



ENJOYING NEOLIBERALISM

JODI DEAN

JODI DEAN TEACHES POLITICAL THEORY AT HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES IN GENEVA, NEW YORK. HER MOST RECENT BOOKS ARE *ŽIŽEK'S POLITICS* (2006), *REFORMATTING POLITICS: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY* (2006, CO-EDITED WITH JON ANDERSON AND GEERT LOVINK), AND *EMPIRE'S NEW CLOTHES: READING HARDT AND NEGRI* (2004, CO-EDITED WITH PAUL A. PASSAVANT). ALL THREE WERE PUBLISHED BY ROUTLEDGE.

ABSTRACT This article draws from Slavoj Žižek's approach to ideology to theorize neoliberalism as an ideological formation. I focus on neoliberalism's fantasy of free trade and on its displacement of symbolic identities by imaginary ones. The fantasy of free trade organizes enjoyment through the promise that everyone will win, uses losses to reconfirm the necessity of strengthening the system so that everyone will win, and perpetually displaces the thieves of enjoyment throughout the system as warnings, exceptions, and contingencies. In addition to relying on the fantasy of free trade, neoliberal ideology also functions through the production of imaginary rather than symbolic identities. These identities serve not as means of internalized discipline but of external control. Thus I argue that a key difference between Keynesianism (the economic theory and practice of the welfare state) and neoliberalism is the production of



subject positions available for redeployment. The disciplined worker and consumer-citizen of the social welfare state are reformatted under neoliberal ideology as the shopaholic and incorrigible criminal.

KEYWORDS: neoliberalism, capitalism, consumerism, psychoanalysis, fantasy, criminal, imaginary

➤ In recent years, scholars have produced significant analyses of neoliberalism as a set of policy assumptions favoring corporations (Pollin 2005), as inseparable from globalization and imperialism (Colás 2005; Radice 2005), as a “project for the restoration of class power” (Duménil and Lévy 2004; Harvey 2005: 16), as a specific form of governmentality (Lemke 2001; Brown 2003), and as a new form of the state (Passavant 2005). My wager here is that the Lacanian-inspired version of ideology critique offered by Slavoj Žižek provides an important supplement to this literature. More specifically, some of the key categories of Žižek’s approach to ideology, those of fantasy, *jouissance* (enjoyment), and the decline of symbolic efficiency, can aid our understanding of neoliberalism as an ideological formation. To make good on this claim, I focus on neoliberalism’s fantasy of free trade and on its displacement of symbolic identities by imaginary ones, specifically, those of the consumer and the criminal.

WHAT IS NEOLIBERALISM?

Most generally, neoliberalism is a philosophy viewing market exchange as a guide for all human action. Redefining social and ethical life in accordance with economic criteria and expectations, neoliberalism holds that human freedom is best achieved through the operation of markets. The primary role of the state is to provide an institutional framework for markets, establishing rights of property and contract, for example, and creating markets in domains where they may not have existed previously. Neoliberalism thus accords to the state an active role in securing markets, in producing the subjects of and conditions for markets, although it does not think the state should—at least ideally – intervene in the activities of markets.

In his unpublished lectures on governmentality, Michel Foucault emphasizes two fundamental differences between early political liberalism and contemporary neoliberalism (Lemke 2001). First, neoliberalism inverts the early model of the state as a limiting, external principle supervising the market to make the market form itself the regulative principle underlying the state. Second, neoliberalism relies on a different notion of the individual or subject. For classic liberals, such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, the free, rational, individual is the very foundation of the state, that which grounds and limits legitimate government. Neoliberals neither anchor their account of the rational chooser in a domain of natural freedom nor make the

rational chooser the ground and limit of government. Rather, they see the subject as acting and reacting in accordance with various economic incentives and disincentives. For neoliberals, then, a goal of governance is to “construct responsible subjects whose moral quality is based on the fact that they rationally assess the costs and benefits of a certain act as opposed to other alternative acts” (Lemke 2001). In short, neoliberalism doesn’t rely on preexisting conditions – it creates new ones, reformatting social and political life in terms of its ideal of competition within markets.

The key principles of neoliberalism were formulated by a group of economists, philosophers, and historians who gathered around Austrian philosopher, Friedrich von Hayek (Harvey 2005).¹ In 1947, they founded the Mount Pelerin Society (the name comes from the Swiss spa where they first met). Their commitment to the role of competitive markets in securing freedom vehemently opposed both Marxist theories of centralized state planning and Keynesian policies of state intervention in the economy.

Over subsequent decades, neoliberalism remained a marginal economic movement, far outside mainstream Keynesian commitment to regulatory policies designed to stabilize capitalism and protect citizens from its worst excesses. Nonetheless, as they combated the hegemony of Keynesianism in academic and policy circles, neoliberals slowly gathered support from financial and political elites. A crucial element of this success was their establishment of alternative institutions. They created “a huge international network of foundations, institutes, research centers, publications, scholars, writers, and public relations hacks” who developed, packaged, and pushed neoliberal doctrine (George 1999). In 1974, von Hayek received the Nobel Prize in Economics. Two years later another key member of his circle won the prize as well – neoliberal economist, Milton Friedman, the primary figure in the Chicago School of economics.

Not until the elections of Margaret Thatcher in the UK in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in the US in 1980 did neoliberal ideology come to dominate economic policy.² The preceding decades were the heyday of Keynesian policies wherein the role of the state was to guide the economy and distribute risk so as to shield the inevitable losers in a capitalist market. For example one such policy endeavors to ensure the stability of production by guaranteeing consumption, either by the state or private consumers. Keynesians thus do not view a living wage simply as a moral issue. Rather, it’s an economic one, a way to guarantee consumers’ purchasing power and thus stabilize production. Michael Lebowitz (2004) explains: “increased wages would increase aggregate demand, stimulate job creation and new investment . . . mass consumption, it was argued, is necessary for mass production. However, to realize these benefits the market itself would not suffice – state policies and micromanagement were seen as critical.” The Keynesian state protects production through

oversight and careful interventions to stimulate demand – the market alone is not enough to guarantee continued, stable, productivity.

By the 1970s, the consensus around Keynesianism was unraveling, in part in reaction to the “structural crisis” in the world economy. Duménil and Lévy (2005: 9) note the main aspects of the crisis: “diminished growth rates, a wave of unemployment and cumulative inflation.” Elsewhere (2004) they identify the crisis as a decline in the rate of profit; unemployment, then, was not a cause of the crisis but an effect, a way for employers to control costs. Other scholars draw attention toward additional blows against the Keynesian economic orthodoxy previously dominant in the postwar era: the collapse of the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1973 (Lapavitsas 2005), the dramatic increases in the price of oil (“oil shocks”) brought about by OPEC in 1973 and 1979 (Lapavitsas 2005; Pollin 2005), and the failure of Keynesianism “to develop public understandings of the economy which could compete with the neoliberal rhetoric of ‘free markets’” (Palley 2005: 21).

