# ON THE DIALECTIC OF THE CONSUMING SUBJECT IN SPACE

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the possibilities and risks for geography of adopting anti-humanist theories of the subject through a consideration of the consuming subject in relation to space. Specifically, this is theorized as a necessarily failed dialectic (or ~~dialectic~~), drawing on Lacan's account of the subject, before Lacanian psychoanalysis is itself considered as the 'mirror of Oedipus', drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis. The paper points to the way in which particular conceptions of subjectivity correspond with particular conceptions of space. The relations between capitalism, consumption, patriarchy, subjectivity and space are, therefore, developed with a view to deconstructing conceptions that fail to approach the human world with a recognition of its radically non-natural nature. The naturalistic fallacies of the classical conception of realist space (and Euclidean geometry) and the rational Cartesian subject are, accordingly, subverted by an act of theory.

**key words** consumption psychoanalysis schizoanalysis subjectivity desire space

'Everything since the Greeks has been predicated wrong. You can't make it with geometry and geometrical systems of thinking.'

Kerouac, 1986, 120

## Introduction

Despite its deliberate lack of engagement with earlier psychological models of the consuming subject in space—frequently referred to under the rubric of 'urban consumer behaviour'—this paper is positioned against the geometricist *credo* to which all such work adheres.

The current move from atomistic models of consumers towards a fuller recognition of the radically social nature of consumption (Miller, 1987; Lee, 1993) potentially carries for geography something of the force of David Harvey's earlier exegesis of Marxism (Harvey, 1982, 1985a, 1985b). Where Harvey succeeded in breaking with models of the space-economy which simply took as given, as *natural*, the premises of an historically and geographically specific economic system (*viz.* capitalism), anti-humanist[1] theories of the subject as consumer similarly have the potential to instantiate a conception that is anti-naturalist, that breaks with common-sensical notions of the 'individual' which are in fact social constructions dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Dumont, 1977; 1986; Althusser, 1969; 1972; Williams, 1976, 161-165). Thus, the theorization of the subject represents one possible basis for the elucidation of the constitution of Western culture and society in all its historical and geographical variability—though, of course, the dismay

expressed by some at Harvey's (1989) privileging of Marxism as a totalizing discourse should serve as ample warning that particular theoretical discourses are no more (though equally no less) than that.

One reason for developing this area of theory is the increasing amount of geographical interest in consumption. The *analytical* perspectives of those anti-humanist discourses pertaining to subjectivity with which this paper concerns itself serve to allow a kind of epistemological triangulation with respect to *ethnographic* studies of the (urban) consumer. Given the current vogue for such studies, this seems a highly appropriate theoretical engagement. A full consideration of the relative merits of these approaches is not, however, undertaken here. Rather, the initial concern must be to provide a rigorous account of anti-humanist theories of the consuming subject.

Rachel Bowlby begins her *Shopping with Freud* (1993) by noting the coupling of the two names 'Ford' and 'Freud' in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). The questioning of the reactionary potential of Freudianism raised by Huxley has elsewhere been the topic of intense debate, which arguably realized its apogée in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972; English 1983), an apostasic text which, according to Bogue (1989, 83), is '[t]he modern counterpart of *The Antichrist* of Nietzsche, *The Anti-Oedipus* ... [being] a more literal translation of its title ... .'

The current wave of theoretical writing on the so-called 'consumer society' has, however, had little to say with respect to psychoanalysis (of whatever stripe), or Deleuze and Guattari's alternative schizoanalysis—a fact that should invoke some

surprise given that the world of consumption everywhere appears to be linked to phantasy, to sexuality, to the unconscious, to desire (cf. Williams, 1983). One assumes that this has more than a little to do with the inherent complexity of, or at least unfamiliarity with, these discourses. Miller (1987, 99), for instance, rejects Lacanian psychoanalysis in one sentence, on the basis of the bold yet highly dubious (and probably incorrect) assertion that language is an entirely conscious activity while 'objects may retain their place in the ordering of the unconscious.' For Miller 'there seems little reason to suppose that the unconscious is structured largely in relation to language or some other grammatical form.' With this glaring mis-statement of perhaps the best known Lacanian slogan Miller, presumably unwittingly, fundamentally misrepresents the Lacanian position. Similarly, Bocock (1993, 84) follows what is a highly inadequate account of Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) *Anti-Oedipus* with the lofty pronouncement that 'their case was overstated,' belying the fact that he has shown little commitment to comprehending even the basic dimensions of their work. For this reason, I attempt to assemble here, first, a Lacanian understanding of the consuming subject, followed by a Deleuzo-Guattarian alternative.

## Lack, desire, the Other

The relations between Freud, Lacan, and Deleuze and Guattari are suitably complex and hence consideration of the Deleuzo-Guattarian position is simply deferred until the later stages of this paper. Concerning the relation between Freud and Lacan, Land (1992, 45) writes that 'Freud ... is an energeticist (although reading Lacan and his semiological ilk one would never suspect it).' But Lacan's (1979, 20) discovery that

'the unconscious is structured like a language' firmly marks out a position which reveals the priority of the social over the natural. Lacan replaces any pretension that psychoanalysis could be a positive, natural science with an insistence on its status as a thoroughly human science of the unconscious which amplifies the cultural, the decidedly *un*natural: 'the unconscious is neither primordial nor instinctual; what it knows about the elementary is no more than the elements of the signifier' (Lacan, 1972, 316).

The Lacanian subject is, from the start, formulated in opposition to the Cartesian *Cogito* (Lacan, 1977, 1). The 'I' is something to be explained, not something to be taken as stable, given or axiomatic. Lacan theorized the earliest stages of the attainment of subjectivity with reference to the 'mirror stage,' a formative event that sees the development of the ego in the previously auto-erotic and fragmented infant (Lacan, 1977, 1-7). It is formative of subjectivity in that the infant must move from its initial auto-erotic stage to taking (the image of ) its whole body as love-object prior to its being able to enter into inter-subjective relations.

