

## Enjoying Social Media

*By Matthew Flisfeder*

In what follows, my central concern is with the contemporary critique of ideology; but my trajectory involves thinking the operation of ideology in social media. By social media, I mean Web-based network sites that, as boyd and Ellison explain, allow people to “(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.”<sup>1</sup> The examples of such sites are familiar by now to many and include blogs and sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. My objective is to think critically about the ideological role of social media in the context of late capitalist consumer society—a society defined by what Slavoj Žižek refers to as the “demise of symbolic efficiency,” what Fredric Jameson has defined as “postmodern,” or what Mark Fisher has more recently referred to as “capitalist realism.”<sup>2</sup> Referring as well to Jodi Dean’s pioneering work on a Žižekian approach to online media, particularly her conception of “communicative capitalism,” my aim is to argue that social media provides a good model for thinking about the connection between ideology and enjoyment at a point when digital media makes possible the conditions for the erosion of the subject of desire. In contrast to Dean, then, my claim is that the ideological operation of social media is one that interpellates the subject in relation to desire rather than drive.

The promise of the Internet is that it will give a voice back to the people, one that has been taken away by private media and entertainment. However, according to Dean, “the expansion and intensification of communication and entertainment networks yield not democracy but something else entirely: communicative capitalism.”<sup>3</sup> Dean discusses the conditions of communicative capitalism by examining the world of technoculture, which functions by creating disconnection in the guise of community. Communicative capitalism makes this kind of disconnection operative by engaging users through the repetitive

and reflexive circuits of drive, imposing further gaps in older symbolic networks of community. By doing so, blogging and the use of social networks such as MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter facilitate the integration of users into the matrices of neoliberal capitalism.

While Dean argues that in the context of the demise of symbolic efficiency, drive is not an act<sup>4</sup>—suggesting instead that, in today’s circumstances, drive makes ideology work—my claim is not that drive is not an act, but that (to cite the title of one of the sections in Žižek’s *The Ticklish Subject*) “perversion is not subversion.” That is, what we begin to realize in a period of the decline of big Authority is not that ideology is no longer a matter of desire, but that the “inherent transgression” that sustains the subject’s attitude to her enjoyment works today, not by subverting power, but by “willing” it into existence. This is not unlike the masochist who takes a paradoxical pleasure from the violence of the sadist because it allows her to return to a position of loss from which all actual enjoyment takes place. The masochist therefore enjoys turning herself into an object for the other’s enjoyment.<sup>5</sup> In order to save her desire, the subject requires (at least the fantasy of) some figure of prohibiting agency whom she can transgress.

Dean, however, proposes that, given the demise of symbolic efficiency, since no prohibiting agency exists, desire gives way to drive, which according to her is the form taken by the subject’s relation to enjoyment in the information age. In this sense, Dean argues against Žižek’s claim that emancipatory politics follows an ethics of drive. As she explains, “conceived in terms of drive, networked communications circulate less as potentials for freedom than as affective intensities produced through and amplifying our capture.”<sup>6</sup> Her argument is largely based on the idea that today, everyone knows that the big Other does not exist; and, therefore, no agency exists that can prevent the subject from realizing her desire. My point, though, is that, given these conditions, the subject of late capitalist consumer society, rather than relating to the loss constitutive of subjectivity—that is, the subject of drive—prefers to disavow the fact of the Other’s non-existence in order to preserve the pleasure garnered in the pursuit of the lost object of desire. This is a subject that has yet to accomplish the traversal of the fantasy that sustains her relationship to Authority. The ideological function of social media is, then, one of “willing” the big Other into existence. Social media, in other words, is the answer to the question: “how will capitalism succeed in re-introducing lack and scarcity into a world of instant access and abundance?”<sup>7</sup> Social media has the function of re-introducing a limit into the social field that preserves the subject of desire—this is a limit constitutive of the Symbolic order as such.

