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# The Death Drive, Zombies, and Zombie Capitalism

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## Abstract

This paper considers the theory of the death drive (Freud and Lacan) in relation to the cultural figure of the zombie, and the use of the term 'zombie' to describe practices of hyper-capitalism. References are made to Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, Sophocles' Theban Plays, Goya's *Saturn*, migratory desire, Lacan's *lalangue* and *objet petite a*. A possible ethics of the death drive is discussed.

## **Night of the Living Dead**

At the beginning of George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), a young stylish-looking couple drive out into the country in a late model car. It's the middle of the day, but the grainy, black and white cinematography washes out evidence of color and light. The effect is to create an ambiguous space dominated by gray, a space in which the sky is featureless and the light of day has faded away

By the couple's playful bantering conversation and the hint of an unspoken tension between them, one might easily suppose that the couple are lovers. They are sophisticated and urbane, perhaps even jaded, and the drive into the country takes them out of their usual environs. The young man is handsome, sharp-witted, and cynical. His cynicism stands in sly revolt against authority and convention. His hair and eyes are dark, his complexion pale. His lips are given to a wry or sardonic smile that verges on a sneer. The young woman is also attractive and coolly detached, but she is more placid and conventional.

We in fact learn that they are brother and sister, and that they are traveling out to the cemetery where their father is buried, to remember him and leave flowers at his grave. The young man complains about the inconvenience of the trip—he has better things to do than go to cemeteries, and he has no true love for the father anyway, making this graveside gesture a sham. His sister is more sincere and insistent in her desire to remember the father, if for convention's sake, if nothing else. In this she is vaguely reminiscent of Antigone, though she is neither heroine nor martyr.

Romero's art is a vision of radical desublimation, of things falling apart in the libidinous grip of death. He portrays a guilt that is, at the same time, postmodern and panicky and absurd, and that does not allow for the 'unbearable splendor' of one who resists death by embracing its sublimation. In Romero's vision the possibility of sublimation is no more.

It is here, in this ambiguously colorless space at the gravesite of the father, that the zombie assault begins. A decaying old man looms on the horizon, attacks and devours the cynical young son. The young woman, thrown into profound terror, flees the cemetery, for the moment escaping this obscene, accusatory, cannibalistic assault.

The scene portrays the desire of the dead, the abhorrent desire of the dead father for his living children, a desire which radiates outward from the aperture of the grave. The image is paradoxical, and polyvalent—the dead father, the father who deals death, the father who refuses to die, the father whose corpse embodies the vengeance of law. The horror is archaic, indelible in the traumatic sense, libidinized within the rubric of the family romance, and catastrophic for the hope of social contract. In the Levantine religions, the desire of the dead, when it awakens and tombs split apart, marks the apocalyptic moment, the end of history, the impossibility of continuing the human condition as it was.

In Goya's painting *Saturn*, the archaic cosmic father devours one of his children, usually described as a son, but the mutilated child could be male or female. Many interpret this painting as a critique of Spain's bloody civil and political disorder spawned by the Peninsular War, and as a critique of the derelict political father King Ferdinand himself. In this artistic vision, mayhem and war revert to the death wish of the father for his children. The name of the father, which binds the death instinct under sign of the law, decays and falls into ruin like the tombstone of a neglected grave. The father's obscene decrepit body intrudes upon mortal life. Goya's Saturn emerges from the cosmic abyss. The boundaries of his naked flesh are barely discernible. He is bestial, wolf-like. His thin limbs and knobby joints suggest he is racked by hunger. Yet his face and gaping mouth are undeniably human, his eyes staggeringly wild and deranged. The black abyss is also found in his toothless gaping maw where the bits of his child disappear.

Perhaps *Night of the Living Dead* reverts to this same principle as a reaction to the war and bloody unrest of 1960's America. The political mythology of 1960's America is historically disturbing and lends itself to a hermeneutics of the death drive. The young rightful father figure is slain in a bloody public assassination. With his death the name of the father bleeds out. A repellent impostor intrudes and take command. He is the obscene illegitimate father. He unleashes the masters of war. Death and insanity reign in the country.

