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(Žižek's) Lacan as Political Historian: Reevaluating Aspects of the 'Chilean Miracle' through a Psychoanalytic Lens

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Abstract: The use of Lacanian psychoanalysis in political study has expanded in recent years, however, existing scholarly work focuses on contemporary political issues. Little attempt has been made to apply elements of Lacan's psychoanalytic theories to moments in political history. This paper is the first to address this. As the popularisation of Lacan in this discipline has largely emerged on the back of the work of Slavoj Žižek, this paper utilises Lacanian theory as interpreted by Žižek. This study selects three aspects of the so-called 'Chilean Miracle' and applies elements of Lacanian theory to them to provide fresh insights and understandings. These are: the 1973 coup that replaced Salvador Allende with General Augusto Pinochet as head of state, which is reimagined through Lacan's 'Symbolic'; the transition to democracy of 1988-1990, which is submitted to a reinterpretation through Lacan's 'transference'; and the reconstruction of the Chilean Socialist Party between 1973 and 1990, which is reinterpreted through Lacanian conceptualisations of 'desire'. In providing fresh interpretations of these constituent processes of the 'Chilean Miracle', this paper demonstrates the validity of 'taking Lacan back in time' while simultaneously offering new theoretical approaches to understanding the foundations of contemporary capitalism.

Keywords: Žižek, Lacan, Chile, Neoliberalism, Democratisation

Introduction

The use of Lacanian theory in political studies has grown remarkably over recent decades. Slavoj Žižek has undoubtedly been at the forefront of the popularisation of using Lacan's work to spearhead new approaches to the study of politics. However, it is inescapable that the bulk of Žižek's work, and thus the bulk of political work in which Lacan is applied, focusses heavily on analysing pop culture (such as in *The Parallax View* (2006)) or contemporary political processes and issues (such as *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2002) in which the 'War on Terror' serves as a focal point). Even the work of others who use Lacan in their own interpretations focus on the contemporary world. A prominent example is Feldner and Vighi's *Critical Theory and the Crisis of Contemporary Capitalism* (2015), which focusses on the recent global financial crisis. What is missing from the popularisation of Lacan is an attempt to use his work to delve into the past and to (re)investigate past political events. This paper is the first that looks to address this, utilising Lacan's work as interpreted by Žižek as a tool for the study of political history. This paper relies on Žižek's understandings of Lacanian theory as his work constitutes one of the most deeply developed applications of Lacan to politics, and thus it serves as a useful basis for deploying Lacan as a political historian.

This paper applies (Žižek's) Lacan to three aspects of one of the most important periods in Chilean political history: Augusto Pinochet's authoritarian rule of 1973-1990. These are: the coup of 1973 which brought Pinochet to power, and the ensuing years of violent repression; the 1988 plebiscite in which Pinochet was voted out of office, and the resulting transition to democracy; and the demise and resurgence of the Chilean Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista* - PS) during the junta's rule. The period of 1973-1990 is often referred to as the 'Chilean Miracle', an era during which Chile's economy was radically transformed from one characterised by state intervention in the economy to one that symbolised the supposed benefits of economic liberalisation. The era of the 'Chilean Miracle' is considered as having great importance to contemporary understandings of economics as it served as a test case for the economic and political doctrine commonly known today as 'neoliberalism' (Valenzuela 1997, Klein 2007). The three constituent components of

the ‘Chilean Miracle’ era selected here in this paper for study provide strong test cases for examining the validity of utilising Lacanian theory in studies of political history. The suspension (in 1973) and resumption (1990) of democracy processes were not unique to Chile, and were experienced by other countries both within and outwith the South American continent. The context of the neoliberal turn during the epoch adds to the similarities of experiences of other countries at the time. This is also the case for the transformation undertaken by the PS. The party’s move to the right is not unique and similar changes were evidenced by other established centre-left and leftwing parties in both the global north and global south. This means that in applying Lacanian theory to these processes it can be demonstrated how such a theoretical approach can open up further possibilities for reinterpreting similar or contiguous events.