While we know that the big Other does not exist, we act as if this were not the case. Why? The Lacanian joke about the man who thought he was a grain of seed—often recounted by Žižek—offers a possible explanation. After months of treatment, the man is convinced by his doctor that he is not a grain

of seed, but a man. Weeks after he is cured, the man returns in an hysterical rage. “What is wrong?” asks his doctor. “You know you are not a grain of seed, but a man.” “Yes,” replies the man. “I know; but does the chicken know?” This is how the subject reacts to the nonexistence of the big Other. The problem is not the subject’s own belief (in the big Other), it is rather the ambiguity of the Other’s belief. Or, to take another of Žižek’s examples, consider the operation of the stock market.<sup>8</sup> When we play the stock market, we are ultimately placing a bet on what public opinion *believes* public opinion to be. It is this belief in the Other’s belief that accounts for our continued relation to the big Other, despite our own personal recognition of its non-existence. It is this ambiguity that provides the pretense for our activity, and social media is the platform through which, today, in popular culture, the big Other continues to be operative.<sup>9</sup>

### The End of Ideology

There is a problem with thinking about the critique of ideology, today, in what many view as a post-ideological era. Both the Right and the Left offer up a position on the “end of ideology.” On the Right, we have the Fukuyamaist claim that Liberal Democracy and the market economy have triumphed, therefore ending the ideological disputes of twentieth-century politics. The world has appeared to have settled on one true answer. Meanwhile, on the Left, the conception of ideology as “false consciousness,” on the one hand, has been thoroughly annihilated by post-Structuralist thinkers, from Foucault to Derrida; while, on the other hand, the popular discrediting of every Master Signifier, or point of ideological fixing, up to and including the Marxist conception of History (Lyotard’s “incredulity toward Grand Narratives”), makes it difficult to claim that something like ideology still exists, at least in the Marxist sense.

In the information age—a period that can be roughly associated with the consumer ethic of late capitalism—it is also difficult for critical theorists to claim that ideology still exists since new information technology has eased access to knowledge. As well, media education is no longer something familiar only to scholars—who today does not know about media manipulation and the practices of photoshopping and airbrushing, editing, and CGI effects, let alone the problems of media imperialism, concentration of ownership, and the role of advertising in commercial media? Who, in other words, can we say is still “duped” by the media? Likewise, consumer society has provided everyone with access to the means necessary for realizing all of our pleasures. Consumer society eliminates the notion that our society is one that is based on repression and prohibition. Given these circumstances, how can it be possible to claim that something like ideology (let alone false consciousness) or Authority still exists? It is in *this* sense that we need to understand the contemporary critique of ideology in the context of what Žižek has referred to as “the demise of symbolic efficiency.”

### The Demise of Symbolic Efficiency; or, The Big Other Does Not Exist

The problem for the critique of ideology is that, today, with the “end of ideology,” and the pleasure ethic of consumer society, no one seems to believe any longer in the existence of the big Other. The “demise of symbolic efficiency” and “the big Other does not exist” are two formulations for the same basic situation. The Symbolic order is no longer held together because every Master-Signifier articulated has been reduced to a mere effect of fixing, or suture. This is why Fredric Jameson is accurate in referring to the Lacanian formula for psychosis in his description of Postmodernism as a “breakdown of the signifying chain.” There is no totality that determines the flow of language; rather, what we have is a series of free-floating discourses and signifiers, local “language games,” unbound by a universal totality. Jameson’s point about the postmodern breakdown of the signifying chain pertains to the specificity of the historical moment of the political mediations of postmodernism, particularly those of the postwar period, which saw the formation of new social movements (NSMs), from feminism, anti-racism, and the gay rights and liberation movements, that took the place of the proletarian struggle against capital. The positive and progressive aspects of the NSMs destabilized (to some degree) the phallo(go)centrism, white-supremacism, and heteronormativity of the reigning order—or, at least these movements allowed the underlying elements of these aspects of power to be brought to the surface and enter mainstream consciousness, if they were not necessarily able to eradicate these forms of power.