Between six to eighteen months, the 'motor helpless' human infant becomes fascinated by its image in the mirror, which—unlike other animals—it seems, with some jubilation, to recognize as its own. The human infant identifies with the external image as a *Gestalt:* the body is no longer in pieces and for the first time the infant anticipates an objective mastery of its body. This 'recognition' is, however, necessarily a 'misrecognition' (*méconnaissance*) being, as it is, an identification with a specular image in the plane of the mirror. Moreover, this identification is

necessarily *alienating*, in that the realization of the subject in the mirror phase always occurs elsewhere, in an imaginary space outside of the infant, where actual mastery remains impossible. Finally, because the image is a *Gestalt*, it is necessarily a '*spatial identification*' (Benvenuto and Kennedy, 1986, 58, original emphasis), an image formed by a circumscribing other, dividing the ego from the external world. Hence the mirror stage establishes ~~a relation between~~ ego and other but this relation is complex, the child locating its own image in the other and the other in the image of itself. For instance, the child's identification with its mirror image is typically verified by an adult (e.g. its mother), such that the child actually identifies with (what it takes to be) the mother's perception of itself. The mirror stage thus instantiates a tension in relation to the other, for attaining a subjective viewpoint necessarily entails being denied the viewpoint of the constituting other whilst appearing at a point within it (Lacan, 1979, 67-78). The formation of an essentially narcissistic ego, which provides a wholly imaginary coherence and unity (as a result of *méconnaissance*) thus also has a defensive aggressivity as its 'correlative tension' (Lacan, 1977, 22). Accordingly, there is an ambivalence stemming from the entirely fictive status of the relation of absolute plenitude the child construes between ego and other.

Lacan's subsequent exploration of semiotics brought a shift of focus from the register of the *imaginary* to that of the *symbolic*, which no longer framed discussion in terms of the image but in terms of the signifier. The accession of the subject into language provides the basis whereby the erotic-aggressive egocentric relationship established by the mirror phase is overcome, thereby permitting inter-subjective relationships—but only at the cost of incurring further division, alienation and lack.

Lacan reformulated the Saussurian sign as $\frac{S}{s}$ to indicate the priority of the signifier (S) over the signified (s), the bar designating the *separation* of the two elements rather than the intrinsic reciprocity and stability between the (arbitrarily related) signifier and signified that Saussure theorized as being productive of meaning. While Lacan follows Saussure in recognizing that signifiers (as well as signifieds) are defined diacritically, possessing negative rather than positive values, Lacan is concerned to draw out the implication for the subject of the nature of signification by stressing the 'incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier' (Lacan, 1977, 154). Meaning is, on this understanding, necessarily an active process which relates dialectically to the coming-into-being (*devenir*) of the subject, not a given and stable relation that could be available to a pre-existing subject. Accordingly, Lacan (1979, 207) defines the signifier as 'that which represents a subject for another signifier.' However, while subjectivity is dependent on the signifier, relying on the Other of language for its designation, its being can never be thus adequately represented. This, appropriately, mirrors the misrecognition involved in the mirror stage.

The coherence implied by the identification of the subject position 'I' is illusory since the I is necessarily split in discourse into the I that is enounced and the I of enunciation, the latter being ex-centric in relation to the former (Lacan, 1977, 146-78). This can be witnessed—in relation to the *lying*, rather than the more classical *thinking* subject—with respect to the so-called 'liar's paradox' (Lacan, 1979,136-48): 'I am lying' necessarily entails a split between the subject of the signified (enounced) who lies, and the ex-centric subject of the signifier (enunciation), who is able to enounce

such a fact (without violating the principle of non-contradiction which renders the phrase paradoxical in common-sensical terms). The speaking subject is thus divided between the conscious of intended meaning and the Other, the entire network of signifiers (constituting *langue*) from which individual utterances (instances of *parole*) are drawn. This division of the subject is also an instance of alienation since, according to Lacan (1979, 211), the accession into language can never be complete and 'meaning survives only deprived of that part of non-meaning that is, strictly speaking, that which constitutes in the realization of the subject, the unconscious.' Hence Lacan's (1979, 20) statement that 'the unconscious is structured like a language.' The speaking subject, *$*, is therefore never complete and can be conceived of as 'disappearing' or 'fading,' which Lacan (1979, 207) refers to as *aphanisis*. Thus, the entry of the subject into the symbolic, whilst providing for the possibility of inter-subjective relationships, necessarily constitutes the subject as *lacking*.

The lack in the subject which issues from its attainment of representation as a signifier within the symbolic order is the foundation of desire. For subjectivity is determined by the Other of language, and all that is incompatible with the assigned subjectivity is relegated to the unconscious. '[*D*]*esire is*' Lacan (1979, 158) insists '*the desire of the Other*' (italics in original) and must necessarily pass by way of the 'defile of the signifier' through which it is structured. Desire is, in short, subject to the law inscribed in the symbolic order. Accordingly, desire lies beyond the pleasure principle of Freud, in the locus of the Other and outside of the subject and its own concerns with its well-being. The subject's articulation of needs are, as a consequence, always framed by this sense of lack, such that whilst needs may be met,

the articulation of need is necessarily overdetermined by an articulation of the insatiable desire to make good the lack issuing from the symbolic order. This lack Lacan denotes as '*objet petit a*' (*a* standing for *l'autre*, the other of the imaginary relation of plenitude construed during the mirror phase). The barred subject, *$*, is therefore destined to mis-take *objet a* as that which will make good the lack—and since this is impossible it is destined to be played out interminably in the realm of phantasy. Lapsley and Westlake (1992) thus describe this coming-into-being of the subject as a necessarily failed dialectic (hereinafter: ~~dialectic~~), invoking Lacan's (1982, 158) remark that 'sublation is one of those sweet dreams of philosophy'.

