power, it generates an offer of opportunity, one that may be made use of, or walked away from. This jail is facilitative of possibility, whereas a real prison only presents the possibility of a continued violence that cannot be refused.

We may also recognise the stranded connections that link lubricative power to life itself. Lubricative power is represented by a delta of facilitative exchanges. These are not restricted to erotic relations, but flow throughout the machine of power, animating every day exchanges between living entities. In Chapter 3, I suggested that frictional force aimed to constrain life, to direct its actions, command its outcomes, and limit its potentiality. Obversely, lubricative power aims to open the potentiality of life. It does not direct, but creates the conditions by which reciprocal outcomes may be achieved. Facilitation does not ask how life may be regulated, determined and reconstructed; but rather, how it is that life, as it is already contextually presented, may become an active participant within the political networks into which it is thrown. A lubricative politics does not free the soul from power – since power is, as Foucault argues, inescapable – but offers the hope that the soul may be freed from the frictional hand of violence, which, to refer back to the Aristotelian conception, reduces the living to most “primitive” aspects of their existence. At its most expansive, the gift of facilitation enables a seemingly open-ended potentiality, where what was previously impossible becomes possible. If the measured violence that belongs to the core of frictional power is only capable of the production of bare life, then pure facilitation –

\textsuperscript{84} Harry McClintock, “Big Rock Candy Mountain,” recorded 1928, RCA Records.
which lies at the heart of lubricative power – enables a life that is capable of moving beyond its bare functioning; a life that is actively engaged within relational networks of power.

The *Euprymna Scoleps*, a small luminous squid, possesses what has been described as a “welcome organ,” by which it is able to attract symbiotic couplings with other organisms, not with aim of destroying or consuming the other, but as a means to develop a network of cohabitation.\(^85\) The *welcome organ* is perhaps a fitting expression for the potential of facilitation, and its embodiment in the flesh of the world. Perhaps the most seductive aspect of a facilitative politics is the invitation into the unknown, the possibility of a leap into a clouded infinity of potentiality. This step forward into the dark, the open affirmation of the possible, points to the potentially vast, dangerous, “utopic,” expanse that may be opened by the facilitative act. The erotic moment, a point in space where a consensual pleasure is sought, is a momentary grasp at an agreement unencumbered by force. In so far as the erotic must be erotic and not violent, it is possible to find an absolute refuge from the threat of force here; in this sense, the deployment of facilitation, that first opening of potentiality, represents the *hope* for a refuge from violence. Hope after all describes accurately our relation to the potential gift of the other. We cannot expect the gift, indeed we may never believe, in our heart of hearts, that we are worthy of such a gift. Neither can we expect the gift to be received, or imagine that it will be accepted as earnestly as we are willing to give it. But we ardently hope that the gift will arrive, that it will be received, and lift us from the situation within which we find ourselves caught. “She clung impetuously to him, found his mouth and pressed it passionately with hers. The darkness rolled away, she saw the sun, and laughed the serene laugh of a young girl in love…They loved each other in despair, in death itself.”\(^86\) A hope that resides in our hearts, and feeds our encounters with others; a hope that radiates warmly from the souls of young lovers. This may be described as an *erotic hope*, or a hope for an earthly peace, found perhaps momentarily, amidst the souls of the living. It is this *erotic hope*, the possibility for a space untouched by frictional violence, a literal “heaven on earth”, that will be returned to in Chapter 6. I turn now though to

\(^{85}\) I am indebted to Susan Gapps for an exciting paper on the work of the American scientist, Lynn Margulis, presented at a University of Western Sydney postgraduate seminar in 2003. Margulis provides one of the few alternative accounts to Darwinian “natural selection.”

look at how lubricative power, a delta of facilitative acts and assemblies is organised within the machine of power.
But one must reject (Verwerflich aber) all mythical violence, the violence that founds droit, which we may call governing (schaltende) violence. One must also reject (Verwerflich auch) the violence that conserves droit, the governed violence (die verwaltete Gewalt) in the service of governing.

Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence.”

5. Governed Violence: Formalised Lubricative Channels

In Chapters 3 and 4 I provided a micropolitical analysis of relations of force and facilitation, with a focus on two practices that I believe sit close to the respective cores of frictional and lubricative power: namely governed violence and erotic relations. I argued in Chapter 4 that lubricative power could be understood as a delta of facilitative exchanges: the product of a multiplicity of facilitative gestures and assemblies. In this Chapter, and in Chapter 6, I turn to look more specifically at the dynamics of lubricative power, how it is organised, and the characteristics of its interrelationship with frictional power.

Lubricative flows course throughout the landscape of power. They are burrowed into the heart of power machines, they flow through complex tributaries and conduits; they leak unpredictably from region to region; they swirl turbulently touching points of friction and drawing facilitative flows into their wake. They allow movement, facilitate change, make possible smooth transitions, allow productivity, and liberate breaks: power invites, almost invariably, unctuousness. The lubricative schema of power may be broken into three points of analysis: informal lubricative flows; points of pure lubricity; and formal lubricative channels. Informal Lubricative Flows refer to the multiplicity of lubricative acts that lack macro-coordination, but nevertheless provide the facilitative means for large-scale movements of power. I characterise as pure lubricity those moments that reflect an unadulterated exchange of facilitative energy, where human relations are conducted without reference to force, and beyond

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1 This is a translation that appears in Derrida’s reading of “Critique of Violence.” See Derrida, “Force of Law: The “Mystical Foundation of Authority””, p36. The translation of this section from Edmund Jephcott, which Derrida describes as “insipid,” reads as follows: “But all mythic, law making violence, which we may call “executive”, is pernicious. Pernicious, too, is the law-preserving, “administrative” violence that serves it.” See Benjamin, “Critique of Violence”, p252. As Derrida observes in his reading of Benjamin, “Gewalt” itself signifies legitimised force or judicial power; it is also significant in this regard that “walten” means to rule or govern.
the shadow of violence. Indeed, I shall argue that even in the midst of the greatest violence such moments of reprieve may spontaneously be possible, and that they embody what may be described as an **erotic hope**.

*Formalised Lubricative Channels* are explicitly organised systems that feed facilitative gestures, acts and assemblies to distinct points within political networks. Unlike the micropolitical acts of facilitation described in the last chapter, formalised channels are characterised by larger scale, planned, non-spontaneous movements of facilitative assemblies and gestures. These may be envisaged in the form of the oil networks and drilled conduits that form an intricate matrix within the machine of power. These channels direct lubricative flows in a coordinated fashion, applying timing and precision to their deployment.

In this chapter I shall argue that formalised lubricative channels are best exemplified in the functioning of bureaucracy. Today’s bureaucracies possess an immense facilitative potential. They enable the coordination of mass education and employment; they allow sophisticated problem solving between agents across the globe; they facilitate large-scale biological controls and management of territories; they enable the careful and precise deployment of resources on a massive scale. And, as we shall see, the lubricative power of the bureaucracy may also enable the sophisticated management of violence. It is the latter function that will form the focus of the second part of this chapter: bureaucracies frequently function within the aegis of government, and it is in this guise that they display an enhanced capacity for the sophisticated coordination of frictional violence. It shall be argued below that government involves the intricate management of both frictional and lubricative power as a means to “conduct the conduct” of living populations. This ability is exemplified within governmental institutions of violence – the prison, the camp – where violence is measured through a precise and strategic deployment of force and facilitation. Thus I shall argue that today, perhaps more than ever, formalised lubricative channels are connected, and in some situations are synonymous with, the exercise of sovereign force.

**Bureaucracy and Lubricity**
In many ways bureaucracy has received a bad press. The fact that bureaucracy is often seen to stall, or generate friction, rather than facilitate – and lubricate – is indicative of its poorly deserved status. For Paul du Gay, this leads to misconceptions around what is represented by bureaucracy:

The bureau carries a hefty “charge sheet” inscribed with multiple offences ranging from the relatively banal – procrastination, obfuscation, circumlocution and other “typical products” of a “red tape” mentality – to the truly heinous – genocide, totalitarianism, despotism.

A popular contempt for bureaucracy hides the role that bureaucratic modes of organisation play in making possible the particular relations in which many of us are involved on an everyday level. This was evident even to Max Weber, who argued that for better and worse, bureaucratic forms are central to the emergence of both mass democracy and the capitalist economy.

According to Weber, bureaucracy refers to a particular mode of organisation of a multiplicity of human actors, who through the performance of routine administrative tasks, are ordered by forms of regulation, and “rationalised” conduct based upon knowledge and information. The bureaucracy may be distinguished from other forms of organisation by the curious way in which these human actors are employed in its service, and how they relate to each other. Thus, bureaucrats must meet particular criteria of education and experience prior to employment (they must often pass

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4 Ibid., p974. Du Gay suggests that the dangers involved in surrendering or reversing the deployment of bureaucratic means may outweigh any apparent benefits of its absence: for example, the employment of bureaucrats as polling clerks during elections (rather than political party members, for example) enables voting to occur, in ideal conditions, with anonymity and without influence (see du Gay, In Praise of Bureaucracy, p57). Yet frank admission of the centrality of bureaucracy to modern life does not provide an apology for the role played by bureaucracies in the administration of violence, nor excuse the need for analysis of bureaucratic forms. Rather, responsibility is gained for thinking about the place of bureaucracy and it relation to power: in the words of Weber to “check and effectively control the tremendous influence” of State and bureaucratic power, and avoid being constrained by its “inherent limitations” (see Weber, Economy and Society, Vol. 3, p1403).
competency examinations for example\(^6\), and are employed based upon their ability to meet these criteria, and not by election, or by association with others in similar employ. Further, bureaucrats are paid salaries for their work, and seek neither formal political power, nor are they coerced to perform duties like members of an armed force.\(^7\) Bureaucratic careers often involve the slow accumulation of knowledge and skills, with promotion granted to those who demonstrate the gaining of new abilities, experience and technical knowledge. Although bureaucracies are hierarchical organisations, the bureaucrat does not owe an allegiance to any particular official, but rather to the mode of organisation itself: thus, at least in principle, the persons employed within the bureaucratic organisation, including its leaders, may be replaced without affecting the operation of the organisation.\(^8\)

The strict organization of human resource relationships within bureaucracies reflects an attempted erasure of the effects of personality, familial relation and “charisma” from the operations of the administration. Weber states: “Bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is ‘dehumanised,’ the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation.”\(^9\) The success of the modern bureaucratic apparatus is a result of its formalised detachment from established pre-determining social relations. The bureaucracy ideally treats all cases before it with the same level of seriousness, and evaluates each case using pre-determined criteria. The use of rationalised means – including “means-ends calculus,”\(^10\) expansive documentation and recording of actions, subordination of officials to hierarchical lines of organization, and the strict delineation of action according to regulation –

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\(^8\) Weber states: “After Bismark had, during the long course of his years in power, brought his ministerial colleagues into unconditional bureaucratic dependence by eliminating all statesmen, he saw to his surprise that upon his resignation they continued to administer their offices unconcernedly and undismayedly, as if it had not been the ingenious lord and very creator of these tools who had left, but merely some individual figure in the bureaucratic machine which had been exchanged for some other figure.” *Economy and Society, Vol. 3*, p989.

\(^9\) Ibid., p975.

\(^10\) Ibid., p1002.
ensures that outcomes are routinely predictable.  

We may thus characterise bureaucracies as networks that constrain and precisely coordinate the actions of actors with the aim of producing predictable, timely and proportionate effects. In Chapter 4, I identified the lubricative gesture with a spontaneous and open-ended gift giving. This gift is frequently local in character: thus its effects are usually limited to small personal networks. Bureaucratic power, on the other hand, displays the potential for this same localised activity to facilitate the operation of great political assemblies, where lubricative flows containing a multiplicity of facilitative gestures are strictly organised, and contained within discrete, directed channels of operation. It is thus no accident that for Weber bureaucracy took on an explicitly lubricative function: “Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs – these are raised to optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic organisation.”

Bureaucracy involves the orchestration of lubricity upon a large scale. Bureaucracy is a means to organise the facilitative action of not merely one or two human actors, but hundreds, if not thousands, of actors. Human gestures are ordered to provide regularity and predictability: staff are provided training to ensure that particular generalised routines of telephone etiquette, standardised documentation and computer literacy are met; procedures, protocols and regulation are applied by managers to ensure consistency; all actors, from top to bottom of the hierarchical organization, rely upon delegation and lines of accountability to direct their work. Similarly, bureaucratic formations have entailed technological innovation which itself is organised within a facilitative circuit: for example, computerised database systems have provided a means of client file management, which has, at least in theory,

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11 Hence, as Weber notes, the compatibility of the rise of bureaucracy with the positivist legal tradition, particularly the impulse toward the “conception of the modern judge as an automon into which legal documents and fees are stuffed at the top in order that it may spill forth the verdict at the bottom along with the reasons, read mechanically from codified paragraphs.” Ibid., p979 (see also pp976-8). It is perhaps not surprising therefore that bureaucracy should emerge as synonymous with a totalitarianism that spurns the judiciary: Arendt states that “When Hitler said that a day would come in Germany when it would be a ‘disgrace’ to be a jurist, he was speaking with utter consistency of his dream of a perfect bureaucracy.” See H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, (The Viking Press, New York, 1964), p290.

allowed different organisations in vastly different localities to have rapid access to stores of information. Bureaucracy is thus a form of facilitation that is rationally organised upon a mass scale, involving a network of both human and non-human actors.

Many of the large scale local, national and international political and economic processes that define contemporary society rest upon the immense lubricative capacity of bureaucratic organisations. Representative democracy, for example, depends upon the employment of impartial officials to administer parliamentary elections, in order to minimise undue influence and tampering with votes cast. In this sense, bureaucracy has become indispensable to our understanding of the “free and fair” election.

Bureaucracy is further connected to the development of “mass democracy,” in the employment of bureaucrats by mass political parties, who both administer the day to day operations of the party – meetings, campaigns, lobbying, candidate selection etc – and organise the receipt of the large donations which enable mass political parties to organise electoral support.14

Bureaucracies are also intimately connected to large-scale business organizations, where the demands of profitability and means-ends rationality can coincide to even more precisely focus the efficiency associated with the organization of the administrative task. Indeed, Weber, who saw that bureaucracies functioned most smoothly within business organizations, predicted that commercial interests would eventually force change in the operating practices of public bureaucracies, stating that “it is primarily the capitalist market economy which demands that the official business of public administration be discharged precisely, unambiguously,

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13 It is worth emphasising that “rationalised means” are also a defining characteristic of the bureaucracy. For Weber, modern western bureaucracy could be distinguished from other forms of organisation, and indeed, other pre-existing forms of bureaucracy, by the centrality of rationality and instrumentality to its operations: “The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organizations as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production” (see M. Weber, Economy and Society, vol3, p973). The bureaucrat does not provide a judgement on a particular case on the basis of an abstract principle of justice, or by reference to tradition, but through the consideration of existing statutes and regulations, and the application of logical procedure to decision making. It is for this reason that Weber suggests that the “advance of the rationally trained expert displaced the old trial procedure which was bound to tradition or to irrational presuppositions” (p975), for bureaucracy eliminates the unpredictability of judgement, through the application of formalised regulation of decision and conduct.

14 Ibid., pp984-5; also see pp989-90.
Bureaucracy may also be intimately involved in the facilitation and organisation of State violence. Hannah Arendt’s now famous account of the trial of Adolf Eichmann – the chief official charged with responsibility for the administration of transport for the Nazi “Final Solution” – provides a model of the capacity of the bureaucratic apparatus to become implicated in the orchestration of violence upon a large scale, and create the conditions for its smooth execution. Eichmann’s self-defence was that he was a mere “cog” in the machine; he had followed regulations: “What he had done was a crime only in retrospect, and he had always been a law-abiding citizen, because Hitler’s orders, which he had executed to the best of his ability, had possessed “the force of law” in the Third Reich.” The fact that Eichmann, whose organisational efforts had contributed to the torture, incarceration and deaths of millions of Jews, was not a monster but described himself as a mere official, indicates the potential for bureaucracy to provide the framework by which even the administration of atrocity could appear as rational, legitimised or as Arendt insightfully declares, “banal.”