The paper is divided into three subsections. The first analyses the coup, reviewing existing scholarly work before examining why Žižek’s critique of ideology - which is founded upon Lacan’s conceptualisation of the ‘Symbolic’ - can shed new light on the significance of the ‘Chilean Miracle’. The paper then moves onto Chile’s transition to democracy in the late 1980s, reviewing the stark differences between Chile’s pre-1973 and post-1990 democracies. Here, Lacan’s understanding of transference is employed to offer up a new understanding of the democratisation process. Building off this the paper then discusses the remarkable transformation of the PS throughout the ‘Chilean Miracle’, introducing the topic of desire in psychoanalysis, epitomised in Lacan’s formulation *Che Vuoi?*. The paper then concludes with some brief summarising remarks.

Part 1: Neoliberal Chile as a reconstitution of the Symbolic

Chile’s neoliberal experience - enacted under the dictatorship of General Pinochet - has received a large amount of attention from varied academic traditions, political scientists, political historians, ‘hispanists’, cultural studies, and the like. Existing academia appears to leave no stone unturned in deciphering the events of 11 September 1973, those that led to it and what has since come after. Some focus on the particular, the questions of who, what, where and when, while others take a *longue durée* approach, stressing the importance of historical and geographical context. Regardless of the focus taken, whether one stresses the role of the US and

its Cold War politics (such as the works of Weiner (2007), Qureshi (2009), Haslam (2005), and Verdugo (2004)), or the role domestic politics played (as in the works of Amy (2005), Silva Solar (2008), Negri (2012) and Fermandois (2013), to name but a few), it is clear that various political actors and dynamics - both domestic and international - contributed to what was a very complex political process. Nonetheless, the principal criticism offered here is that much of the work described thus far takes the tone of apportioning blame for the coup. To some, the US is to blame. For others, it is Chilean politics and its actors - be they of the right, the left or the centre. Apportioning culpability is of course important, however this paper takes the view that much of the existing literature has focussed on 'over-historicising' events with the effect of overlooking other important aspects of the coup, which this section of the paper addresses.

A much smaller set of scholarly writing has begun to emerge, however, which, rather than seeking to apportion culpability, has sought reimagine the coup and the ensuing 17 years of junta rule within the broader scope of the history of capitalism, and it is upon this perspective that this paper builds. Particularly informative and classic of this approach is Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* (2007). Klein writes that Chile was Milton Friedman's (the architect of this new form of capitalism) 'first laboratory' (Klein 2007, p. 166) for his radical, free market economic theories, and that the coup allowed his disciples (the 'Chicago boys' - Chilean students who had gone to the University of Chicago to study under Friedman) to implement these theories. Klein spends much time detailing the violence enacted by the Chilean state upon its citizens and writes how the brutal oppression of the Pinochet-led junta allowed for this new form of economics to be fully installed. This is important because what Klein is suggesting is that the brutal violence of the State was necessary not just to solidify the Junta's rule, but to transform the Chilean social body in order for this new economic system to take hold. This linking of neoliberalism with state violence is a theme shared by Ruth Blakeley in *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism* (2009) and Oscar Guardiola-Rivera in *Story of a Death Foretold* (2013).

A desire to locate the junta's despotic and violent rule within a broader history of the permutations of contemporary capitalism is an important and welcome step. It is this new approach that can be combined with Žižek's take on Lacanian psychoanalysis

to provide a new insight into the functioning of the new ideological landscape that first unfolded in Chile in the 1970s and 1980s, and then the global north shortly after. Accepting first the premise that state violence in Chile was not simply designed to entrench the junta's rule but was also a tactic of the purposeful reorientation of the Chilean social body, this reorientation can be read not just in economic or political terms, but in ideological terms also. In other words, the brutal repression was not simply to disrupt organised labour and make profit making easier (an economic interpretation), nor was it simply to minimise opposition to the junta (a political interpretation), but that these were symptoms of a wider drive to reformulate the ideological landscape of Chilean politics, economics and society in a neoliberal hue.

Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) identify this new strand or variation of capitalism as having emerged in the mid to late 1970s. Differentiating this 'new' capitalism (labelled by this paper as 'neoliberalism' and as 'connexionist' capitalism by Boltanski and Chiapello (*ibid.,* p. 105)) from the previous form (often referred to as the 'postwar consensus' (Kavanagh 1992)), the authors identify a shift not just in capitalist economic policy making (a shift from state intervention in the economy to free markets), but also a shift in the 'spirit' that justifies and underpins capitalism. The authors contend that this new 'spirit' is founded upon the concept of individualisation, whereby the political subject is interpellated as a unitary entity, detached from common bonds that may identify the subject, such as class. Jodi Dean in *Crowds and Party* (2016) builds on this, affirming that, 'the second-wave feminist idea that the 'personal is political' has become twisted into the presumption that the political is personal: how does this affect *me?*' (p. 31). This understanding of neoliberalism as not just a suite of economic policies but as a particular (re)orientation of the social body can be further bolstered by Žižek's critique of ideology. As he states in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 'the fundamental level of ideology…is not an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself' (1989, p. 32). Ideology thus has an integral role to play in structuring social reality, otherwise known in Lacanian terms as the Symbolic (Fink 1997).

Given this, a renewed understanding of the supposed 'Chilean Miracle' (*el Milagro de Chile*) can be offered. Chile's neoliberal experience, as the first country to

concretely undergo the machinations of the neoliberal project, was not simply an experience of a different way of doing politics and economics. It was a project that resolutely reshaped the ideological structure of Chile and its social body. It can be read as a reconstitution or reformulation of the Symbolic. The re-drawing of the subject as an entity of pure individualism detached from social bonds reflects this transformation of the ideological order that underpins contemporary capitalism. The violence enacted by the junta was part and parcel of this process, a necessary tactic to ensure the successful transformation of the ideological fantasy. Given this new interpretation of neoliberal Chile as an ideological process as well as an economic one, the events that brought the junta's rule to an end can now also be readdressed.

Part 2: Transition to democracy as a case of *'transference'*

The Chilean transition to democracy, as is often the case with (re)democratisations following authoritarian rule, was articulated as a 'return'. The plebiscite called by Pinochet in 1988 in which he petitioned the Chilean public for an extension to his time in office offered the legally existing opposition (hereby known as the 'democratic opposition' given the parties' involved desire to transition Chile to a democratic political structure) to organise together into a coalition and campaign for a 'No' vote. The opposition campaigned on the platform that a 'No' vote would resurrect Chilean democracy, rather than create something new altogether. The idea of 'returning' to democracy was recognised by the leadership of the democratic opposition as being a key motif upon which they needed to play in order to stand any chance of success. In a book published just after the plebiscite, key figures of the opposition reflected upon the campaign. One such figure, Eugenia Weinstein, a noted psychologist, wrote that many Chileans, and particularly young Chileans, struggled to envisage a democratic Chile without harkening back to a time in which many of them were not even alive:

'The future was for them a blur and a clean slate, a return to the past to start all over again and this time to have the opportunity to be someone else, different from what they had managed to become'[1] (Weinstein 1989, p. 23)

Another, Guillermo Campero, a sociologist, summarised the importance of the 'return' succinctly: 'The people wanted to return to democracy'[2] (Campero 1989, p.

127). Indeed, even the ‘Si’ campaign organised by the junta played on this motif of ‘return’. Pamphlets printed and handed out by the ‘Si’ campaign frequently warned that a ‘return’ to democracy would mean a ‘return’ to the days of the Unidad Popular government (*Ahora Noticias* October 5th 2014), and thus a ‘return’ to disorder and chaos (both political and economic). This is important because, thanks to the constitution promulgated by Pinochet and his junta in 1980, the exact form of democracy to which Chile would transition following a ‘No’ vote was already predetermined and bore little resemblance to the democratic structure that was in place prior to the 1973 coup.