Lacan's 'Schema L' (Figure 1) schematizes the subordination of the ego-other relation (characterized by the imaginary symbiotic pre-Oedipal relation between mother and child) to the symbolic relation between subject and Other which ruptures the imaginary relation of plenitude. (Note the pun in the Figure: S, *Es* [= Id]; i.e. the subject as analysand.) The symbolic relation of the subject to the Other, which instantiates a renewed sense of lack in the subject, Lacan associates with castration, such that this relation is overdetermined by considerations pertaining to sexual difference.

The Oedipus complex introduces the law that regulates *jouissance* through the interruption of the dyadic relation between ego and other by the presence of a third term, associated with the father, or strictly speaking, the name-of-the-father (*q.v.*). The Oedipus complex therefore lies at the base of patriarchal society which is, by definition, *phallocentric*. The phallus is, for Lacan, a signifier without a signified. It

signifies the necessarily absent object of desire that would make good the subject's lack, its presence marking and masking the absence or lack in the Other (which is therefore designated as the barred Other, Ø, or A for *l'Autre*). Gender is, precisely, a result of the way in which subjectivity is inscribed within the phallic function.

The Oedipus complex may initially be formulated as being a consequence of the incest taboo, its consequences flowing from a fundamental prohibition, the law of the father. Such a taboo is not, as Freud hypothesized, a primordial and universal feature of the human species but, as Lévi-Strauss (1970) demonstrates, a cultural law which is significant in its very existence as much as in its content. For such a law asserts the priority of the cultural over the natural in the uniquely human order of things, thereby affirming cultural law and social obligation over natural instinct (cf. Durkheim, 1965; Mauss, 1990; Bataille, 1988a, 1988b). But the consequence of this particular affirmation of the social is a system of exogamy whereby either women or men must be exchanged between family lines. Accordingly, patriarchy may be defined as a system of the exchange of women, and as a consequence of this women are defined, in binary terms, against men: woman as that which is not man, rather than the other way around. The reliance of this system on a binary opposition of rigidly unified subjectivities necessitates both that the male subject sublimates anything that would undermine a unified masculine subjectivity, and that male bonding functions to reinforce this. This is the basis of Freud's assertion that patriarchy is sustained by the sublimation of male homosexual desire, which would otherwise appear as unacceptable to its functioning, and is therefore transformed into the kinds of

masculine myths perpetuated as socially valuable within Western patriarchal culture (Easthope, 1986).

The inscription of gender within the phallic function is, therefore, characteristically asymmetrical in its engendering of masculine and feminine subjectivities. Irrespective of gender, the 'premature' birth of the human infant and its absolute dependency on the mother is misconstrued by the infant as being a precise reversal of this situation; that is, it is the mother whom is entirely dependent on the infant, without whom she would experience lack, and whom she therefore desires. In short, the child takes itself to be the phallus. The fictive situation of plenitude thus conjured by the child successfully assuages the absolute helplessness it would otherwise experience. However, this relation is ruptured for the child by the presence of the father. The recognition by the child that there is a difference between the mother and the father is conceived of in terms of the phallus—possessed by the father, lacking in the (castrated) mother. The apparent possession of the phallus by the father and the consequent authority of the law of the father places an interdiction on the child's desire to be what the mother desires, thereby initiating a movement in the subject towards a new position, fuelled by the symbolic threat of castration.

In coming to recognize the sexual division between those marked by lack and those possessing what would seemingly make good the lack (i.e. the phallus), the child is necessarily channelled to one side or the other of the binary divide. However, rather than making good the lack, the identification of the boy with the position offered as 'masculine' by the symbolic order works to reaffirm it when it is discovered that the

Other is also characterized by lack. This situation is necessarily so given that it operates under the name-of-the-father: the father is not a thing but a name for a thing, and the identification with the father is therefore with a signifier. There is, therefore, no secure, fixed or finally complete identity available to the post-Oedipal subject gendered as masculine—no available position where the subject's lack would be made good.

The Oedipal route to feminine sexuality is more problematic. On discovering the fact of the mother's castration—that is, that the mother lacks possession of the phallus—the only Oedipal resolution is through first taking the father as love-object only in order to later renounce this violation of the incest taboo and transfer desire to other subjects constituted as masculine within the phallic system—therein assuming an identification with the castrated mother. Feminine sexuality is too, therefore, a matter of the law, and not a pre-given subject position. The patriarchal structure of the symbolic positions the feminine subject as subordinate, able to figure for the masculine subject as *objet a*, and objectified in male phantasy as 'the woman' (*la femme*). *La femme* functions as a contradictory projection by masculine subjects of their experience of lack onto the woman, who is thereby figured as lacking whilst at the same time representing that which will make good the lack and function as the terminus of men's desires, a site of absolute *jouissance*. The most problematic dimension of this account of feminine sexuality concerns why women ever take up a post-Oedipal identification rather than remaining in the pre-Oedipal position of the 'phallic woman' (Lacan, 1982; Grosz, 1990).

The status of the Oedipus complex in Lacan's account of subjectivity is itself complex.[2] The above account bears the suggestion that desire is Oedipal, and that the satisfaction of desire is not impossible but rather forbidden. Castration is, however, a necessary effect of the signifier rather than a result of the law of the father. In his subsequent conceptualization of the *real*, defined as that which lies beyond symbolization and has no specular dimension, Lacan theorizes the role of *la chose*. *La chose* is defined in terms of the primordial mother who is always already subject to lack, rather than the mother who forms part of the imaginary relation of plenitude which is ruptured by the name-of-the-father. The child's relation to *la chose* is formative of an originary lack in the subject, the *manque-à-être*[3] which expresses itself as an insatiable desire for the imaginary lost object it never possessed. This relation to *la chose* is responsible for both desire and the myth of an Edenic condition of absolute plenitude. The relation of the child to the primordial mother poses the question of the signified of the maternal signifier: what is it she wants (lacks)? This is necessarily the phallus, the signifier of that which would make good the lack in the Other (but which therefore signifies that which does not exist). In taking itself to be the phallus, the infant locates itself within a signifying chain thereby subjecting itself to castration or lack. This process entails a separation of the subject from the *objet petit a* which stands for and masks the absence of absolute *jouissance*. Thus the subject is constituted around a void, being an imaginary whole around a hole—a *(w)hole*—destined to seek for *la chose* in the *objet a*. Despite the earlier formulation, the Oedipus myth therefore remains a myth, both permitting the repression of the fact of castration and simultaneously serving to dissimulate the absence of *la chose* (Lapsley and Westlake, 1992; Benvenuto and Kennedy, 1986, 183-95).