It could, however, be argued that the end result of non-class-based NSMs has been the triumph of consumer identity politics. The demands of NSMs are capable of being realized by consumer society. Identity politics and consumerism are natural allies. Consumer society asks of the individual not to repress who she is—*consumer society does not prohibit*. Its ethic is one of fully realizing the Self. “Be your true self!” The interpellative call of postmodern, late capitalist consumer society is, simply, “Enjoy!” Because there is no longer any agency of prohibition it is possible to claim that the big Other no longer exists. But what the lack of prohibition presents is, however, a severe problem for the preservation of the *desire* of the subject.

### Obligatory Enjoyment

Žižek argues that when ideology is no longer a matter of false consciousness, then its mode of operation shifts away from the Symbolic and toward a fantasmatic specter: an ideological fantasy that gives structure and support to our reality. Reality, as such, is according to Žižek always-already ideological, structured by some underlying fantasy formation that puts us in relation to our desire. The Symbolic surface level of every ideology is supported by a “sublime object” of ideology that subjectivizes us in relation to our enjoyment. The problem of ideology is not that people are not aware of their actions and how they

contribute to the reigning order. The problem is that people are fully aware, but they continue to act as if this was not the case. Even more than this, it is our very resistance to ideology—our attempts to transgress (what we perceive to be) the reigning order—that traps us even further within its grasps. Subversion and transgression are the very conditions for our capture by ideology precisely because this kind of action procures a perverse pleasure.

There is a perverse core (in the strictest Lacanian sense) to the form of ideology: specifically, ideology in the context of postmodern, late capitalist consumer society, takes the form of fetishism.<sup>10</sup> In part, this has to do with the interpellative call of postmodern consumer society, the call to “Enjoy!” Prohibition to enjoy has been replaced by an *obligation* to enjoy. However, this also has to do with the mode of ideology today, which according to Žižek is premised on cynicism and the psychoanalytic category of disavowal, best encapsulated by Octave Manoni’s phrase, “*Je sais bien, mais quand même . . .*”<sup>11</sup>—I know very well, but nevertheless . . .

From a Lacanian perspective, the price of entry into the Symbolic order is a constitutive loss. As McGowan puts it, “no subjectivity exists prior to this structuring loss.”<sup>12</sup> But the subject has two possible modes of relating to this constitutive loss—desire and drive:

desire is predicated on the belief that it is possible to regain the lost object and thereby discover the ultimate enjoyment. Desire represents a belief that a satisfying object exists and can be obtained. In contrast, the drive locates enjoyment in the movement of return itself—the repetition of loss, rather than in what might be recovered.<sup>13</sup>

These two modes—desire and drive—are, however, tied to each other: the “continuing frustration of desire—this failure to obtain the truly satisfying object—is the precise way that the drive satisfies itself. Through the drive, the subject finds satisfaction in the repetition of failure and loss that initially constitute it.”<sup>14</sup> Desire, in other words, serves the drive as a mechanism for facilitating the repetition of the loss, “which is where enjoyment actually lies.”<sup>15</sup> There is a problem, though, for the subject of desire in the context of postmodern, post-ideological, late capitalist, consumer society: without a prohibiting agency; with the demise of symbolic efficiency; when no one believes any longer in the existence of the big Other—what is to prevent the saturation of desire? The constant injunction to “Enjoy!” presents a dilemma: we can only enjoy insofar as we are prohibited from enjoying.

For Žižek, fetishism disavowal expresses the contemporary reigning cynical approach to ideology. Cynicism, as McGowan puts it, “is a mode of keeping alive the dream of successfully attaining the lost object while fetishistically denying one’s investment in this idea.”<sup>16</sup> The post-ideological subject can fully recognize the fact that investment in the object of desire is doomed to failure, but nevertheless, she continues to invest herself in the search for this object. True satisfaction is achieved, not by the successful attainment of the object, but

by the enjoyment of returning to the position of loss through failure. Drive is definitely a central aspect of contemporary communicative capitalism; however, we should be hesitant about claiming that the subject of communicative capitalism is one of drive.