Zygmunt Bauman extends Arendt’s analysis further, not simply arguing that genocide and mass extermination are within the scope of bureaucracy, but suggesting further that modernity itself has developed political structures that, under the influence of bureaucratic rationality, have become “ethically blind”:

the light shed by the Holocaust on our knowledge of bureaucratic rationality is at its most dazzling once we realize the extent to which the very idea of the Endlösung was an outcome of the bureaucratic culture.

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17 Ibid., p287. Arendt states “I also can well imagine that an authentic controversy might have arisen over the subtitle of this book; for when I speak of the banality of evil, I do so only on a strictly factual level, pointing to a phenomenon which stared one in the face at the trial. Eichmann was not Iago and not Macbeth…Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all. And this diligence in itself was in no way criminal; he certainly would never have murdered his superior in order to inherit his post. He merely, to put it colloquially, never realised what he was doing” (p287).
19 Ibid., Italics in text. “Endlösung” translates as “the final solution.”
Bauman suggests that bureaucracy, far from being a passive enactor of political decision, was instead actively responsible for generating the innovative means by which the massive task of genocide became possible: “the very presence of functionaries, charged with their specific tasks led to further initiatives and a continuous expansion of original purposes…expertise demonstrated its self-propelling capacity, its proclivity to expand and enrich the target which supplied its raison d’être.”

If erotic relations demonstrate the capacity for facilitative means to generate exchanges of reciprocity unfettered by force, then the bureaucratic administration of genocide demonstrates the insidious potential for this same lubricative power to enable unimagined forms of violence, orchestrated upon a grand scale. In these cases, bureaucracy functions to smooth the frictional elements of an extreme ensuing violence, and enable the more effective deployment of force. For example, it is frequently observed (for Arendt with some controversy) that the Holocaust was dependent upon creating the means by which Jews themselves would be integrally involved in their own genocide. The role of the SS bureaucracy was, as Bauman argues, instrumental in the administration of this partnership:

This astonishing effect of successfully extending the rules of bureaucratic conduct, complete with the delegitimation of alternative loyalties and moral motives in general to encompass the intended victims of bureaucracy, and thereby deploying their skills and labour in the implementation of the task of their destruction, was achieved (much as in the mundane activity of every other, sinister or benign, bureaucracy) in a twofold way. First, the external setting of the ghetto life was so designed that all actions of its leaders and inhabitants could not but remain objectively ‘functional’ to German purposes […] Second, particular care was taken that at every stage of the road the victims would be put in a situation of choice, to which criteria of rational action apply, and in which the rational decision invariably agrees with the ‘managerial design’ […] As a matter of fact, even those already deported were

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20 Ibid., p245. “Entfernung” refers to removal or placing at a distance: i.e. transportation and deportation.
21 Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem, p284.
left with the opportunity to deploy their rationality to the very end. The gas chambers, temptingly dubbed ‘bathrooms,’ presented a welcome sight after days spent in overcrowded, filthy cattle trucks. Those who already knew the truth and entertained no illusions still had a choice between a ‘quick and painless’ death, and one preceded by extra sufferings reserved for the insubordinate.  

Bureaucracy functions to smooth the frictional elements of an extreme ensuing violence. But this facilitative gesture is a “false gift”: it offers little to the victim – except perhaps reduced suffering – whilst presenting the instigators of violence with a more pliant body upon which to apply their instrumentation. This form of power, a curious intersection of extreme frictionality and facilitation, reveals the potential for a cynical deployment of lubricity within relations of power. The hands of lubricity is offered to the other, apparently freely, yet ultimately these deployments only make possible violence, and reveal only an insidious care for the other as bare life. This form of power is often deceptive: it was not, after all, in the spirit of kindness that the true meaning of the fate that awaited those who entered the “bathrooms” in Auschwitz was kept a secret from those who arrived in packed cattle trains to the camp. The secret was held for the benefit of the enhanced efficacy of violence, for “in the camps elaborate precautions were taken to fool the victims right up to the end.”

This structure of frictionality interwoven with lubricity provides a clue to the logic of contemporary sovereign violence, which has been identified in this work as synonymous with the pursuit of a governed violence: that is a violence that exercises an insidious care towards life. Where my earlier discussion of the camp and torture described the means by which this particular tactic is pursued through purely frictional means (that is through force), we are now in a position to supplement this conception with an understanding of the facilitative capabilities available to sovereign power to augment the administration of these frictional effects: in particular, the administrative apparatuses which enable the conditions by which this violence may be exercised.

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22 Bauman, The Bauman Reader, p252.
23 Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem, p90.
In the camp, for example, bureaucracy is instrumental in the organisation of those spaces that inmates inhabit; in the implementation of administrative procedures for the governance of the behaviour of staff, security personnel etc.; in the maintenance of resources moving in and out of the camp. Elaborate files are created on those incarcerated, which includes health, occupation and other information; movements between the camp and the outside world are monitored and controlled. A paper and data chain relays authorities, communications and information between the administrators of the camp and relevant government and private agencies in the world outside. Bureaucracy also offers itself to inmates, as the means by which they may exercise control over their situation. In an Australian context, detention centres for “illegal” refugees offer the possibility of freedom from the camp on the proviso that certain administrative conditions relating to the processing of applications for asylum are met. Failure to submit to predetermined standards of conduct in the camp can jeopardise one’s possible grant of asylum. In this situation, compliance becomes a precondition of release. The bureaucratic apparatus, which presents itself as the means of salvation for those interned in the detention centre, also provides the means of capture, since it demands the docility of the life contained within. In these cases, the efficient exercise of measured violence necessitates the development of complex lubricative pathways to enable the desired outcome.

The administration of violence involves the concerted management of both force and facilitation. But it would be incorrect to say that it is solely bureaucratic rationality that holds the expertise for such management. Indeed I would argue, contra Bauman, that the technical skill that enables the orchestration of large-scale State violence does not rest with bureaucratic rationality, but with the science of government, of which bureaucracy forms a component. Governmental rationality is precisely the art of managing frictional and lubricative power: an art that finds its raison d’être in the management of violence.
Government and Violence

Foucault’s “Governmentality” lecture\(^\text{24}\) provides further grounds for thinking about the relation between measured violence, lubricative power and sovereignty. Discourses of governance alter the direction of sovereign power away from a singular concern for its own survival, towards an obligation to manage the conduct of the population within its territories. For Foucault this is a significant shift in the operations of State power, that by necessity forces a move away from the maintenance of territory (as the mere physical possession of the sovereign) to the biopolitical intervention into the citizenry, as an end in itself.\(^\text{25}\) Whilst the core foundations of sovereign power remain – its enumerated powers claiming dominion over territory, its right to violence in the maintenance of its borders and the pursuit of internal order – governmental discourses point sovereign energies towards a broad management of life within its domain.

The shift from sovereignty to government also represents a shift in strategy. Sovereign power, following the Hobbesian model, deploys force in a directional manner to achieve particular effects that reinforces its own power. Military forces literally “push back” invaders, and expand territories; resources are devoted to the pursuit and punishment of criminals within the sovereign domain; and territory is managed by reinscribing sovereign power through periodic bouts of violence. Governance, on the other hand, involves a strategy that Foucault suggests is “economic” in scope\(^\text{26}\): rather than exerting force in singular directions, governing involves the attempt to manage, by discrete interventions, the behaviour of humans and objects in a relational field. Foucault provides the example of a ship:

What does it mean to govern a ship? It means to take charge of the sailors, but also of the boat and its cargo; to take care of the ship means also to reckon with winds, rocks and storms; and it consists in that activity of establishing a relation between sailors who are to be taken care of and the ship which is to be taken care of, and the cargo which is to be brought to port, and all those

\(^{24}\) See Foucault, “Governmentality.”
\(^{25}\) Ibid., p100.
eventualities like winds, rocks, storms and so on; this is what characterises the government of a ship.\textsuperscript{27}

The fact that one owns a ship is secondary to the business of its governance: “property and territory are merely one of its variables.”\textsuperscript{28} Government is a responsibility to ensure the smooth cohabitation of a range of diverse and autonomous agents, and not the maintenance of property for its own benefit.

Foucault’s identification of governmental rationalities correlates with his work on biopolitical and disciplinary power, particularly with regard to the way in which individuals comes to manage their own conduct. Disciplines aim at directing behaviour through the provision of the normalising tools by which one may govern the self. The compulsion to govern oneself, leads to the requirement that one bares one’s soul: that is, allows one’s self to be opened up for interrogation by rational expertise. Thus, as observed in Chapter 3, Foucault argues that the modern individual becomes compelled to “confess” to others, and opens to discourse an increasing number of aspects of the self.\textsuperscript{29} This creates the conditions by which the decisions one makes about one’s life, one’s inclinations and peculiarities, become subject to a normalisation which compels one to vigilantly monitor one’s self, and strictly control behaviour, expression, appearance and deportment.

Governance then, may be understood as the means by which we correlate the self as a bundle of desires, dispositions, physical characteristics, intelligences and so on: the self as an entity which is to be managed constantly, as an economy of factors within which discreet interventions may be made.\textsuperscript{30} The seemingly endless discourses available on weight control are one example of such governmental models translated to the individual. Those identified with weight “problems” are assessed in relation to

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p94.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{29} Foucault, \textit{The Will to Knowledge, The History of Sexuality: 1}, pp53-73.

\textsuperscript{30} Thus Mitchell Dean argues that “if the self is conceived of as a spiralling ribbon which folds over and over itself defining a space of interior being without essential substance, then in contemporary political culture, the self is composed of the different cloths, weaves, colours, and patterns of the various programs of government, techniques of self, and the work of the human sciences.” See M. Dean, \textit{Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault’s Methods and Historical Sociology} (Routledge, London and New York, 1994), p211. See also M. Clifford, \textit{Political Geneology After Foucault: Savage Identities}, (Routledge, New York and London, 2001), p65.
their individual physical characteristics, their genetic and hereditary dispositions, their desires and their inclinations and their abilities with regard to physical activity. This information is used to develop strategies based upon available food and medication regimes, forms of body drilling, exercise and motivational training to propel the body into action and curtail weight-gaining activities. Governance extends the disciplinary model of power by presenting the body as a complex mix of characteristics, passions and desires, dispositions and inclinations, which must managed by planning, strategic deployment, and ongoing strategy, with the aim of achieving normalised outcomes.

Foucault refers to governance as a “rationality;”\[^{31}\] it comes to guide the activities of entities ranging in size from the State (and we can infer in the contemporary context, the “global economy”), to the family,\[^{32}\] to the individual (the “soul”\[^{33}\]). In this sense, whilst governmental models of power are characteristic of a particular trajectory of state power, they are not limited to this sphere. Other organisations take up principles of governance as a means to manage the interactions of the actors within their particular domains of influence. For example, local councils become concerned about managing the behaviour of residents and visitors within their municipalities. Councils may launch crime prevention strategies, which attempt to supplement the coercive activities of the police force, by providing safe houses within a community, or lighting dark parks, or consulting with different communities within the municipality, or utilising electronic surveillance in public spaces, or funding youth centres.

The detection and prosecution of law breakers, which was always a responsibility of sovereign power, becomes a “community problem” under governmental rationality, and a diverse range of groups, from councils to churches, schools to parents groups, youth workers to senior citizens associations, become involved in managing this


\[^{32}\] See C. Osmond, “Towards a genealogy of child protection in NSW,” unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Sociology, Macquarie University, 2003. Osmond states: “the liberal policing of families, emergent as a social form of government, remains a persistent feature of contemporary government. The tutelary apparatus - with its voluntary and coercive tactics for therapeutic familialism – provides the conditions of possibility for a responsible, autonomous freedom while retaining the right to discipline and punish if expert assessment determines that this is required in particular cases. Rather than imposing social norms, it prefers that parents are self-governing – in a process of folding in which the external relations of power and governance (a political subjectification) create an interiority which can act on itself - an interpellation of social norms and imperatives into individual family member’s desires.” (3.3)

\[^{33}\] Foucault, “Governmentality,” p90.
“problem.” Some of these strategies are discussed by Pat O’ Malley with regard to the governance of Australian indigenous communities.\textsuperscript{34} O’ Malley describes a particular intervention which commenced in 1990, when the Department of Community Services in Western Australia approached representatives from the Ngaanyatjarra people to negotiate a cooperative strategy to address solvent use (“petrol sniffing”) within the Ngaanyatjarra community.\textsuperscript{35} This intervention supplements existing State powers to pursue “petrol sniffers” through the criminal justice system, and represents a shift from — a more traditional — tactic of the deployment of sovereign force, to an attempt to “manage” the behaviour of communities through the deployment of diverse facilitative agencies.\textsuperscript{36}

There is a difference between the “rationality” that Foucault attributes to governing groups and the rationality that appears as central to the functioning of modern bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{37} For Weber the rationality embodied by bureaucratic operations – an instrumental logic which promotes “rule, means-ends calculus and matter-of-factness”\textsuperscript{38} – is endemic within societies: its threat is that it will come to dominate the conduct of all social and organisational relationships. Foucault would certainly agree that rationalities impose themselves on forms of social organisation, but he would argue that definition of what is “rational” is itself open to discursive variation, as a consequence of struggles over power and their relationship to “truth.” Foucault suggests that rationality is attached to particular practices that, given historical, political and technological developments, appear as justified, inevitable, civilised and reasonable. Thus, in an interview, Foucault explains:

I don’t believe that one can speak of an intrinsic notion of ‘rationalization’ without on the one hand positing an absolute value inherent in reason, and on

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., pp163-4.
\textsuperscript{36} This emphasises the relational aspect of governance models: that not only do they attempt to mould existing practices, but they themselves are transformed – in this case “indigenised” – in their application within a particular context. As I shall relate in Chapter 6, this may in part be a consequence of the nature of lubricative power, to “seep” beyond formalised conduits.
\textsuperscript{38} Weber, \textit{Economy and Society, Vol. 3}, p1002.
the other taking the risk of applying the term empirically in a completely arbitrary way. I think one must restrict one’s use of this word to an instrumental and relative meaning. The ceremony of public torture isn’t in itself more irrational than imprisonment in a cell; but it is irrational in terms of a type of penal practice which involves new ways of envisaging effects to be produced by the penalties imposed, new ways of calculating its utility, justifying it, graduating it etc. One isn’t assessing things in terms of an absolute against which they could be evaluated as constituting more or less perfect forms of rationality, but rather examining how forms of rationality inscribe themselves in practices or systems of practices, and what role they play within them, because it is true that ‘practices’ don’t exist without a certain regime of rationality.  

The analysis of rationality then should not look for a singular, universalising and irrepressible force that exerts itself increasingly into modern mentalities; but ask instead why it is, amongst a range of diverse activities, that ‘rationality’ should be accorded to particular practices. Mitchell Dean provides an excellent characterisation of the distinction between a Weberian interest in rationality and that of Foucault:

they face opposite horizons: one toward the being of humankind, its experience of the world, its potential for a kind of rationality, and its dilemmas in a world that cannot be delivered, even by the use of that potential, from its irrationality; the other to the multiple forms of rationality inscribed in heterogenous and irreducible systems of practices through which the various identities of humankind are ceaselessly made and unmade, and which capacities are formed and transformed.

The emergence of governmental rationality into the daily operations of power has arguably affected a change in the way contemporary bureaucracy functions. In Australia since the mid-1980s there has been a process of reform of public administration, where there has been a significant modification in the traditional

40 Dean, Critical and Effective Histories, p72.
norms of bureaucratic operation, at least according to the classic Weberian analysis. In particular, there has been an emergence of “managerialism” which draws from a tradition of private entrepreneurship, as opposed to the pure means / ends calculus that characterised traditional bureaucratic rationality. Arguably, these changes in culture also reflect an engagement with principles of governmental rationality, which seek innovative techniques to manage resources, people and technology.