Thatcher and Reagan responded to rising unemployment and inflation in the UK and US by tightening the money supply (already undertaken by Jimmy Carter in the US), reducing the power and influence of the unions (Thatcher infamously breaking the coal miners’ union and Reagan firing the air-traffic controllers who refused to return to work), deregulating the economy (eliminating or loosening regulatory oversight in a slew of areas, including banking, communications, utilities, trading, airlines, and the railways so as to foster competition), and pursuing privatization strategies (involving both the subcontracting out of public services and their complete selling off to the private sector) (cf. Campbell 2005; Arestis and Sawyer 2005). Reagan, and to an extent his predecessor, Jimmy Carter, specifically defended privatization in terms of neoliberal ideology, that is as a means of forcing government to “embrace private marketplace models” and “respect capitalist measures of success” (Cohen 2003: 393). Bill Clinton and Al Gore embraced and extended neoliberal ideology. As became ever clearer during Clinton’s first term, government was like any purchased good, a product offered to satisfy customers even as its production and provision demanded a mindful eye toward the constraints of the market.

Since the early 1980s, increasing numbers of states have adopted neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation, and financialization. Some have done so on their own (or, more accurately, as a response to pressures from ruling financial elites seeking to restore their class power). Others have been compelled by international institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to remove price controls, accept inferior terms of trade, and dismantle their public sectors as a condition for aid and loans. Previously committed to a view of development emphasizing the managerial role of the state, these institutions came in the late 1970s and early 1980s to be dominated by the Washington Consensus, the conviction that

neoliberalism provided the quickest and surest formulae for growth. Structural adjustment policies involving cuts to state budgets and programs for the poor were thus instituted throughout the Second and Third World to encourage the development of markets (or, to eliminate barriers to the flow of capital and capacity outside of countries to more profitable investment sites). The former Soviet Union likewise underwent “shock treatments” as its state-owned and controlled economy was rapidly privatized.

By the end of the twentieth century, neoliberalism had replaced Keynesianism as the reigning approach to the economy, the state, and development.³ As Robert Pollin observes: “The neoliberal economic agenda – of eliminating government deficits and inflation, sharply cutting back government spending, deregulating labor and financial markets, and opening national economies to free trade and multinational capital investments – has become so dominant throughout the world over the past generation that even thinking through serious alternatives presents itself as a daunting task” (2005: 173).

The charge led by Margaret Thatcher as she dismantled the British welfare state and defeated the trade unions in the name of ending increasing competition now prevails as the common sense of neoliberal ideology – There Is No Alternative.

IDEOLOGY CRITIQUE

Žižek’s revitalization of ideology critique provides a set of concepts useful for understanding neoliberalism as an ideological formation. Arguing that ideology refers not to what people know, but to the belief underlying and animating people’s actions, Žižek concerns himself with the ways that ideological formations work as economies of *jouissance* (enjoyment).⁴ Drawing from Jacques Lacan, Žižek views *jouissance* as an excessive, intense pleasure-pain, as that “something extra” for the sake of which we do what otherwise seems irrational, counterproductive, or even wrong.⁵ We might think here of the difference between friendship and passionate love. Whereas spending time with friends may be pleasurable, falling in love can be agonizing. Yet it is a special kind of agony, one that makes us feel more fully alive than anything else. *Jouissance*, then, is this excess beyond the useful and measurable that transforms something or someone into an object of our desire (Lacan 1999: 3). It is also that extra element of pleasure attached to the painful experience of repeatedly missing one’s goal. Here, *jouissance* is not that which one desires but can never quite reach; instead, it is an object of drive, that which the subject might try to push away, but which attaches to his efforts, nonetheless.

Žižek conceives ideology as more than a discursive formation covering over the fundamental incompleteness and impossibility of society insofar as an emphasis on discourse alone misses the extra, irrational nugget of enjoyment that attaches the subject to a

formation. For Žižek, ideology takes hold of the subject at this precise point, one that exceeds the meaning or significance an ideological formation provides (Žižek 1989). Ideological fantasies organize and arrange this excess thereby providing – or promising to provide – the subject with enjoyment.

My focus on neoliberalism as an ideological formation relies on, critiques, and extends Žižek's approach insofar as Žižek has claimed that Capital is Real. He elaborates this point in several ways, drawing out different aspects of Lacan's notion of the Real (a notion which changes over the course of Lacan's teaching). Žižek argues, first, that Capital is Real in the sense that it "sets a limit to resignification" (Žižek 2000b: 223). This argument appears in the context of his debate with Judith Butler and Ernesto Laclau. Žižek objects that both theorists "silently accept" as a fundamental premise the continued operation of the capitalist market economy. In their thought, Capital is the boundary or outer limit of contemporary counterhegemonic struggle: "the smooth functioning of Capital is that which remains the same, that which 'always returns to its place'" (ibid.). Not only has the rise of identity politics and new social movements been an effect of the critique of the political primacy of class struggle, but they also occupy a space made possible by the dynamic of global capitalism itself. Political and social movements unfold in the spaces opened up (and closed off) in the course of the expansions and intensifications of capitalism – expansions and intensifications that are themselves manifestations of class struggle, both in terms of gains made by labor and in terms of capitalist successes. Žižek's point, then, is that Capital is Real in the sense that it establishes the very terrain of political struggle, the scope and limits of what might be undertaken politically.

In a second argument, Žižek views Capital as Real "in the precise sense of determining the structure of the material social processes themselves" (1999: 276). Žižek has in mind "the inexorable 'abstract' spectral logic of Capital which determines what goes on in social reality" (ibid.). He takes pains to distance this sense of Capital as Real from the idea that speculation abstracts itself from people's activity as producers and consumers. Such an idea misfires because it fails to acknowledge the way abstraction (specifically that of economic speculation) attaches to actual social life. What seems most speculative, abstract, and distant, far removed from everyday practices, in actuality exerts an effect, a determination, on these very practices. Differently put, the abstract dimension of Capital, its "spectral logic," is not simply a matter of the capitalist form. It also appears within the content of capitalism, in the awareness that structures the activities of production and consumption. Thus an aspect of the content overlaps with and stains the form, thereby anchoring the one to the other. This stain and overlap fit the Lacanian criteria for the Real: it's the contingent nugget disrupting and sustaining symbolization.