### The (Digital) Delay of Desire

“Communicative capitalism” is an attractive way to theorize the current configurations of networked media, and it is difficult to disagree with Dean’s characterization of the ideological operations of information technology and social media.<sup>17</sup> Her theory allows media scholars to grapple with the conditions of space-based media, where the limits of time are increasingly eroding. Noting the similarities between early blogs and search engines, Dean points out that both originate in the problem of organizing information online. Filled by “the fantasy of abundance,”<sup>18</sup> online users had previously been plagued by the problem of locating sought-after information. Like the Lacanian theory of the unconscious, Dean points out that in cyberspace “the truth is out there” but difficult to find within the sea of abundance.

Dean notes that the first blogs were lists of websites, links, and articles, noteworthy to the blogger. Bloggers also added comments about the links that they posted. Like search engines, blogs emerged in place of the “subject supposed to know” (the Lacanian analyst). The search engine and the online database also work in combination to avoid the time lag, or the delay, the result of which is the “spatialization” time. This adds to the difficulty in grasping a conception of prohibition in postmodernity. Everything is available; there are no limits to access. Desire is no longer prohibited by time—the time necessary to locate and achieve satisfaction; everything is present, located in the database. The result is a crisis for the subject of desire—how to save the saturation of desire. This is how we might concede to Dean’s claim that drive makes communicative capitalism operative, and therefore unlikely to work for a political act of resistance and transformation. The disappearance of the delay, which made satisfaction of desire appear possible, leaves only the drive on the other side of fantasy.

New media, information technology, and social media add to this mix. There is no longer any denial of access (that is if we ignore the global digital divide). Everything is open and available online. But does instant access suffocate desire? There is an important temporal dimension to desire, that of the delay. Desire exists only insofar as the object remains lost. Increasingly, as the delay is reduced closer to zero, it can become apparent to the subject that there is a limit point to desire. The temporal limit is spatialized—delay is no longer the primary factor in distancing oneself from desire. It is now a matter of space—the space of the database. The object is there; it is no longer lost. The suffocation of desire—the reduction of the delay to zero—appears to leave only the drive that circles around the void of the loss. From Žižek’s perspective, this is what can potentially lead the subject toward some kind of break from ideology.

Desire involves the endless search for an (impossible) object that will bring satisfaction. But desire is, by definition, insatiable. It continues to follow along a cycle in which the object attained is never *it*, the thing that is desired. This constant search for the object produces an unconscious satisfaction in being able to reset the coordinates of desire, continuing the search. Drive speaks to this other side of insatiable desire. It achieves enjoyment for the subject by *failing* to get the object. With desire, one can never achieve full enjoyment; however, with drive, one is condemned to an unbearable enjoyment. According to Žižek, “desire and drive are two ways of avoiding the deadlock of negativity that *is* the subject . . . The two ways . . . involve two thoroughly different notions of subjectivity.”<sup>19</sup> The subject of desire chooses, whereas for the subject of drive, choice is inverted into making-oneself-chosen. The only freedom I am granted in drive “is the freedom to choose the inevitable, freely to embrace my destiny, what will happen to me in any case.”<sup>20</sup> That is, the subject of drive recognizes the constitutive aspect of loss, which the subject of desire disavows.

The reversal of desire into drive, therefore, involves the subjectivization of that which is beyond representation. That is, we subjectivize the traumatic kernel—the negative limit—of the Self. Žižek argues, therefore, that an ethical *act* is in line with an ethics of the drive.<sup>21</sup> If desire is that which attaches the subject to ideology, the drive moves the subject in the direction of emancipation. In the psychoanalytic sense, the drive is all that remains once the subject has “traversed the fantasy.” That is, “if no object can satisfy desire, desire must proceed for its own sake, which means that it must become drive. The drive is what remains of desire after the image of realization has been stripped away. It is desire without the hope of obtaining the object, desire that has become indifferent to its object.”<sup>22</sup> The instant access of technoculture leads, potentially, to this stripping away of the subject of desire. As McGowan notes, “the immediacy created by digital technology plants the seeds for the recognition of the subject of drive.”<sup>23</sup> But it is here that we see how ideology is still structured and supported by fantasy:

There is, of course, nothing necessary about the emergence of the subject of drive. The contemporary spatialization of time may simply continue to produce dissatisfied subjects of desire who continue to increase their investment in the illusory promise embodied by the commodity. As long as we experience the object’s failure as contingent rather than necessary, we will remain subjects of desire devoted to the capitalist mode of production.<sup>24</sup>

### Symbolic Identities

How, then, to save desire from its suffocation in an age of abundance and instant access? Social media, I claim, is the manner in which capitalism has succeeded in re-introducing lack and scarcity into a world of instant access and abundance. In social media, the subject, who no longer believes in the

existence of the big Other, works toward a willing of the big Other back into existence. The subject caught in social media is not duped by ideology, but seeks it out in order to save herself from the saturation of her desire; to save herself from the anxiety of living under the conditions of the demise of symbolic efficiency; and, to save herself from the traumatic encounter with the impossible-Real that has been opened up by the limit points of the Symbolic. Social media is one example of the secular solution to the lack of a big Other (paralleled by a fundamentalist turn to conservatism and tradition). People, in other words, engage with social media, “not to *escape from*, but rather in order to *escape to* a social reality that protects (mediates) us more effectively from the truly traumatic issues and concerns that belie our ‘normal’ lives.”<sup>25</sup> Social media is a new frontier for desire. This can be seen in three operations of social network sites deified by boyd and Ellison: the public profile, connecting to a network, and the operation of “sharing.” For the sake of brevity, I will rely on examples from Facebook in the analysis that follows.

One of the central questions we need to pose about the profile page is to whether it is a representation of the subject’s Imaginary or Symbolic sense of Self. According to Dean, the society of control and communicative capitalism make possible the conditions for replacing Symbolic identities with Imaginary ones. The latter is one aspect of the dominance of neoliberalism and its emphasis on the cult of the individual, away from the welfare state’s emphasis on community. Communicative capitalism, then, “does not provide symbolic identities, sites from which we can see ourselves. Rather, it offers in their place new ways for me to imagine myself, an immense variety of lifestyles with which I can experiment.”<sup>26</sup> In communicative capitalism, we are not interpellated into “symbolically anchored identities;” instead, we are enjoined “to develop our creative potential and cultivate our individuality.”<sup>27</sup> This characterization, however, is perhaps more appropriate to the brief decade-long period between the popular arrival of the Internet and the arrival of social media. In the 1990s, the attitude was that nobody on the Internet knows who you really are (best encapsulated by the parody cartoon, “on the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog”)<sup>28</sup>—online, we can present a different persona and no one will know: perhaps the ultimate victory for identity politics. Today, though, the mechanisms of control and big data are so precise, that it is possible to determine one’s offline identity by way of online activity. The profile page provides some indication of how this works.

On Facebook, details about one’s city of residence, contact information, marital/relationship status, date of birth, employment history, and education, are all provided on the public profile. What is even more important is that this information is provided freely and willingly by the user herself. Of course, providing a minimum of this information is required in order to join the site; however, the necessity of joining is another significant aspect of social media. The price of inclusion is the willful submission to the mechanisms of surveillance. Additional information is also provided on the profile page:

photographs in which one is tagged—thus providing a true-life image of the subject on the site, as opposed to the avatar; places that one has visited; interests, such as music, film, television, books, etc., with specific titles and names of artists and authors—the latter are provided by the operation of “liking”; the profile page also lists the names of Facebook groups in which the user is a member. To whom is all of this data presented? The answer, of course, is another piece of data that makes up the profile page: the friends list—that is, the user’s online social network.