According to Martin Pointer, the “new public management orthodoxy,” can be described as a “reaction against bureaucratic formalism and proceduralism. It embodies an “output” emphasis and defines and attempts to measure management performance on the basis of outputs, wherever possible in quantifiable terms.”  

The adoption of principles derived from the private sector for the “efficient” operation of administrative structures alone is not necessarily foreign to Weber’s original analyses of bureaucracy. Indeed, as stated above, Weber argued that business organisations were likely to develop the most efficient forms of bureaucratic organization, stating that “the very large modern capitalist enterprises are themselves unequalled models of strict bureaucratic organization. Business management throughout rests on increasing precision, steadiness, and above all, speed of operations.”

But, there have been contemporary changes in the operation of bureaucracy that have undoubtedly shifted away from the traditional Weberian understanding. The reforms witnessed in Australian and other jurisdictions, for example, have brought significant changes to the functioning and organisation of bureaucracies in these localities. Anna Yeatman, in her analysis of Australian managerialism, suggests that there have been a number of broad changes to the operation of contemporary public sector bureaucracies. Firstly, as stated above, there is an application of business principles to the management of bureaucracies, and a general commitment to

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42 Weber, Economy and Society, Vol. 3, p974. Weber suggests further, perhaps predicting the future development of public administration, that “today, it is primarily the capitalist market economy which demands that the official business of public administration be discharged precisely, unambiguously, continuously, and with as much speed as possible.” Ibid.
demonstrating that “the public sector can be as managed as well as private firms.”

Where the traditional Weberian bureaucracy sought expertise within its own ranks, drawing upon the accumulated experience and knowledge of internal staff and utilising a system of merit and promotion to recruit its “top brass,” the contemporary Australian bureaucracy almost explicitly seeks its middle and upper level expertise from a range of different fields, including the private sector, with an aim of securing those with skills in the application of generic management skills, rather than those who can demonstrate a specialised knowledge in a particular area. Related to this is the “contracting out” of previously government run services to businesses or non-government organisations. One outcome of this trend in Australia, for instance, is that some prisons, and a large number of detention centres, are run by private for-profit companies.

Secondly, there has been a general movement to introduce principles of transparency and public accountability to public administration. As discussed above, the Weberian bureaucracy relied on a degree of anonymity around the roles played by its employees: personnel are regarded as functionaries that are employed to perform delegated tasks, and are accountable only to their superiors for their actions. On the other hand, Yeatman observes that in the contemporary Australian bureaucracy an emphasis on transparency developed, which obligates public servants to be answerable to the public for their work. Thus we find that bureaucrats are made directly responsible for their actions through the development of formal consultative, complaint and “freedom of information” mechanisms that limit the ability of bureaucracy to obfuscate its operations. These changes reflect a shift in ideology towards embracing the market place: citizens become “customers,” who are owed particular rights as consumers of government services. Finally, there is a degree of flexibility introduced into the conduct of bureaucracies, particularly around the behaviour of middle and upper level managers, so as to encourage “initiative, and where appropriate, an entrepreneurial spirit.”

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46 Ibid., p34-5.
48 Yeatman, Bureaucrats, Technocrats, Femocrats, pp3-4. See also p24.
49 Ibid., p24.
50 Pointer, “Public Management: Fad or Fallacy?” p40.
Whilst these emerging trends in the "reform" of public administration point worryingly to the increasing commodification of aspects of social life, and the seemingly inevitable and unquestioned primacy of the market as a rationale for social organisation, it is arguable that they also inculcate within them forms of governmental reason, which provide a more broadly "economic" scope to the way in which large organisations are managed. This seems to be apparent when we consider the manner in which contemporary bureaucracies prioritise the management of diverse tendencies within their own ranks to ensure outcomes are met. There is an "emphasis on effective communication with staff, respect for their individual cultivation of autonomy, and contracted work agreements with them concerning goal achievement."\(^51\) Rather than invest in managers with the power to direct the actions of their subordinates, there is instead a pastoral focus, with a less instrumental strategy of deploying a diverse assembly of skills, resources and knowledges to "steer" the organisation along a "charted course." Hierarchised, centralised control is still considered important, particularly for broad strategic planning, but the ethos of management has shifted towards facilitating a guided autonomy amongst subordinates: "management responsibility is devolved so as to 'let the managers manage.'"\(^52\)

Perhaps more ominous than the emergence of managerialism within bureaucracies is the relationship of governmental rationality to the bureaucracies that "administer" (in both senses of the word) violence. I would argue, \emph{contra} Arendt and Bauman, that it is governmental rationality, rather than bureaucratic rationality \emph{per se}, which has most significantly affected the organisation of large scale social assemblies, and hence, \emph{the way in which violence itself is governed}. In the twentieth century and beyond, we bear witness to the growth of governmental solutions to the problems presented by the need for management of population and resources. The persecution, and eventual slaughter, carried out by the Third Reich against the Jewish, Roma, homosexual, disabled and other populations of Europe, is an example of such governmental strategy. At each stage of the operation, from the initial deportations, to the internment of populations in labour camps, to the final solution found at the gas chambers, all arms of government, and not just its bureaucratic functions, were

\(^{51}\) See Yeatman, \emph{Bureaucrats, Technocrats, Femocrats.}, pp21-35.

\(^{52}\) Pointer, "Public Management: Fad or Fallacy?" p40.
involved. Governmental rationalities enabled not merely the exercise of coercive force, but the whole project of managing problems of population given finite resources, existing knowledges, relationships, dispositions and forces. Even at the very end, when sovereign force was pursued at its most cynical and brutal, where millions were reduced to ashes, the whole operation was conducted according to a governmental strategy, where various resources were strategically deployed, rules of conduct and legality devised, individuals and organisations (including Jewish organisations) enlisted to ensure deadlines were kept, civilian and business agents incorporated, a whole medical and scientific apparatus involved, government, police, bureaucratic and military organisations coordinated: in short, a thoroughly “economic” approach was required to secure the success of the eventual outcome.

Thus, though it is true that Eichmann was always a “mere” bureaucrat, I would argue that he was charged with duties that exceeded the regular limits of bureaucratic management, and approached principles of governmental management. He recognised that resolution of the “Jewish Question” required a diverse approach to the regulation of population, calling upon a variety of resources and necessitating the alignment of departmental, military and community forces. To name one area of lubricative deployment, efforts were made to secure the administrative means, and material technologies devoted to transporting Jews reliably and quickly to the death camps in the East: “The Ministry of Transport provided the necessary railroad cars, usually freight cars, even in times of great scarcity of rolling stock, and they saw to it that the schedule of the deportation trains did not conflict with other timetables.”

Or, to cite another example, steps were taken to contact Jewish leaders and councils, establish formal Jewish authorities in protectorates and ghettos and powers were handed over to particular functionaries. These were all strategies with the aim of facilitating transport, incarceration, labour and eventual extermination. In these examples,

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53 Shirer states that “Before the postwar trials in Germany it had been generally believed that the mass killings were the work of a relatively few fanatical S.S. leaders. But the records of the courts leave no doubt of the complicity of a number of German business men, not only the Krupps and the directors of the I.G. Farben chemical trust, but smaller entrepreneurs who outwardly must have seemed to be the most prosaic and decent men, pillars – like businessmen everywhere – of their communities.” See Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, pp972-3.

54 Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem, p115.

55 See letter from Reinhard Heydrich to the Commanders of Special Units of Security Police, September 21, 1939: “Each Jewish congregation must set up a Jewish Council of Elders...It will be fully responsible, in the truest sense of the word, for an exact and prompt execution of all past and future directives.” See Topography of Terror, p128-9.
bureaucratic competence in a single area is not sufficient. Instead, a diverse expanse of skills and knowledge is required for managing the project of genocide, involving familiarity with a range of elements and an ability to reckon with different forces and relationships.

It must be acknowledged that this viewpoint – that the administration of annihilation is within the scope of governmental reason – is at odds with traditional commentaries on Foucault’s concept of governmentality. Indeed governmentality is rarely associated with violence, let alone atrocity. This is due no doubt to the apparent connection of governmentality with forms of liberalism. Foucault argues that in so far as liberalism is concerned with setting limits upon the intervention of government into the management of populations, it is the bearer of the ongoing discourse over “good government” that pervades contemporary societies. In this sense, liberalism is the “self consciousness” of government. It provides the mirror by which government may recognise itself, and continually re-align itself. As Graham Burchell surmises, Foucault’s treatment of liberalism shifts the terms by which it may be analysed:

Foucault’s analysis of liberalism is pitched at the level of its practice as a critical reflection on governmental reason. It is not an analysis of liberalism as a theoretical doctrine, a utopian dream, an ideology or a collection of particular governmental policies. Rather, liberalism is presented as a principle and method for rationalizing governmental practice, for a constant reflection on and criticism of what it is.

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56 A notable exception, apart from the theoretical discussion from Mitchell Dean discussed below in this work, is the recent book from Judith Butler, entitled Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence, (Verso, London, 2004). Butler argues that governmentality provides a point of disruption to the regular juridical order through which a “rogue” sovereignty can emerge (p56), “one with no structures of accountability built in (p66). Butler states that “the suspension of the rule of law allows for the convergence of governmentality and sovereignty; sovereignty is exercised in the act of suspension, but also in the self allocation of legal prerogative: governmentality denotes an operation of administration power that is extra-legal, even as it can and does return to law as a field of tactical operations”(p55). Butler’s perspective is useful in so far as it provides a way to link governmentality to examples of sovereign violence including torture and camps. But the concept of a “legitimate” versus “illegitimate sovereignty” is at odds with the analysis I present here, because examples of torture and camps must be regarded as inherent components of biopolitical sovereignty and not deviations from “legitimate” rule.


This affinity between liberal discourses and the governmentalisation of the State tends to obscure the potential connection of governance to the application of violence as an instrument to govern populations. Since liberalism is so often connected with the need for restraint in areas of potential intervention, and conversely, emphasises the pre-existing rights of citizens to conduct their lives free from interference, the art of government – as exemplified in liberal discourse – is rarely associated with the multiplicity of “illiberal” acts committed by sovereign power.

Contrary to this conventional association of governmental practice to liberalism, Dean argues that government may take on modes that do not, at least outwardly, resemble those of liberal democratic states, suggesting that such regimes may be described as examples of “Authoritarian Governmentality.”\(^{150}\) Within liberal states, Dean argues that there are frequent justifications for the exercise of authoritarian forms of rule. Liberalism relies upon a presupposition of free agents who both allow themselves to be governed and provide legitimation for the “training” of subjects who are “suitable” for governance. Liberal discourses often emphasise the need to cultivate the appropriate knowledges within the citizenry, in order that civil subjects may then be able to participate within the formal political process. Thus there is an endorsement of disciplinary networks (schools, education campaigns etc.) that are deployed for the benefit of particular populations that “are yet to attain the maturity required of the liberal subject.”\(^{60}\) It is this same logic that may also provide authorisation for the systemic exclusion of those groups deemed unsuitable participants within the civil political space. Justification is found for the use of authoritarian measures against those populations determined as consisting of “poorly developed” political subjects. In an Australian context, perhaps the most pertinent examples of the use of authoritarian – indeed genocidal – measures may be found in the long history of dispossession and oppression of Australia’s Indigenous populations. As Nicoll observes, this history emphasises the racialised nature of governmental strategy:

Following waves of dispossession throughout the continent that saw

\(^{150}\) See Dean, Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society, pp131-148.
\(^{60}\) Ibid., p133.
Aborigines removed and land subdivided and sold to settlers, the colonial authorities were faced with the problem of a dispossessed Indigenous population. ‘Settlements’ were established to which Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were confined. Enforced regimes of labour, prohibitions on particular forms of sociality, such as drinking, and a system of passports which restricted movement from one settlement to another, were elements of this ‘carceral regime’ well into the twentieth century. The important point here is that *terra nullius* authorised a particularly governmental form of warfare. 61

Thus, even violent forms of biopolitical intervention, such acts of dispossession, or genocide, may be inherent within the sphere of liberal governance: “while the biopolitical imperative does not account for all that bedevils liberal-democratic states, it is remarkable how much of what is done of an illiberal character is done with the best of biopolitical intentions.” 62

Where authoritarian modes of governance remain implicit, albeit veiled within liberal democratic regimes, governmental rationalities are outwardly recognisable in forms of totalitarian political organisation. In such States, violent biopolitical imperatives became openly incorporated within the principles of governmental reason. Dean draws upon Foucault’s last chapter of *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, suggesting that such regimes explicitly embody the emerging principles of a bloody biopolitics, where the concern for populations, and the power to “foster life and disallow it to the point of death” intersect in the right to regulate biological populations with the sword: crystallising in particular, in racism, propagated forcefully by the State. 63 Dean argues that modes of rule which advance biopolitical objectives through coercive means, cannot be separated from governance itself, since authoritarian governmentality remains composed of the same elements which characterise the field of government. 64

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63 Ibid., pp 139-40.
64 Ibid., p 147. To once again render the relation of bureaucracy to government, Dean observes that the existing bureaucratic rationalities must themselves be assessed within the context of governmental rationalities. “It is not simply the logic of the bureaucratic application of the human sciences that is at issue but the reinscription of racial discourse within a biopolitics of the population and its linkage with themes of sovereign identity, autonomy and political community.” Ibid., p 144.
Dean separates sovereignty from government by associating governmentality with the power to foster life, and sovereignty with the power to end life: he states that “the notion of sovereignty differs from rationalities of government proper in that the latter are concerned with a fostering of the living and augmentation of life. In contrast, sovereignty operates by deduction, as a right of death rather than a power over life.”

Note that this contrasts with my own argument, forwarded in Chapter 3, that sovereignty is equally as aligned to life as it is to death.

I have argued, following Agamben, that sovereignty is defined by its ability to constitute the exceptional space. This space is inherently biopolitical, since it aims at the production of the bare life: that is, the exercise of a violence of measure that reduces life to a mere token of domination. It is the centrality of biopolitics to exception which leads Agamben to contest Foucault’s claim that biopolitics is a relatively new phenomenon, arguing that “Western politics is a bio-politics from the very beginning.”

Given the connection of government to sovereignty, Agamben’s reading of the relation of biopolitics to sovereign power challenges the meaning of governmental rationality itself, and its association with the “fostering of life.”

If, as Agamben asserts, sovereignty remains irrevocably connected with biopolitics, then it may be said that the exercise of sovereignty, as the legitimised violence deployed under the guise of government, is not a departure from a politics of life, but conforms absolutely to the biopolitical imperative. In this sense, Foucault’s suggestion that contemporary sovereignty may be associated with a power to “foster life” must be read in conjunction with its counterpart, the ominous right to “disallow to the point of death;” in the same fashion as one reads the old power of sovereignty – to kill and let live – as involving the exercise of an interconnected right. The power to kill implies the power to let live, since those who survive the wrath of the sovereign’s sword only do so at the mercy of a sovereign power not deployed (sovereignty commands the right, after all, to annihilate all with a mere push of a button).

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65 Dean, Govermentality, p202. See also p100.
66 Agamben, Homo Sacer, p181.
67 See Foucault, The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality 1, p138.
The same logical coupling accompanies the biopolitical sovereign right: biopolitics is not merely the “optimisation” of life, but the simultaneous deployment of both facilitative resources to enable life and violence designed to “disallow life.” Modern sovereignty commands the resources to enable and foster life, and a connected power to bring life to the threshold of death. It is true that governance may be more easily associated with the fostering of life, and with the provision of the lubricative means by which mass augmentation of living bodies may become possible. But the exercise of sovereign violence, even that most distinctly connected with the sword, remains a violence that, through the constitution of the exceptional space, is also biopolitical. It is for this reason that I have argued that the whip serves as a more accurate metaphor than the sword for the logic of contemporary sovereign violence: a weapon that literally inflicts a measured violence which stops short of death, and hence simultaneously exercises an insidious care for the living. The capacity to measure violence, to exercise and insidious care for life, is above all a capacity for governed violence.

