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Terror/enjoyment: performativity, resistance and the teacher's psyche

Matthew Clarke*

School of Education, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

This paper focuses on Stephen Ball's article, *The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity*, since it is here that he analyses the issue of how neoliberal education policies shape teacher identities that I also wish to explore. I begin by providing a summary of the 2003 piece, noting how it locates teachers and their work in the midst of policy, politics, and passion in contrast to dominant techno-rational discourses of teaching – embodied, for example, in discourses of professional teacher 'standards' or 'competencies' that reduce teaching to matters of technical efficiency. As part of this summary, and complementing Ball's own use of Foucault, I use the four 'axes' of Foucault's ethics to explain how performativity has brought about changes in relation to (1) the domain, (2) the authority sources/mode of subjectivization, (3) the practices and (4) the telos of being a teacher. The paper goes on to argue that Ball's emphasis on 'terror' can usefully be supplemented by a Lacanian-inspired recognition of 'enjoyment' as an explanatory factor that help us understand the grip of neoliberalism's ideology of performativity. The paper concludes by examining the economies of fantasy and enjoyment as they relate to the work of teachers, how these economies work to sustain the terrors of performativity, and how an ethics of the Real that emphasizes the critical and creative potential of sublimation, might form part of a repertoire of resistance.

Keywords: neoliberal education policy; performativity; teacher identity; psychoanalytic theory

Introduction

It is now 30 years since education in Western contexts such as the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia were harnessed to the then nascent neoliberal economy[1] and thereby ascribed responsibility for the future of society, shackled, as it were, by the bonds of fear embodied in the bleak warnings of *A nation at risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983). This was followed, five years later in 1988, by the passing of England's Education Reform Act (ERA), a 'watershed event' that installed the essential neoliberal logic of competition and autonomy for schools, along with access to school performance information as the basis for school choice on the part of parents, in the English education system, simultaneously establishing an international blueprint for others to follow (Levin and Fullan 2008, 173).

Since then, England, like the United States as well as various countries in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia and New Zealand (Davies and Bansel 2007), has been

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*Email: m.clarke@unsw.edu.au

subject to nearly three decades of neoliberal educational reform. These reforms have had different specificities and nuances in each education system, reflecting different, contexts histories and political systems. But, like the ERA blueprint, overall this reform agenda has been driven by the values of marketization, competition, choice and accountability and justified in England's case by links to a shifting sequence of overarching, but ultimately empty, signifiers, from 'the free market', to 'the third way' and on to 'the big society' (Kerr, Byrne, and Foster 2011). Regardless of whether this trajectory of reform will eventually lead to a 'pendulum swing' towards a more humane version of education (Barker 2010), or whether we are facing the end of state education (Ball 2012), the various projects and experiments conducted under the invisible – in the sense of never being openly avowed by policy makers – guiding hand of neoliberalism have had momentous effects on all aspects of education policy and practice, including its management and organization, its curricula, and, not least, on its professional body of teachers.

The manifestations of neoliberalism in education include increasing central control of what is taught in the form of national or state curricula; the detailed specification of teachers' work through professional teacher competencies and standards, coupled with the introduction of performance management systems and other audit mechanisms to monitor and control teachers and teaching; and the introduction of centralized high-stakes testing regimes to continually evaluate the output of teaching by rendering it visible, calculable and comparable. Taken together, these reforms represent an assault on teachers' knowledge, autonomy and judgment (Furlong 2004). But more than this, 'the novelty of this epidemic of reform is that it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are' (Ball 2003, 215).

The terrors of performativity *and* the teacher's soul

The visceral – and eviscerating – effects of neoliberal education policy reforms on the professional identities of teachers have been documented by a number of authors but never more powerfully than in Ball's (2003) account, *The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity*. That this piece struck a chord with readers and researchers is evidenced by its extraordinary academic impact with nearly 1200 citations listed on Google scholar in the decade since its publication, as compared to a 'mere' 420 citations for What is policy: Texts, trajectories and toolboxes published a decade earlier (1993). Likewise, a slightly earlier article published in the same journal, *Teacher professional identity: Competing discourses, competing outcomes* (Sachs 2001), addressing many of the same issues in terms of the implications of neoliberal discourses and practices in education for teachers' identities, registers 'only' 364 citations on Google scholar. The paper also had powerful resonance with practising teachers in schools, many of whom contacted the author 'to indicate ways in which his writing on performativity "spoke" to their experiences and aligned with their sense of fear and anger' (Ball and Olmedo 2013, 94, n 1). What might explain the extraordinarily resonant chord this paper struck?