Within the parlance of psychoanalysis the children of the father are not innocent, cannot be innocent, To the famous dream statement 'somewhere a child is being beaten,' the death drive adds 'somewhere a grave is being neglected.' The law binds incest and incestuous murder from emerging in the gap between generations, while it also stops that gap from collapsing into the undifferentiated Ur-language of symbiosis, Lacan's *lalangue*. The neglect of the grave ruptures the law and allows the radiance of the death drive to shine forth. Saturn devours his children because they are destined to overthrow his cosmic rule. His children are his future death. A chthonic deity, he is always holding himself against an horrific transformation back into iron

and earth. Once a child experiences the rage of its father and recognizes that the father could kill, once that rage is inscribed and bound into memory, an inevitable line of questioning follows: *Why hasn't he killed me already? Does he regret not killing me before I grew? How can I bear up against his power that makes me nothing? Must I seduce him, or murder him, or become him, in order to live?* The function of the name of the father is to still those questions and erase them from memory.

What, then, is guilt? It is the lingering trace memory of those questions concerning murder and seduction. It is the perturbation of the death drive shining from the chthonic abyss—the abyss where dead fathers are expected to appear as a vengeful apparition, but mercifully rarely do.

In *Night of the Living Dead*, the zombie assault continues, becomes general, becomes apocalyptic. The survivors glean news of the outside world from emergency radio broadcasts, much as survivors were portrayed in earlier films concerning the nuclear holocaust. They secure themselves in an old farmhouse and debate whether to defend the first and second floors of the house, or retreat and barricade themselves in the cellar. The cellar is perhaps easier to defend, but for the majority of the group going beneath the ground is abhorrent. The advocate for the cellar is a middle aged man who proves to be untrustworthy and angry and domineering. He has abusively broken his wife's spirit and he deceives the group for his own purposes. In his first appearance in the film, he rises from the cellar as from a grave and angrily surprises the other survivors. He is yet another obscene chthonic father. His depravity marks the lawless reversal nurtured in the cellar. In the cellar his daughter succumbs to the strange contagion spread by a zombie bite. She becomes a child zombie, no longer at peace with the living or the law of the living. A child reborn under the sign of Saturn, she devours her mother. In this act she devours her origins. The zombie-dead have no memory of their origins. The elevation of the cannibalistic urge is total. Memory would place a limit upon this urge, introduce a conflicting impulse, lead to a hesitation or perhaps even a zombie doubt. The alterity of the zombie is precisely this absence of doubt or conflict or memory. The zombies embody the atavistic memory of a transgression, but they have no memory of it. There is no economy at work in them other than the economy of hunger.

Perhaps it can be said of the zombies, recalling Freud's conception of the death drive, that they embody the atavistic memory of being inanimate. For Freud the death drive embodies the trace memory of inanimate being, not as a form of consciousness, but as something outside of consciousness. The death drive as conceived by Freud is perhaps the most obscure element of

the unconscious, an almost pure alterity to ego consciousness. By a trope destructive of life it impels the enactment of what cannot be remembered consciously. Possession by the death drive seems to assure that radical unconsciousness attributed to the dead.

### **Zombie Apocalypse**

In the zombie apocalypse the figure of the end of the world returns in a new elaboration, shorn of the technology of the atomic and hydrogen bomb, which was its immediate cultural predecessor.

One can trace a sequence of modern types or visions of the end of the world, which commences at the midpoint of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but has its roots in the ancient apocalyptic literatures of the Levant. These images mark the progression of a fearful meglomania and despondency within the teleology of an end. The post-World War II movement of these images is both historical and rapid, reflecting the violent alternations and manipulations of cultural fear. Here perhaps the interplay of history and economics is at work, as they both spiral around an axis of absence which serves perhaps as an equivalent of the Lacanian *das ding*—that sublime, horrific, unnameable object of the real that draws the human subject toward death, that seduces collectively through historical action moving toward dissolution.

This absence, of which Lacan speaks, must surely be related to the problem of absence in modernity, to the death or departure or forgetfulness of god, to the deconstruction of the symbolic, to the ascent of realism and its subsequent collapse into uncertainty, to the loss of the sacral function in the act of naming. This centripetal energy around an axis that cannot be named except in reference to a negative semiotic term, is a Lacanian figure for desire and its restless movement. Viewed collectively it becomes a collective historical desire. As such it incurs the difficulties of a metaphysics of history in the vein of suggesting an almost Hegelian subjectivity or world spirit. Yet this is precisely the problem which opens in Freud's theorizing of the death drive. In Freud Hegelian positivity is replaced by a profound pessimism. Instead of a destiny in the totalizing self-awareness of world spirit, history comes to rest in the dead remains of its material substrate.