Governmental reason provides the conceptual blueprint for the conduct of contemporary sovereign power. Governmentality reveals itself as an art devoted to managing varying intensities of lubricative and frictional deployments within the heterogeneous political field. The governmental imperative is evidenced by the vast resources involved in the maintenance and creation of bureaucracies, infrastructure, educational institutions, health facilities, and social and community programs. Many of these deployments do not correlate with the use of force: they are directed towards the wellbeing of the subjects residing within the sovereign domain. In some senses they may be said to reflect a sovereign interest in facilitating consent to sovereign power: certainly, the State may find it expedient to, at least in part, ground its power upon consent. Governmental rationality suggests that it is not merely concern for its own power that motivates the State’s interest in the wellbeing of the population, but a true concern for the management of the populace. Yet this same biopolitical aspect of governmentality — its concern for population — engenders violence, which even if not waged for the benefit of the sovereign, may be waged with equal virulence for the benefit of race; or blood; or life itself.

There is a twofold relation between lubricative power and sovereignty. Firstly,
sovereignty, in so far as it is governmentalised, has the capacity to channel lubricative flows in a fashion that would appear to vary from the traditional focus of sovereignty upon security. The State possesses a vast reservoir of facilitative resources that may be deployed towards the creation of extensive lubricative channels and conduits, many of which operate beyond the grasp of violent sovereign power. Significant resources, expertise, and labour are devoted towards the health and well being of the population. Large scale bureaucracies are formed, massive social programs initiated, expertise and knowledges are generated. In these cases the facilitative potential of biopolitical sovereignty seem at odds with its capacity for violence.

Secondly, despite the fact that lubricative deployments may frequently not correlate with the direct use of violence, there remain many occasions where the management of lubricative power coincides with violent sovereign aims. This may be found primarily in the creation and maintenance of massive bureaucracies, the large formalised lubricative networks that oil the movements of the great friction machines within the sovereign domain. Thus where there exist prisons, detention camps, police and military forces, border controls, there are attached bureaucratic administrations – great formalised lubricative networks – which facilitate the enactment of the sovereign decision to pursue violent means. These may or may not conform to the “traditional” sovereign concerns for territory: true to the emergence of governmental rationality, the object of rule today may in many cases be displaced onto the life of a given population, rather than the land and resources it dwells amongst. Yet this is only the replacement of territory for blood as the final concern of violence. It does not affect the sovereign prerogative to wield violence, nor its willingness to do so.

Further, in so far as both governmental rationality and sovereignty share a biopolitical concern for population, we may suggest that even the most seemingly benign deployments of lubricity within the sphere of government must be seen within the broader context of a desire to regulate life by all means at its disposal: to foster life and disallow it to the point of death. In this sense the perplexing face of contemporary sovereign violence – exemplified in the US campaign against Afghanistan, in the simultaneous delivery of bombs and food – can be characterised as representing the complexities of contemporary lubricative and frictional management. Modern governments undoubtedly devote huge resources towards the wellbeing of the
populations over which they seek to exercise control; but lubricative deployments may inevitably be only steps away from the use of violence towards the security of that same population. The lubricative power that issues from sovereignty must therefore be approached with the same caution with which we are taught to approach the mythical Trojan horse: a gift that may contain within it an irrefusable violence.
It was the same with May ’68: those who evaluated things in macropolitical terms understood nothing of the event because something unaccountable was escaping. The politicians, the parties, the unions, many leftists, were utterly vexed: they kept repeating over and over again that “conditions” were not ripe. It was as though they had been temporarily deprived of the whole dualism machine that made them valid spokespeople. Bizarrely, de Gaulle, and even Pompidou, understood much more than the others. A molecular flow was escaping, minuscule at first, then swelling, without, however, ceasing to be unassignable.

Giles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

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6. Informal Lubricative Flows and Erotic Hope

The machine of power contains a matrix of lubricative flows that move within formalised channels, deploying facilitative gestures and assemblies to distinct points within relations of power. As I have argued, these formalised flows are perhaps best exemplified within the bureaucratic apparatus, which aims to organise large-scale facilitative affects according to rationalised principles. Tight control of lubricative flows can enable immense productivity. Government is precisely that science aimed at organising frictional force and lubricative flows.

But formal lubricities do not account for the total effect of lubricative flows within the machine of power: on the contrary, only a small portion of lubricative flows may ever be incorporated within formalised channels. Networks of informal lubricity, on the other hand, touch every aspect of relations of power. We find them flowing through small and large organisations, between individuals and groups, generating a multiplicity of facilitative micro-events. Even in the most concentrated sites of measured violence — the rape / death camp, the torture complex — it is possible to find moments of informal lubricity, where a brief understanding is reached, a cigarette shared, or an unsolicited act of facility is granted. Informal lubricity accompanies the everyday acts of entities within the landscape of power: the movements of bodies in

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relation to each other on pavements; the small “niceties” made by workers to each other in an organisation; a favour from a friend; a touch from a lover.

In this chapter I provide an overview of informal lubricities: their role with respect to formalised lubricative channels; their capacity to flow / flood outside formalised networks; and their capacity to generate forms of reciprocity and community outside of the reach of sovereign violence.

**Informal Lubricative Flows and the Microdynamics of Power**

The lubricative network cannot be understood through mere knowledge of its formalised conduits of operation. The total effect of *informal lubricative flows* – the accumulated product of an infinity of localised, everyday acts of facilitation – far outweighs the combined effects of formal channels. These localised, informal flows reach into every relation of power, making productive assemblies possible across the social order. Indeed even the bureaucracy, with its formalised rules of conduct, and strict lines of hierarchisation, is also a network for informal lubricative flows. These tributaries run between and within offices, producing individual and collective inventiveness and enterprise; they provide the organisations with their “living power.”

Making sense of informal lubricative flows requires attentiveness to what Foucault describes as the “microphysics” of power.² There is a necessity for *scale* in the analysis of power, and the recognition that every great movement in power is in actuality made up of a great multiplicity of human and non-human actions, all caught within a heterogeneous flow of political forces. The interactions of power occur at the international, national, state, regional and local levels. Power happens at the individual level, between bodies, and as I have argued in Chapter 4, between organs and objects. Political analysis must turn attention to the way in which small unpredictable movements of bodies affect the global positioning of larger organisational entities.³ This does not negate the effects of large-scale movements, such as the action of the sovereign, nor imply that organisations such as the State are not imbricated within, or do not “benefit” from, attempts to manage the

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³ Ibid.
microdynamics of power. The State may attempt to grasp hold of, claim as its own, or be asked to be part of, a range of political interactions; but at all times the totality of power is larger than the State. Power remains, for everyone concerned, including the State, “the machine in which everyone is caught.”

Deleuze and Guattari, like Foucault, provide a conceptualisation of the microphysics of power, which is useful for this analysis.\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, pp208-31.} I have argued in Chapter 4 that the erotic relation could be conceived of as an assembly, in a similar fashion to the couplings of “desiring machines” described by Deleuze and Guattari in \textit{Anti Oedipus}.\footnote{See Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{Anti-Oedipus}.} The continuous connection of diverse microelements also provides a template for the analysis of power in general, which is always an attempt to trace the movements and connections between micro elements within an expansive field of force and facilitation effects. Deleuze and Guattari offer a refined set of metaphors for describing micropolitical organisation in \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, through the concept of \textit{segmentarity}, and the division between \textit{molar} and \textit{molecular} forms of organisation. The segment is defined by Deleuze and Guattari as the base unit of organisation:

Segmentarity is inherent to all the strata composing us. Dwelling, getting around, working, playing, life is spatially and socially segmented. The house is segmented according to its rooms’ assigned purposes; streets, according to the order of the city; the factory, according to the nature of the work and operations performed in it.\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p208.}

The segment allows us to not only think in terms of the spatiality between different elements, but also consider the freedom of movement of elements with respect to each other: Deleuze and Guattari suggest that segmentary organisation may be analysed in terms of its \textit{flexibility}. Segments that allow units to be continuously arranged and rearranged are described as “supple.”\footnote{Ibid., p209.} On the other hand, forms of organisation that are heavily centralised, allow for little movement, and obey strict rules regarding relations between segments, are described as “rigid.”\footnote{Ibid., p210.}
States of suppleness and rigidity are not mutually exclusive: rather, different modes of segmentarity co-exist with each other. Thus, for example, apparently unified centrally organised and rigid wholes may be made up of “supple” heterogeneous components: “the modern political system is a global whole, unified and unifying, but it is so because it implies a constellation of juxtaposed, imbricated, ordered subsystems.” The differences between supple and rigid segmentation depend on the scale of analysis: that is, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, there is always a plurality of modes of political organisation, composed on both molar (macropolitical) and molecular (micropolitical) levels. Step backward and it is possible to see large unified organisations, such as States, departments and churches; step forwards and suddenly the smaller micro elements are brought into focus. This mode of analysis, between molar and molecular levels of scale, is in many ways similar to Latour’s “black boxing,” as discussed earlier. Open the black box, and a range of entities within a relational network spill out; step back from the black box and one merely has one component, hermeneutically sealed, and apparently unitary in organisation.

There is a relationship between the concept of segmentarity and the analysis of bureaucracy presented in the previous chapter. As I have argued, the bureaucracy is a formalised lubricative network which attempts to capture and organise a multiplicity of lubricative gestures. Because it seeks to organise lubricity at a micropolitical level, bureaucracy is both a complex device for the formalised organisation of lubricity, and a complex of informal and unformed lubricity in itself. Even formal, “rigid” lubricative networks include complex flows that run across political apparatuses. These informal lubricative flows are necessary for large organisations as they deliver

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p213.
11 Further, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, the apparent implications of scale may be reversed. Those organisations associated with an apparent “supple segmentary” may themselves be comprised of rigid elements: “Leftist organizations will not be the last to secrete microfascisms. It’s too easy to be antifascist on the molar level, and not see the fascist inside you, the fascist you yourself sustain and nourish with molecules both personal and collective.” Ibid., p215.
12 Latour, Pandora’s Hope, pp183-5.
the micro facilitative gestures and assemblies necessary to enable these organisations to perform their precisely directed macro facilitative function.

Perhaps a salient example of the need for supple, informal lubricities is the role played by clerical support personnel and executive and personal assistants in large organisations. These positions – traditionally taken by women – frequently require flexibilities in job description, stretching from basic competence with administrative tasks such as minute taking and typing; to skills in managing staff appointments; to an ability to manage aspects of client / staff relations (“meet and greet” clients; organise relevant business and social events); to a willingness to organise aspects of senior staff “personal business matters” (purchasing lunch, picking up the dry cleaning etc). Juliet Webster observes: “the competencies that women workers bring to bear in their work vary from the organisational skills of the secretary who ensures the smooth running of the office and deals with the office politics which are never explicit, to the typist or wordprocessing operator who, despite the most routine of jobs, still knows how to get the best from her machine and the workings of her particular environment.”

These positions tend towards a pure facilitation: their role is almost wholly to enable organisational movement, even if the immense productivity of these positions is not acknowledged. Webster observes: “The secretary who effectively runs the office without, predictably, any recognition, is a familiar phenomenon.” This is in part a reflection on the immense value placed on formalised responsibilities within the organisation structure: as Karen Ramsay and Martin Parker note, individual success often hides the “labour that is frequently unacknowledged and goes unrewarded in organizations…and reflects the greater value given to rational, task orientated behaviour.” Once we recognise the role played by informal lubricities, it is clear that the two modalities of facilitative organisation – that is formal and informal – are

equally important and are often inter-dependent, despite the fact that informal lubricities may not be offered the same level of recognition.

Despite the fundamental role of informal lubricities within administrative structures, their innate flexibility and lack of containment generate a source of potential instability that continually threatens the unity of the formalised lubricative organisation. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that this creates something of an inherent distortion in the operation of the organisation:

> It is not sufficient to define bureaucracy by a rigid segmentarity with compartmentalisation of contiguous offices, an office manager in each segment, and the corresponding centralisation at the end of the hall or on top of the tower. For at the same time there is a whole bureaucratic segmentation, a suppleness of communication between offices, a bureaucratic perversion, a permanent inventiveness or creativity practised against administrative regulations.  

The ability of the informal lubricative network to act “against administrative regulations,” to flow across boundaries and between assigned segments, to secrete itself from the pores of the centralised network, is indicative of its expansive capacity. As much as the bureaucracy is an apparatus designed to capture the informal lubricity contained within, it is condemned to a certain leakage both from its boundaries and between the compartments that compose its internal structure. We may thus observe, to think once again in terms of Latour, that this is a black box that carries an inherent instability in its operation. The machine of power is, after all, sticky and wet.

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18 We could also note, the structure of departments within an agency may frequently create antagonistic forces across different strata of the organisation: for example, between management and workers; or policy and service deliver functions.
19 In fact, to borrow from Michael, we could argue that a more appropriate term for the bureaucracy – and other organisations like it which incorporate vast interconnected networks of human and non-human actors – is the “black blob.” Michael states: “the solidity of the black box suggests the same output – e.g. a camera always works thus (of course, what the notion of black box signifies is all the hard work of corralling disparate elements to ensure that a camera “always works thus”). The black blob, by comparison, is a softer entity with more fluid boundaries. The elements that comprise it work together – cohere – but what it produces, what it does, shifts and varies. Moreover, those components sometimes do things seemingly on their own, yet always within the borders – the skin – of the black blob.” See Michael, *Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature*, p131.
Lubricative organisation must respond to the problem of leakage: it must attempt to hold, direct and unify the creative force within its borders.

In this context, we may recognise the reason why industrial action taken by workers to “work to rule” can be so effective, since efficient productivity, inventiveness and smoothness of operation rely upon a continued flexibility that is oiled by a multiplicity of seemingly unauthored facilitative actions. Industrial regulation demands conformity, frequently supported by the threat of economic sanction, more often than not backed by the coercive force of the law. Yet its strict observance, to the letter of its command, threatens the possibility that its intended outcome will ever be realised. Withdraw lubricative devices and the organisation grinds to a halt.

Organisations devoid of lubricative flows are animated only by the regulation and the friction of law. The paradox of this situation is that in order for the organisation to approach an idealised functioning it must allow for the conduct of particular relations that remain unpredictable, and beyond the scope of regulation. Work to rule plays on this paradox, by seeking worker regulation of what is usually beyond regulation. This form of industrial action does not rely upon the full withdrawal of labour (as does a strike), nor does it provide a physical barrier to production (as does a picket), but relies upon workers withdrawing the multiplicity of non-compulsory acts which are engaged in as employees; gestures which whilst formally unrecognised, enable the smooth functioning of the organisation. When “work to rule” action was used effectively by English rail guards in the early 1900s, it was met by trepidation: an editorial commented that the “new sabotage, legality in excelsis, the essentially law-abiding strike, would mean paralysis!”

Where the protest action of “work to rule” represents a guarded and strategic withholding of lubricity from formalised networks, the street protest on the other hand represents an explicit mass exodus of lubricity from formalised channels of organisation and its reappearance in public space. In one sense, this withdrawal of lubricity marks the failure of a production process; yet this grand oil leak may also be the starting point for a new productivity. I argue that the street protest incorporates a

twofold lubricative process: first, the temporary or permanent evacuation of lubricative flows from machines of power; second, the temporary and creative flourishing of “unauthorised” networks of power which accompany the outbreak of informal lubricity from previously formalised conduits. The latter aspect of the protest is responsible for the creation of mobile and transitory networks, the linking of strangers in new productive assemblies, the swelling of new lubricative flows that generate turbulence within the lubricative mechanisms of power. The street protest, though undeniably violent – indeed a moment of grand frictionality – may also generate a serene lubricity. I turn now to a historical example, one that generated a now infamous annihilatory violence yet was responsible for moments of a seemingly pure lubricity.