This is a well-trodden path in existing scholarly work and has been explored in depth by historians and political scientists alike. The constitution of 1980 was designed not just to severely limit the threat of Marxism in Chile, as Pinochet and his junta saw it, but was also crafted with the specific goal of imprinting on Chile by way of legal framework a neoliberal reorientation of both the country’s economy and its body politic. In fact, the constitution was commonly referred to as the ‘Constitution of Liberty’, a moniker borrowed from neoliberal theorist Friedrich Hayek’s book of the same name (Barros 2002, p. 255; Ensalaco 1999, p. 179). Amongst other things, the constitution severely limited state power in economic affairs, entrenched the military and its civilian right wing political allies as the established political force in the country, and banned parties of the radical Left. Key elements of the constitution have since been reformed or removed altogether, however these were the starting terms for the transition that the democratic opposition had to observe and in any case, the changes since have largely been cosmetic (Fernández and Vera 2012). The constitution of 1980 bears little resemblance to the constitution of 1925 which it replaced. The end result is a Chile that is wholly unbalanced, with the Chilean business community and its international allies (predominantly US and European multinationals) wielding immense political power and influence, while civil society and its pillars, particularly organised labour, have been deconstructed to the extent that linkages between the state and the body politic are fragmented and weak:

'Chilean civil society [is] so poorly organised. That poor organisation remains and has rendered civil society extremely weak, particularly in relation to the popular sectors. In particular, trade unions, the student movement, and civil society

organisations working around social issues at the national level are very weak' (Luna & Mardones 2010, p. 114)

This rupture between the post-1980 state and civil society was deeply entrenched by the transition in the late 1980s. The process was characterised by negotiations amongst political and military elites rather than a more symbiotic relationship between the elites and the Chilean populace. As Nef states, 'The transition has been the result of a pact of elites from which most of civil society has been excluded' (Nef 2003, p. 31). What's more, this governance by elite negotiation has persevered long after the transition ended. Calls for radical change that have emerged from eruptions of protest have led to little of substance. Chile's civilian leadership have been able to 'negotiate compromises which temper aspirations for change' (Rabkin 1992, p. 120), meaning that the Chilean state is still at its foundation authoritarian and neoliberal.

By contrast, the previous form of liberal-democratic Chile that existed prior to the 1973 coup shared little in common with that which exists now. Of course, at the formal level, Chile was then, as it is now, a liberal democracy, sharing features easily identifiable within a liberal democratic system such as elected representatives, separation of powers and competitive elections. However, it is at sub-surface level - the relationships between the state and civil society - where things were very much different. Organised labour was one of the most powerful political forces in the country, a key political actor whose voice and rights were protected in law. These rights, although in some ways restricted, allowed the labour movement to take part in Chilean political life, and indeed key organisations of the labour movement, such as the CUT (*Central Única de Trabajadores* - Chile's largest trade union confederation at the time) had direct linkages to political parties (Pollack 1978, Drake 2003). All in all, the Chilean state was seen to act almost as an arbiter between civil society and the business community, sharing characteristics not uncommon amongst liberal democratic states of the mid-20th century. Indeed, this was most prominently seen during the fateful Allende administration as President Allende and his Unidad Popular government repeatedly fought to actively reconcile the competing demands of various groups within Chilean society at the time. Notable conflicts included those between rural landowners and landless *campesinos* (which the government sought to harmonise through a process of land reform) (Bellisario 2007), and mining

companies and the mineworkers' unions (which the government attempted to resolve through a programme of nationalisation and compensation for owners of the formerly private mines) (Collier and Sater 2004).