Just as Hegel's thought balances delicately on a fulcrum of Enlightenment and Romantic foundations, so does the entire theorizing of the death drive rest upon the conceits of modernity and the catastrophic events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Once Zarathustra declares that god is dead, doesn't the emergence of a theory of the death drive become inevitable?

Consider the origins of the Cold War. An almost theological reverence or awe accrues to the thermo-nuclear device. The bomb is unequivocally a human achievement, a kind of profound handiwork, and in the popular imagination it re-awakens images of the angel of death and the end of days. *Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.* (Oppenheimer, quoting the *Bhagavad Gita*). The Cold War emerges within the shadow of a collective trauma. The human race has conjured the possibility of its own end. The race achieves the teleological fruition of Western science and technology in a perfect material manifestation of the death drive. The end will arrive instantaneously, but from afar, from the sky, from bomber bays and missile warheads, from the secret furnace of the stars—a secret humanity has tricked from the stars in its fateful guise as Promethean race. These events, and the fantasy of our almost immediate, self-willed disappearance, conformed perfectly to the idea of a collective death wish, and spawned films and writings which were posthumous meanderings on this theme, the death drive working itself out as either the judgement of god upon the race or as the *telos* of a race whose god had died.

In the zombie apocalypse death becomes less celestial, more chthonic, arrives less from the future and more from the past, as if we have moved on entirely from the metaphysics of god, and god's judgement to the nearer concerns of what is hidden within us—an atavistic urge to end history, not by our cunning science, but in the refusal to remain civilized, a desublimation to that single last drive which uncomplicates everything and which eradicates memory, love, and community. This is seduction by a pre-modern, pre-human fundamentalism, and it cannot be entirely accidental that zombie fantasies arise and take hold just as the spectral threat to civilization according to our political mythology changes from the communist to the fundamentalist.

We might also consider the figure of the zombie as a radical satirization of consumerism, consumerism as the path to an apocalyptic destiny in an age of hyper-capitalism and hyper-commoditization. Here the zombie represents a retreat from the demands of civilization to an ascendant orality in which one is free to devour everything and regard the world as nothing more than a collection of part objects. This interpretation asks: Don't we all secretly wish to regress? Is not regression the principle of final consumerist paradise that shines forth from late capitalism? The popularity of zombie fantasies suggests a secret prohibited wish to become a zombie—to submerge oneself in a collective that is not a society, that does not communicate, that has no politics and no economy, no exchange of goods and service, and no repression, a kind of flash mob of the undead. In Pittsburgh where the original Romero films were made, hundreds of people join in each year in a zombie walk, replete with vivid make-up and worm-eaten

costumes, to lumber about in a groping and willfully dim-witted manner, seemingly possessed entirely by the peculiar consciousness of a zombie-mind, suggesting, as cinematic zombies often do, an almost poignant vulnerability and unconscious innocence.

### **Sophoclean Drama and the Death Drive**

The death drive seems always implicated in the questions of desire as it flows across generational boundaries and from the living to the dead.

Lacan based his theorizing of the death drive on the Theban plays of Sophocles, especially *Antigone*. In the Sophoclean dramas the enigmatic spiral of death and dissolution turns upon an axis of transgressive desire moving from one generation to the next.

*If you conceive a child, that child will grow up to commit the monstrous acts of killing its father and sexually embracing its mother.* That was the prophetic utterance given to Jocasta and Laius and it immediately doomed their love. In Lacanian terms it joined their love to *Das Ding*—that unnameable, prohibited object that leads to catastrophic dissolution, and yet is also the true *telos* of desire.

The migratory movement of desire through lesser pleasures toward *Das Ding* is for Lacan the essence of the death drive. Civilization can only erect barriers around *Das Ding*, laws, taboos, repressions and denials, to forestall its seductive pull. *Das Ding* is peculiarly the atavistic pull for symbiosis with the maternal object, and as such its fantasies are both annihilatory and paradisaic; and it is also an unnameable, monstrous and seductive object that shines forth from the future, toward which desire carries us.