Finally, Žižek suggests a third way Capital is Real – it confronts us at the level not of meaning but of truth. He writes:

Capitalism is the first socioeconomic order which *detotalizes meaning*: it is not global at the level of meaning (there is no global “capitalist world-view,” no “capitalist civilization” proper – the fundamental lesson of globalization is precisely that capitalism can accommodate itself to all civilizations, from Christian to Hindu and Buddhist); its global dimension can be formulated only at the level of truth-without-meaning, as the “Real” of the global market mechanism. (2006: 181)

Žižek’s discussion here is in the context of an engagement with Alain Badiou, specifically Badiou’s emphasis on the gap between meaning and truth. Contemporary subjects find themselves in a condition of irreducible multiplicity wherein they encounter the following alternative: either they accept the undecideability of interpretations, the way that no interpretation, no meaning, can be grounded, and thus give up claims to truth, or they attempt to discern a truth outside these meanings. Persisting outside of meaning and interpretation, truth belongs to the Lacanian category of the Real rather than the symbolic order of language. It does not allow for or lead to a total way to understand the world. Instead, truth involves a specific cut or intervention from the specificity of an engaged perspective.⁶ To assert that Capital is Real, then, is a political claim about the key determination of the present.

Žižek’s discussion of capitalism as Real may be compelling, but it prevents us from understanding how neoliberal ideology works as an economic and political project, as a specific way to arrange antagonism and produce enjoyment. As Wendy Brown (2003) argues, neoliberalism “is a constructivist project: it does not presume the ontological givenness of a thoroughgoing economic rationality for all domains of society but rather takes as its task the development, dissemination, and institutionalization of such a rationality.” Žižek’s emphasis on the Real of Capital runs into the problem of assuming that markets and marketization are inevitable as it fails to consider how neoliberal ideology installs in its subjects the conviction that markets are desirable and should be produced. Such an assumption occludes and naturalizes the roles of governments – as local enterprises, national states, and international organizations – in creating property rights, establishing corporations, producing a functioning tax system, and policing and militarily defending the infrastructure necessary for business (cf. Derber 2002).

There is an additional advantage in considering the fantasy structure of neoliberal ideology: exposing the politics Žižek occludes through his characterization of contemporary life as post-political, as a form of management wherein the possibility of politics is foreclosed in advance. More specifically, Žižek is concerned, on the one hand,

with the loss of the possibility of universalization (of particular claims and identities coming to stand for something more than themselves and thereby provide anchoring points for a broader array of political demands), and, on the other hand, with the onslaught of impossible demands that guarantee political marginalization and thus protect those who raise them from facing the responsibility of actually exercising power (1999: 198–236; cf. Dean 2006: 120–24). He argues, moreover, that such depoliticization results from a more primary failure to politicize the economy. While he targets this argument against “critical theorists” who have turned their focus to cultural studies, he includes as well post-Althusserians such as Badiou, Laclau, and Jacques Ranciere. And, more importantly, he extends the point to claim “*the depoliticized economy is the disavowed ‘fundamental fantasy’ of postmodern politics*” (1999: 355).

A focus on neoliberal ideology demonstrates that the fantasy of “laws of the market” is hardly disavowed – it is neoliberalism’s basic premise. The broadest version of Žižek’s claim implies that contemporary politicians feel compelled to hide the fact of state involvement in the economy – but this is a key premise of neoliberal governance, as Bill Clinton’s defeat of George H.W. Bush in 1992 demonstrated, “It’s the economy, stupid.” My argument is that the economy under the neoliberal paradigm is neither depoliticized nor disavowed. Rather, it is produced, brutally, as the field, rules, and spoils of exploitation and domination. Crucial to this endeavor, to the process of structuring *jouissance* so as to ensure acceptance of the basic framework of domination, is the fantasy of free trade.

FREE TRADE

Neoliberal ideology relies on the fantasy of free trade. Everyone, ultimately, benefits in an unfettered market because markets are the most efficient ways of ensuring that everyone does that for which they are best suited and gets what they want. Michael Lebowitz describes this faith:

The unfettered market, we are told, insures that everyone benefits from a free exchange (or it would not occur) and that those trades chosen by rational individuals (from all possible exchanges) will produce the best possible outcomes. Accordingly, it follows that interference with the perfect market system by the state must produce disaster – a negative-sum result in which the losses exceed the gains. So, the answer for all right-thinking people must be, remove those interferences. (2004: 15–16)

The fantasy of the free market promises that everyone will win. To ensure that all will win, the market has to be liberated, freed from constraints, unleashed to realize its and our full potential (cf. Shaik 2005). As free rational agents armed with full information, people

will make the right choices – but, again, only so long as nothing biases or constrains these choices.

Žižek's account of the phantasmatic background of ideology brings to the fore the analytic benefits in considering neoliberalism in terms of the fantasy of free trade. I consider here four elements of his discussion. First, Žižek argues that the “external ideological ritual is the true locus of the fantasy which sustains an ideological edifice” (1997: 6). Considering a discourse or formation as an ideology, then, does not involve some kind of search for truth hidden under the distorted beliefs of misguided masses. Rather it involves looking at actual practices; these practices, what people actually do, are the location of ideological beliefs. Neoliberal ideology focuses on practices of exchange. The ordinary exchanges of everyday people – cleaned up and understood as rational decisions made under ideal conditions – are trade. Part of the fantastic appeal of neoliberalism comes from the way individual exchanges stand in for global flows (upward) of capital.

Second, Žižek holds that fantasy answers the question, “What am I to the Other?” (1997: 8). The typical answer in the United States is “free.” To the Other, I am the one, we are the ones, who are free. After September 11, 2001, “because we are free” answered the question “Why do they hate us?” Moreover, from the US perspective, the Cold War was fought between freedom and totalitarianism. Neoliberalism's emphasis on free trade answers the question of who we, as Americans, are, and, increasingly, who “we” are in a global sense: the global “we” is the we connected through markets, the “we” of what I describe elsewhere as communicative capitalism (Dean 2002, 2005).

Third, Žižek explains that fantasy occludes an original deadlock (1997: 10). The fantasy of free trade covers over persistent market failure, structural inequalities, the violence of privatization, and the redistribution of wealth to the “have mores.” Free trade sustains at the level of fantasy what it seeks to avoid at the level of reality – namely actually free trade among equal players, that is equal participants with equal opportunities to establish the rules of the game, access information, distribution, and financial networks, etc. Paradoxically, free trade is invoked as a mantra in order to foreclose possibilities for the actualization of free trade and equality.