**Tiananmen**

The violence generated by the street protest occurs within a space of juridical exception. But the protest differs from the exceptional space of the camp in the sense that it is not merely the State that wields a measured violence within this sphere. The street protest is an extraordinary event within the juridical sphere, since it is one of the few occasions where violence exercised by groups of people may be tolerated within the bounds of law. Exception in this instance grants the opportunity for both police and protesters to engage in extraordinary acts that would not otherwise be tolerated by law. We may observe, for example, that attacks by protesters on police may not attract sanction by the police, even when the culprits are known. For example, protesters may openly spray-paint signs and roads, break windows, dent police vehicles, barricade entrances, and yet not necessarily attract criminal sanctions from the State. Thus the street protest offers a peculiar point of resistance to the exceptionary power of sovereignty.


23 Note that Agamben’s most recent translated work on exception indicates that he would agree that exception can function in this dual manner, stating that “in both the state of exception and revolution, the status necessitatus appears as an ambiguous and uncertain zone in which de facto proceedings, which are in themselves extra- or anti-juridical, pass over into law, and juridicial norms blur with mere fact – that is, a threshold where fact and law seem to become undecidable.” See G. Agamben, *State of Exception*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005), p29; see also B. Neilson, “Potenza Nuda? Sovereignty, Biopolitics and Capitalism,” *Contretemps 5*, December 2004, at
granted the right to exert force, and it is here that the otherwise illegal act will be tolerated, even if this act may itself constitute a virtual slap in the face for the power tolerating this violence.

The street protest is, in this sense, a meeting of measured violences. Each side deploys a governed violence that aims to bit by bit wear the opponent down. We find this very clearly in the use of State violence during the Beijing uprising, where before the tanks were ordered to recapture Tiananmen Square, there was a gradual escalation in the intensity of measured violence between the State forces and the Beijing citizens. The initial mass mobilisations in Beijing in late April 1989 were not occasions of physical violence, and in these instances, the police had been “ordered to not use violent means” since “the authorities expected that the appearance of a large number of police to block the streets would be sufficient to stop unarmed students and discourage bystanders.”

In the weeks that followed there was an increasing interaction of State forces and protesters. Even by the early evening of June 3rd, when the Army had been ordered to enter Beijing and re-establish control, the measure of violence exercised was significantly greater, but notably did not as yet include lethal force. Apart from their AK-47s, the army carried with them a range of “non lethal” devices, including “metal bars, nail-studded clubs, garrottes and whips, including a type of steel-core whip with an outer rubber covering that leaves no visible wounds.”

At 2pm tear gas was used on a demonstration of students and residents. Later that night, Armoured Personal Carriers tried to force their way through barricades, one indiscriminately running over people in its way. A few hours later (1.30am), “several thousand soldiers carrying iron bars” met protesters, “bringing their iron bars down on the backs and heads of people as they tried to flee.” This escalation, though still irredeemably violent, represents a measure of care towards life that the violence that


Lin, The Struggle for Tiananmen, p59.


Lin, The Struggle for Tiananmen, p116. Lin states that “Beijing residents claimed that this was the first time gas was used by the Communist government on the Chinese people” (Ibid).

Brook, Quelling the People, p125.

Ibid., p139-40.
followed could not lay claim to. Even the first warning shots, fired at 10.30pm on June 3rd – into the air above the heads of the protesting masses – could claim a “care” for life, despite the risks of such an action to those residing in buildings above street level.

Although the street protest is usually characterised as a measured violence, it may turn towards annihilatory violence; either as paramilitary or military forces attempt to forcibly disperse the crowd with bullets, gas, and tanks; or as the protesting mass itself returns the violence that is being directed against it, killing State-employed troops and personnel. In the case of the Beijing uprising, this moment came at 1.30am on June 4th when the government loudspeakers around Tiananmen Square broadcast a warning that the army “would now no longer exercise ‘restraint’ and that the personal safety of those who disregarded this warning could ‘no longer be guaranteed.’”29 The events which unfolded in the hours after this moment – the violent crushing of the protesting students who were camped in the square, and the continuation of the violence which had been wrought throughout the night by the People’s Liberation Army against Beijing citizens who had barricaded streets in support of the students – represent the final measure in violence, when force is no longer governed in order to maintain life, but annihilatory in that the violence exerted shows no regard for life: reports of the number of dead range up to 4000.30

Although there is a great potential for violence, whether as an exchange between protesters and (restrained) State forces, or as an eventual State orchestrated massacre, the street protest is also a site of lubricative flows. Indeed, I would argue that the work to rule, the strike and the protest action in general are effective precisely because they withdraw lubricity. This withdrawal is not merely of labour power (the collectively assembled force amassed by organisations to drive production) but the slipping away en masse of a previously organised lubricity from formalised channels of power. In

29 Ibid., p135. This announcement relates only to the immediate vicinity of Tiananmen Square, and the subsequent “cleaning operation” which occurred there. Shootings of people had begun elsewhere in the city at 11.00pm June 3rd, after warning shots were fired (p121). These shootings began in earnest after the army, who had been held up at various barricades throughout the city, were ordered to “reach Tiananmen Square by midnight”. See Lin, *The Struggle for Tiananmen*, p117.

30 Ibid., p118. It was of course notoriously difficult to discern exactly the number who had died or who were injured as a result of the “incident”. The Chinese government officially claimed that 300 died, whilst 7000 to 9000 were wounded, the Chinese Red Cross and hospitals in Beijing estimated that around 2600 people died (pp117-8). Also see T. Brook, *Quelling the People*, pp151-69.
In this sense, if the street protest is seen as an evacuation of lubricative power, it may also be seen as a flood: an amorphous, heterogeneous, “undisciplined” entity that may explore every avenue and conduit, which flows turbulently and resists containment. In Canetti’s influential account of crowds, one finds reference to the liquid quality of the rolling mass, \textit{firstly}, as an expanse of fluidity (“the sea is multiple, it moves and is dense and cohesive. Its multiplicity lies in its waves, they constitute it”\textsuperscript{33}), \textit{secondly} as a river:

\begin{quote}
    The most striking thing about a river is its direction. It moves between unmoving banks, and these render its flux continuously apparent. The unresting and uninterrupted flow of its waters, the definiteness of its main direction – even if this changes in detail – the determination with which it
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{32} This potential is emphasised in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s political treatise, \textit{Empire}. Arguing that the evolution of capitalist exchange has allowed for the creation of a new “abstract labour” that can be defined as “the cooperating set of brains and hands, minds and bodies; it is both the non-belonging and the creative social diffusion of living labour; it is the desire and the striving of the multitude of mobile and flexible workers; and at the same time it is intellectual energy and linguistic and communicative construction of intellectual and effective laborers.” See Hardt and Negri, \textit{Empire}, p209.

makes towards the sea, its absorption of other smaller streams – and all this has an undeniably crowd character.\textsuperscript{34}

In his two volume psychoanalytic account of German soldier males in the early twentieth century,\textsuperscript{35} Klaus Theweleit extends Cannetti’s definitions of the mass by analysing them in terms of their symbolic forms and argues that the representation of the flood – and other similar substances such as slime, and the mire – are connected to a symbolic repulsion for the feminine. Masculinity armours itself against an enveloping, and putrefying morass that threatens to corrupt men, and desecrate the images of an idealised femininity: “The morass grows until it becomes endless. Mother Germany has become a pigsty. A morass. The morass gives birth to new whores.”\textsuperscript{36} Many of the elements identified here by Theweleit are also present in Luce Irigaray’s analysis of fluids. For Irigaray, the liquid represents the lost other of the solidified real: rigid unities are posed that efface the existence of flowing substances, and yet the solid can itself only exist as a composite of fluid entities that have temporarily been rigidified into an apparently unified form.\textsuperscript{37}

It is possible to surmise from both Irigaray’s and Theweleit’s discussion that there is a political imperative to organise and contain informal lubricative flows: to channel them into formalised conduits, and direct them into timely, organised deployments. Like the fascist response to the flowing protesting masses that Theweleit analyses, there is a governmental logic which seeks to direct flows, to contain them, to make their movements orderly and predictable. This is the operative principle of bureaucracy, which formalises facilitative power within rigid lubricative conduits. But the street protest serves as perhaps the most visceral locality for this form of

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p96.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p390-1. Masculinity in Theweleit’s analysis is characterised by a continuing effort to fend off, and contain this liquid abject: “In patriarchy, where the work of domination has consisted in subjugating, damming in, and transforming the “natural energy” in society, that desiring-production of the unconscious has been encoded as the subjugated gender, or femaleness, and it has been affirmed and confirmed, over and over again, in the successive forms of female oppression.” Ibid., p432.
\textsuperscript{37} Jean Paul Sartre’s discussion of snow as a “granular compact” is interesting in this regard, as it too suggests the essential liquidity of the solid, and by reversal, the solidity of the liquid. See J.P. Sartre, Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology, (Washington Square Press, New York, 1992), p766; Sartre’s discussion in Being and Nothingness on slime, and the subsequent intellectual discussion this has sparked, particularly from Michelle Le Douff, is also interesting with regard to Theweleit’s account.
lubricative management, since the protest is a site where the bodies of the living mass are physically contained by the State force, utilising violent means. This is where directional forces, both internal and external to it, which attempt to drive its energy into formalised conduits and prevent its evacuation, meet the corporeal flowing flesh of the crowd. Examples of what I would describe as “flood management strategies” may be seen in action in today’s large globalisation protests, where tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of bodies, meet on regular occasions with police forces in public spaces. For example, at a large anti-globalisation protest held in Melbourne in 2000, large barricades are erected around the perimeter of a casino complex (Image 3), with each section of the barricade constructed from a solid concrete base, upon which a steel mesh fence is mounted. The fences curl outwards to make it difficult for protesters to scale the barricades. Each section is linked by steel connections, and secured into the ground by thick steel supports that run through the concrete base. Besides these structures, active engagement by State forces is necessary to govern the flows of the crowd: when some ten thousand protesters flood around the complex, roving bands of police are deployed to break blockades, and clear flows. The response of the police to such situations more often than not involves some sort of regimented or solidified formation (Image 4). Police march around the complex in a rigid segmentation, and rupture walls of protesters by forming themselves as a solid wedge to pierce through assembled bodies. Horses, batons, and vehicles are all used with the aim of either piercing through chains and flows of protesters, or as a means of limiting the movement of the flood.

It is not merely State forces that attempt to manage and direct the mass. The protesters themselves govern their own conduct, attempting to bring some form of molar organisation to their cause. The blockade or the picket is an example of this. The blockade or picket is essentially a solid strategy. It involves assembling the mass into a hard formed object. To break this blockage, the components (human bodies) must be chipped off, pushed aside, flattened or dispersed. In modern democracies the occupation of public spaces tests the nerve of the State in its commitment to damming and unpicking this mass. The constant pursuit of a solid strategy by blockaders is seen

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38 “S11” protest held on September 11th, 2000, (exactly one year prior to the terror attacks in New York) at the Crown Casino complex, Melbourne. I attended the protest as a fieldwork exercise for this project.
Image 3: Mesh and Concrete Barricades, September 11th 2000 Protest

Photo: Author
as imperative to the success of the strategy. Rally marshals desperately yell hoarse cries over public address systems calling for people to “Stick together!” “Link arms!” “Don’t let them break us!” At the Crown casino protest, a marshal yells “Stay solid! Stay solid!” as a group of protesters, losing interest, begins to trickle away.

The tendency of the protesting mass to resist forms of containment is especially interesting for an analysis of lubricative politics. The power of the crowd is not its sheer physical strength, nor its capacity to regiment and solidify itself, but rather its peculiar ability to continuously seep through barriers, to creatively find points of communication and draw new bodies into connection with it. Bodies sustain the barricades – feed them their energy – supplying fresh protesters to new and old sites of frictional contestation. New protesters provide a “cooling function”: allowing new bodies to replace those that are bruised and damaged. The street protest enables a grand communicative web, supported by a proliferating field of informal and temporary linkages. Messages spread quickly through the crowd, facilitated by technologies such as audio systems and mobile phones, as intricate informal networks are activated to provide information on the movements of police, the status of various blockades, and the latest happenings within the vicinity of the protest. Protesting bodies quickly and effectively split and reform around the police, flooding between points, leaking from entrance to entrance. The flooding mass that engulfs these police units poses a significant strategic threat: how can the police control the mass which refuse to become a wall which it could break, refuse to “passively” occupy spaces, refuse to sit still? Indeed, how could the duly appointed rally marshals themselves hope to be in command of this process? The protesting mass is not merely liquid, but it is slippery. It continuously evades capture; it searches for passages of connection that are not rigid and formalised; it creates the conditions for unplanned moments of production.

We cannot make the mistake, though, of imagining that the movement of lubricative flows from formalised channels represents an “escape from power.” For the street protest is itself a network of power; even if, to make use of Mike Michael’s phraseology, it is closer to a black blob than a black box.39 An example of the

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39 See Michael, Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature, p131

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Image 4: Regimented Formation of Police September 11th 2000 Protest

Photograph: Author
continued connection to the machine of power is the role of discipline within the protest. Although the protesting mass represents a slippery evacuation from the conventional mores that traditionally govern the conduct of bodies – for example, people may choose to walk down roads, halting traffic – this same mass is subject to modes of disciplinary regulation. This regulation may reflect rules of etiquette that surround the conduct of protests: for example, a degree of respect may be shown to rally marshals who direct crowds; or a certain tolerance may be cultivated towards different political tendencies within the rally. Further the street protest generates its own norms: for example, the crowd may obey a pressure to appear animated, to dance and sing in the streets, even if this is not the sort of activity with which all individual members of the mass are comfortable.

What is interesting about these same regulatory norms is their capacity to facilitate the building of new political networks outside the formal conduits of lubricative power. In these moments, a brief pure lubricity can arise, where relations take on a malleable expansiveness, innovative couplings are generated, and a true peace may emerge strangely unfettered by the manifest forms of violence that proliferate around it. These opportunities break the everyday monotony of our lives, rupturing the intricate and suffocating web of governing forces within which we are caught. They relieve us from the implicit forms of violence that operate tacitly around us and present an opportunity for relations unmediated by law and contract: they offer hope for reprieve.

We find this pure lubricity in the days before the massacre in Beijing, when Tiananmen Square and its surrounds were occupied by encampments of students and workers, and trodden daily by mass protests for nearly two months before. The occupation would have been dirty, and crowded, and by the end of May it was reported that “sanitary conditions were deteriorating rapidly,”40 with some 100,000 to 200,000 people staying overnight in the vicinity of the square.41 Yet as Lin emphasises, despite the chaotic intersection of protesting bodies, the square “was also

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peaceful, orderly and euphoric.\textsuperscript{42} Tiananmen Square had become the symbolic centre for the new democratic movement: with student leaders proclaiming that “the Square will become the clearest banner of the triumph of truth over evil, of the people’s triumph over fascism.”\textsuperscript{43} Tiananmen was the locus within which students began their hunger strikes on May 13\textsuperscript{th}, continuing up until May 20\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{44} It was also the central location for continuing mass mobilisations of bodies: for example, one of the largest protests, held on May 17\textsuperscript{th}, attracted some 2 million people.\textsuperscript{45} But more than just a locale for the exertion of a popularly exercised force, Tiananmen Square was also a territorial site\textsuperscript{46} for the staging of a lubricative community: those who lived within the square, or devoted time to it, became immersed within a space that facilitated the emergence of forms of political engagement which had hitherto been unimaginable.

