

Dead Stock: The Researcher as Collector of Failed Goods

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As I enter the seventh year working on a book that is far from being finished, my mother, always impatient for me to produce something (either because she considers me unproductive in my father's business sense or because of a compulsive need for completion), announced to me that "the problem" is that I like research better than writing. Needless to say, her comment triggered all sorts of existential questions, which I concealed under an uncertain smile.

Am I more of a researcher than a writer? I asked myself, knowing too well I'm definitely not the type who gets up at 6 a.m. to write feverishly all morning. Writing has never been a vital necessity for me, although I enjoy it to the point that everything else is forgotten when I'm writing (or researching, for that matter), not to mention the way that it helps me through difficult moments by making them concrete in a manner proper only to action—in this case, writing as thinking in action. This is what writing is to me: the ability to think through things in a way that no amount of discussion, or even reading, allows.

In fact, I've always believed that I write in order to speak without being interrupted. Quite a narcissistic act, I recognize, but which of our acts isn't about the will to carve ourselves a place in the world? Without a minimum of narcissism we wouldn't utter a single word, according to psychoanalysis. All action, and reaction, is about this fundamental declaration of existence, and research, of all things, is far from exempted. On the contrary, research is one of the most self-centered activities that can be exercised. After all, the process of researching, which consists of looking further, and deeper, and more (especially more), usually involving a high degree of personal investment, is almost inevitably related to an inner quest, whether coached as a search for facts, problem resolution, or a certain bottom line; whether real or imaginary, concrete or abstract, plain or complex; and whether for a just cause, the betterment of humanity, or the ultimate weapon of mass destruction.

Research, as the word indicates, is about searching repeatedly, systematically, obsessively, the proof being that once we have found what we were supposedly looking for, we start all over again. In this sense, research is akin to collecting: what is collected matters less than the process it engages and its ability to become an all-consuming endeavor.



Fig. 1. Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre (1787–1851), *Coquillages*, 1839. Daguerreotype, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (16.3 cm × 21.2 cm). Unwillingly tracing our marine origins, collections of natural history (considered by an early collector to be “cemeteries filled with corpses”) were more popular during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries than collections of art. Practically forgotten since then, they’ve only become a source of historical research in the last few decades.

Once we have understood research is really about us, accepting that in its pursuit we are no better than feverish collectors or impenitent seducers, the basic question is, what are we searching for? What is it that we seek so desperately that we can spend weeks, months, and even years (sometimes a lifetime) in its pursuit, traveling to all sorts of remote places, spending any available resources (ours or others’), cajoling even the most unpleasant of creatures in order to obtain what we want (fig. 1)?

At first sight, both researchers and collectors would seem to be looking for something perceived as missing, something whose absence makes us feel incomplete, the search being designed to fill such a void. This fundamental absence is one of the main tenets of psychoanalytic theory, and particularly of the Lacanian notion of symbolic castration, which proposes that as social beings we have been

literally cut off from our primary animal bond and that, truckloads of culture and civilization notwithstanding (or precisely because of this social redundancy), such a scission has left us with an irrepressible desire to return to that first condition, however basic, fusional, and unsubjective it may be.

Privileging the phallus as the central pivot around which culture is produced and turns, psychoanalytic theory makes of this peculiar totem both the castrating agent that represents and imposes the symbolic order (language and culture) onto unarticulated reality and the imaginary locus of what is lost—or “castrated.” Overdetermined by this double process, desire becomes inherently male, with the phallus playing the triple role of castrator, castrated, and fetish—a sort of one-man band that has rightly earned psychoanalysis harsh criticism for reproducing and justifying patriarchal culture as much as explaining it.¹

Since I happen to be a woman, and therefore condemned by the fathers of psychoanalysis to achieve only partial socialization (given females’ structural inability to fully access the symbolic), I must confess that, despite all my admiration for other aspects of psychoanalysis, castration theory just doesn’t cut it for me. Apart from having desire hinge on a referent from which more than half of humanity is by definition excluded (Lacan often uses phallus and penis interchangeably, a gliding of registers that clearly betrays what is at stake in his discourse), my problem with castration theory is mainly its glorification of what is missing (*le manque* or “lack,” as in “Lackan” . . .), of absence.² A half-gratifying and extremely paradoxical absence that needs to be infinitely perpetuated in order to guarantee the vital thrust of desire, itself never fully satisfied at the risk of existential dissolution in a black hole of anxiety.