Part of the appeal of *The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity* is no doubt linked to its refusal to work within these technicist assumptions and its insistent location in a counter-discourse that recognizes and affirms the increasingly excluded personal, emotional and political dimensions of teaching. As noted above, a key thrust in the neoliberal reform agenda in education has been an emphasis on measurable (quantifiable) 'quality and excellence' (219). This emphasis is reflected in the promulgation of sets of professional competencies and standards for teachers that, in the words of Australia's recently approved national professional teacher standards 'define the work of teachers and make explicit the

elements of high-quality, effective teaching in twenty-first century schools that will improve educational outcomes for students' (Education Services Australia 2011, 2). Regardless of the value of any particular set of teacher professional standards, the standards discourse as such is technicist and reductive in orientation, suggesting that the multidimensional complexities of teaching can be captured in a series of bullet points, while typically occluding the personal, emotional and political dimensions of teaching as work.

As suggested by its evocative title, *The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity* is organized around the trope of struggle between these new, impersonal policy technologies of performativity and the enduring humanity and vulnerability of 'teachers, as ethical subjects' (216[2]). The impersonal, technical nature of the former is suggested in the paper, and in neo-liberal management speak, by descriptions of educational practice in terms of 'cost-effective policy outcomes' and 'productivity targets', in comparison with which teachers 'are subject to regular appraisal and review and performance comparisons' (218). These new forms of 'performative competition', enabled by a professional culture of 'increasing individualization', replace 'organization cooperation and older forms of collective relations among workers', resulting in 'physical and emotional damage to teachers and high levels of "existential anxiety and dread"' (219). Tellingly the human, as opposed to the productivity, costs of the new policy technologies are born by individuals, as 'we become ontologically insecure' and as 'in the labyrinth of performativity … reflexivity is internalized' becoming 'matters of self-doubt and personal anxiety rather than public debate' (220). That is to say, the performative tech-nologies of neoliberal management of education 'have an emotional status dimension, as well as the appearance of rationality and objectivity' and are associated with 'individual feelings of pride, guilt, shame and envy' (221).

Part of this emotional cost is a direct result of the intensification of teaching, whereby a 'second order' workload associated with accountability and the need to continually justify one's ongoing employment is added to the 'first order' demands associated with actual teaching (221). The consequences of this intensification include 'a kind of values schizophre-nia', in which 'commitment, judgement and authenticity' are subordinated to 'impression and performance management' (221). The further consequences of this shift include the depar-ture of 'increasing numbers of teachers', with those who remain facing 'inauthentic practice and relationships' (222), as well as the skewing of resources and effort to areas and individu-als 'where measurable returns are likely to be achieved' (223) and the growing proliferation of practices of gaming and 'fabrication' as 'effectiveness' replaces 'truthfulness' (224) as an institutional value in 'the performative society' (226). The struggle between the impersonal and destructive technologies of performativity and the human soul of the teacher is summed up in the statement on the penultimate page, predicting the prospects for those institutions in a weak performative position in the competitive arena created by neoliberal education reform, but also indicative of the consequences of performativity for education more widely: 'the heart of the educational project is gouged out and left empty. Authenticity is replaced entirely by plasticity' (225). Thus, as Ball notes, neoliberal policy and its performative technologies changes not only what people do, 'it changes who they are' (215).

In seeking to understand the argument in *The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity*, particularly given Stephen Ball's Foucauldian orientation (e.g. 2013), and his recent attention to Foucault's ethical works (Ball and Olmedo 2013), it is helpful to revisit the relationship between Foucault's genealogical and his later ethical works (e.g. Foucault 1985, 1986, 1997). In *Discipline and punish* (1977), Foucault analyzes transformations between the classical and modern periods in practices of punishment along four dimensions. First is a transformation in the punishable 'substance', which is transferred from the physical body to the treatable soul of the offender (1977, 16); second is a change in the 'mode of subjection'

implicit in these practices of punishment, such that the simple equation of crime and punish-ment ('an eye for an eye') is replaced by subjection to a range of expert knowledge – that of psychologists, criminologists, counsellors and prison workers, for example – which is brought to bear on the criminal; third is a shift in the practices of punishment, where 'the symbolics of blood' centred around the spectacle of judgment and sentencing 'gives way to the continuous, hidden work of assessment, management and normalization' (Dean 1994, 161); and fourth is a shift in the telos, or ultimate purpose, of punishment, which witnesses a shift from exacting total submission to sovereign power to producing useful and docile subjects of modern disciplinary practices.

