

In *120 Days of Sodom*, one of the libertines ruminates on the irony of ejaculating during anal intercourse, wasting the seed with a sneer at the sanctity of life. The French Revolution killed the king and replaced divine hierarchies with the universal reign of Reason, with blood of the guillotine on its hands. The hypocrisy of an aristocratic class that professed Christian virtuousness yet lived the most extreme forms of sin constitutes the essence of de Sade's novels: masters are always rich, their victims are always poor. This does not suggest the evil nature of the rich, but evil as a universal nature, nestled in all but permitted to the few. The egalitarian spirit of the time leads de Sade to a simple truth: freedom given to a rational man necessarily leads him into filth.

As for today, freedom has become the most ambiguous notion: ideally defined by the recognition of human rights, it is factually defined by property rights, exclusive by definition, privileging accumulation and venture over sustainability or fulfillment. The speculative surplus dialectically produces its negative: debt, which persistently defines the very essence of economic relations. The neoliberal ethic offers a particular form of Master/Slave dialectic, where the continuous necessity to work, which has virtually no horizon, is presented as a quasi-consensual means of control. An invisible rope tightening around everyone's neck, the logic of debt forces a dilemma between material demise and the tantalizing prospect of sudden wealth.

Propagation of human life is subordinated to the generation of surplus value; therefore, the system perpetuates itself by ensuring that the debt is never repaid but reprocessed. Emerging from the gap between the ideal and the real, articulation of desire becomes impossible when output is excessive, whereas misery turns into an opportunity for the market. Since the rise of psychoanalysis, we know that money and shit are two poles of the same materiality: finance is the abstract equivalence of a thing, whereas waste implies a finished process, the form of matter consequently hidden from sight. In this regard, to turn its hidden place into a fetish is the ultimate perversion, not laughing cynically at the pretence of valuation, but watching the formless mirror reflecting the process of civilization, bound by the circularity of desire and disgust. There, the experience of the sublime coalesces with the trembling sight of the abyss between a cryptic God and his slaves, as distant as an Oedipal father and the germinating foetus conceived from his cum.

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