An absence, then, that, dialectically located between Eros and Thanatos (the impulse to go beyond ourselves and the one of succumbing to our mortal inertia, both of which meet in the dissolution of the subject with varying degrees of pleasure), gives a little something to everyone without making anyone ultimately happy. An absence, furthermore, that, residing at the core of modern Western philosophy, is so taken for granted that doubting it seems entirely out of the question. And yet, as with all discourses based on negative value, absence creates more absence, more emptiness, more desire for the unattainable, just like the famous serpent biting its tail, except that here the tail must be literally understood in its French double sense: *la queue*, the penis.

Searching for what has been lost is not only a waste of time but moreover a form of perversion, a sort of “wicked pleasure” constructed on its very impossi-

bility. Granted, we are free to interpret everything as constituted by absence if we believe in a clear-cut distinction between reality and representation, rendering the latter into a simple substitute of the former. Yet both psychoanalysis and art illustrate how blurry the perceptual boundaries between the two can become, and how being acculturated often leads to taking one for the other—representation as reality and reality as representation—albeit in different degrees according to each psychological configuration. Otherwise, none of us would bother speaking, writing, or drawing pictures: we would be out there in the wild doing like the rest of the animal kingdom without creating so much trouble for ourselves.

What might it mean, then, if instead of looking for what is missing our search is directed toward what abounds—so much so that we don't even see it? In order to propose how this cultural “blind spot” works, I will begin by discussing some aspects of Lacanian theory and then move out of this very rocky terrain into the more fluid one of cultural economy. Paradoxically, Lacan comes in very handy when it comes to abundance, since the fundamental absence that has come to represent almost single-handedly his entire theory is based precisely on excess, providing us with an idea as to why and how such profusion can grant the kind of pleasure to be found in researching and collecting.

Lacan's “Leftover”

Excess is a constitutive aspect of Lacan's pet notion, the *Object(a)* (“*objet petit a*” or “small other”), itself a primary consequence of subject formation, as well as the principal site of desire. Briefly summarized, subject formation is contingent on the crucial encounter between the unconstituted self and the Other, alterity providing the necessary exteriority that pulls us outside a deadly fusional sameness.³ In this encounter, the subject-in-formation measures itself specularly against the Other. As a result, both subject and Other are divided (or symbolically castrated): the subject by the Other's delivery of the Symbolic order, a process that cuts out the subject from the fusional magma, allowing it to become relatively autonomous; the Other because in delivering this structural (and structuring) endowment, it is reduced to a minimal—in the sense of unalienable—version of itself, becoming a “small other” in the eyes of the subject. It becomes an Other bereft of symbolic dimension, although by the same token loaded with something the subject is ready to die for: *le manque*, lack.

Lack is presented by Lacan as *moins-phi*, the absent phallus, an unimaginable and therefore unrepresentable entity whose disappearance is the quintessential

trigger of desire.⁴ Literally what is not there (and as such, quite a peculiar support for the entire psyche), symbolic lack has an imaginary surrogate in the *Object(a)*, which Lacan describes as a “leftover” (*le reste*), a “residue” that escaped symbolic articulation in the process of subject formation.⁵ *Object(a)* is therefore what has been castrated or left out, and as such it is an irreducible source of alterity and the privileged site of phantasmatic desire. For what has been left out is precisely that fusional aspect that provides *jouissance* and makes of the “small other” the foremost libidinal reserve.⁶ Having failed to fall prey to the subject’s symbolic makeover, *le reste* becomes instead both a site of imaginary pleasure and, insofar as it stands in for lack, of the neurotic anxiety triggered by the potential fulfillment of desire. Small wonder that Lacan considers it the main cause of analytic confusion.