This foreclosure appears in the slippage between ideas of competition and winning. On the one hand neoliberal thought emphasizes the necessity of competition. As Susan George points out, competition was Margaret Thatcher's central value, and faith in competition was the governing precept of her destruction of the British public sector. George quotes Thatcher, “It is our job to glory in inequality and see that talents and abilities are given vent and expression for the benefit of us all” (1999: 4). On the other hand even as neoliberalism emphasizes competition, it holds onto the notion that everyone is a winner, a notion clearly at odds with competition

because in competition there are winners and losers. Thus Third World countries are not told, “sorry, losers, that’s the breaks in a global economy.” Rather, they are promised that everyone will win (cf. Derber 2002: 37–8). The Global Report on Human Settlements notes:

Conventional trade theories see increased trade and a liberalized trade regime as purely beneficial; but, as in all chance, there are, in fact, winners and losers. Those participating in the active, growing areas of the world economy or receiving (unreliable) trickle-down effects benefit. Those who do not participate at best receive no benefits, but, in fact, are usually losers, since capital tends to take flight from their countries or their industries to move to more productive zones, reducing work opportunities and business returns as currencies and wages fall or jobs disappear. (2003: 40)

Similarly, in the United States, workers are advised not to worry about the decline in manufacturing and rise of outsourcing. New jobs will be created. With education, they can be retrained. Again, the neoliberal fantasy promises that no one will lose. Finally, at the level of the local school, kids today are taught that everyone wins. Everyone gets some kind of prize or ribbon just for showing up. In some US districts, schools no longer post grades or rankings out of fear of hurting the self-esteem of those students near the bottom. Thus the emphasis on testing part of George W. Bush’s education policy, No Child Left Behind, is not accompanied by a corresponding ranking of students; instead, schools and teachers are ranked and assessed – not the students, because everyone is a winner.

Fourth, Žižek writes that “fantasy constructs a scene in which the *jouissance* we are deprived of is concentrated in the other who stole it from us” (1997: 32). Free trade stages this scene as a deferred promise of fulfilment. When we meet in the market, our needs and desires will be met. This is the very definition of a perfect market – it will meet everyone’s needs and desires. In a crude sense, financial, stock, bond, and commodities markets are bets on this future, investments in the promised fulfilment. We could also include here mortgages, loans, credit cards, that is all sorts of different financial instruments that rely on a presumption of future satisfaction.

Of course market exchanges do not actually provide *jouissance*. Moreover when the market serves as a vehicle for *jouissance*, it is mesmerizing, repulsive, excessive. I can explain this point more clearly by distinguishing between free trade’s staging of the lack of enjoyment as a loss or theft and its figuring of the corresponding excess of *jouissance*. According to the fantasy of free trade, everybody wins. If someone loses, this simply indicates that trade was not free. Someone cheated; he didn’t play by the rules. She had secret information, the benefits of insider knowledge or the advantages

of an unfair monopoly. Within the terms of the fantasy, the solution to this problem is oversight, preferably by those familiar with the industry or practice in question. The government can make sure that others are not out there stealing our enjoyment, the fruits of our labor, through their dishonest and unfair dealings.

There are risks, however. The government might get overinvolved. It might overstep its boundaries and impede “free trade.” Differently put, the notion of oversight continues to sustain enjoyment as stolen as it shifts the location of thievery from the insider or cheat to the government itself – *it might tax me too much; it might pay for the medical expenses of all sorts of illegal immigrants while I could lose my health insurance at any point; it might use my tax dollars to support tenured radicals (who look down their lazy, secular noses at me and my hardworking, God-fearing way of life) while I can’t even afford my kids’ tuition . . .* The fantasy of free trade thus plays host to series of tensions and anxieties associated with our failure to enjoy.⁷

Neoliberal ideology’s fantasy of free trade also accounts for the lack of *jouissance* in terms of excess, that is as the sacrifice or expenditure of “too much.” The one who fails to enjoy fails because he has overdone something; there is something excessive in his relation to the market. A company expanded too fast; it tried to do too much too quickly. Perhaps it failed because it overpaid its workers, overproduced, or overdiversified (and hence lost touch with its fundamentals). Similarly those who find their stock portfolios, retirement accounts, and pension funds decimated by falling markets likewise expended “too much.” They were overconfident; they didn’t play it safe enough; they had too much faith in the market. These losers, in other words, were irrational in their expectations. Perhaps they were even greedy. At the very least, they failed to achieve the proper balance necessary for the promised, inevitable, market success.

How the fantasy accounts for losers is less interesting than how it accounts for winners’ failure to enjoy. Why don’t they enjoy? The neoliberal fantasy of free trade deals with this lack in various ways. One relies on a differentiation between market and spiritual fulfillment. Although the supplementary role of neoconservatism, primarily in its Christian materialist form, is crucial to the larger story, I can’t go into it here. I’ll note, however, that the matter is complex insofar as some versions of evangelical Christianity in the United States rely specifically on market-tested tactics. The sprawling megachurches of the west and southwest, for example, try to attract congregants by offering large clusters of goods and services such as childcare, financial advice, restaurants, health clubs, singles’ get-togethers, and rock concerts. Their basic message integrates spiritual blessings with promises of material abundance. A video series produced by and for Revolution Church in Manitou Springs, Colorado, repeats the superegoic injunction to enjoy characteristic of communicative capitalism. Its title is “Enjoying God.”⁸

Another way neoliberal ideology's free market fantasy accounts for the winners' failures to enjoy combines the division between material and spiritual values with the problem of excess. We might consider in this regard the figure of the entrepreneur or executive who seems to have it all, but actually doesn't. In the first place, it is never clear how much "it all" is – how much is necessary and for what? This question is perpetually deferred in the fantasy of a free market insofar as buying and selling, investing, and even bequeathing never stop. The market continues, until the end of time. In the second place, the free-marketeer, the fantasmic businessman, corporation, or investment banker (in each of us) has to be careful and not be *too* absorbed, *too* captivated, by the delights of the free market. The sacrifice is too much when it involves the marketeer's friends, family, and soul.