Doubtless part of the excitement related to the new opening for political dialogue that was created in the vicinity of the Square. The encampment was the site for hastily convened meetings, and exchanges of political views; it was the site where newly emerging political entities would converge and proclamations and denunciations would be formulated. It was also a site of a daily political contestation: for example, the efficacy of maintaining the occupation would be debated vigorously by varying factions within the democratic movement.\textsuperscript{47} Decisions made within such a context required popular agreement, since they ultimately lacked the force of law. It may have been this factor which led to the continued occupation of the Square, which persevered despite the resignation of the significant student leaders in late May,\textsuperscript{48} with many students having arrived from afar, keen that “they would not be denied the

\textsuperscript{42} Lin, The Struggle for Tiananmen, p127.
\textsuperscript{46} David Harvey’s analysis of utopia as a territorial formation is relevant in this regard. See D. Harvey, Spaces of Hope, (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000), especially “Spaces of Utopia,” pp133-81.
\textsuperscript{48} See June Four: A Chronicle of the Chinese Democratic Uprising, p125.
opportunity to have their voices heard and their participation recognised.” These exchanges attracted attention from Beijing residents: “Most people came individually or in families and because they were curious or sympathetic. They were excited about the freedom experienced by the students encamped at Tiananmen and about their own freedom of movement and speech.” As the troops swelled around Beijing awaiting orders to quell the uprising, a space of lubricity opened as new forms of cooperation and communication spread through the city:

When the residents and students successfully stopped the troops on the outskirts and the troops eventually were ordered back to camps and barracks, the residents rejoiced with the students, convinced as before of their conviction that their city was sacred and that the brotherly and paternal love for the liberation army was upheld by all Chinese. Euphoria filled all Beijing. Traffic was orderly without traffic police. Crime rates in May were significantly down. People went about their business, feeling relieved, happy, optimistic, and excited. They brought water and food to feed the students. They came to Tiananmen to visit and talk to students. They cheered and participated in the marches and demonstrations around Tiananmen.

This lubricative web would create the terms for new political spaces, and project desires for consensuality and reciprocity beyond the bounds of formal political institutions. Two events in particular, immediately prior to the arrival of the troops, capture the spirit of this utopic political intervention. Firstly, on May 30th a ten metre tall statue, “Goddess of Democracy,” was erected in Tiananmen Square, as an abstract symbol of the democracy movement. Secondly, on 3rd June, one day prior to the massacre, the Tiananmen University of Democracy was established within Tiananmen Square. Both of these mirror two prominent fixtures within civil society — namely the monument and the university — yet their disconnection from a legal apparatus, and therefore from the coercive “security” of law, rendered them malleable, and more

50 Ibid., 104.
51 Ibid., p133. It was, as Lin points out, the residents of Beijing, and not the students, who suffered the greatest casualties in the massacre.
intimately connected to the bodies that supply them their facilitative power. As points of a purely lubricative intersection, they are reliant upon the living power of the people who animate their functioning. Sadly, this same transience of lubricative assembly reflects their relative fragility in the face of violence. The University would be disbanded when the Square was cleared by troops on June 4th; whilst on the same night, a tank would topple the “Goddess”: “It must have been quickly and easily reduced to rubble, mixing with all the other rubble in the square, to be cleared away by the army as part of its show of cleanliness and order.”

The protesting mass is the evacuation of the living lubricative function from the grasp of organised and institutional power. The machine of power, like the internal combustion engine, is inevitably leaky. Lubricants slip between chambers, they ooze out of gaskets and pressure cracks, they move in unanticipated flows, they may even, given a significantly large breach, escape the machine altogether. We thus observe the phenomena of Tiananmen: where sovereignty may seek an extreme, annihilatory violence as a desperate means to restore order, and prevent a cataclysmic oil leak.

The “oil leak” thus enables us to re-interpret Benjamin’s enigmatic concept of “divine violence.” As discussed in Chapter 3, Benjamin interprets the general strike – the mass withdrawal of labour by workers across all industries in an economy – as an example of a divine violence, since its aim is not to re-invent the law, or sustain an existing law-making regime, but to absolutely suspend law-making violence: it “purifies the guilty, not of guilt, but of law.” Where a more limited industrial action, such as a small scale picket, may aim at only local demands, such as a pay increase, and conform to certain demands of the law, and may use violence to make law (to change, for example, an award agreement), the general strike wields a coercive violence which places sanctions upon both the state and industry for an indefinite period, and lists demands which threaten the being of the law itself.

From the standpoint of lubricative politics, the general strike is the dream of a total evacuation of lubricative flows from the mechanisms of power: the flow of a multiplicity of facilitative gestures from the clawing grasp of political institutions.

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The general strike is thus the fantasy of a giant oil leak, of a flood of lubricative power that escapes from the grasp of the formalised conduits that had previously contained its energy. The threat it holds is that the facilitative gestures and assemblies, which had previously enabled a range of diverse relationships and productivities, should suddenly become absent, or become incorporated within whole new networks of power outside existing strongholds. But as much as this is a great force that threatens to seize and rupture great industries, bureaucracies and the mechanisms of the State itself, the lubricative potentiality of this flood must also be recognised: it searches out new lubricative networks, and seeks its investment at a great distance from organised and formal conduits of power. It feeds the creativity and productivity of spontaneous and mobile connections, enables new planes of inventiveness, enables unimagined relations, far from the formal channels of lubricative power. Importantly, it is this abrupt slippage of lubricative power from the formalised conduits of power, which, as we shall explore below, holds within it the hope for relations freed from the shadow of violence. The significance of the social protest, including the Beijing uprising, rests not merely in the potential it demonstrates in Sovereign power for an annihilatory bloodshed, but in the capacity of lubricative power to create, even if only momentarily, a site of political relation outside the grip of sovereign violence.

**Beyond Violence: Erotic Hope**

It is perhaps strange that amidst the most terrifying exchanges of violence, during points in history that can only be described as a living hell, there have emerged moments of an almost serene reciprocity, which within their respective contexts take on the qualities of the unreal. So it must have seemed for the World War One soldiers on the Western Front, who amidst the mud, misery, and the stench of rotting corpses, found occasions for agreement and communication with the very same forces which, perhaps only moments before, it had subjected to an apocalyptic barrage of fire power. As the stalemate between the Allied and German forces dragged on, conventions developed between the contesting armies that allowed for peculiar moments of truce, where an “understanding” was sought with the enemy. The codes of conduct that evolved between the British and German forces in the Somme between 1915 and 1916 appeared to demonstrate that forms of understanding and agreement were possible between mortal enemies. For example, it is said that
“‘neither side shelled the transport and shelling never began before 8 a.m.’ in order that the soldiers could ‘have breakfast comfortably before settling down to the day’s work.’”\(^{55}\) Respites in violence also allowed time for necessary rituals to be observed, such as the burial of the dead: “In August 1916 Australian stretcher-bearers came out, carrying Red Cross flags, and the Germans did not recommence firing until the battlefield had been cleared. The Australians then reciprocated. In February 1917 the 1\(^{st}\) Civil Service Rifles and a German unit came to a similar agreement.”\(^{56}\) Still other moments, apparently from out of nowhere, reflected a spontaneous desire for release from the context of violence. Where trenches were in close proximity, “the Germans would occasionally intimate their desire for a quiet time by raising placards or shouting across the gap”\(^{57}\); and on one occasion, a story is told of troops on either side of the front, singing songs to each other, and applauding.\(^{58}\)

On occasion these unofficial truces included recorded fraternisation between enemy soldiers. In these brief moments, friendly chatter, souvenir swapping and games replaced armed conflict as the predominant mode of interaction. Perhaps the most famous example of such an exchange occurred on Christmas Day 1914:

> Then, up and down the whole line, Frenchmen, Germans and Englishman spontaneously emerged from their trenches and met in no man’s land where they exchanged cigarettes, drink, food, photographs and addresses. A company of the 2\(^{nd}\) Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers even played a game of football with a Saxon unit, which they won 3-2.\(^{59}\)

In such a moment, the grim reality of one’s situation may be temporarily forgotten, and an almost utopian and dream like reciprocity may be achieved:

> A German NCO started his fellows off in some marching tune. When they had done I set the note for ‘The Boys of Bonnie Scotland’, and so we went on singing everything from ‘Good King Wenceslas,’ to the ordinary Tommy’s

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\(^{59}\) Ibid., p172. See also Lloyd, *The War in the Trenches*, p33.
song, and ended up with ‘Auld Lang Syne’ which we all, English, Scots, Irish, Prussians, Wurtenburgers, etc., joined in. It was absolutely astounding, and if I had seen it on a cinematograph film I should have sworn that it was faked.  

How is it possible that within contemporary political spaces we may find such a moment of a pure reciprocity, which is uncluttered by violence? I have already argued that the erotic relation is an example of such a moment. The erotic relation involves the consecutive laying down of lubricative acts – gifts to others – which open possibilities for new modes of communication and interaction between erotic participants. Love making, even when burdened by obligations and clumsy miscommunications, aims at the production of a consensual reciprocity, within a space that though immersed in power, must, of necessity, be untrammelled by violence. Those who engage in consensual erotic relations hold within and between them what can be described as an *erotic hope*: the desire to find with others a place of sanctuary, a point where time itself may be apparently suspended, and an absolute, dream-like reciprocity achieved. This is not a divine hope for a metaphysical heaven – which soars high above the living – but an earthly hope for a mediation which does not know of the friction of law, or of the annihilation of bloody conflict, and the violence implicit in it; a hope that feeds our wild, utopic dreams of escape.

Are we right to summon *hope* as an authentic political category? Surely, we may reason, hope is a form of wishing that belongs more properly with dreaming, rather than within the realm of the politics of the here and now. This would be true if the outcomes of hope were mere fantasy. But it is within the particular transcendence of self that accompanies hope – the projection of the self into a future which may or may not be real – we come to imagine possibilities for the self that are intractably situated in the “Real” of the world. We hope for the future because we are caught in the context of today. In this sense, as Heidegger observes, hope never loses sight of the self in the world as it is existentially posited:

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Hope has sometimes been characterised as the expectation of a *bonum futurum*, to distinguish it from fear, which relates itself to a *malum futurum*. But what is decisive for the structure of hope as a phenomenon, is not so much the “futural” character of that *to which* it relates itself but rather the existential meaning of *hoping itself*. Even here its character as a mood lies primarily in hoping as *hoping for something for oneself* [*Fürsich-erhoffen*]. He who hopes takes himself *with* him into his hope, as it were, and brings himself up against what he hopes for. But this presupposes that he has somehow arrived at himself. To say that hope *brings alleviation* [*erleichtert*] from depressing misgivings, means merely that even hope, as a state-of-mind, is still related to our burdens, and related in the mode of *Being-as-having been*. ⁶¹

In the transcendence of hope we continually posit the terrain of the political context within which we are caught. We drag the world with us when we hope: the world informs the trajectory of our dreaming. When we say “I hope for a brighter day,” we are both acknowledging the calamity of the present moment, and the very real possibility — even if this possibility never arrives as an actuality — that respite from the present calamity may one day arrive.

Where hope involves intersection with the hope of another (“I hope that Giorgio loves me the way I love him”) ⁶² then there emerge points of consensuality, and potential reciprocity, which rest upon an understanding that our individual hopes do not threaten to violate those of the other (“I was surprised to find that my hopes were reciprocated”). It is in this context that we can once again appraise the gift, and its particular relation to others. For the pure gift opens a plane of radical potentiality to the other and renders the relation of the self to others as being in a state of hopeful waiting. When I say to myself “I hope Hannah liked my gift,” I await with anticipation for the potential of the gift to be recognised. The thread that binds us to our gifts is the hope that the gift that is received by others from ourselves will be apprehended in the way in which we imagined. This process is of course fraught with danger, since we can place such stringent demands upon our gifts that they can

⁶² Or in other words: “I hope Giorgio shares with me the hope that we love each other as much as each other.”
become a burden (for example, a rich relative who gives us money but demands that we only use it for a particular purpose). Yet the same gift, when given without condition or contract, may also engender an open-endedness that wholly frees the relation between gift giver and gift receiver. As Lingis observes, this is a point at which a relative freedom emerges:

it seems to me that a real gift is always a kind of liberation. A liberation towards something grand and something more grand. The most beautiful recent case I can think of is this: a friend of mine in Japan called me and said, ‘I’ve just turned 50’. To give himself a birthday present he gave a round-the-world ticket to two of his students. He freed himself from his money and wants nothing in return. He freed his soul from the kind of anxiety that everybody feels when you turn 50 and you want to hold onto your own life and you realise life is beginning to decline. And of course the students in question were free to travel around the planet and to open their sensibility, their hearts, their minds to all kinds of new things. It’s a completely liberating gift, a gift of freedom for everyone.63

Here we can recognise the coincidence of political aspiration and the gift. Politics evokes others since it is a description of the relation between the self and at least one other. The gift also evokes the other since the gift, by nature of what it is, demands the existence of the other as a recipient. Force is often understood as the coercive means by which the other’s actions may be directed: in other words, the starting point for a relationship of domination. The gift, on the other hand, is the necessary starting point for a relation of reciprocity and consensuality with others.

Erotic Hope is an expression for the radical potentiality of the gift to engender a shared vision for the future between the self and the other. But why “erotic” hope? What is it about our hope towards the erotic relation that deserves a place of distinction amongst other hopes? And why should erotic hope deserve a separate classification within the nomenclature of politics itself? The erotic relation is representative of that relation which seeks reciprocity and collaboration as the nexus

63 Lingis quoted in Zournazi, Hope, p38.
between the self and Other. The hope for the erotic relation is distinct from other hopes because of the reciprocal character of the hoped-for future. It differs from hopes for riches or fame, which more clearly refer to the individual (even if they imply the existence of a world), or a hope for an external event, such as the arrival of rain, which seeks a global change without necessarily seeking a change of self. Erotic hope, on the other hand, is the hope for an ongoing engagement with the other that lacks a clear outcome or horizon: it seeks pleasure in its open ended-ness. In erotic hope I long for the surprise that will unfold in the other. And I hope for the unexpected that will, through this process of engagement, unfold within myself. Erotic hope must not be considered as a simple desire for the other. It is true that hope may be an expression of the desire that our desires may be fulfilled by the other, but such fulfilment necessarily involves engagement with the unpredictability and complexity of the other, a process which cathects pleasure towards the joint production that may ensue from an erotic entanglement. Desire directs and projects the self into the world. Erotic hope, on the other hand, presents the open horizon that draws our desires towards the productive engagement with the other.

Tracing the trajectory of erotic hope from the individual to the collective requires us to look for moments where a multiplicity of facilitative gestures and assemblies operate without force: where community rests on relations of reciprocity alone. Although points of consensuality – and reciprocity – are imaginable within our personal relations, it is often difficult to locate these materialisations within macropolitical formations that entail the involvement of many people and entities. There have been many attempts to imagine such broad collective points of reciprocity, notably located in the works of the writers of utopia, such as Charles Fourier, Thomas More and Saint-Simon. The writings of Fourier in particular have a strong resonance with erotic hope as I describe it in this work: the voluptuous and evocative “A Session of the Court of Love,” for example, may be read as a pioneering attempt to transform sovereign violence through the principles of a facilitative eroticism.

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Sadly, such attempts to imagine political organisation without violence and coercion are inevitably met by a scepticism that re-enforces the significance of violence as the preferred tool of social organisation. Dreamy-eyed utopians are thus confronted with the truth of organisation which they have apparently lacked the necessary “realism” to perceive for themselves: either that humans are, by the hand of God or nature, wrought as creatures of violence, who may never be separated from their innate natures; or faced with the apparent “fact” that forms of coercion are necessary to create unity, to ensure structural cohesiveness and stability in human production. We find both of these arguments posed, to impressive rhetorical effect, in Hobbes’ description of the state of nature, as a condition that affords “no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” Hobbes’ description of the state of nature, as a condition that affords “no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

The solution Hobbes presents is a sovereign violence that provides the unitary threat necessary to provide order in the state of nature. The consequence of this strategy is that for Hobbes, peace is only possible through the guidance of the sovereign sword. Freedom from violence is only “secured” through the application of violence. If we accept this model, then we are confronted by the paradox of social organisation and its relation to violence: namely that whilst violence is considered intolerable and pernicious within our own personal relationships, violence is tolerated, even desired, within large-scale forms of social organisation.