It is important to note here that Lacan's conception of desire is both metaphysical and impersonal. It is less that the subject desires than that the subject is swept up by desire. Desire is not merely a phenomenon of the body, but perhaps more importantly, a phenomenon of language. And for Lacan desire has no material or nameable object. It passes through a series of proximate objects, Lacan terms these *objet petit a's*, which are only partial or inadequate satisfactions. They are possible or sanctioned objects which provoke and sustain desire toward its oceanic, ungraspable, impossible striving.

It is reasonable to assume from a psychoanalytic standpoint that the prophetic warning given to Jocasta and Laius only intensifies their desire to consummate their love. They choose not to submit to the law. In essence they choose not to submit to the prophetic castration which

allows life by forestalling the dissolution provoked by the death drive. Following a Lacanian analysis they choose to transgress; they die to the law, and so die symbolically, and so enter the fatal space that exists between the two deaths, between symbolic death and actual physical death. (Freeland, 2013)

Laius and Jocasta's passion renders everything concerning the Theban palace strange and tragic and hidden, qualities that are characteristic of the interval between the two deaths. Enraptured, possessed by the forbidden, they are unconscious of the fact that death holds them already. They are unconscious even as death and murder and the pollution of guilt circulates around them. This alters the ethos of the three generations described by Sophocles in the Theban cycle. The deformed subjectivity of the parent becomes a shadow cast upon the child. In an effort to avoid fate Jocasta and Laius direct a slave to leave the unnamed infant who will become Oedipus exposed on a hillside. Rescued and raised by strangers, Oedipus becomes the subject of an ironic reversal. He becomes the one who finds hidden answers to riddles. And yet he lives from the beginning in that enigmatic space of the two deaths. He becomes the embodiment of transgression, paradoxically already dead to the symbolic order, sleepwalking in the manner of his parents toward a catastrophic revelation. The entropic disorder of this family passes to his daughter Antigone, and to his sons, and draws recurrent strife and tragic death to the politics of Thebes.

### **Antigone**

If the death drive is unavoidable, if it is the destiny of all living creatures and of humanity in particular, how can one fashion an ethos of life that does not deny or falsify this drive?

Lacan describes Antigone as a figure of "unbearable splendor." She becomes the spectral image of a hero radiant in a light that emanates from the death drive. In her the images of darkness and obscurity and self-willed blinding that afflict her family are reversed, even as she replicates the horrific fate of her father, entering the coils of the underworld while still alive.

In reference to the confrontation between Oedipus and Tiresias, concerning especially Oedipus's "wonderful angry curiosity," Holderlin writes: "*knowledge, when it has broken through its limits, as if intoxicated in its own magnificent and harmonious form, which can remain at first, provokes itself to know more than it can bear or grasp.*" (Holderlin, 2009) This passage can be



applied equally to Antigone, who seeks an unbearable knowledge, a suicidal knowledge of purity held against the corruption and timidity that masquerade as reason in Thebes.

That purity, of course, is a religious one and also one of familial love in that it concerns performing the rites of the dead for her brother, an act forbidden by Creon. And having exhausted finally her desire for the objects of life, each one of them proving to be tainted and no longer desirable, her last desire, in Lacanian terms the desire by which she crosses beyond the limits of the human and into the deathly realm of the gods where the unnameable object resides, is for the purity of her obligations to the dead, and of the love of the living for the dead.

To her timid sister Ismene, Antigone says, *“Be as you choose to be, but for myself I myself will bury him. It will be good to die, so doing. I shall lie by his side, loving him as he loved me; I shall be a criminal—but a religious one. The time in which I must please those who are dead is longer than I must please those of this world. For there I shall lie forever. You, if you like, can cast dishonor on what the gods have honored.”* (Sophocles, 1994)

We must understand Antigone, first of all, in her withering rejection of Ismene, whom she once loved, as one who is drawing a line of radical difference between herself and the living world. She holds no sympathy here for one who is weaker than she is. She is cold, contemptuous; she seeks to distance herself, to draw a difference as boldly as possible between herself and Ismene. She speaks from the void of a desire that is no more—no more sisterly love, as if to say in Lacanian terms her sister was only an object in that spiraling path, an *objet petit a*, whose destiny is to be discarded as that more vital and malignant desire turns blindly in the direction of the death object. Yes, it is correct to say that the death drive is vital, that it represents desire operating in its most vital and absolute terms, at the height of a paradoxical distinction between life and death. Ismene could only retain her sister’s deathly desire by becoming herself a dead one, that is by joining Antigone in choosing death over the timid and failed life of a woman in the Theban court.