While the main interest of the “small other” undoubtedly lies in the role it plays in subject formation (especially regarding the relationship between alterity and desire), its residual character has not garnered much attention. Yet it is this aspect of the *Object(a)* that is most challenging to Lacanian theory, since *Object(a)*’s basic constitution as leftover supply—*jouissance* being by definition excessive—may be actually postulated as the counterpart of phallic lack, instead of its imaginary stand-in. In other words, more than enacting an absence, *Object(a)* is a blind spot where Otherness is rendered invisible or specularly erased, a “blank” space whose reinscription is saturated, or overdetermined, by precisely that aspect of the Other that is most dangerous or threatening to the subject (fig. 2).

This possibility was foreseen by Lacan himself: toward the end of his life, he speaks of a non-phallic, or “beyond phallic” *jouissance* that would be the exclusive domain of women. In so doing, he gives us a “plus” that suddenly raises our status from *pas tout* (“not all”: women’s supposed inability to access the symbolic hampering our being a universal “all,” as opposed to men)⁷ to what one might be tempted to call a *plus que tout* (“more than all”), since what he proposes is a sort of going over, or beyond, symbolic organization.

This excessive pleasure is, like the leftover, a sort of “no-man’s land” whose freedom is also that of emotions and creativity.⁸ For all its liberating qualities, however, such repositioning of the non-phallic as a joyful, almost blissful subversion of the social order becomes a sort of *cadeau empoisonné* or “poisoned gift” to women. Since, while this “more than all” certainly frees us from the dire theoretical fate of being mere objects of desire and/or semiconstituted subjects, its corporeal emphasis pushes us back into the essentialist “mother nature” role that feminism has fought for so long as a more subtle form of oppression.



Fig. 2. Pascal André (Madagascan, born 1954), *Typographic Traces on Swedish Pine Trees*, 2007. Photograph, $14\frac{13}{16} \times 9\frac{7}{16}$ in. (36 x 24 cm). Courtesy of BIOS. Measuring scarcely a quarter of an inch, typographs are black beetles that feed on fallen pine trees (which they colonize with up to four thousand individuals per tree), carving the galleries that have gained these insects their name. Having enormously multiplied since 2005 due to the ravages of global warming, typographs are now moving on to live trees, constituting a great menace for the Swedish forests in which they proliferate.

Nevertheless, emphasizing *Object(a)* as leftover, rather than privileging lack as an imaginary absence that the “small other” attempts—however unsuccessfully—to replenish, allows the *Object(a)* to be reformulated as the inevitable overflow that occurs when the subject is confronted with the Real in the form of the Other. And, insofar as the leftover is definitely more image-prone and tangible than “minus phallus” (since the *Object[a]* is susceptible of “being invested on the physical level as a form of auto-erotism,” when not in “plain autism”),⁹ its fusional offer may account for something as ungraspable as the all-encompassing pleasure derived from the obsessive accumulation, and ensuing immersion, proper to both research and collecting.

Cultural Surplus

Lacan’s leftover is the psychic equivalent of the economic notion of surplus, that aspect of production that doesn’t sell and is therefore commercially condemned.¹⁰

Considered redundant and therefore discardable and second-rate, surplus is often remaindered below cost, when not simply destroyed in a sort of cultural foreclosure.¹¹ Popular (stamps, magazines, coins), as opposed to art, collections are usually made up of such surplus. Bereft of primary cultural value and/or circulation, the items in these collections are no longer in use, and the pleasure they offer is derived in part from their inherent anachronism and/or marginalization, which renders them witnesses, or traces, of a different time. Displacing economic or aesthetic criteria, their main worth is often based on “possession,” or its imaginary experience.