To summarize, Lacan subverts the fixed, coherent Cartesian subject in theorizing a subject characterized by lack and a concomitant insatiable desire. The illusory unity enshrined in the Cartesian subject is itself a function of this lack. The coming-into-being of the subject necessitates the third place of the Other, which positions and circumscribes the subject, but the presence of which is effaced or dissimulated by the subject. Lacan's (1977, 315) *Graphe Complet* (reproduced as Figure 2) provides a formal depiction, representing the subject in a continuous dynamic of becoming only to fade. It consists of an upper vector, denoting the drive of the desiring subject and lower vector, denoting the signifying chain of the speaking subject.

The vector of the drive diagrams the subject's desire. The locus of the Other is the site of castration: ($ ◊ D) places the barred subject in relation to an impossible demand (D) for unconditional love that would make good the subject's lack. The nature of this relation is denoted by the lozenge, which represents the conjunction of the mathematical 'less than' (<) and 'greater than' (>) symbols, indicating the impossibility of the subject's demands being met, and also recalls the silversmith's mark of authenticity, indicating the uniqueness of any subject's demand (Lapsley and Westlake, 1988, 76-7). S(A) is the signifier of the lack inherent in the Other, otherwise known as the phallus. This engenders desire, d, which links to the formula for phantasy, $ ◊ a, that places the barred subject in relation to the *objet a*; the lozenge here denotes the presence of the Other in the *screening* of desire.

The lower vector, the vector of speech, also passes through the locus of the Other (A = *l'Autre*), the counterpart of Saussure's *langue*, the structure of signifiers upon which all speech acts draw. The possibility of speech and therefore meaning requires punctuation by the subject, $, which occurs at s(A), when need is expressed (in the temporary stabilization of the sliding of signifieds beneath signifiers) but only with the concomitant repression that belongs to the unconscious. s(A) is thus a signified, the point in the signifying chain at which the subject is represented in language—but only ever inadequately, in the future perfect continuous of the 'will have been'. This instance of *aphanisis* results in the subject seeking to overcome the resultant lack by identification with the idealized image, i(a), which has its prototype in the mirror stage. This is linked back to the misrecognition of the ego at m (*moi*, or me), thereby suturing the imaginary and symbolic registers. This exposition of the Lacanian account of subjectivity now permits a fuller consideration of the *consuming* subject.

## Phantasy, fetishism, scopophilia

Consumption is a process that brings subject and object into ~~dialectical~~ relation: as with all relations involving subjectivity, it is a necessarily failed dialectic in that it cannot result in unity. The expression of demand in relation to need by the subject is necessarily channelled through the locus of the Other—through the defile of the signifier—and as a consequence results in an insatiable desire. The lack inherent in the Other entails that subjectivity is necessarily characterized by lack, $, and a supplement that would make good that lack, *objet a*. Existing theoretical discourses on consumption, however, typically rely on particular incarnations of the Cartesian subject—most notably *homo œconomicus*—that are characteristically complete, self-

present and coherent, capable of fully articulating demand in relation to need. Such discourses thus remain impervious to the presence of the Other, and as a consequence misconstrue the relation between the consuming subject and its object of desire as a simple dyadic one. The Lacanian model, however, insists upon a radical alterity that intervenes in the expression of demand, which is, accordingly, necessarily overdetermined by desire—in Lacan's formulation the desire of the Other.

While consumption is commonly associated with notions of fulfillment, the Lacanian model renders this problematic. Consumption is frequently linked to negativity, for instance in its current everyday sense of 'using up' (see R. Williams, 1976, 78-9) but, as the French *consommation* reveals, it also possesses a positive, climactic or climacteric aspect (R. H. Williams, 1982, 6). Thus consumption offers more than the simple satisfaction of needs. It makes an impossible promise of absolute *jouissance* that properly belongs to the realm of phantasy. Phantasy may therefore be defined as that which organizes, configures and screens desire. It is an articulation of desire that seeks to mask the lack in the Other by the wholly imaginary union of subject and object, de-subjectivizing the subject, and thereby permitting an expression of *jouissance* that goes beyond conscious thought.

The relation between barred subject and *objet a* may be expressed in the formula for phantasy, $\$ \lozenge$ a, where the lozenge denotes the necessary presence of the castrating Other, given that lack is a condition of the subject's being. The *objet a* is thus destined to remain within the imaginary, functioning as a lure promising to make good the lack in the subject. It is the trace of the 'lost object' *la chose*, the mythic

plenitude that is itself engendered by the subject's originary *manque-à-être*. Crucially, *objet a* cannot be symbolized, its absence from the symbolic being a condition of subjectivity and thus phantasy involves the figuration of *objet a* in any number of guises. The imaginary union of subject and object that occurs in phantasy is classically taken to function according to the transformation of a thought into an experience. This state repeats the earliest phases of childhood, where perception and representation remain undifferentiated. Thus, dreams and similar psychic states engender a reality-effect, as a result of the suspension of the normal intervention of the ego which structures the world as a plausible context for the subject's being (hence the sur-realism of dreams). However, the definition of phantasy as simply the imaginary fulfillment of an unconscious wish neglects the role of the symbolic. Laplanche and Pontalis (1973, 314) thus define phantasy as the 'imaginary scene in which the subject is a protagonist, representing the fulfillment of a wish (in the last analysis an unconscious wish) in a manner that is distorted to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes'. Because desire is always the desire of the Other, phantasy simultaneously articulates both desire and the law, irrespective of their degree of correlation, such that the expression of repressed ideas is necessarily conditioned by defensive mechanisms. As a consequence, the ~~dialectic~~ of the consuming subject is dominated by a variety of failed attempts to dissimulate the lack in the Other.