Charles Dickens's character of Ebenezer Scrooge is perhaps the most familiar reminder of what happens to those who fail to enjoy precisely because of their investment in the free market. Inverting Dickens's story of a miser who turns moderation into excess, the 1997 film *The Game* (directed by David Fincher) offers a character for a neoliberal age, Nicholas Van Orton (played by Michael Douglas). More than a story of the cold investment banker, fabulously wealthy and successful yet nonetheless incapable of connecting with his wife, his brother, or a childhood trauma (he witnesses his father's suicide), the film treats Van Orton's financial and material success as profoundly boring and repetitive (in stark contrast to another Douglas character, the corporate raider Gordon Gekko in Oliver Stone's 1987 film, *Wall Street*; in the earlier film, Gekko's success, even his coldness – as in the famous line, "Greed is good" – appears as the ultimate object of desire). In *The Game*, other white men at the top, the real players, are shown expressing their sense of boredom and entrapment. Persisting in a stultifying environment of pervasive enjoyment, they need desperately to install the gap necessary for desire. The solution is "the game," an unpredictable, high-risk game in which the players don't know the rules, the other players, the conditions, the limits, or even what determines a win or a loss. The game repeats in another space the brutality of the neoliberal market, returning to its players the possibility of desire that their successes had foreclosed.

The mistake involved in excessively sacrificing for the sake of success is one of overidentification, of identifying too much with neoliberal ideology. As Žižek argues, "an ideological identification exerts a true hold on us precisely when we maintain an awareness that we are not fully identical to it, that there is a rich human person beneath it" (1997: 21). The free-marketeer who sells himself, who sells out, who sells it all, overidentifies with neoliberal ideology, eliminating the place of the warm, interesting person that the system is supposed to serve, whose needs the system is supposed to meet. In sacrificing everything to the system, the player, the investment

banker or entrepreneur, acts as if such a sacrifice is necessary for success, thereby subverting the fantasy that we are all winners. *The Game*, incidentally, does not subvert this fantasy – in the end, Van Orton, having been, like Job, stripped of everything, confronts his trauma, becomes a full person, and reconciles with his family.

Another version of the overidentified, overinvested free-marketeer is the one who clearly delights in the game, in the risk, the hunt, the thrill of the market. A key motif in market-porn, that is in memoirs of life in business, the fascinating-repulsive market predator exposes the obscene supplement of the free market fantasy. His enjoyment depends on the other's losing. He only wins when others lose. According to business memoir conventions, the predator ultimately has to lose in some domain – his business is taken over or collapses, he loses his family, or he loses his sense of self. This loss is thus accompanied by lessons, lessons now made available to everyone so that we can avoid his mistakes and be ourselves winners in the free market.

I've been describing free trade as the fantasy that occludes and sustains the brutality of neoliberal capitalism. Free trade establishes possibilities through which we narrate our relation to enjoyment. Žižek suggests that what makes desire possible in contemporary conditions is the "despotic figure which stands for the primary *jouisseur*," the one who appropriates all enjoyment (1999: 315). My reading of the fantasy of free trade suggests otherwise. This fantasy provides a more complex organization of enjoyment, one that promises that everyone wins, uses losses to reconfirm the necessity of strengthening the system so that everyone wins, and perpetually displaces the thieves of enjoyment throughout the system as warnings, exceptions, and contingencies.

CONSUMERS AND CRIMINALS IN THE NEOLIBERAL IMAGINARY

The fantasy of free trade is but one of the fantasies animating neoliberalism as an ideological formation. In this essay, I've also mentioned neoliberalism's reliance on neoconservatism as well as its investment in its differences from and opposition to competing ideologies. Elsewhere I explore the fantasies involved in the complex of ideas around publics and publicity (2002). Important as the level of fantasy is for understanding neoliberal ideology – it tells us how neoliberalism organizes enjoyment – fantasy alone is insufficient for producing the subjects neoliberalism needs. Neoliberalism has to employ other means as well, as its understanding of the role of the state explicitly acknowledges.

In his discussion of the strong neoliberal state, Paul Passavant (2005) develops a compelling account of neoliberal governmentality. A crucial element of this mode of governmentality is the consumer/criminal doublet. By linking this notion of the consumer/criminal doublet to Žižek's idea of the decline of symbolic efficiency, I can

elucidate an additional aspect of neoliberalism as an ideological formation. Namely neoliberalism relies on the production of imaginary rather than symbolic identities. These identities, moreover, function as means of external control rather than of internalized discipline. Thus a key difference between Keynesianism (the economic theory and practice of the welfare state) and neoliberalism is the production of subject positions available for redeployment. The disciplined worker and consumer-citizen of the social welfare state are reformatted under neoliberal ideology as the shopaholic and incorrigible criminal.

The decline of symbolic efficiency

In his critique of risk society theory (1999), Žižek introduces the notion of the decline of symbolic efficiency (cf. Dean 2002). The notion draws from the later work of Lacan to designate a change in the functioning of the symbolic order. Briefly put, during the middle years of his teaching, Lacan described the symbolic order as the everyday order of language and meaning. The symbolic is what counts as our everyday experience, our understanding of the role of names and offices, our expectations regarding references. We might say that the symbolic here refers to what everybody knows. In his later work, Lacan introduces different modes in the operation of the symbolic. Hence, his four discourses – those of the Master, hysteric, university, and analyst – are different forms of the social link established through language. By Seminar XX, rather than describing a symbolic order held in place by a master signifier, Lacan theorizes a symbolic space held together by fragile and contingent knots of enjoyment (symptoms, quilting points).⁹ In this later version, Lacan emphasizes the ways the imaginary, the symbolic, and the Real are entangled in one another, rupturing, filling in, and covering over their own excesses and lacks.

Žižek's notion of a decline in symbolic efficiency continues the theorization of this idea of a symbolic space permeated by enjoyment. He emphasizes our perpetual uncertainty, our sense that we never really know whether what we say registers with the other as what we mean or, more specifically, our sense that we can't actually say what "everybody knows." There is no ultimate guarantor of meaning, no recognized authority that stops our questioning or assuages our doubts. For example if we receive distressing medical news, we can seek a second, third, fourth opinion. We can look for more information on the Internet, exploring alternative remedies. There are myriad experts all offering their own specific advice – yet we don't know how to choose among them. Or, to take another example, how can we know the truth about global warming? Scientists, politicians, and journalists have called it a hoax and a conspiracy to undermine capitalism (cf. Monbiot 2006). Other scientists, politicians, and journalists emphasize that these voices are a minority, that there is clear evidence for global warming and a consensus that humans

are causing it. In the face of such fundamental disagreement, how can one determine whom to believe? Žižek's notion of the decline of symbolic efficiency captures this fundamental uncertainty, this fact that we cannot count on something like reality.