Collectors invest themselves body and soul in this type of collection, and just like researchers, they do so with very little hope of financial gain. After all, profit and surplus (just like the symbolic and the leftover) are practically antithetical. Profit is gain, and endures as an active value, whether reinvested directly as capital or indirectly as consumption. Surplus is, economically speaking, loss, and is known in commercial trade as “dead stock” since it no longer moves within primary commercial circuits.¹² For a number of diverse reasons (its time is past; it never quite made the primary circuits because it was too expensive or simply didn’t hit the target; its potential market was saturated), dead stock missed its allotted loop and is destined to the secondary circuits of recycle and resale. It is, quite literally, a leftover.

My interest in kitsch partakes of this fascination for dead stock and cultural leftovers: objects that have stopped being fashionable or mainstream, or that never even reached the necessary consensus to be so, and that occupy an altogether different social space, providing a superfluity that makes them negative to most, attractive to some, and the only consumption choice for many. These are the outmoded objects that lose—if they ever had—any financial value, becoming the stuff of discount outlets and flea markets before reentering the market as “born-again” collectibles with a new cultural agency.

The Renaissance collections of natural history, whose objects were slowly but surely downgraded from medieval wonders to Enlightenment curiosities, are an early example of such a cycle.¹³ Nowadays, and after having been ignored throughout most of the twentieth century (except in the research/educational domains), organic remains have gradually regained the spotlight as tokens of pretechnological times, as the proliferation of stores that sell “naturalia” like shells, bones, and stones seems to indicate. Something similar is happening with vinyl records in the music industry, although, consistent with the ever-increasing speed of market turnover, this cycle spans decades and not centuries: after being displaced in the 1980s by compact discs, vinyl was rescued in the 1990s by the sampling and mix-

ing of disc jockeys (often researchers, collectors, and artists all in one), becoming vintage treasures in a prime example of cultural recovery and redefinition.¹⁴

Vinyl is a good example of the social importance of dead stock, for it is through its recovery that a good chunk of musical history is being salvaged, even if in a “second degree” sense that may annoy its original audience but that is completely consistent with the passage of things through different generations. Instead of stored away in a dusty basement (or worse, slowly decomposing like so many film reels), vinyl found a second existence susceptible to all sorts of readings, whether historical, ironic, or nostalgic. That this particular recovery mixes the old and the new, as well as analogue and digital technologies, is just another proof that things, like memories, never truly die or disappear but only go into a state of suspension until they resurface and recirculate once again.

Collections and research meet precisely here, the one to safeguard cultural dead stock from dispersing to the point of disintegration, the other to recover it for new readings and interpretations, or to reaffirm old ones—for research can, and does, go both ways. Believing that research is exclusively groundbreaking is as illusory as pretending that novelty is by definition revolutionary. Often it is quite the opposite, the old being disguised under cover of the new, as a lot of what we’re seeing in cyberspace shows.

Dead stock may be considered part and parcel of what Raymond Williams calls “residual sensibilities,” distinguishing these, along with emergent ones, from predominant culture, whether traditional or mainstream.¹⁵ That psychoanalysis and Marxist cultural theory should propose in the 1960s and 1970s similar tropes to articulate and explain those aspects of individual or collective life that appear secondary or outmoded, but still manage to play fundamental roles, is hardly a coincidence. Anticipated by Walter Benjamin in his iconoclastic proposal of the ruin as a “dialectical image” (one that helps understand both the utopian dimension of a phenomenon and the reasons for its failure), Lacan’s leftover and Williams’s residue point to a vision where psyche and culture are seen as live, irregular, and contradictory forces that, like the Phoenix, always reemerge from the ashes of their respective transformations (fig. 3).¹⁶

While the Lacanian leftover conceptualizes the psyche as an economy of excess, Williams’s residual formations map out a field of research in what until then had been discarded as useless. In so doing, Williams formalizes Benjamin’s cultural extension of psychoanalysis (a discipline greatly inspired by the archaeological find-



Fig. 3. Michèle Gignoux (French, born 1944), *Francs Hachés: Sculpture Boules*, 2002. Polystyrene balls covered with shredded francs, glue. Courtesy of the artist. The shift from national currencies to the Euro in 2002 implied a sudden surplus of useless coins and bills. Obsolete French bank bills were shredded and stacked away by the Banque de France and later recovered and transformed into sculptures by Guignoux. The sculptures shown here of thread balls point metonymically to the famous 1811 weaver's revolt in Nottinghamshire, the first major industrial rebellion against the replacement of manual labor rendered superfluous by machines.

ings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), enabling a signifying chain of both literal and figurative debris that runs through modernity (and, quite crucially, through two world wars) in an attempt to explain the present from what has been forgotten, stuck away, or left behind.