One of the most prominent aspects of the current literature on consumption is its consideration of the social construction of identity by the consumer (Jackson and Holbrook, forthcoming). Consumerism characteristically offers a source of pleasure in its promise of fulfillment and denial of lack—a denial that can be associated with

the narcissistic formation of the ego during the mirror phase. Such narcissistic identifications are constantly fuelled by the discourses of consumerism. Advertising, for instance, typically reflects back to us idealized images with which we are asked to identify, offering subject positions that repeat the identification with the specular image of the mirror stage (cf. Williamson, 1978). However, such identifications are necessarily imaginary, being characterized by misrecognition: narcissism, as a denial of lack, involves being seen from a position within the Other from which one would wish oneself to be seen. Such a narcissistic misrecognition of its own omnipotence by the subject carries with it the correlative aggressivity of the mechanisms that defend its fictive unity. Thus, narcissistic identification with idealized images cannot successfully overcome the lack in the Other. Consequently, a culture based on narcissism is inevitably replete with its problematical consequences (Lasch, 1979).

While Williamson (1978) theorizes the positioning of the subject by the discursive practices of consumerism in terms of the mirror stage, this is based upon Althusser's (1977) reading of Lacan. A rigorously Lacanian position would, however, deny the fixity implicit in Althusser's conceptualization of 'interpellation.' Discourses position subjects in the manner the mirror stage anticipates in that they are instantiated by acts of enunciation that appear as complete when, in fact, they depend upon a subject of enunciation for their completion. The suturing of the imaginary and symbolic inherent in this process bring being and meaning into temporary alignment in a way that effaces the lack in the Other, thus permitting identification with an illusory unified subject position. Multiple identifications are, therefore, the expected outcome of the discourses of consumerism, particularly given the increasing tendency towards

the creation of differentiated, heterogeneous 'lifestyles' (Featherstone, 1991). The subject may, therefore, identify with multiple and contradictory subject positions, thereby articulating conflict within the psyche. Moreover, the failure to attain a state of unity reveals that consumerism does not concern itself with the fulfillment of desire (which would put an end to the subject) but with its perpetuation. The possibility of multiple identifications amplifies the insatiability of desire, suturing the rhythm of its flows, in a manner that is, significantly, entirely consonant with the structure of capitalism.

Moreover, this potential for multiple identification does not exclude identification with the Other. Fetishism represents one such identification, but an identification which *disavows* the lack in the Other. It may, therefore, be conceived of as the liminal position of the structure of disavowal. Disavowal is a mechanism based on a discrepancy between knowledge and belief: something is known, but the subject maintains a belief contrary to its knowledge. The phallic system and the consequent binarization of (sexual) difference figure the lack in the Other as the absent maternal phallus. If the acculturation of the child, on entry into the symbolic, brings the structure of disavowal to bear on the absence of the maternal phallus, this provides a prototype for future instances of disavowal that will impossibly seek to mask the lack in the Other and posit an imaginary unity in the subject. If a particular object is invested with the (impossible) potential to stand as a substitute for the maternal phallus, its presence both marking and masking an absence, this represents an instance of fetishism.

Those phantasies most repeatedly replayed by the discourses of consumerism entail a process of disavowal, a willing suspension of disbelief with respect to the knowledge that particular commodities (new clothes, a holiday, a new car...) sustain rather than fulfill desire. As a dynamic process linked to the system of capitalism, consumption has a manifestly narrative structure. While the possession of any given commodity necessarily fails to make good the consuming subject's lack, the excess of commodities that is the defining feature of the consumer society (Benjamin, 1973; Simmel, 1978; Baudrillard, 1968, 1970) permits a sequential transfer of desire onto yet another commodity that can figure as *objet a* and function as a projection for the imaginary abolition of lack. Commodities thus act as lures for the subject's search for completion. The narrative structure this implies is situated in opposition to the death drive, which would seek the abolition of the Other and bring about the return to the state of non-being that is anterior to subjectivity and entry into the symbolic. In the consumer society, where identity is increasingly linked to consumption—'I consume, therefore I am'—the question 'to be or not to be' is interminably replayed in practices of consumption. The discourses of consumerism thus repeatedly (re)produce the sense of lack that gives rise to desire, and interminably defer a resolution with the promise of future plenitude—generally in a manner conditional on the attainment of impossible circumstances (as in the idealized images of advertising). The opposite of this future positioning of the impossible is the commonplace nostalgia assumed for earlier mythical situations where the slogans of the consumer society—'You are what you buy', 'You are what you eat', 'You are what you consume'—were afforded less significance, a nostalgia that is evident in desires for 'authentic' rather than mass produced commodities.

The distance between subject and object of desire must, therefore, be maintained in accordance with the narrative structure imposed by consumerism if subjectivity is itself to be maintained. Significantly, it is the *scopic* drive that is most predominant in the functioning of consumerism (Bowlby, 1985)—the drive that functions more than any other in the *maintenance* of a distance between subject and object. The sexual overdetermination of this scopophilia, as a virtually omnipresent feature of the consumer society, is evinced by the widespread use of images of, predominantly, the female body in the marketing of commodities. The imbrication of capitalism and patriarchy is, therefore, readily apparent in the linking of the commodity and *la femme*, thereby overdetermining the figuration of *objet a*. There remains a problem here, however, in the asymmetry of pleasures derived from practices of consumption by the different genders. While the potential for stereotypical characterizations of shopping affording specifically *feminine* pleasures ultimately stems from the way that gender has been grafted onto the division of the capitalist economy into the separate spheres of 'production' and 'consumption', the question of specifically feminine pleasures associated with consumption cannot be foreclosed. And the preponderance of images that may be taken as so many figurations of *la femme* in advertising must accordingly be approached with a more complex understanding than an oversimplified conceptualization of a male gaze focusing on the woman (*la femme*) as object of desire. Recent shifts in the gendering of consumption, arguably fuelled by the changing social construction of male (homo)sexuality and consequent marketing of commodities specifically to men (Mort, 1988) reveals something of the complexity at work here.