This four-part schema is employed again in the ethical works, where Foucault uses them as a framework for thinking about the different ways in which ethics was conceived in the Greek, Roman, and early Christian eras, and where they become four axes of ethics: (1) the ethical substance (the part of the self pertaining to ethics); (2) the mode of ethical subjection (the authority sources of ethics); (3) Ethical self-practices and; (4) the telos, or endpoint, of ethics (May 2006; O'Leary 2002). Thus, the four dimensions of the genealogy of power become four axes of ethical self-formation, providing a further means through which we can think about the ethical formation of teachers as subjects (Clarke 2009a, 2009b).

In this sense, *The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity* describes a number of shifts in the ethical subjectivities of teachers. These include: a shift in the ethical substance of teaching, from a domain that is primarily defined in terms of processes of classroom ped-agogy, to a domain that is increasingly defined in terms of outputs and results, defined in managerialist terms; a shift in the authority sources that define the mode of ethical subjec-tion of teachers, from one defined in terms of 'professional judgement and cooperation' (218) as well as a meaningful relationship between teachers and what they do (222), to one defined in terms of a requirement 'to produce measurable and "improving" outputs and per-formances' (222) as part of an 'ethics of competition and performance' (218); a shift in the ethical self-practices of teaching, from 'the primacy of caring relations in work with pupils and colleagues' (Smyth et al. 2000, 140, cited on 222), to performativity-oriented 'fabrica-tions' designed to meet the ever-changing requirements of accountability (224–225) and; a shift in the telos of teaching, from 'irrelevant principles, or out-moded social commitments' (223) to the new performative purposes of 'excellence and improvement' as the 'driving force' of teachers' practice (223).

As noted above, Ball has recently drawn on Foucault's later ethical work to think about how notions like 'care of the self' might be useful in thinking about resistant subjectivities in the face of neoliberal governmentalities. In similar fashion, and writing against a shared back-ground of concerns about the increasing encroachment by discourses and practices of accountability in education, I have argued that Foucault's ethics and 'care of the self' have significant potential for addressing the concerns raised by neoliberal policy in relation to teachers' identities by highlighting the ways in which individuals and groups are shaped by contingent social, historical and political factors, as well as foregrounding the ways in which they resist or comply with these influences (Clarke 2013).

However, at the same time, given the increasing emphasis in my own work in psychoana-lytic perspectives, I am mindful of critiques of Foucault's ethics as providing an insufficient set of tools for theorizing political resistance, since, amongst other things,

> What is missing from Foucault's account is [therefore] some sort of account of the unconscious processes and 'irrational drives' which both bind us to power and cause us to try and free our-selves from it … what is needed is some notion of the psyche – understood as different to the subject and as forming the unpredictable underside of subjectifying power. (Newman 2007, 76)

'Some notion of the psyche' is implied by the evocative term, 'terror', in Ball's title. It is also suggested by the metaphors deployed in the opening section, of 'floods' and 'epidemics' (215), whose rich connotations of a lack of control contrast with cold, calculating objectivity inhering in the 'technical rationalities of reform'. Indeed, the paper explicitly seeks 'to "get behind" the objective façade' in order 'to examine the subjectivities of change and changing subjectivities which are threatened or required or brought about by performativity' (217). Aside from querying the notion of 'getting behind', whose two-dimensionality implies a straightforward truth/ideology distinction, and which I might wish to supplement with something like the metaphor of the möbius band (a strip of paper, twisted and then joined at each end) which appears to have two sides but turns out to have only one (Rothenberg 2010), my question would be whether the notion of 'soul' – in Foucault's terms 'the prison of the body' (1977, 30) – is sufficient for the task. For as Butler inquires,

> does the reduction of the psychoanalytically rich notion of the psyche to that of the imprisoning soul eliminate the possibility of resistance to normalization and to subject formation, a resistance that emerges precisely from the incommensurablity between psyche and subject? (1977, 87)

Framed positively, my question is how can a psychoanalytically informed notion of the psyche enrich and enhance the understandings afforded by notions of a discursively produced subjectivity?