*“It will be good to die.”* In this statement Antigone discards her desire for life, or perhaps, in the act of speaking, an awareness of her deathly desire dawns within her. Ismene gives voice to the terror of witnessing this event. *“You ought to realize we are only women, not meant in nature to fight against men, and that we are ruled by those who are stronger...How I fear for you, my poor sister.”* The appeal is to the reality, to the truth, of weakness, as are so many cautions born of unconsciousness and fear. It is this appeal that Antigone most despises—its timidity, its inadvertent argument for the master’s claim over the slave, that power belongs to men

over women, and most especially to the king over his subject/child/woman. Nobility matters not. Ethics and law matter not, except that the law is no longer symbolic discourse but only the raw operation of power. We can suppose that Antigone despises this sisterly display, if only because Ismene's timidity wraps itself in a sibling love that also claims to be pure. Its cost is a taint that Antigone will not and must not accept. Ismene rejoins, "*You have a warm heart for such chilly deeds. But you are in love with the impossible.*"

Ismene must withdraw from this suicidal cataract. She will remain symptom and symptomatic, and in this she is anchored as to a rock. She will not be found among the dead at the end of the play, even as the dead multiply in a catastrophic algorithmic progression, when Creon's own deathly desire—yes, we may consider that he, too, is in the grip of the death drive but with much less awareness and in a manner far less sublime—orchestrates a *danse macabre* within the polity of Thebes.

Ismene speaks as a form of equivocation, though she strikes at something deeper when she accuses Antigone of being in love with the impossible. That is a most Lacanian accusation, naming a desire that goes beyond the limit of life, where no mortal can survive, where reason has volatilized, where language stops.

## **CREON**

An account of the king comes due, especially in recognition that *Antigone* presents a political situation. It confronts a political act, defiance of the king, and the enigmatic power of that act born in powerlessness and in opposition to the power of the king.

Hegel, famously, saw the *Antigone* as illustrative of an historical process, the clash of opposing political forces or positions, that of Creon and that of Antigone, and he saw this as a situation in which there was a rough moral equivalence to the two sides, each side supporting a reasonable interpretation of the good as seen from its perspective. Hegel reads in *Antigone* the clash between the family and the polis, an important structural crisis in the development of the polis. (Kaufmann 1979) But Lacan notes that in the figure of Creon something more emerges than the discourse of the state and the practice of kingly power.

Speaking to Creon, Teiresias says: ..."*Realize you are on the razor edge of danger...I sat at my ancient place of divination for watching the birds...they were horribly distressed and screamed unmeaningly. I knew they were tearing each other murderously.*" Thebes, and the

status of its polity, reveals itself in this prophetic image of cannibalistic slaughter. There is little distance between the divination of screaming birds and the actual horror of the city. “*Yield to the dead man; do not stab him—now he is gone—what bravery is this, to inflict another death upon the dead?*” We can make this a question of psychoanalysis, by altering the seer’s question slightly. What desire is this to inflict another death upon the dead? We might answer that it is a last or final desire. It is certainly the lest desire that possesses Creon, as he seeks to inflict a second death not only upon Polyneices, but upon Antigone as well. He seeks to bury her while she is still alive.

“*To inflict another death upon the dead*”—a last desire, a fatal desire, that begins presumably in some more reasonable plan but migrates toward a vengeance that always wants to exceed itself, not only to kill but to doubly kill. This, too, is a transgression beyond the mortal limit and carries Creon into a deathly beyond.

If the nobility of Antigone, if her ‘unbearable splendor’ as Lacan terms it, is based upon her possession of and by the death drive as her desire attains a greater and more pure sublimation, then we can perhaps say that Creon, in a state of far less awareness, is also possessed by that migratory precession of desire toward a beyond, but he presents a desublimation, the deconstruction of his virtues toward the more elemental and brute impulse, annihilation of the other. His is an ethical trajectory that travels in an opposing direction to that of Antigone, and from this perspective, in reference to Hegel, the conflict is less political than it is existential and ethical.

### **Zombie Capitalism**

We have the suggestion of an ethical path or course, or more precisely two such trajectories, both of which serve the death instinct, as all human paths must. One represents an unbearably splendid sublimation, the other a crudely tyrannical desublimation into murderous rage.