However, this emphasis on scopophilia should not detract from the fact that the scopic dimension of consumerism has arguably supplemented and come to supplanted the relation between consumption and other drives. Williams' (1976) remark that to express a distinction between 'use' and 'consumption' is still to express a relevant distinction articulates the historical specificity of consumption in relation to capitalism. Arguably, it is the supplementary scopic dimension that comes to define consumption *qua* consumption in the consumer society. But the connotation of the term 'consumption' with the oral nevertheless retains its significance. Whereas the scopic drive maintains a gap between subject and object, the oral—and anal—drives function by the fusion of body and object. Consumption may be considered to involve a compulsion to repeat the oral phase of childhood, captured in the Freudian conception of *anaclisis*. The original somatic need to suck the breast in order to attain the nourishment for continued survival becomes, at later stages of bodily development, successively detached and displaced, but the secondary bodily pleasures are retained in the form of a sexual drive. The initial connection between the erotic and the oral is, therefore, compelled to repeat itself in the psychic drive in a manner that relates to the historical specificity of consumption: the desire to attain fulfillment by the subject is tied to the oral and, by extension, to consumption. This may be coupled with the well-known anality of money ('filthy lucre'—the possession of large amounts of which defines the 'filthy rich' as those who are 'rolling in it': see Borneman, 1976), such that this pair of drives represent an extremely important dimension to the functioning of consumer capitalism, notwithstanding the significance of the scopic.

The ways in which the subject seeks to overcome the lack in the Other may, therefore, be properly characterized as ~~dialectical~~. Such a conceptualization is highly revealing of the extent to which patriarchy and capitalism are imbricated: in the consumer society phantasy, as a mode of pleasure, encounters the commodity. However, since patriarchy is an aspect of Western society that long preceded the development of capitalism, this imbrication demands fuller consideration. Marx's early theorization of alienation under capitalism was subsequently recast as the thesis of the 'fetishism of commodities', where it is suggested that

> 'the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things' (Marx, 1967, 73).

These 'social relations between things' are, precisely, the supplementary qualities of commodities—which may be conceived of in terms of a network of signifiers or sign-values (Baudrillard, 1981)—that, with the development of the consumer society, have come to supplant capitalism's initial basis, simultaneously drawing on and redefining the prior structures of patriarchy and (gendered) subjectivity. Commodity fetishism and the ~~dialectic~~ of the consuming subject are, in other words, highly consonant structures; capitalism and the play of phantasy are thoroughly imbricated.

## The norm, Anti-Oedipus, molecular sexuality

That the discourses of consumerism and the psychoanalytic subject seemingly posses such consonance demands caution. Bowlby's (1993) opening remarks on Huxley's *Brave New World* raise the question of the degree to which psychoanalysis might be implicated in that which it purports to explain. For Foucault (1978), Freudianism stands in a similar relation to sexuality and the dominant sexual order as Marxism does for Baudrillard (1975) in relation to capitalism, representing a 'repressive simulation' (Genosko, 1994). It is itself the 'mirror of Oedipus', standing in an imaginary relation to its circumscribing other and characterized by a necessary misrecognition. More specifically, it generates an image of sexual difference that is part of the process of the construction of a social representation, a *norm*. Thus, while Lacan positions himself in opposition to ego psychology, its stress on the super-ego of Freud's 'second topography' of the psyche, and the whole conservative potential of psychoanalytic thought, Lacanian psychoanalysis inevitably remains contaminated. Whilst Lacan sees only the Other of the Same—proclaiming that there is no Other of the Other, nothing outside the symbolic—Deleuze and Guattari risk affirming this possibility, and with it the hypertelic potential of a hundred thousand lines of flight.

The crucial emphasis on the presentation of difference as a consequence of *logos*, the law, and the constitution of desire within the symbolic order necessarily represents desire in the constraining terms of the dialectic, even where this term is placed under erasure. And as Foucault (1983) reveals power to be productive, impossible to constrain within the negative terms of the dialectic, so Deleuze and Guattari (1983) see desire as immanent and productive (Shaviro, 1993). For Lacan, the other of

existence—the negativity of non-being—becomes a structuring centre to subjectivity and desire, in that *jouissance* represents that which is forbidden or unavailable to the speaking subject. Given the absence of any possibility of a complete subject position, including the absence of sexual rapport—'in the case of the speaking being the relation between the sexes does not take place' (Lacan, 1982, 138)—desire is indelibly marked by lack. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) question this negative construction of desire which itself may be shown to result from the binarization of sexual difference in accordance with the law.

*Anti-Oedipus* (1983) proceeds from a reading of Freud that accords in certain ways with Lacan's, but takes Freud as a point of departure rather than being founded upon a sense of a 'return'. As Marx took from Smith and Ricardo a radical kernel, this is what Deleuze and Guattari see in Freud. Smith and Ricardo *deterritorialize* wealth, remove its conception from the properties of things to perceive a subjective abstract essence in the form of productive labour. Similarly, Freud deterritorializes desire, considering it 'no longer in relation to objects, aims, or even sources (territories), but as an abstract subjective essence—libido or sexuality' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 270). Desire—and to this extent Deleuze and Guattari accord with Lacan—is not a fixed, territorialized entity possessed by a pre-existing subject but a flow that produces a subject. It is, therefore, an exchange-value and its laws of transformation trace the contours of the libidinal economy that psychoanalysis takes as its object of study. But even in Lacan's insistence on the absence of sexual rapport, the stress on the symbolic serves to focus in on the level which provides a *representation* capable of reterritorializing desire in relation to the family, in the same way that the institution

of private property provides a representation which reterritorializes abstract labour: 'Thus subjective abstract Labour as represented in private property has, as its correlate, subjective abstract Desire as represented in the privatized Family' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 303-4).