The network is a list of people with whom the user maintains contact online. These may or may not be those with whom the user is actively engaged in offline life. This, though, is the list of others to whom the user is presenting her Self as an objectified entity: a combination of the commodification of the Self and the entrepreneurial ethic of neoliberalism. In fact, in some cases, it is the user’s friends list, or network, that makes her desirable to others, a demonstration of her “symbolic capital”—this is even more pronounced on the professional social media site, LinkedIn, where it really is “who you know” that counts. What’s important, though, is that it is the “friends” in social media that are the target of one’s activity, whether it is the operation of liking, sharing, commenting, or updating one’s status.

“Liking” is the operation of demonstrating—through the simple click of the mouse—something about one’s taste. “Sharing” similarly presents something about one’s taste but can also add detail about an opinion on anything from humor to politics—it is a demonstration of one’s “cultural capital.” One may share articles and images that are of interest to oneself, and potentially to one’s Facebook friends. Sharing, though, is also an operation of showing to others something about one’s own sense of humor, political sensibility, and so on. Images, as well, can be shared—most popularly in recent years is the meme: an image or video that is passed electronically online. Recent memes often take the form of images with short/quick catchy captions, often expressing either some cynical or ironic observation about contemporary life and politics. Liking and sharing act symbolically. They are articulations of one’s subject position within the field of the Symbolic. Likes and shares are enunciated contents. It is the operation of articulating signifiers which “represent a subject for another signifier.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, comments and status updates articulate in language the subject’s Self-representation for others. Comments and status updates take the form of the blog and reduce it to short, simple, statements. The furthest extreme of this, so far, is Twitter, in which users must express themselves in 140 characters or less. Beyond the word, though, Instagram has reduced this function to the mere image. With Instagram, users can upload images taken with their mobile phones, without the labor required of articulating their affects in words.<sup>30</sup>

Mobile media, such as smart phones, simplify these operations. Not only can we participate in social media wherever we roam—without the use of a personal computer—now, it is possible to easily share images and videos captured on one’s phone, easing the signifying aspect of Self-representation in

social media. This is of course the operation of control society moving beyond the disciplinary mechanisms of surveillance. But the degree to which we are integrated into these mechanisms, despite the fact that we are aware of how they work, demonstrates the way in which social media acts as the willing into existence of the big Other. Not because we are monitored, but because it is the agency of the Other for whom we perform our Symbolic identities in social media, which is increasingly connected to the world offline. I tweet, therefore I exist; and the compulsion to (re)tweet is the symptom of our needing to feel affective recognition from the Other.

### **Analyst or Pervert: Or How to Break Free of the Circuits**

Since the subjects of communicative capitalism are, according to Dean, already subjects of drive, it certainly appears as though an ethics of drive is off the table for a revolutionary politics—or does it? Perhaps what the demise of symbolic efficiency demonstrates is that the line between ideology and emancipation is thinning out. A political ethics of drive depends largely upon the way in which the demise of symbolic efficiency is interpreted and approached. If it is read, in Lacanian terms, as the non-existence of the big Other, pure and simple—the Other of the Symbolic order, regulating and organizing Symbolic reality—then surely it is necessary to concede Dean's main argument, that a politics of drive is not possible today, or the "drive is not an act." But what if the postmodern subject's recognition of the non-existence of the big Other is *only* apparent?

Dean further argues, contra Žižek, that in the context of the demise of symbolic efficiency the position of the analyst, as defined by the Lacanian discourse of the analyst, loses its radical subjective positioning. The analyst's position of subjective destitution is one of drive. But, according to Dean, if we think of the social link of the discourse of the analyst within the context of the demise of symbolic efficiency, the position of the analyst as one of pure drive is no longer radical.<sup>31</sup> This, however, makes sense if we conceive the position of the agent in the analyst's discourse, not as that of the analyst, but as that of the pervert, which carries the same form as that of the analyst (*a - \$*).<sup>32</sup> The pervert and the analyst are separated by a thin line, which we can attribute to fantasy. That is, they share the same basic structure, and are grounded in a certain kind of knowledge; however, the analyst has successfully traversed the fantasy—she acknowledges loss as constitutive—while the pervert has not—he wishes, still, to be the object for the Other's *jouissance*, since it preserves his own enjoyment. The analyst accepts the position of subjective destitution, while the pervert wills the Other back into existence in order to preserve his perverse pleasure.