This decline in symbolic efficiency, this change in the status of reality, of the symbolic order of language and meaning, has been noted by others besides Žižek – most directly, by the administration of George W. Bush himself. In an oft-cited article from the *New York Times Magazine* (2004: 51), Ron Suskind relates a discussion he had with a White House aide. The aide dismissed journalists as being part of the “reality-based community.” He continued, “That’s not the way the world really works anymore . . . We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you are studying that reality – judiciously, as you will – we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study, too . . .”

Žižek's notion of the decline of symbolic efficiency should be read together with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's account of the shift from disciplinary society to the society of control (2000). Disciplinary logics worked primarily within the institutions of civil society to produce subjects. Hardt and Negri detail the way these institutions – the nuclear family, union, school, neighborhood – are now in crisis. The old political subject, the citizen-subject of an autonomous political sphere, the disciplined subject of civil society, can no longer be said to exist. Racial, ethnic, and sexual identifications are less fixed, less stable, less available as determinate subject positions. In their place, we now have fluid, hybrid, and mobile subjectivities who are undisciplined, who have not internalized specific norms and constraints, who can now only be controlled. In Lacanian terms, this means that symbolic identity is increasingly meaningless in the society of control. What we find instead are imaginary identities sustained by excess *jouissance*. The society of control attempts to limit the mobility and fluidity of these contemporary hybrid identities. These limits, however, are not those installed by a master signifier or symbolic law. Rather, they are knots of excessive enjoyment. My argument is that the fascinating/repulsive images of the consumer and the criminal figure these knots of excessive enjoyment.

Neoliberal ideology does not provide symbolic identities – that is sites from which we can see ourselves. In their place, it offers opportunities for new ways for me to imagine myself, a variety of lifestyles with which I can experiment. The variety of available identities and the mutability which characterizes contemporary subjects' relations to their identities render imaginary identity extremely vulnerable – the frames of reference that give it meaning and value are forever shifting; the others who might challenge it, rupture it, can appear at any moment. Their successes, their achievements, their capacities to enjoy can all too easily call mine into question – *I could have had more; I could have been better; I could have really enjoyed*. We encounter under neoliberalism a situation wherein “symbolic prohibitive norms

are increasingly replaced by *imaginary* ideals (of social success, of bodily fitness . . .)” (Žižek 1999: 368). These imaginary ideals combine with ferocious superego figures who enjoin the subject to enjoy. There is, in other words, a “*direct super-egoization of the imaginary ideal*” (ibid.).¹⁰ Thus rather than providing symbolically anchored identities (structured according to conventions of gender, race, work, and national citizenship) neoliberalism offers its subjects imaginary injunctions to develop our creative potential and cultivate our individuality, injunctions supported by capitalism’s provision of the ever new experiences and accessories we use to perform this self-fashioning – *I must be fit; I must be stylish; I must realize my dreams. I must because I can – everyone wins. If I don’t, not only am I loser, but I am not a person at all; I am not part of everyone.* Neoliberal subjects are expected to, enjoined to, have a good time, have it all, be happy, fit, and fulfilled.

Consumers and criminals

The idea of the decline of symbolic efficiency enables us to read Passavant’s “consumer/criminal doublet” as a specific figuring of enjoyment, as a site of fantasmic investment specific to neoliberalism as an ideological formation. Whereas the Keynesian welfare state produced the symbolic identities of consumers, workers, citizens, and prisoners, neoliberal governmentality relies on the imaginary figures of the consumer and the criminal. As I explain, the consumer figures the possibility of enjoyment promised by neoliberalism. Consumption provides the terrain within which my identity, my lifestyle, can be constructed, purchased, and made over. Yet consumption is more than a terrain – the consumer is compelled by the superego compulsion to enjoy, by the impossible demand to do more, be more, have more, change more (cf. Žižek 2006: 310). The consumer today is imagined as excessive, extreme, and unregulated. In other words it is imagined as a composite of the neoliberal market itself. Correspondingly, the criminal figures this ever-present threat of loss, the losing that the fantasy of free trade disavows. Thus I argue that insofar as the criminal serves as the site of displaced anxiety over such loss and losing, it is the intolerable monster, the one who stands for the Real of violence and whose expulsion and eradication mobilize neoliberal governmentality.¹¹ The obverse of the out of control consumer, the monstrous criminal, must be controlled completely, for life, or, better, to death.

In *A Consumers’ Republic*, Lizbeth Cohen (2003) describes three waves of consumerism in the United States. Crucial to each wave is the symbolic role of the consumer, that is of the consumer as a recognized identity in a democratic polity. In each wave Cohen’s consumers provide symbolic locations from which one might gaze at American society, positions from which citizens might see themselves and thus from which they might be effectively mobilized. Among her examples are the loyal female citizens of the Second World

War whose consumer choices were central to the war effort; the African Americans demanding equal treatment in restaurants, stores, theaters, parks, pools, and buses; the grassroots participants in mass campaigns for safe products, fair labels, and equitable credit. These consumers serve as ego ideals, points of symbolic identification, gazes in front of whom people might imagine themselves in their activities as consumers and thus view themselves and these activities as likeable, admirable (cf. Žižek 2000a: 116).

Cohen's active consumer-citizens differ significantly from consumers under neoliberal ideology. Whereas the activities and political engagements of consumers under Keynesianism centered on the consumption of necessities – food, transportation, housing – today's consumer is primarily a consumer of excess, armed with credit cards and perpetually revising his or her identity. Thus, Juliet B. Schor (1998) construes the “new consumerism” in terms of a compulsion to purchase luxury goods so as to keep up with televised images of affluence. Other commentators similarly describe consumerism in terms of relentless marketing, obsessive purchasing, and luxury fever (Frank 1999; Brown 2000; Taylor 2000). Crucial to their accounts is the image of the consumer as compelled to buy, as a manikin with a credit card driven to create a lifestyle for itself. Finally, Ronaldo Munck, describing the combination of the banalization of citizenship and celebration of consumption characteristic of neoliberal ideology's reconstruction of the terms and terrain of politics, writes:

While production, under the old industrial capitalism, had served as a market of identity and class divisions, now consumption came to the fore. Clearly consumption in the new global market serves a vital economic need, but it also makes for a cultural restructuring of society. The whole consumer process – from conception to sale, through advertising, marketing and fashion building – has fragmented identities and made them more fluid as consumption is continuously revolutionized. (2005: 65)

Unlike the stable symbolic identifications of disciplinary society, the fluid imaginary identities created through consumption are as dynamic and volatile as the market.