The regressive potential of this representation causes Deleuze and Guattari to focus on the real rather than the symbolic. For, crucially, the symbolic operates at a *molar*, aggregate level: it is an *'anthropomorphic representation of sex'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 294, original italics). This functions as, precisely, a representation that organizes and constrains—in accordance with a procedure of statistical abstraction—differences that are irreducible to a binary code (of sexual difference): 'We are statistically or molarly heterosexual, but personally homosexual, without knowing it or being fully aware of it, and finally we are transsexual in an elemental, molecular sense' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 70). The function of the symbolic is thus regulative rather than constitutive, organizing the singularities and hæcceities of molecular sexuality in accordance with a hierarchical and binarized form of difference that serves as the basis for the establishment of heterosexuality as a statistical norm and majoritarian standard around which deviations are distributed statistically (cf. Doel, 1994). These characteristics of the molar order carry implications in terms of power, and specifically the male dominance afforded by the phallic system.

The fact of heterosexuality's regulative role as a majoritarian standard renders the possibility of an immanent heterosexuality problematic. Its 'compulsory' character translates it to the superpersonal standard of the molar order, such that the

characteristic of desire at the personal level cannot be heterosexual. Moreover, in assigning the imposition of the norm an intrinsic, internal status, psychoanalysis is implicated in peddling a prevailing representation of desire as internal that is, in actuality, imposed from on high. Psychoanalysis, therefore, proceeds so as to internalize the norm of heterosexuality, resigning itself to the symbolic essentialization of heterosexuality as a transcendental model: the binarization of the law of sexual difference necessarily instantiates lack as central to, or as the necessary cost of being, human. But this relies precisely on an anthropomorphic representation of sex, predicated on an essentialist distinction between the human species (in its constitution of speaking subjects) and all other animal species. To conceive of desire in terms of a condition of lack that is itself already the product of the regulation of desire is to retreat from the radicality of the notion that subjectivity is cultural rather than natural. Psychoanalysis is therefore as replete with references to necessity as comparable discourses that represent these characteristics as biologically necessary.

If heterosexuality is an idealized norm to which even those identifying as heterosexual cannot ever adequately correspond, then desire clearly works at a different level. But this level is always captured by the curve of the heterosexual norm and regulated by practices of subjectivation and the construction of interiority required to impose such a reductive binarization of difference. It is not a case of the law of (sexual) difference necessarily rupturing an imaginary relation of coherence and unity but of a regime of difference restricting available identities in accordance with an idealized majoritarian standard. In short, bodies are restricted by representations of legitimate identities as psyches and are inevitable destined to fail to correspond to the molar norm. But at the

personal level, this situation permits other sexual identifications to be revealed. For instance, male homosexual desire might be characterized as 'foreclosure' (*Verwerfung*) with respect to the name-of-the-father, the subject identifying with the phallus through the mother, but in addition to such regulated homosexuality, which is 'Oedipal, exclusive and depressive' is a second region of homosexual desire that is 'anoedipal, schizoid, included and inclusive' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 70). Homosexual desire, therefore, potentially traces a line of flight from the molar system, disrupting the 'anthropomorphic representation that society imposes on [the] subject' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 296). The resistance to the re-territorializing principles of the heterosexual norm are, therefore, in part a consequence of its own ordering and organizing characteristics (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 294-5). Homosexuality that escapes the imposition of an exterior law opens onto a level of molecular sexuality that is, properly speaking, vegetal or transsexual in nature.

Because subjectivity and the symbolic possess a character of mutual conformity, sexuality cannot provide for any subjective identification and belongs instead to the molecular level. Molecular sexuality is that which is affirmed by the innocence of homosexual desire and is itself more fully affirmative of the potentialities of the body. It is marked by a multiplicity of singularities, hæcceties and becomings. It does not accord with the bisexuality of the polymorphous perverse body of the infant, which is itself a retroactive myth of lost unity, but to a differentiation characteristic of vegetal hermaphrodism. There is no distinction between, and no rupture of, an imaginary unity by a law of difference marked by lack. The subject is not constituted as lacking (-1) but by a series of singularities and hæcceties that lack nothing yet which engage

in transversal communion without effecting any form of closure or unifying totality. 'Desiring-production is pure multiplicity, that is to say, an affirmation that is irreducible to any sort of unity' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 42). In other terms, such a process is hypertelic. Desiring-production therefore possesses a hermaphroditic quality in that the fragments whose 'sole relationship is sheer difference' are always already and interminably open to new couplings and becomings without which desiring-production cannot function. Or again, these fragments are machinic parts: 'What a mistake to ever have said *the* id. Everywhere *it* is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. ... Something is produced: the effects of a machine, not mere metaphors.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 1-2).

This machinic conception of desire reveals its (trans)political potential for attaining an escape velocity with respect to the symbolic order, as it reveals the error of Freud's phantasmagoric formulation of the unconscious. Under such a formulation '[t]he unconscious ceases to be what it is—a factory, a workshop—to become a theatre, a scene and its staging.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 53). Thereafter, the unconscious was taken to be a *deus ex machina* whereas it is in fact itself machinic. It is for this reason that the 'schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on an anlyst's couch' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 2). For the schizo takes words for things and thereby functions in consciousness in the same way that the unconscious functions—where meanings are the workings of the body. Meanings are not

phantasmagorical but material, and thus schizoanalysis provides the potential to move beyond the anthropomorphic representation of sex.

Schizoanalysis is, therefore, 'the variable analysis of the *n* sexes in a subject' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 296). At this level, desire functions by means of transversal communication, which establishes connections between entities that are separated but are not characterized by lack and are consequently not connections made in order to attain a unity: 'It will be with them as it is with plants: the hermaphrodite requires a third party (the insect) so that the female part may be fertilized, or so that the male part might fertilize. An abberant communication occurs in a transversal dimension between partitioned sexes.' (Deleuze, 1972, 121). On the molecular level, the transversal connection produces a whole of particular parts 'but does not totalize them ... it is added to them as a new part fabricated separately' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 42), thus forming a potentially infinite series: ... + 1 + 1 + 1 + ... (Massumi, 1992). In contrast to the binary logic of 'either/or', which 'claims to mark decisive choices between immutable terms', the schizophrenic 'either ... or ... or' 'refers to the system of possible permutations between differences that always amount to the same as they shift and slide about' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 12), 'without ceasing to be differences' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 70).