Zombie capitalism—the term emerges in critical economic thought in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, most especially in Chris Harman’s book (2009), and found in variations such as zombie banks and zombie globalization, coinciding of course with the ubiquitous popular culture fantasies of the zombie and the zombie apocalypse. The use of the term also coincides with the various economic shifts and crises and bubble economies emergent in an environment of increased globalization, increased commodification, and progressive financial deregulation. Harman is

especially concerned with the zombie policies of large banks and international financial institutions.

How might the current mode of capitalism take up the death drive? And how might the theory of the death drive serve critical thought in the interpretation of this capitalism?

Harman's analysis of zombie capitalism draws upon four overlapping metaphors that tie the behavior of zombies to the trope of what is often called hyper- or late stage capitalism. These metaphors concern appetite, ideology, undead immortality, and terror.

Such is the passion of capitalism, such is the desire of capitalism, that this desire is almost always thought of as energetic, restless, migratory: it discards its objects (much as if they were Lacanian *objet petit a*'s), much as if they were inadequate terms or de-libidinized fetishes, in favor of the new, in favor of the 'what's next,' as if in search of some future/past/paradisal object that it cannot yet see or name.

The zombie appetite is well known. The zombie has only a single drive—a mono-dimensional hunger that cannot be sublimated into a higher form, nor does it come into conflict with any other drive or value, of which the zombie has none. The zombie represents the radical triumph of the atavistic wish, the atavistic appetite. For the zombie consciousness is no more. Intrapsychic conflict is no more. Subjectivity is no more. Given the human desire for a destiny that simplifies by inscribing a singular ascendant quality or wish, we might imagine the zombie as a *telos*, cybernetic in the simplicity of its motivation. And its appetite is limitless. It will devour everything in sight until nothing remains. The zombie is a perfect figuration of the de-sublimated, Creon-like version of the death drive.

Harmon asserts that the figurative zombie well describes the theoretical function of large banks and financial institutions in the moment of late capitalism. The desire to consume and accumulate capital becomes not just the ascendant value, but the only value. Prior constraints and regulations and conflicting values are removed or subverted, and the unregulated pursuit of capital becomes an hallucinatory substitute for virtue—Gordon Gekko's 'greed is good' hypothesis. Banks and financial institutions become possessed by this single drive. Relative to human life they become aberrant, death-dealing, and occupy a space beyond social discourse. This interprets capitalism as a radical desublimation that takes up and discards its objects in a migratory fashion. Its gaze is indifferent, migratory, vacuous—a posthumous, post-human, post-apocalyptic gaze.

What is the ideology of the zombie? We can only infer what it may be, as zombie's have lost the ability and/or desire to speak. Whatever that ideology may be, it surely involves the elemental split of all objects between good and bad. Hunger is bad, flesh is good, fire is bad, etc. The ideology is fixed, nothing is learned, nothing changes. Again, this suggests Creon in the grip of the desublimated death drive. In the final orbit of a last desire, nothing more can change, and nothing more can be learned. The object, the desire for the object, the entire economy of objects and desire comprising a deathly libidinous ideology, is rigid, fixed, and unresponsive to change. This is a paradigmatic symptom of the death drive.

Harman criticizes the fixed, ideological adherence of banks and financial institutions to certain policies and theories and strategies, even as those theories fail and yield disastrous results. Joseph Stiglitz (2003) writes of his experiences at the World Bank, where a narrow band of ideological neoliberal practices were imposed on developing economies with no regard for historical, cultural, geographic or other idiosyncratic factors which disproved the so-called enlightened universalism of neo-liberal economics. Entranced by a cathexis to a so-called perfect theory of capital, but completely deluded and oblivious to 'facts on the ground', the World Bank and its technocrats quite literally devoured developing economies, wreaking havoc, yet remained oblivious to that havoc. Cathexis to ideology in the face of that ideologies failed results becomes synonymous with Lacan's deathly desire.

A similar analysis could be applied to the American attempt to rebuild Iraq following its so-called conquest according to neo-liberal economic and political theory. Enforced idealism very quickly passes into domination and nihilism and the dynamics of a resentful submission. This migratory trajectory leads to death. This is the scene of empire and domination in their most pejorative sense, and it is founded upon a vaguely imagined utopian ideal that is beyond realization yet charged with an overwhelming unearthly libidinous force, such that accommodation to the real objects of the world seems worthless and impure.

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