It is worth conceiving the demise of symbolic efficiency, then, not necessarily as the loss of the Symbolic order as such (the non-existence of the big Other), but rather as the loss of the symbolic efficiency of the analyst's interpretation. According to Žižek, postmodernity is marked by a crisis in interpretation, leaving the symptom intact.<sup>33</sup> The problem, then, is how to bring a

rupture in the subject's symptomal chain, when she herself already recognizes the interpretive procedure of locating its cause. According to Žižek, the loss of the efficiency of interpretation is one way to diagnose the postmodern condition of the demise of symbolic efficiency.

This, too, is how one should read Fredric Jameson's notion of "cognitive mapping"—lacking the symbolic weight of interpreting her position in the world, the subject remains lost, trapped in a situation, without any means of making sense of herself and her position in the world. What this means, then, is that—while agreeing with Dean's *characterization* of communicative capitalism—the conditions of emancipation involve not redirecting the loop of drive, but of sticking to the "cognitive mapping" of the analytical discourse: the analytical position is one of willing to sacrifice desire; while the position of the pervert recognizes the failure of the object, but nevertheless enjoys her symptom. The latter is the type of subject position interpellated for our enjoyment of social media. While enjoying social media we are still subjects of desire.

### Notes

1. d. m. boyd and N. B. Ellison (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 2007. <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>
2. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject* (New York: Verso, 1999); Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *New Left Review* I 146: 53-92, 1984; and, Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Zero Books, 2009).
3. Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 2002), 3.
4. Dean, *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2010), 31.
5. On this topic, see Todd McGowan's brief, but poignant explanation in *Enjoying What We Don't Have: The Political Project of Psychoanalysis* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska, 2013), 14–15.
6. Ibid.
7. Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters* (New York: Verso, 1996), 190.
8. Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (New York: Verso, 2009), 10–11.
9. Žižek notes that "the very 'positing' of the big Other is a subjective gesture" and that "the big Other is a virtual entity that exists only through the subject's presupposition." One of the arguments that I make here is that, although the postmodern subject is capable of pronouncing the nonexistence of the big Other, she still posits its existence in a displaced way in order to preserve a desire, mediated by fantasy. This gesture of positing the big Other's existence is, I claim, reified in social media. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (New York: Verso, 2008), 113.
10. We might even say that, in the context of postmodern, consumer society, commodity fetishism as the *form* of ideology implicit in capitalism is fully realized.
11. See Octave Mannoni, *Clefs pour l'imaginaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).

12. McGowan, *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011), 11.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 29.
17. See Dean, *Publicity's Secret, Blog Theory, and Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies* (Durham, NC: Duke, 2009).
18. See Dean, 2009, 42.
19. Žižek, 1999, 299.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham, NC: Duke, 1993), 60.
22. McGowan, 28.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, 29.
25. Paul A. Taylor, *Žižek and the Media* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), 78.
26. Dean, 2009, 66.
27. *Ibid.*, 67.
28. *The Joy of Tech* comic strip recently updated this cartoon in light of the revelations in the United States about NSA surveillance through social media: "On the Internet Nobody Knows You're a Dog—1990s and Now." June 17, 2013, <http://www.joyoftech.com/joyoftech/joyarchives/1862.html>
29. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis, 1964–1965*. Alan Sheridan, trans. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), 207.
30. Here, though, it is possible to consider the image, not necessarily and simply as an aspect of the Imaginary, but perhaps more appropriately as a "parallax object" that is split between the Symbolic Master-Signifier and the Imaginary *objet petit a*.
31. Dean, 2010, 88.
32. Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2006), 303.
33. See Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Verso, 2002), xci.