To be sure, not all accounts of consumption begin from excess or luxury – Daniel Miller (1998) in particular has done important work on consumption as provisioning. Nonetheless, images of excessive consumers abound and in fact determined debate in the US Congress over the (typically misnamed) Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005. In an argument characteristic of those offered in support of the legislation, Tim Kane (2005), a research fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation, rejected “the liberal line that some fifty percent of modern bankruptcies are driven by healthcare emergencies” and lauded the bill for “making it harder for people to abuse the system and feign poverty.” For

him, as well as for the majority of Senators and Representatives who approved the bill, overhauling bankruptcy law was “essential” to helping “bankrupt Americans break the bad habits of over consumption.” These voices, along with those of economists and sociologists considering consumerism strictly in terms of excess and luxury, have little to say about provisioning, or about the rising costs of health care, housing, education, and transportation on the one hand, and the collapse of pension funds and increases in layoffs and unemployment on the other. How they conceptualize consumption, in other words, has less to do with actual practices than it does with a specific image of the consumer. Moreover, even as they criticize the consumption of “experiences,” that is of travel, leisure, culture, and spirituality, they too often neglect the fact of the broader commodification and marketization of ever more aspects of daily life such that people have little opportunity to do other than consume.

The image of the excessive consumer saturates popular media. Magazines, newspapers, and television shows employ a vocabulary of abundance. Women are said to pick up “armloads” of sweaters – *one in every color!* In the United States, the market for mini storage facilities as well as for closet organizing systems is rapidly expanding as consumers run out of places to store their extra stuff. Mainstream media coverage of “Black Friday,” – the Friday after Thanksgiving when shoppers eager to cash in on Christmas bargains send retailers into the black as they post their first profits of the year – features images of mobs and mayhem. A television news report from an ABC affiliated station in the San Francisco area describes a common scene:

Stores created a shopping frenzy on the day after Thanksgiving that turned ugly and even violent. Here and across the country, shoppers fought over merchandise, and in one case, trampled others. The rush to get into a Michigan Wal-Mart store when the doors opened turned into a stampede. Shoppers fell and tripped over each other. A lady lost her wig and quickly put it back on as the melee continued. At the Best Buy store in San Carlos, early morning shoppers created a mob scene just to get bargain-priced laptops and other electronics. (Louie 2005)

British novelist Sophie Kinsella has written a popular series of novels featuring an excessive consumer – *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, *Shopaholic Takes Manhattan*, *Shopaholic Ties the Knot*, and *Shopaholic and Sister*. The novels’ protagonist is Rebecca Bloomwood, a compulsive shopper who spends in order to save and who works as a financial journalist, dispensing the advice she doesn’t follow. Her purchases always make a kind of immediate sense and in so doing render ostensibly responsible economic advice a kind of nonsense. Put in the Lacanian terms I’ve been using thus far, we can say that Rebecca Bloomwood figures the imaginary consumer as a knot of

jouissance. She figures today's consumer as the necessary obverse presupposed by rational descriptions of neoliberal markets: enjoined by the superego to shop, buy, enjoy, she fails when she does and she fails when she doesn't. She fails when she does by overspending, overconsuming, running up debt, and risking bankruptcy. She fails if she doesn't because she will lose her already fragile identity; she will have no way to signify who and that she is, where and how she belongs. The first book, *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, ends with Bloomwood – her credit cards maxed out – successfully avoiding bankruptcy in two quite predictable ways: she sells her belongings, thus confirming the importance of free trade, and marries a wealthy businessman.

I turn now to the other side of the consumer/criminal doublet, the criminal. David Garland describes in detail the decline of the rehabilitative ideal in penal policy over the past thirty years. He explains:

Crime has been redramatized. The stock welfarist image of the delinquent as a disadvantaged, deserving, subject of need has now all but disappeared. Instead, the images conjured up to accompany new legislation tend to be stereotypical depictions of unruly youth, dangerous predators, and incorrigible career criminals. Accompanying these projected images, and in rhetorical response to them, the new discourse of crime policy consistently invokes an angry public, tired of living in fear, demanding strong measures of punishment and protection. (2001: 10)

As Garland makes clear, criminals today figure as imaginary objects in revenge fantasies. They stand in for the emergence of the inexplicable, the unpredictable. As sites of loss, they embody and occlude neoliberal ideology's inability to account for, to allow for, loss and losers. Free trade fantasy necessarily recuperates loss in a narrative of gain – *everybody wins*. Losses in the Real, Real losses, don't fit. They are overwhelming, excessive. The criminal is the imaginary figure covering over and sustaining this excess of loss. His monstrosity marks the horror of losing, our inability to account for inevitable contingencies. The neoliberal criminal, then, is outside the domain of calculable risk: we can never be insured against the loss he inflicts upon us. The logic, as Passavant (2005) points out, is one of zero tolerance. No risk is acceptable; any risk is monstrous, unbearable.

Garland finds that welfare state era criminology understood crime in terms of functioning institutions, in terms, that is, of proper education, family socialization, and job opportunities (2001: 15). In this discourse, the criminal was a deviant, one who deviated from social expectations. Crime signified "an under-achieving socialization process" and could thus be remedied by state intervention in specific

domains (ibid.). In contrast contemporary criminology views crime as routine, committed by normal individuals responding to available choices and incentives. Criminals are market actors like everybody else. Crime can erupt anywhere, any time. The proper response is one of zoning and vigilance, of supervision and control, of crime prevention. The goal is protecting the public, ensuring public safety, preventing the impossible. Appropriate measures keep *us* away from *them*. The daily business of the community has to be secured against the criminal disruption.

Corresponding to this shift from deviant to norm is a change in the focus of criminological concern. Welfare state criminology emphasized the criminal, bringing all the disciplines to bear in understanding him and his crime. In contrast the society of control emphasizes the victim. “Victim impact statements,” Garland writes, “are introduced to court in order to individualize the impact of the crime, to show how the offence affected this particular victim, in all her particularity, in all her human specificity” (2001: 179). As a result the offender is rendered “more and more a projected image” (ibid.). The criminal, in other words, is less a person than the image standing in for a horrifying, unbearable, contingent event. Injustice is what happens to the victim; the victim is the one unjustly deprived of opportunity, life, *jouissance*. The criminal is imagined as the monstrous instrument of deprivation.