My point here in relation to Ball's work echoes Miller's statement in relation to that of Foucault, that 'what interests me here is not any desire to contradict Foucault' (Miller 1992, 59). Likewise, my desire is not to contradict Ball; rather, I hope to explore the productive possibilities of theoretical interanimation, for as Miller goes on to note, Foucault's work during his last years has striking parallels with the work of Lacan (Miller 1992, 62). In this, I am also guided by Ball's own insight, that 'in the analysis of complex social issues – like policy – two theories are probably better than one' (Ball 1993, 10), and so in the remainder of the paper, I explore how insights from Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, approached via the work of Laclau and Mouffe, can complement and extend the insights of *The terrors of performativity and the teacher's soul.*

The terrors of performativity *vs.* the teacher's soul

In Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) terms, Ball's paper can be read as structured around the construction of two antagonistic chains of equivalence. On the one hand, we have the new performative technologies of neoliberal managerialism, whose practices reflect Bernstein's 'mechanisms of projection' (221) and include 'the database, the appraisal meeting, the annual review, report writing, the regular publication of results and promotion application, inspections and peer review' (220); whose hero is the manager (219); whose guiding values are performance and effectiveness (224); whose ethos is individual and competitive and; whose consequences include anxiety, dread, terror for individuals and gaming and fabrication on the part of institutions (224–226). In opposition to this chain, we have the 'older policy technologies of professionalism and bureaucracy' (216), whose practices reflected Bernstein's 'mechanisms of introjection' (221) and included 'organization cooperation and older forms of collective relations among workers' (219); whose hero was the teacher; whose values included 'the older ethics of professional judgement and co-operation' (218); whose ethos was collective and collaborative, emphasizing authenticity, meaningfulness and beliefs (222–223) and; whose consequences included membership of an 'autonomous or collective ethical self' (226). The undesirable nature of the former chain of equivalence is signalled in the title, where the signifier 'terror' evokes the horrors of the guillotine and the brutality of the

global 'war on terror', in contrast to the benign spirituality suggested by the signifier 'soul'. This is confirmed on the first page, where education reform is described in Levin's biological terms as an 'epidemic' that is '"carried" by powerful agents' and, in language invoking biblical or natural disasters, as an 'unstoppable flood' (215), as well as in the final pages in the reference, cited above, to performativity gouging out the heart of the educational project. This message is further enforced by the use of the inclusive 'we' to signal solidarity between the author and the audience as fellow subjects of the terrors of performativity, as in 'we learn to talk about ourselves and the relationships, purposes and motivations in these new ways' (218). Yet the irredeemably complex nature of social reality – which we might think of in terms the infinitude that characterises the field of discursivity (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 113) – means that any such organization of that reality into antagonistic chains of equivalence, such as those outlined above, is inevitably a reductive (and fantasmatic) simplification of that reality.

In Lacanian terms, we might read the chain of equivalence associated with performativity as aligning with the symbolic – the totalizing realm of human experience associated with language, law and structure (Evans 1996, 202) – and thus representing a form of symbolic domination of teachers by the policy technologies of performativity. Conversely, we might read the chain associated with the teacher's soul, and its associated values of cooperation, collaboration, collectivity, and authenticity, as aligning with the imaginary – 'the realm of image and imagination, deception and lure' whose illusions include 'wholeness, synthesis, autonomy' (Evans 1996, 82). In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Laclau and Mouffe 2001), each chain of equivalence – or rather the social antagonism existing between them – is held responsible for blocking the full constitution of the other's identity. Žižek adds the additional insight that it is not the antagonistic adversary that prevents the full fruition of identity, but that 'there is a force of negativity that is prior to social antagonism … this force is nothing but the Lacanian Real, i.e. the traumatic kernel which always resists symbolization' (Torfing 1999, 128). The Lacanian Real is understood here (to the extent that talk of 'understanding' the Real is not a contradiction) as that which cannot be unassimilated in the symbolic or imaginary but which is attested to in the pervasive human experience of existential or ontological anxiety (Boothby 1991, 147–148). In this sense, 'the subject is a paradoxical entity, which is, so to speak, its own negative, i.e. which persists only insofar as its full realization is blocked' (Žižek 2005, 254). Nonetheless, the antagonistic adversary is still held responsible for the blockage of a full identity. Consequently, our constitutive lack as subjects resulting from the traumatic kernel of the Real, is projected onto this adversary – an outside that simultaneously constitutes and subverts the unity of the inside (Torfing 1999, 129) – so that, for example, neoliberalism's policy technologies are blamed for the non-realisation of 'authentic' teacher identities, while the 'irrelevant principles, or out-moded social commitments' (Ball 2003, 223) of recalcitrant teachers are held responsible for preventing the full fruition of neoliberal policy technologies in education.