The question that then arises is why, given the stark contrast between Chile's pre-1973 democracy and post-1990 democracy, was the transition articulated as a 'return' - both by the democratic opposition and by the military junta - when patently it was nothing of the sort? It is here where Lacanian theory can shed some light. The articulation of 'democratic return' or 'return to democracy' can be seen as a case of transference. Žižek takes Lacan's understanding of transference and describes it as thus: ''Transference' names the vicious circle of belief: the reasons why we should believe are persuasive only to those who already believe' (Žižek 1989, pp. 36-37). He continues, 'The mystery of *transference* itself: to *produce* new meaning, it is necessary to *presuppose* its existence in the other' (*ibid.* p. 210). In the political realm, in order for a new structure or tradition to be crafted, its roots or origins must be pre-supposed as already existing or already having existed by those who wish its creation, even though they do not. This, for Žižek, is the cycle of belief which necessitates political constructions:

'The invention of some new content can only occur in the illusory form of returning to the past original truth…When ethnic groups constitute themselves as nation-states, they commonly formulate this constitution as returning to ancient and forgotten ethnic roots. What they are not aware of is how their 'return to' constitutes the very object which it returns: in the very act of returning to tradition, they are inventing it' (Žižek 2006, p. 29).

What Žižek has described here is the procedure undertaken by the democratic opposition when campaigning for and negotiating the Chilean democratic 'return'. As has been previously described, Chile's new democratic structure was an entirely new creation founded upon a constitution which carried the very explicit goal of entrenching neoliberalism within the country. Chile's new democracy bears little resemblance to the democratic form that was terminated by the coup in 1973. By conceiving the Chilean transition as a *re*-democratisation, with a strong emphasis on the 're', the democratic opposition was able to articulate a proposition that had

substance for it was designated a location within the Other, that Other being the reformulation of Chile as a neoliberal society and instituted as the new Chilean state. What this discursal procedure of transference therefore designates is also an act of the creation of a particular symbolic identity. The democratic opposition, through articulating the 'No' vote as a return to a Chile identifiable in the annals of history, adorned themselves with the mask of those able to provide salvation to Chile. This is most evident in the official campaign slogan adopted by the 'No' campaign, *Chile, la alegría ya viene* - Chile, joy is coming. Thus, the importance of this act of transference - of portraying the Chilean transition as a 'return' - is twofold. It was necessary in order to first give the 'No' vote and secondly the democratic opposition campaigning for it an identifiable meaning (or 'content' as Žižek puts it) located within the Other (the Chilean neoliberal state). Without transference both the 'No' vote and its campaigners would have been left as empty vessels devoid of signification, rendering them meaningless. What Žižek's formulation of Lacan's transference demonstrates is that the articulation of 'return' was a necessary discursive manoeuvre.

Part 3: The Socialists' reinvention as a case of *'Che vuoi?'*

This neatly takes the discussion on to the curious reformation of the Chilean Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista* - PS) in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As previously noted, Chile itself (both its economy and body politic) underwent a radical neoliberal reorientation under Pinochet. So too did the principal party of the Chilean Left, the PS. Much like the contrast between pre-1973 and post-1990 Chilean democracy, so too was there a stark contrast between the PS of the Allende presidency in the early 1970s and the PS that emerged following the transition after having been largely driven underground by the iron fist of the junta (Ricardo and Yocelevzky July - September 1986).

It must first be recognised at this point that the PS was for a long time one of the more radical parties of the Chilean Left. The party has flirted at times with revolutionary violence and insurrection and even officially adopted popular revolution as party strategy in 1967 (Furci 1984b). That said, it also has a long history of directly engaging with Chile's democratic institutions and traditions (Drake 1973). It has a long history of fielding candidates in municipal, regional and national elections,