More can be and has been said about the criminal as an imaginary figure. Scholars are attending to the proliferation of crime dramas on television, the spectacle of criminality that drives local news, and the rhetoric empowering appeals to strict sentencing and the death penalty. What my analysis of fantasy in neoliberal ideology adds is insight into the way the imaginary criminal is the site of displaced anxieties around the brutality of the neoliberal economy. Criminals thus seem particularly horrifying figures precisely because they are figures for the Real of loss. The more anxious and desperate economic conditions become, that is the more false and fragile the fantasy of free trade is experienced as being, the more monstrous and deadly become those imagined as criminals in our midst and the more they will have to pay since no one else can. As Jonathan Simon notes, “the notion of retribution as an abstract requirement of justice is giving way to the ability of specific individuals to obtain satisfaction from cruelty” (2000: 127). The satisfaction one gets from the suffering of another, as we learn from Nietzsche, is then perhaps the greatest enjoyment one can expect (which may explain the lack of an outcry in the United States after the publication and circulation of the photos of tortured prisoners at Abu Ghraib – apparently Americans were glad to see that Iraqi prisoners were being tortured; apparently Americans enjoyed the photos).

In his work thus far, Žižek has overlooked the criminal as the imaginary figure who sustains the place of inevitable crisis and loss and whose punishment provides enjoyment. So even

as he addresses the importance of the victim, he retains risk society theory's emphasis on the technocratic and therapeutic administration of individualized needs, thereby failing to notice how the individuated victim of contemporary criminology is not the same as the "complaining underprivileged" of identity politics (Žižek 1999: 361). This difference impacts Žižek's account of the contemporary subject's relation to law. Žižek argues that in a world of ultimate permissiveness and fluidity, subjects who are ostensibly free to experiment with their identities rely on an obscene supplement of law. He uses the example of lesbian sadomasochism, yet also emphasizes more general attachments to rules and frequent appeals ("complaints") calling for the big Other of the law to intervene. His point is that the subject's attachment to the domination and hierarchy of law is secret, the hidden obverse of contemporary freedom. It is more accurate to say that there is nothing hidden about it. Neoliberal governmentality functions less technocratically than punitively, providing that enjoyment lacking in the neoliberal market. The imaginary identities of consumers and criminals are sites of displaced concern over the excesses and contingencies intrinsic to so-called free markets. They thus serve as figures onto which neoliberal subjects can project their anxieties and anger, sites of individualized blame covering over systemic problems.

CONCLUSION

Neoliberalism is an economic and political program benefiting the top 1 percent of the world's population as it sends billions into poverty. While forced upon many, it is also chosen and embraced by some, particularly those privileged in the United States, United Kingdom, and European Union. Thus neoliberalism also functions as an ideological formation offering a specific arrangement of enjoyment. I've discussed here the operation of the fantasy of free trade as a key aspect of this arrangement – neoliberalism promises that everyone will win. It also integrates its losses and failures into this arrangement as intensifications of the promised enjoyment – whether as stolen or excessive, enjoyment is still possible.

Yet neoliberal ideology relies on more than fantasy. It involves a restructuring of political possibility. I've analyzed this restructuring in terms of neoliberalism's elimination of the symbolic identities made available under Keynesianism and provision of the imaginary identities of the consumer and the criminal. At stake in my analysis is the change in the terms and terrain of political struggle: whereas the welfare state enabled the construction of political identities as sites for oppositional redeployment, neoliberal ideology forecloses such opposition in advance. Under the conditions of the decline of symbolic efficiency, identities are too fleeting and unstable to serve as sites of politicization. The implications for political opposition are vast – under what terms might alternatives be figured if identity cannot serve as an organizational site?

NOTES

1. While nearly all discussions of neoliberalism mention the role of Hayek, some commentators emphasize earlier thinkers and movements as well. Palley (2005) locates the intellectual lineage of contemporary neoliberalism in the laissez-faire economics of nineteenth-century Manchester and the repeal of England’s Corn Laws. Clarke (2005) locates the foundations of neoliberalism in the work of Adam Smith. Conversely Treanor (2005) accentuates the differences between Smith’s emphasis on property and neoliberalism’s emphasis on contract as well as the expansions of the temporal space of the market under neoliberalism. Lemke (2001), in his reading of unpublished lectures by Michel Foucault, draws attention to Foucault’s analysis of German economic liberalism in 1928–30, the Freiburg School or *Ordoliberal*s, in relation to the Chicago School. Key to the approach of the *Ordoliberal*s was the idea that markets need to be constituted and maintained through political interventions. The Chicago School differs in that rather than endorsing governance in the name and interest of the economy, it treated the social and political spheres themselves as economic domains. In their hands the state itself is a kind of enterprise. Government practices are thus to be evaluated on the basis of market concepts.
2. Munck (2005) identifies the Pinochet military coup in Chile in 1973 and corresponding restructuring of the economy in accordance with the economic theories of the Chicago School as the first phase of neoliberalism. See also Harvey (2005: 7–9). Harvey, in addition to noting the importance of the Chilean case, finds the management of the New York City fiscal crisis crucial to the solidification of neoliberal policies. He writes:

It established the principle that in the event of a conflict between the integrity of financial institutions and bondholders’ returns on the one hand, and the well-being of the citizens on the other, the former was to be privileged. It emphasized that the role of government was to create a good business climate rather than look to the needs and well-being of the population at large. (ibid.: 48)

3. For a thorough discussion of the ways in which consent to neoliberalism was constructed, see Harvey (2005: ch. 2).
4. For a thorough account of Žižek’s notion of ideology see Dean (2002: 4–8, 2006: ch. 1).
5. As I explain (2006: 17–18), Lacan models the notion of enjoyment (which is always a surplus, an excess) on Marx’s notion of surplus value.
6. See also *The Parallax View* in which Žižek emphasizes “Truth itself is not a property of statements, but *that which makes them true*” (2006: 150).

7. For an elaboration of the notion of anxiety here see Copjec (2006). In the experience of anxiety, she writes, “one has the sense not only of being chained to an enjoyment that outstrips and precedes one, but also of the opacity of this enjoyment, its incomprehensibility and unassumability” (ibid.: 105).
8. See <http://www.revolution.church.com/sermons/Enjoying%20G0d.html>.
9. Lacan introduces the four discourses following the events of 1968 and elaborates them in Seminar XX (Fink 1995: 130; Lacan 1999: 16–17; cf. Dean 2006). See also Žižek’s discussion of the shift in Lacan, a discussion heavily influenced by Jacques-Alain Miller’s reading of Lacan (Žižek 2000a: 116–17, 2004: 101).
10. For an account of the superego as commanding enjoyment, see Lacan (1999: 3–7), Žižek (1997: 114), and Dean (2006: 32–41).
11. One might want to argue that the illegal immigrant provides yet another imaginary identity. The very use of the term “illegal,” however, draws our attention to the way that neoliberalism relies on the image of the criminal as a container for figuring in advance those disadvantaged through and by neoliberal globalization.

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