What are separated into two antagonistic chains, both of which can be thought of as social fictions, or fantasies, to the extent that they gloss over the messy complexity of the social, are inextricably linked in the Lacanian subject. That is, teachers are simultaneously colonized/seduced by the totalizing symbolic effects of neoliberal policy technologies, while also yearning for an imagined authenticity of (former/future) collaboration and collegiality. In this sense, fantasies and social fictions comprise both imaginary and symbolic aspects (Campbell 2004, 120), in that symbolic identification involves attributing an imaginary unity and transparency to the symbolic, as, for example, occurs when subjects are 'spoken' by neoliberal policy-speak, while imaginary identifications are governed by the symbolic order's master signifiers, be these neoliberal or otherwise. Furthermore, since 'the imaginary is

always already structured by the symbolic order' (Evans 1996, 84), both orders involve alienation, stemming from the differential nature of the symbolic order, where signifiers only have meaning through their place in a system of differences, within which the subject can never develop an adequate or coherent sense of identity as a subject (Newman 2007, 85). This alienation is compounded by the ambiguous, internal/external nature of the unconscious, itself structured through the same order of language that precedes and exceeds the individual subject. Finally, there is the alienation resulting from the haunting presence/ absence of the Real, i.e. that which cannot be symbolized, which hovers within each of the other forms of alienation, disrupting meaning, destabilizing identities and displacing reality (Newman 2007, 86).

Terror and performativity, resistance and capitulation, surplus and enjoyment

Interestingly, and despite my reading of the paper in terms of simplifying chains of equivalence, Ball captures something of this complexity when he talks about the 'deeply paradoxical' nature of fabrications, identifying how they simultaneously involve (symbolic) 'submission to the rigours of performativity', while also providing an (imaginary) 'eluding or deflecting [of] direct surveillance' (225). That is, rather like the ostensibly two sides of the möbius band that turn out to be one, resistance and capitulation mutually constitute each other; or as Ball puts the point concisely, 'fabrications are both resistance and capitulation' (225). But beyond this, he talks of 'a surplus of meaning in such exercises. A surplus which spills over into the everyday life of the organization' (225) – is this, perhaps, an aporetic and unconscious reference to something like the Lacanian Real, the 'traumatic void that can only be glimpsed in the fractures and inconsistencies of apparent reality' (Fisher 2009, 18)? It certainly touches on questions of how we might understand not only the disciplinary production of the subject through discourse, but also 'the disciplinary production of *an attachment to subjection*' (Butler 1997, 102, emphasis in original), raising again the issue of the need for notions of an unconscious, though 'not an unconscious outside of power, but rather something like an unconscious of power itself' (Butler 1997, 104).

For if schools and teachers are simultaneously engaged in resistance and capitulation, this suggests the operation of 'unconscious motives and "irrational drives which both bind us to power and cause us to try and free ourselves from it"' (Newman 2007, 76, cited above). Here, Lacan's theorization of jouissance,[3] or enjoyment, provides insights into our attachment to states of subjection and subordination and hence helps explain the reproduction of systems of ideology and authority. According to this theorization, our entry into the social world of the symbolic requires sacrificing a pre-symbolic enjoyment as fullness; desire (and social life per se) depends on the promise of recapturing, at least partially, this lost enjoyment. Fantasy serves as the means by which desire is staged, promising a 'beatific' future of harmonious fulfilment and satisfaction ('our students will all do better next year'), yet simultaneously relying on the threat of a 'horrific' possible disaster scenario that is part of Ball's 'terror' ('our students will all do badly, the school will be closed and we will lose our jobs'). The horrific scenario in turn relies on the positing of some 'other' (the students who did not work hard enough; colleagues who were not committed enough), who prevented the fulfilment of the beatific vision and hence stole our enjoyment, an act of demonization which is itself a source of enjoyment; yet desire also returns in the form of a projected hope of recapturing the lost or stolen enjoyment in the future and hence of the eventual realization of the beatific vision (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2008; Stavrakakis 2007; Žižek 2005, 254). Returning here to the point made earlier about parallels between Lacan and Foucault, it is worth noting that the latter's view that power 'induces pleasure' (1980, 119) in some ways

resonates with this Lacanian explanation of the relationship between subjection and enjoyment (Stavrakakis 2007, 183).