Where a Hobbesian schema would suggest that violence is an inherent factor in human relations, Benjamin explicitly argues that violence need not be a factor in the resolution of conflict:

Is any nonviolent resolution of conflict possible? Without doubt. The relationships among private persons are full of examples of this. Nonviolent agreement is possible wherever a civilised outlook allows the use of unalloyed means of agreement. Legal and illegal means of every kind that are all the same violent may be confronted with nonviolent ones as unalloyed means.

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Courtesy, sympathy, peaceableness, trust, and whatever else might here be mentioned are their subjective preconditions.\textsuperscript{68}

For Benjamin, examples of non-violent means include civil forums such as the conference or meeting, where opinions may be put forward, and agreements forged, without the intervention of violence or coercion.\textsuperscript{69} Further, Benjamin suggests that when law making / law maintaining violence is absent from intervention in disputes, this may in turn provide the impetus for the resolution of conflict by means other than violence: “To induce men to reconcile their interests peacefully without involving the legal system, there is, in the end, apart from all virtues, one effective motive that often puts into the most reluctant hands pure instead of violent means: it is the fear of mutual disadvantages that threaten to arise from violent confrontation, whatever the outcome might be.”\textsuperscript{70} In this sense Benjamin reverses Hobbes’ problematic of human violence. The State is no longer the guarantor of human peace: instead, the State can only promise a continuing violence: a violence that may in fact intensify the use of force as a means to settle disputes. Only in the absence of the law may one hope to facilitate “unalloyed means of agreement.”\textsuperscript{71}

Since a true peace is not possible under the auspice of a violent sovereign, peace must be sought in momentary points of non-violence – or pure lubricity – which, through dissociation with the law, become havens for the non-violent resolution of dispute. Whilst non-violence does not hold within its grasp the necessary resources to break the power of the State – since to do so it would need to be “armed” in some way, either with violence or coercion\textsuperscript{72} – it remains capable of facilitating the conduct of relations outside the sphere of State intervention. More importantly, non-violent

\textsuperscript{68} Benjamin, “A Critique of Violence,” p244.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p245.
\textsuperscript{71} This prompts us to reassess the significance of Benjamin’s concept of “divine violence,” which is commonly read as offering divine violence as the only means of salvation from law. Certainly, this ominous reading is present in Derrida’s interpretation of the text, where he attaches a great significance to the Messianic overtones of Benjamin’s promise of divine violence, but also associates it, almost regrettably, with the cipher of the holocaust (see Derrida, “Force of Law: The ”Mystical Foundation of Authority,”” p52). Also see Peter Fenres’ discussion of Benjamin and pure means outside of the framework of law in P. Fenres, “Out of the Number: Benjamin and Irigaray Toward a Politics of Pure Means,” in Diacritics, Vol. 28, No. 1, (1998), pp43-58, especially pp45-6.
\textsuperscript{72} Since, as discussed in Chapter 3, even “non-violent” forms of protest, such as those practised by protesters against British colonial rule prior to Indian Independence, rely on coercive means to “persuade” the State (e.g. blocking public thoroughfares or preventing production).
means holds with them the prospect of a *true peace that is secured amongst the living*. This is not a peace without power, since power remains inescapable, but it is a peace that is unfettered by violence or coercion, apparently naive to the workings of the great friction machines, and their hold over the living. It is an earthly peace, which, as distinct from a divine violence, offers as its goal the cessation of violence from within the sphere of life. It is also by necessity a fragile peace. It is grasped momentarily, since it lacks the means to ensure its security from violence: one may escape violence, or alternatively, meet violence with violence, but violence, unlike a gift, may never be refused. If divine violence represents a pure violence which remains uncontaminated by law, then it is possible for us to name another formation, also lacking reference to law, which is perhaps the polar opposite of a divine violence: namely *a pure lubricity, the end point of the trajectory of erotic hope*.

If Christmas on the Somme in 1914 serves as an example of the seemingly unreal possibilities that erotic hope may hold for those engaged within the sphere of war – within a space devoted to a continuing annihilatory violence without measure – one is prompted to ask how a pure lubricity may be achieved within the civil space, where a frictional violence serves as a predominant means of governance. The answer to this lies within *exception* itself. For while the exceptional space forms the basis of the sovereign right, it also forms the point of departure in which the mass itself may, even momentarily, constitute political community beyond the bounds of the sovereign grasp. Thus, in addition to analysing the importance of exception in defining sovereign power, we also need to consider those exceptional spaces where new political forms flourish – if only momentarily – ungoverned by sovereign power. In the exceptional space, where the protesting mass claims a right to exert a violence that temporarily breaks the monopoly of force previously held by the sovereign, there exist points of reciprocity, facilitation, and consensuality. Such spontaneously formed lubricious communities inhabit an alcove that is sheltered from the violence of a juridical apparatus which arches menacingly all round it.

The classic modern example of such a political formation was the Paris Commune, declared on March 28th 1871. The uprising which had preceded its inception had been undoubtedly violent, with armed Parisians defending the surrounds of the city from
the assaults of the French army, intent upon recapturing power within Paris. Yet for two months before the final massacre of some 30,000 Parisians, and despite acts of violence both within Paris and outside it during this period, there were some extraordinary events, many of which reflected a desire to find community beyond the violence of sovereign power. This desire is in part expressed in the symbolic actions taken by the Commune to remove from within Paris the semblances of the monarchical regime. As Marx describes in his chronology of events, the symbols of State violence were summarily effaced: “On the 6th, the guillotine was fetched out by the 137th battalion of the National Guard and publicly burnt amid loud popular applause. On the 12th, the Commune ordered the triumphal column on the Palace Vendôme, which had been constructed by Napoleon I after the war of 1809 out of a captured cannon, to be overthrown, as it was a symbol of chauvinism and mutual hatred among nations.”

The day to day lives of the people living within the commune also reflected a desire to create a space which was removed from the violence of law: it was here that those living in a space of absolute exception had the momentary opportunity to engage in political exchanges which had previously been unimaginable. Examples of these experiments included the surrender of abandoned workshops to cooperative control on the 17th of April; and awarding of a pension to women and their children who had lost men in the revolt, without regard to their marital status. In other cases, wild celebrations, such as those which broke out across Paris in 1870 when the first revolts had occurred, would temporarily produce joyous outbursts from animated crowds: “In their mad frenzy men would passionately embrace each other, or commence to dance.”

The capacity for exceptional space to function as a momentary point for the manifestation of a spontaneous and utopic lubricity, suggests that exception itself, whilst granting the sovereign expansive powers towards the conduct of both governed and annihilatory violence, may also offer a fragile reprieve from relations which are bound by force. In particular this space offers an opportunity for us to consider how it

75 March, History of the Paris Commune of 1871, p194-5.
76 Ibid., pp182-3.
77 Ibid., p21.
is that life may be constituted from outside the context of sovereign power. If life is rendered “bare” in the face of sovereignty, then what form does life take when it is outside the grasp of sovereign violence? And, what is the character of the relations in which this life may be engaged?

We could speculate that the answer to these questions lies in democracy. After all, in the examples of protest I present, exception appears to generate an eruption in popular modes of sovereignty. There are a number of frameworks for sovereign power that encapsulate the possibility of democratic or popular rule. Democratic conceptions of sovereignty may, for example, be found in the work of the liberal philosopher Locke, who argued that sovereign power was invested in the hands of the people.78 We find a similar tendency in Arendt, who sees authority and power intimately linked with the will of the people.79

Popular sovereignty, to quote David Held, can be said to involve the people’s “right to determine the framework of rules, regulations and policies within a given territory and to govern accordingly.”80 In some respects, contemporary government reflects an aspiration towards a popular sovereignty, particularly in so far as there exists a compulsion for government to embrace the concerns of the populace, in line with its concern for population (even if this can only be said to reflect a desire for re-election). Certainly, the institutions that comprise government do, by and large, sit comfortably with models of representative democracy. Elected representatives sourced through a two party system, public administrations that enable regular “free and fair” elections, parliamentary systems with clear procedures and appropriate “checks and balances,” formal channels for public input into decision making: all these aspects of modern representative democracy are arguably not possible outside a framework of governmental power. But, it is incorrect to adduce from this that government is equivalent to democracy, since governmental processes can form the enclosure that limits the movements of democracy, and place suspicion on any claim to popular sovereignty. William E. Connolly suggests that the contemporary State encages democracy, offering it stability yet also limiting its potential expansiveness: the

79 See for example Arendt, “On Violence”, p120.
“territorial / security state forms the space of democratic liberation and imprisonment. It liberates because it organizes democratic accountability through electoral institutions. It imprisons because it confines and conceals democratic energies flowing over and through its dykes.”

The institutional nature of governmental democracy – the fact that it diverts informal lubricative flows into formalised channels – means that in the modern era representative democracies are inevitably mediated through large bureaucracies, organisations, interest groups, committees and authorities.

Connolly’s comments point to the distinction between representative models of democracy and conceptions of democracy that entail a more significant interaction of community members in political decision-making. Within representative models of democracy the opportunities for real participation in political decision-making – that is, beyond public elections – are rare. The contemporary “democratic” State thus presents itself as democratic only part of the time, since beyond formalised channels for input, most members of the political sphere surrender to decisions of elected representatives and executive power. This apparent disjunction between participatory democracy and government has lead Wolin to re-imagine democracy as a “fleeting” experience, something that temporarily breaks the order of formalised governmental rule:

Democracy in the late modern world cannot be a complete political system, and given the awesome potentialities of modern forms of power and what they exact of the social and natural world, it ought not be hoped or striven for. Democracy needs to be reconceived as something other than a form of government, as a mode of being which is conditioned by bitter experience, doomed to succeed only temporarily, but is a recurrent possibility as long as the memory of the political survives. The experience of which democracy is

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81 W. E. Connolly, The Ethos of Pluralization, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999), p152. In an interesting precursor to Hardt and Negri’s Empire, Connolly comments: “If democracy is not to become a political ghetto confined to the territorial state, the contemporary globalization of capital, labor, and contingency must be shadowed by a corollary globalization of politics. In such a globalization of politics, the political energies and loyalties of many activities will not be confined to the state in which they reside and (if lucky) vote.” See W. E. Connolly, Identity / Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox Expanded Edition, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2002), p215.
the witness is the realization that the political mode of existence is such that it can be, and is, periodically lost.  

For Wolin, the experience of democracy in the contemporary era is limited to a moment of expansiveness: as Nicholas Xenos glosses, democracy “exists in the moments when we open ourselves and our communities to the unfamiliar and unsettling, then dissolves when a new familiarity and a new settlement take place.”

We should recognise clearly here the similarity between this momentary outburst of democracy, and the fleeting glimpse of political reciprocity that characterises erotic hope: both political events rupture the constrained norms of contemporary sovereignty with the evanescent intersection of lubricative flows. Temporary encampments are set up; rolling negotiations occur; manifestos drawn; tendencies emerge, debates and contestation occur; new monuments are imagined as the old symbols of the regime are effaced.

Can we assume therefore that erotic hope is merely an expression for democratic hope? Can a democratic conception of violence escape violence? Certainly, if we accept Wolin’s re-configuration of democracy as a moment of political expansiveness within the landscape of power, there is an equivalence between erotic hope and democratic hope. But it is less clear that democratic sovereignty can be equivalent to a pure lubricity. The obvious difference between the two is the firm opposition of erotic hope to violence. This is not to say that democracy is tolerant of violence: in fact it is arguable that violence actively hampers the possibility of participatory modes of democracy. But it is nevertheless conceivable that democracy may direct violence, and seek to supervise, through popular control, the mechanisms of legitimate force traditionally associated with western sovereignty. Erotic hope differs from democratic sovereignty in so far as it is conspicuously antithetical to violence: it always actively

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83 N. Xenos, “Momentary Democracy,” in A. Botwinick and W. E. Connolly (eds.), Democracy and Vision: Sheldon Wolin and the Vicissitudes of the Political, (Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2001). Note the similarity to Alphonso Lingis” observations on revolution and hope: “…every revolution, every political hope is for setting up a better world, but on the other hand the revolutionary fervour and act is of its nature ephemeral. Just because it doesn”t endure doesn’t mean that it was a failure. But one of the great intoxications of revolution and the reason that it does continually recur is that those who fight the revolution find it a kind of moment of effervescence, of transfiguration. Even if it fails, it was a summit experience for people in common.” See A. Lingis, quoted in an interview with Mary Zournazi, in M. Zournazi, Hope: New Philosophies for Change, (Pluto Press, Annandale, 2002), p38.
seeks to etch a space of pure lubricity – to steal a moment of respite – even in the face of overwhelming violence.

Sovereignty imagines the organisation of relations of power in an ongoing framework, something that erotic hope does not clearly aspire to. Sovereignty endeavours to organise flows of power; to vest power within particular channels of social organisation; to create authorities and legitimacies. The broad difference between democracy and erotic hope is that it is possible to imagine a trajectory for the democratic impulse that inculcates sovereignty, whereas erotic hope merely expresses the desire to engage in lubricious productive assembly. Erotic hope longs for the break in the regime that will open the possibility of a pure lubricity; the hope of popular sovereignty, on the other hand, imagines how the authority of the State may be managed to enable ongoing relationships of consensuality and reciprocity. Erotic hope does not ever dream of enshrining sovereignty within relationships of power, but looks to the pure and expansive moment of productive possibility. Democracy is a praxis for the reciprocal organisation of power, now and into the future; erotic hope simply describes the mad hope for a relation of reciprocity and consensuality in the here and now.
Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over obstacles. We’ve got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen.

D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* ¹

7. Conclusion

I confess: the path we have travelled has been circuitous. The original impulse that sparked this project – namely the paradox of suffering and violence in the twentieth century – has guided us along an unexpected set of detours, occasionally drawing us well away from the usual watering holes of political theory. Along this course we have contemplated the powers of force and facilitation, violence and sovereignty; donned overalls and embarked on a scenic tour of the inner workings of an internal combustion engine; scrambled under razor wire to glimpse the terror of camps and torture complexes; contemplated the soul and its relation to violence and life; crept into “a delightful boudoir,” ² spying acts of reciprocity and consensuality that were capable of pleasurably making possible what was previously impossible; navigated vast tributaries of lubricative flows, across administrative systems, bureaucracies and governments; found ourselves caught amidst the excitement and terror of a surge of flooding bodies; and discovered, secreted away from the grinding friction of opposing forces, spaces of pure reciprocity that were capable of generating a true peace. I make no apologies about the zig-zaging path I have cut across these seemingly oblique territories: the course of this inquiry necessitated an expansive search through fields of pain and pleasure, of force and facilitation, of violence and hope.

The endeavour proved profitable. This work makes a number of distinct contributions towards understanding the contemporary evolution of sovereign violence, the context of power that we find ourselves caught within, and the possible means of escape. Let us summarise the results of this investigation:

1. Lubricative Power

Although relationships of force (or frictional power) are active constituents of social and political networks, they do not operate in exclusion: political theory must account for the multiplicity of facilitative acts and assemblies that generate productivities across the field of power. I have defined lubricative power as a delta of facilitative gestures and assemblies that generate happenings of power that would otherwise not be possible. The most salient example of this is the erotic relation, which of necessity involves the reciprocal laying down of facilitative gestures that produce a pleasurable entanglement which cannot be replicated through the use of force or coercion.

Lubricative assemblies can be large and complex: for example bureaucracies represent a very sophisticated development of the lubricative principle, where vast resources are deployed with the aim of coordinating lubricative flows to enable productivities upon a grand scale. Where the bureaucracy is an example of a tightly segmented formalised lubricative assembly, flows of lubricity frequently lack this organisation: the street protest, for example, can be described as a seemingly wild and untamed flood of lubricity.