for example, with the goal always being to replace the institutions of the state with socialist ones. The party was also very vocal in its support for widespread nationalisation of the economy, major expansion of the welfare state and public services, and land reform (Corkill 1976, Furci 1984a, Reyes 2011). The PS thus has a long history of radicalism. Up until the suspension of democracy in 1973 it was always an overtly Marxist party and is frequently cited by historians as being more to the left than the other established Chilean leftist party, the Communist Party of Chile (*Partido Comunista de Chile* - PCCh) (Drake 1973, Pollack 1978). Indeed, it has been claimed that the PS was the most radical of the constituent parties of Allende's Unidad Popular coalition (Furci 1984a, Reyes 2011). Despite Allende being the leader of the PS, he was often at odds with the party and it is largely thanks to him that the party refrained from breaking away from the Unidad Popular government and arming its supporter base in preparation for armed struggle (Amorós 2008). Above all, what characterises the PS prior to 1973 is ideological independence (it was born in the early 1930s out of disillusion within disparate leftist groups with the PCCh's affiliation to Moscow), a robust anti-imperialist Chilean nationalism, and an ability to draw support from not just the industrial working class, but also from rural populaces and the middle strata of Chilean society (Muñoz Tamayo 2016). What this demonstrates is a party that has varied and direct linkages to sections of Chilean civil society, a party that has a strong tradition of radicalism and independence and a party that has been at the forefront of working class politics in Chile since its inception.

The party was then driven underground into clandestinity following the coup, like all other parties of the Left. As Furci states, at this time, 'the Socialist Party was almost destroyed' (Furci 1984b, p. 7). The party then went through a period of internal division and factionalism. The party's underground organisation was taken control of by more radical elements within the party, led by Clodomiro Almeyda, whereby it became even more strident in its revolutionary fervour and sought to re-organise as a more recognisably 'Leninist' organisation. A small dissident faction within the party, which crystallised around Carlos Altamirano, remained committed to a more moderate, less violent form of resistance to the junta. The division within the PS reflected the divisions within the broader Chilean Left, with the side more inclined towards armed struggle vastly stronger than the more moderate one:

'By the end of 1979 two distinct sectors could already be observed within the traditional left: the sector represented by the Communist party, the MIR, the PSCh headed by Clodomiro Almeyda, and some of the Radical party, working on a common platform which by the end of 1980 became, particularly within the PCCh, a strategy of armed struggle. The other sector was represented by the small parties of the left, the pro-Altamirano PSCh and other Socialist groups such as that led by former General Secretary of the PSCh Aniceto Rodríguez. In reality, there was a vertical division of the Chilean left of strategy and programme' (Furci 1984b, p. 16)

In the early years of the junta, armed resistance dominated the leftist opposition to the regime (Muñoz Tamayo 2016). Even the relatively moderate PCCh had been brought round to this line of thinking. However, in the mid-1980s there was a sea change in leftist tactics, and the nonviolent means advocated by the more moderate opposition, now organised into the *Alianza Demócrata* (Democratic Alliance) - an alliance containing some PS activists and members as well as the Christian Democrat Party (*Partido Demócrata Cristiano* - PDC) - became the vehicle for leftist dissent towards the junta. Muñoz (2008) identifies the turning point as being the failed assassination attempt led by the PCCh of General Pinochet. By the mid-1980s the PS had gone from being the established voice of the insurrectionary left to a leading partner in moderate discontent alongside a party (the PDC) that had actively destabilised Salvador Allende's presidency between 1970 and 1973 (Loveman 1986-1987). The PS played a leading role in the 'No' campaign in 1988 and in the resulting transition to democracy. Following democratisation, the *Alianza* became the *Concertación* electoral coalition, which won every presidential election between 1989 and 2005, with the PS's own candidate, Michelle Bachelet, winning in 2005. Bachelet also won the 2013 election. The *Concertación* coalition had by then disbanded and was replaced by *Nueva Mayoría,* which comprised of the PDC and the PCCh, as well as others (the PCCh was not a member of the *Concertación*).