This theorization helps explain why both capitulation – giving in to the neoliberal imperatives to engage in continuous self-improvement – and resistance – transgressing neoliberalism's imperatives – paradoxically provide enjoyment in a way that is surplus to any symbolic injunctions. That is to say, this surplus enjoyment, whether structured or staged by fantasies of neoliberal performativity *or* by fantasies of a return to 'authentic' teaching, corresponds *with*, offers compensation *for*, and ironically attaches the educational subject *to* – the surplus volumes of data and information demanded, extracted and circulated by neoliberal policy technologies as part of the drive to continuous improvement. In other words, if we think of neoliberalism as a form of pathology, 'the very renunciation of "pathological" enjoyment (the wiping out of all "pathological" content) brings about a certain surplus-enjoyment' (Žižek 2002, 231), just as transgression, paradoxically, serves to simultaneously deny *and* affirm the law (Jenks 2003). In this way, the libidinal economy works hand in hand with the performative informational economy.

Ironically, this complex picture of alienation and subjective non self-coincidence, surplus data (surplus value) and surplus enjoyment, offers resources for thinking about resistance, which, as suggested above, may complement and enrich Foucauldian ideas of subjectification through normalizing discourses that to a large extent underpin Ball's paper, where 'policy technologies of market, management and performativity leave no space of [*sic*] an autonomous or collective self' (226). Space does not permit more than a brief sketch here (for a fuller account, see Clarke and Moore 2013 in press); but in this theorization, resistance is linked to interanimation between the registers of the symbolic, imaginary and Real registers of the psyche. In particular, such resistance is linked to a form of sublimation, which works within the gap between reality and the Real (Zupančič 2003, 83). Such sublimation enables the (re)animation of the signifier through an awareness and encircling of, as well as the (re) energizing by, this foreclosed Real (Ruti 2012; Stavrakakis 1999). At the same time, sublimation bolsters agency by substituting the infusion of everyday objects, meanings and practices with one's own passionate desire, in place of a fantasmatic reliance on the terms dictated by the Other, or on the arrival of the unobtainable Thing (Copjec 2002). Sublimation here is not about utopian idealization, though it does challenge the 'reality principle', whereby reality is seen as something that unproblematically coincides with itself (Zupančič 2003), and whereby (neoliberal economic) ideology presents itself as incontrovertible fact (e.g. 'growth is good' – 'debt is bad').

> Sublimation is thus related to ethics insofar as it is not entirely subordinated to the reality principle, but liberates or creates a space from which it is possible to attribute certain values to something other than the recognized or established "common good" … sublimation gives value to what the reality principle does not value. (Zupančič 2003, 77–78)

Such practices of sublimation would entail recognizing and exploiting the 'surplus of meaning' (225) – another way of describing the gap between reality and the Real – that Ball identifies as central to the exercise of neoliberal policy's performative technologies. This could involve, for example, insisting that a diverse range of meanings be ascribed to a term like 'quality, rather than allowing it to be reduced to the results of high-stakes test scores. Such resistance does not imply the possibility of standing outside or transcending the libidinal economies of enjoyment on which neoliberal policy technologies at least in part rely; 'but it does imply that the possibilities of resignification will rework and unsettle the passionate attachment to subjection without which subject formation – and re-formation – cannot succeed' (Butler 1997, 105). Such ethico-political work may be one way for the teacher's

soul to, if not reverse, at least traverse – in the sense of confronting and crossing in order to assume a new subject position in relation to – the terrors of performativity.

Notes

1. Of course, mass education has always been harnessed to some degree to the needs of the economy but it can be argued that under neoliberalism this harnessing has been intensified.
2. This and subsequent unattributed page numbers refer to *The terrors of performativity and the teacher's soul*.
3. The French term simultaneously suggests pleasure and displeasure, which is altogether lacking in the English term.

Notes on contributor

Matthew Clarke is a member of the politics and policy research group in the School of Education at the University of New South Wales. His recent psychoanalytically informed critical work on education policy has appeared in the *Journal of Education Policy*, *Critical Studies in Education* and *Discourse*. His forthcoming book, *The other side of education: A Lacanian critique of neoliberal education policy*, will be published in 2014 with Sense Publications.

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