Thus molecular sexuality is always reliant on an additional term, but it does not and cannot properly rely on a stabilizing, transcendental signifier (in psychoanalysis, the phallus). Like the insect and the plant, additional couplings are reliant on transversal connections made by an extrinsic nomadic agency which nevertheless exists on the

same plane of immanence. Against the 'global and specific' anthropomorphic representation of sex Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 295) propose molecular sexuality as a multiplicity of becomings which pertain to 'local and nonspecific connections, inclusive disjunctions, nomadic disjunctions...' This accords with Marx's (1970, 88-90) remark that 'the true difference is not the difference between the two sexes but the difference between the human sex and the 'non-human' sex' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 294; see also Lyotard, 1971, 138-41). The difference between Lacan and Deleuze and Guattari is that Lacan fails to appreciate the molecular level of 'non-human' or machinic sexuality and falls back on its anthropomorphic representation.

Molecular sexuality, in its characteristically schizophrenic fashion, is therefore proper to the Body without Organs (BwO) which is not subordinated to the tyranny of organization: 'The BwO is opposed not to the organs... [but to] the organic organization of the organs (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 158). The molecular level thus insists in a virtual dimension, necessarily positioned against the symbolic that imposes a binary law of sexual difference and a norm of heterosexual coupling. And its radical potential lies in the lines of flight it traces with respect to the logocentric ordering of sexuality, in acts of ex-appropriation. It therefore constitutes a block of becoming rather than a system of (unequal) exchange: 'Making love is not just becoming as one, or even two, but becoming as a hundred thousand' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 296).

An unpalatable feature of schizoanalysis for many on the Left is the ambivalence it affords to capitalism—an ambivalence that has significant precedent (cf. Simmel,

1978). For capitalism, while oppressing the schizophrenic by its categorization in medical discursive practice, necessarily provides for its hypertelic proliferation. Understanding the development of *consumer* capitalism, therefore, requires a sensitivity and, above all, an *ethics* which discriminates its politics from anything that could spawn a totalizing discourse.

## Conclusion: Subjectivity, space, consumption

As Easthope (forthcoming) notes, classical (or realist) space possesses a subjective effectivity, its coherent, fixed and knowable (mappable) status reciprocally positioning a coherent, fixed, knowing (in short, Cartesian) subject. The Cartesian subject, as Lacan (1979, 65-119) describes, is formulated as if it were able, visually, to occupy an Archemedian viewpoint, able to exercise a privileged gaze over the Other when, in fact, this scopic omnipotence is an instance of misrecognition, the subject being itself positioned by the gaze of the Other. This mode of subjectivity became especially prevalent with the Renaissance development of perspectival representation, its vanishing point serving to dissimulate the gaze of the Other (as a part of the represented scene), thereby imposing a relation of dominant specularity between mastering subject and subordinate object (Rotman, 1987). (Interestingly, this is predicated on a monocular, rather than stereoscopic vision.) Moreover, perspectival representation is precisely the same development responsible for the conception of classical space (Lefebvre, 1991; Baudrillard, 1993; Lyotard, 1983; Readings, 1991; Cosgrove, 1985).

However, as the Lacanian account of the subject shows such a subjectivity to be an impossibility implicated in its own dissimulation, classical space is similarly an impossibility—and its Greek antecedents reinforce the point that the Cartesian subject itself has a more ancient biography. It was the dual mistake of earlier work on 'urban consumer behaviour' to accept both the Euclidean geometry of classical space and the rationality of the Cartesian subject in its theorizations of the consuming subject in space.

As Lefebvre (1991, 25) suggests, Modernism fragments the coherence, fixity and knowability of classical, realist space:

> '... around 1910 a certain space was shattered ... the space ... of classical perspective and geometry, developed from the Renaissance onwards on the basis of the Greek tradition (Euclid, logic) and bodied forth in Western art and philosophy, as in the form of the city and town.'

The implications of this rupturing of the assumption of the naturalness of space have developed themselves into a variety of guises, including Foucault's (1986) 'heterotopia' (Soja, 1989), Deleuze and Guattari's 'scrumpled geographies' (Doel, forthcoming), Baudrillard's (1993) 'hyperreality' (Clarke and Doel, 1994), and Jameson's (1984, 1989) derivative 'hyperspace'—which he links explicitly to the consumer society and to schizophrenia. Such a *different* spatiality requires a new kind of theory of consumption (Shields, 1992) and a new kind of geography (Doel, 1993).

The current, (post)modern wave of geographical concern with the consumer society must therefore begin—experimentally and theoretically—to explore the conceptions appropriate to the deconstructive mapping of an aspect of Western culture our appreciation of which has long remained in an imaginary relation of knowing and scopic omnipotence that is itself egocentric, narcissistic, and hell-bent on dissimulating its own lack and mis-taking its own coherence.

## Notes

1. On the meaning of the terms 'humanism' and 'anti-humanism' outside of Anglo-Saxon thought see Soper (1986). To grasp the required connotation of 'humanist' it is easiest to think of the term in the same breath as, say, 'sexist'.

2. Cf. 'I have never spoken of an Oedipus complex' (Lacan in a seminar in 1970, cited in Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 53).

3. Lacan proposed the English neologism want-to-be for this 'lack in being'.

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[1]On the meaning of the terms 'humanism' and 'anti-humanism' outside of Anglo-Saxon thought see Soper (1986). To grasp the required connotation of 'humanist' it is easiest to think of the term in the same breath as, say, 'sexist'.
[2]Cf. 'I have never spoken of an oedipus complex' (Lacan in a seminar in 1970, cited in Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 53).
[3]Lacan proposed the English neologism *want-to-be* for this 'lack in being'.

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