The *Concertación,* and the PS that was a constituent party of the coalition, reflected a major shift in established left-of-centre and leftwing politics in Chile. Given the history of radicalism within the PS it is important to recognise that following democratisation the PS did little to challenge the new neoliberal orientation of Chile,

either as a supporting actor of the *Concertación* or as the leading actor when its candidate was in presidential office. Indeed, the various *Concertación* administrations that followed Pinochet embodied the continuation of neoliberal economic and social policy, albeit with slightly more focus on the provision of public services. The coalition's extended stay in office has been characterised as a clear example of the 'Third Way' (Taylor 2006). Yet it was not just at the policy level that the PS had drastically reformed. Structurally there were changes also. The vibrant linkages to pillars of Chilean civil society that the PS had fostered and enjoyed prior to 1973 have since almost been completely broken, and the party has resorted to functioning at an increasingly elite level (that is to say that decision making is taking place at an ever higher level within the party) (Fernández and Vera 2012). he phenomenon of leftwing renewal cannot be read in isolation as a Chilean experience, but must be seen as a broader process that took place both within and outwith Latin America (Sabatini 2002). As previously stated, the contrast between the pre-1973 PS and the post-1988 PS is stark and apparent. The process of leftwing renewal is largely perceived as a strive by larger leftwing parties to remain relevant to voters whose entire approach to and ways of thinking about politics has radically changed in the face of the neoliberal reorientation of capitalism (Fernández Jilberto and Vale 1991, Giddens 1998, Newman and De Zoysa 2011). Ultimately, therefore, the 'Third Way' reflects a desire, and again it is here where Lacanian theory can provide instructive insights into the roots of this desire.

The tendency, as stated, is to interpret the renewal of the PS of Chile and other established leftwing parties across the world in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a reflection of the desire of voters to have a choice at the ballot box of a party that would continue the neoliberal economic and social foundations of society but provide a more human face, with greater expenditure on public services. Thus, in common interpretations, the 'Third Way' is an articulation by the Left of voters' desires. However, Lacan, and particularly Žižek's interpretation of Lacan, can provide a wholly different perspective. With Lacan's formulation of *'Che vuoi?'* it is postulated that one's desire is rooted firmly in the desire of the Other (Lacan 2007, p. 690). Žižek elaborates on this through his description of Freud's observation of his daughter fantasising about eating strawberry cake:

'While she was voraciously eating a strawberry cake, the little girl noticed how her parents were deeply satisfied by this spectacle, by seeing her fully enjoying it - so what the fantasy of eating strawberry cake is really about is her attempt to form an identity (of the one who fully enjoys eating a cake given by the parents) that would satisfy her parents, would make her the object of their desire' (Žižek 2008, p. 10)

Desire is thus not simply desire for the thing itself, but reflects a desire to be desired by the Other. At first glance this then appears to back up previous interpretations of the move to the right by the PS. If desire for something reflects a desire to be desired then it would appear that the desire of the PS to be elected reflects the PS's desire to be desired by voters who have reformulated their approach to politics in the wake of the neoliberal reformation of Chile. However, both headline statistics such as voter turnout, and data collected to analyse voter disaffection demonstrate that voters appear not to be desiring the options that are given to them at the ballot box. Since democratisation, turnout has been falling election after election, while disaffection, particularly with the PS, has risen year on year (Cerda and Vergara January 2009, Fernández and Vera 2012, Jara 2014). General disaffection is particularly noticeable when looking at the first Bachelet presidency, the first PS President since Salvador Allende and the last of the *Concertación* electoral coalition. Bachelet's election in 2005 offered a whiff of hope for change for voters, and yet at the end of her term in 2010, little of that change had been realised: 'Bachelet was perceived as a symbol of political, economic, and social change…[However] Chile's social reality in 2010, at the end of Bachelet's presidency, was not far removed from that of 2006, when she took office'; 'While there was undoubtedly some progress in many areas, there was no fundamental challenge to the neoliberal model or its social priorities' (Fernández and Vera 2012, p. 13; p. 18). The Bachelet presidency also experienced an unprecedented wave of protests from various social groups, including students, environmentalists and indigenous groups (Haughney 2012, Ruiz 2012, Sepúlveda and Villaroel 2012).