2. A New Metaphor to Describe Political Power.

I have proposed a framework that can accommodate the interaction of frictional and lubricative power. I have argued that an appropriate metaphor for describing this complex interplay of power is the internal combustion engine, a device that incorporates within its operations a multiplicity of frictional events, whose effects are tempered by the action of complex lubricative networks that direct flows throughout the far reaches of the mechanism. It is true that this has necessitated a return to a mechanistic analogy for the description of power relations. Nevertheless, I believe this provides a most compelling metaphor for the interactions of power; whether describing the large movements of force and lubricity at the macropolitical level of interaction or as a means to conceptualise the pleasurable and painful rubbing of bodies at a micropolitical level of interaction. The value of the model does not lie in its ability to describe force relationships in isolation, but rather in its capacity to identify economies of lubricity and their effect upon force relationships. Thus, in this machine of power there are many points of exchange, where frictional and lubricative
power move in tandem to generate productivity. We also find in this mechanism hotspots of intense friction, where facilitative power plays only a minimal role; on the other hand there are points of a seemingly pure lubricity, shielded, if only momentarily, from the intense effects of frictional exchange. The machine is complex, but offers useful ways to imagine how intricate movements of force and facilitation are both intertwined, and operate in relative isolation.

3. Governed Violence

I have identified a distinctive form of violence that lies at the heart of frictional power, and as I have argued, this violence has taken on an increased significance within the context of contemporary sovereignty. I have used the term governed violence to describe this violence of measure. This violence is immediately recognisable in the practice of torture, where strategies and techniques are deployed that obey the imperative to maintain the life of the tortured. Torture is, of course, not a new phenomenon. But the twentieth century brought a relatively new development to the history of torture: namely the concentrated deployment of scientific and medical expertise towards the maintenance of the life of the tortured; so that now, perhaps more accurately than ever before, the virtual “threshold” between life and death may be determined.

Governed violence exposes the vulnerability of the soul to power. If, as Foucault suggests, the soul is the object of modern power, then biopolitics has the capacity to reduce this soul to its bare biological functionality: the entity is reduced only to its core nutritive and reproductive capacities. It is perhaps unsurprising that these two capacities that define the most minimal aspects of the soul should sit so close to the heart of the biopolitical imperative, and should have figured with such fearsome prominence throughout the bloody history of the twentieth century.

I regard governed violence as the most terrible weapon within the grand arsenal of the twentieth century. Some may argue that the capacity for injury and death inflicted through mass warfare, and the mass annihilation of the atomic bomb, would rival governed violence for this title. But where the great wars and nuclear annihilation are unquestionably the ubiquitous representatives of the sheer and bloody capacity of
humanity to devastate absolutely, it is the unspoken efficacy of governed violence in achieving its goals, without glamour or ceremony, which ultimately earns it its due respect. For not only has governed violence held in its wake hundreds of millions of lives painfully interned in detention centres, in torture complexes and rape camps, in prisons and other correctional facilities, but it has done so quietly, and with an insidious care for the lives of those it has interned. As prison populations swell, acts of sexual violence proliferate, torture complexes continue their operation, and the power to indefinitely detain insidiously becomes the norm, the “banality of evil” has perhaps never been so apparent.

4. The Micropolitics of Facilitation

Amidst the sad litany of violence, torture and suffering that has occupied many pages of this work I have offered one significant reprieve: namely, a microanalysis of relations that involve a pure exchange of facilitation. I have argued that the erotic relation best exemplifies this exchange, since it rests upon the creation of a space that is not encumbered by force or coercion. Facilitation arrives as a gift: it is characterised by its refuseability. Eroticism involves the management of intensities of sensation through the exchange of gifts of facilitation. Flesh, props, organs, sinew, technologies and minds are brought to the scene of this exchange, and pleasurable productivities are generated through the collaborative assembly of these components.

I have argued that consent is an active process of engagement that involves the successive laying down of facilitative gestures and assemblies towards reciprocal relations with another or others. The heart of lubricative power may be located in these exchanges. Facilitative assemblies and gestures reveal the transformative capacity of lubricative power: the fact that it can make possible what was previously impossible, and through the facilitative process enable what could be painful and violent to be experienced within an environment of pleasure and consensuality.

5. Sovereignty and Government

Throughout this work, I have focused attention upon questions of sovereignty and government, and their relation to violence. In particular government has an important
role within the machine of power I describe in this work, as this is the organising rationality that takes on the task of managing the exchange between frictional and lubricative power. Indeed I have argued that the government of the State is characterised precisely by the attempt to manage complex questions of resources, security and population through the strategic use of lubricative flows and frictional forces. Government represents a sophisticated set of strategies incorporating not merely the sovereign prerogative to utilise legitimised violence, but the devotion of expansive resources to channel lubricative power and nurture vast lubricative networks in order to best manage the populations within its domain of authority. The latter lubricative resources have given birth to many of the great institutions of modern western civility – bureaucracies and libraries, schools and universities, art galleries and swimming pools, councils and authorities – which represent broad, ongoing commitments to fostering elements of population and generating sustained productivities. Though these great deployments of facilitative power are not in themselves worrying – in most respects they are welcomed and particularly for those in westernised societies, difficult to imagine living without – they become more ominous when considered in relation to the contemporary administration of violence by government. When one considers, for example, the bureaucratic expertise deployed to enable the efficient governance of the Nazi atrocities, it becomes apparent that although lubricity can temper the violent capacity for devastation which is held within the hands of biopolitical sovereignty, it may also, conversely, increase the proficiency and scope of this same capacity. The efficacy of governed violence — the careful measuring out of force to indefinitely preserve life held in a state of suspension — may be enhanced substantially through careful lubricative management. The present-day torture complex, which not only utilises sustained, measured forms of violence, but also the latest medical, psychological and scientific expertise, stands as a testament to the vast potential for the infliction of suffering and injury through the strategic deployment of frictional and lubricative powers.

6. Erotic Hope

It is perplexing that the violence and coercion that are found in personal relationships should generally be regarded as intolerable, when at the same time intra and inter State violence should prove the norm for the organisation of macropolitical
relationships. Conversely, it is strange that the moments of unforced reciprocity and consensuality that are found in our everyday relationships should prove unimaginable in large-scale political organisation. This work has deliberately traced a trajectory from the macropolitical to the micropolitical and back again to enable thought on how we may be able to expand reciprocity and facilitation beyond the limited locales of the bedroom, the café or the office. I have described erotic hope as an impulse towards a true peace that involves relations of consensual reciprocity with another or others. This hope seeks to create enclaves of political community that are unfettered by violence of coercion, even if the vulnerability of these formations condemns them to impermanence.

As we sit at the dawn of the twenty first century, and gaze toward an apparently unending horizon of global sovereign power, terrorism and fear, it is difficult to comprehend what the future holds for politics, and what paths may be open to us to escape the mire in which we find ourselves caught. Perhaps the most significant challenge to the future of politics comes from biopolitics, and the hold it exerts over almost every facet of political thinking. Whilst biopolitics is a central component of sovereign power, it is also a rationale that unilaterally effects the conduct of bodies across the political scale. Biopolitics increasingly shapes the way we apprehend ourselves, and provides the frame through which we come to conduct our own conduct. It evinces as “rational” those political demands that are moulded around questions of life and its biological constitution. It envelops the political discourse through which we engage with others, the political demands we make, and our discourse with governing authorities.

In this sense, politics appears to have become inescapably tied to the division of populations and the awarding of biopolitical rights: I am a human, I possess a right to food and shelter; I am a citizen, I possess all the rights of a human, plus freedom of movement and the right to speak freely, the right to vote and receive welfare; I am a child, I have no right to vote, but my wellbeing is assessed by teachers and care workers, and yesterday I was spoken to by a policeman about the dangers of drugs; I am a man, I have many rights, and I have recently been the target of a prostate cancer
campaign; I am a prisoner, I have the right only to the bare necessities of life; I am a woman, I may receive welfare from the government if I stay at home and look after my children, although I still pay a luxury tax on my tampons; I am an old man, I have been assessed by an aged care team and they have offered me a package; I am a cow, I have the right to a stall large enough for me to lie down in, and the right to a painless death; I am a human and I live under martial law, my rights have been indefinitely suspended. The outcome of this logic is that political options that do not relate to the specification and measuring of life are ruled out of the sphere of political choice. This may be seen clearly in debates on how to deal with the “problem” of illicit drug dependence, a debate that is caught between strategies aimed at exerting a governed violence upon the drug user (through prisons or sanctions), and medicalised approaches that seek to rehabilitate the drug user both mentally and physically. Both of these strategies cannot escape from the constitution of life. Both the prison and the hospital articulate the base conditions of biological life with which the recipient of their services must conform: in the case of the prison this is arrived at by violence, in the hospital, by other means. Yet each of these strategies fails to countenance a course of action that takes into account the desires of drug users. It is rarely asked how drug use may be facilitated as a pleasurable practice, and in what ways it is possible for drug users themselves to be involved in the development of safe and consensual drug taking practices (which could involve, for example, strategies to minimise the potential dangers associated with dependence).

Biopolitics does not only affect the regulation of the criminal, or certain designated sections of the human population, but stretches to incorporate life in a global sense. To take the example of the food we eat, a decision that would otherwise appear as private or familial becomes the subject of intense public discourse, and the deployment of massive community resources that draw into their grasp literally millions of life forms. A farmers’ campaign group may lobby the government to devote resources to the management of a disease that is affecting livestock. The government, concerned about the effects of contaminated beef, both for the well being of consumers, and the health of local and overseas financial markets, agrees with the farmers and aligns the expertise of universities and scientific research centres to

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arriving at a solution. Treaties are entered into, bureaucracies engaged, border restrictions are drawn up, the movements of livestock are monitored more intensely, with auxiliary resources devoted towards surveying and controlling the dietary intake of animals to ensure a final product that is free of contaminants. It is this same biopolitical rationality that has delivered us so many of the benefits of contemporary civilisation: public health standards and sanitation, increased longevity, comprehensive health and education systems, dedicated research and teaching facilities, and, of course, prime cuts of meat. In this sense, it is difficult to imagine living without biopolitics. But the danger is that these same instruments for the analysis and regulation of life can be utilised by the great friction machines towards the continuation and intensification of violence: torture, incarceration and death. It is perhaps not incidental that in a similar fashion to the mass slaughter and incineration of hundreds of thousands of head of livestock in the foot and mouth disease panic of 2001, these same biopolitical objectives have also justified the wholesale slaughter and incineration of human populations.\textsuperscript{4} Wherever biopolitics turns, it brings with it the shadow of the camp.

Is it true that, in Agamben’s words, there “is no return from the camps to classical politics”?\textsuperscript{5} How is it possible that political demands may be made without reference to what life as a biological entity demands as its minimal condition? We find glimpses of an answer to these questions at the close of Agamben’s \textit{State of Exception}, where he argues that the key to escape is to find a form of politics that refers to neither violence nor law:

To show law in its nonrelation to life and life in its nonrelation to law means to open a space between them for human action, which once claimed for itself the name “politics.” Politics has suffered a lasting eclipse because it has been contaminated by law, seeing itself, at best, as constituent power (that is, violence that makes law), when it is not reduced to merely the power to negotiate with the law. The only true political action, however, is that which severs the nexus between violence and law. And only beginning from the space thus opened will it be possible to pose the question of a possible use of

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{5} Agamben, \textit{Homo Sacer}, p188.
law after the deactivation of the device that, in the state of exception, tied it to life.\textsuperscript{6}

It should be clear from this work, that the answer to the question of politics beyond biopolitics lies in facilitation; in opening possibilities for consensual and reciprocated production. Pure lubricity – an unfettered politics of consent – does not ask how life may be determined, regulated by law or constructed; rather, how it is that life, as it is already contextually presented, may become an active participant in production. This requires a politics that is willing to embrace that which it is ungraspable, the strange, the unfamiliar; namely that which cannot be described through a minimal state of biological functioning. Perhaps this form of politics is what Lingis suggests is opposed to the “rational community,” a community that instead “demands that the one who has his own communal identity, who produces his own nature, expose himself to the one with whom he has nothing in common, the stranger.”\textsuperscript{7}

In \textit{The Coming Community},\textsuperscript{8} a work published prior to \textit{Homo Sacer}, Agamben calls for the constitution of community through reference to a common, abstract and unqualified quality, or “whatever being,” that may be universally held by all within a multiplicity. It is this abstracted particularity that Agamben argues grounds the dynamics of love:

Love is never directed toward this or that property of the loved one (being blond, being small, being tender, being lame), but neither does it neglect the properties in favour of an insipid generality (universal love): The lover wants the loved one with all its predicates, its being such as it is. The lover desires the \textit{as} only in so far as it is \textit{such} – this is the lover’s particular fetishism.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{6} Agamben, \textit{State of Exception}, p88.
\textsuperscript{8} See Giorgio Agamben, \textit{The Coming Community}, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993).
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., p2. Note resonance with the following statement by Hindess at the conclusion of \textit{Discourses of Power}: “It is not only the problem of sovereignty that we …need to free ourselves from, but also the problem of political community. In effect, this means finding a way to think about politics in the absence of its defining, constitutive function: something far easier to suggest than it will be to effect.” See Hindess, \textit{Discourses of Power}, p158.
We may ponder whether it was this love that was present on that Christmas in 1914. Or present amongst the students encamped in Tiananmen who would greet, talk to, feed and console the soldiers and police who were deployed to contain them. What should make one reach to another, even an enemy, and offer the open horizon of friendship? This gesture cannot be confused with a humanism, which explains away such situations with reference to the innate qualities of humanity, and the supposed propensity of humans for self-recognition and “fraternity.” We should instead recognise this expansive act as a desire for a pleasurably productive pure lubricity, uncontaminated by imaginings of domination, or a future violence, concerned only with forming a consensual assembly. This is a demand for political community that does not determine its membership by specification of those entities that are assembled, but seeks to include life with all its aspects rendered in full.

On June 2nd 1989, a musician, an academic, a head of planning, and a former editor of a magazine began a seventy-two hunger strike in Tiananmen Square.10 Their “basic tenets” were listed in a declaration, which read as follows:

1) *We have no enemies! Do not allow hatred and violence to poison our wit and hamper the progress of the democratization of China.*

2) *We need to reexamine the past. Everybody is responsible for the underdevelopment of this country.*

3) *We are, above all, citizens.*

4) *We are not looking for death, but for a real life.*11

The statements are remarkably abstract, and open ended, although they are, in many ways indicative of the character of many declarations made by those involved in the Beijing democracy movement.12 I draw attention to the last two statements, which are striking in light of the investigations in this work, highlighting what may ultimately be conflicting demands. If sovereignty is irreversibly biopolitical, then the link between the life of the subject and sovereign power – a link which is solidified in the entity “citizen” – is subject to the exceptional gaze of the sovereign, and therefore lives with

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10 See *June Four: A Chronical of the Chinese Democratic Uprising*, p135.
11 Ibid., p139. Italics in text.
12 See Agamben, *The Coming Community*, p85.
the threat that it too may be declared *homo sacer*, and inhabit the bare life. The biopolitical constitution of life threatens the possibility of the real life, a life that is constituted in full, without reference to its particularities. Yet it is this life that was asked for by the hunger strikers. An erotic hope was expressed. They did not desire an annihilatory death, nor a return to the frictional violence of the living, but a “real life.” A real life that may invest itself fully in the political matrix of the present without meeting the demands of membership, or enduring the segregating hand of violence. A real life that gives and receives fully; a life that, without a memory of violence, may extend and open its horizons to others. A real life, whose soul is unhinged from its bare biological constitution. A real life, in which the hope for a pure lubricity may be realised: even if this fragile bloom may only be grasped for mere moments, amidst the incessant howl of slaughter.
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