The question then is if the neoliberal orientation of the PS is not the reflection of voters' desires, then whose desire does it reflect? The mistake is to read voters as occupying the place of the Other in Lacan's *'Che vuoi?'* formulation. The Other, instead, is the neoliberal orientation of Chile itself, instituted in the new Chilean state

that is founded upon the 1980 constitution. It is the Symbolic, the neoliberal fantasy, and the PS's renewal as a party of free markets and neoliberalism reflects the desire of newly democratised neoliberal Chile to have the veneer of competitive elections in which a plurality of positions are represented, yet to have none that threaten the neoliberal structure. Recall earlier how it was described that this was the ultimate goal of the 1980 constitution. The PS's renewal is thus a reflection of a desire that operates at the ideological-fantastical level and is deeply rooted in the Symbolic.

Conclusion

This paper set out to demonstrate the validity of using aspects of Lacanian theory in the study of political history, seeking to move the application of Lacan's psychoanalysis beyond the restricted confines of popular culture and contemporary politics. In order to demonstrate the utility of this endeavour, and thus to demonstrate the insights said theory can offer up, aspects of the famed (and equally controversial) 'Chilean Miracle' were revisited and reinterpreted through a Lacanian lens. This paper relied upon reading Lacan through Slavoj Žižek, and this was justified on the premise that Žižek's interpretations of Lacanian psychoanalysis represent one of the most popular and most deeply developed applications of Lacan's work to politics. This also allowed the paper to focus on its remit of demonstrating the utility of using Lacan in political history, rather than to offer up fresh interpretations of his work.

Three aspects of the 'Chilean Miracle' were highlighted and used as test cases for this paper: the 1973 coup, the transition to democracy in the late 1980s, and the major renovation of the Chilean Socialist Party throughout the period of 1973-1990. Following a brief review of existing literature on the 1973 coup, this paper pinpointed a small and emerging school of thought that locates the coup within a broader history of contemporary capitalism. This served as the paper's starting point and from there it was positioned that the coup and ensuing military junta not only marked a transition in Chile's economic and political structure, but also marked a similar transition in its ideological structure. This was elaborated through an application of Žižek's ideology critique which is founded upon Lacan's understanding of the 'Symbolic'. It was proposed that Chile underwent a transformation in its Symbolic

structure, which acted as a necessary process in the ensuing economic and political changes it experienced.

From this, the discussion moved on to the end of the junta's rule: the transition to democracy between 1988 and 1990. Focussing on the narratives of the opposing campaigns in the run up to the 1988 plebiscite, it was highlighted how both sides articulated the proposed democratic transition as a 'return' to democracy. This was contrasted with the political reality that post-1990 democratic Chile bears little resemblance to the democratic form that was terminated in 1973. This inconsistency between political actors' perceptions and the political reality was interpreted through the Lacanian understanding of 'transference'. It was postulated that the act of portraying the transition as a 'return' was a necessary discursal procedure that reflected the needs of political actors to articulate a political proposition that had some grounding in the Symbolic in order to give both their campaigns and themselves meaning. This links back to Žižek's ideology critique, suggesting that the 'return' narrative again reflects an ideological fantasy.

This paper then finished with a brief discussion of the PS and its major structural and political changes during the 17 year junta rule. It was noted that, as with pre-1973 and post-1990 Chilean democracy, the PS that emerged from the junta's rule bears little resemblance to that which was removed from power in 1973. The drastic shift to the right by the party was interpreted through Lacan's understanding of desire. Moving away from common understandings of the Left's move towards the right in the post-Cold War era (a process exhibited in numerous countries, not just Chile) as being seen as a desire to remain relevant to voters, this paper positioned the PS's embrace of the 'Third Way' as a desire to remain relevant to the Symbolic structure itself. In other words, the PS's renewal reflects again an ideological desire to remain desired by neoliberalism, which itself desires a Left that is nonthreatening.

Notes

1. Original passage: 'El futuro era para ellos un borrón y cuenta nueva, un volver al pasado para partir todo de nuevo y esta vez tener la oportunidad de ser otro, distinto a lo que habían logrado llegar a ser'. My own translation.

2. Original passage: 'La gente quería volver a la democracia'. My own translation.

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