Part of the conceptual appeal of notions like the ruin, the residue, and the leftover lies in their paradoxical reappropriation as active, positive categories: an “illuminating” excess in Benjamin’s dialectical sense (Williams’s residue functioning as counterbalance for hegemonic culture) or a “joyful” one as proposed by Lacan. These figures, apocalyptic emblems of destruction and waste, render spatial fragmentation and temporal displacement so visually overdetermined as to

make them tangible and post-symbolic—that is, allegorical—accounting for their postmodern seduction. Moreover, all three are intimately related to what Georges Bataille calls *la part maudite* (the “accursed share”): that unproductive excess that, despite being identified with the forsaken or object (or perhaps for this very reason), plays a fundamental role in maintaining social balance.¹⁷

Lacan’s *reste* and Bataille’s *part maudite* represent excess as an inevitable and necessary aspect of economy, psychic and social, respectively. Lacan’s leftover not only provides the subject with an exit from the social grid, enabling it to retain a relative—however imaginary—access to pleasure but rescues this last dimension as the ultimate site of alterity. As a result, the *Object(a)* confronts the subject with an unsurmountable duality: insofar as *Object(a)* maintains a phantasmatic distance, it is glorified as the unattainable, yet once *Object(a)* comes near, it is quickly stigmatized, else the subject risks being pulled in by its fusional attraction and disappearing altogether. Similarly, Bataille shows how surplus, caused by excessive vital energy, is attributed a negative value that justifies its destruction, lest this energy take over the whole social body. By condensing all that is forsaken, therefore, both the leftover and the excess function as the sacred scapegoats of ancient ritual, preventing chaos through their sacrifice.

The leftover is an “accursed share” in more ways than one. First, in the process of mirroring, enticing, and simultaneously threatening the subject’s complex desire, the *Object(a)* oscillates between being fetishized and ostracized, representing what Freud dubbed the subject’s “double”—a sort of “Doppelgänger” that the subject needs to create, and battle, in order to configure its own identity.¹⁸ Second, the subject responds to *Object(a)*’s titillating offer with a high degree of ambivalence and anxiety, proceeding to the voracious replacement—that is, consumption—of *Object(a)*’s, leaving a literal wake of leftovers in its delirious path.

Dead stock is apparently failed merchandise that, just like Benjamin’s dialectical ruin and Lacan’s leftover Other, becomes far more interesting for this very failure, whether because of its undoing of illusion, its curbing of normativity, or both. Through their residual capacity, the ruin and the leftover contribute to the exposure and implosion of established authority, including that of the theories that put these concepts forth in the first place. Yet what is most relevant is that excess—psychic, social, or economic—enables the articulation of a material surplus (too many objects in the market creating an engorgement that cannot be easily reabsorbed) with an excess of meaning (this saturated condition rendering signification interchangeable

and empty, as happens with *Object[a]*), and therefore susceptible to constant appropriation and reinterpretation, for better or worse. Consequently, excess contributes in the creation of an atmosphere of sensorial profusion and exhilaration very close to the kind of borderline destructive pleasure described as *jouissance*.

What is dead, what alive? Researchers, at least those in the humanities, seldom think in these terms, yet this question underlies our activity. And not only because research constitutes our intellectual core but because it provides a new life to an object or phenomenon.

Researchers are creative in the indirect manner proper of collectors. Neither produce the kind of “original” material associated with modern artistic creation. Instead, we work with and through what already exists, no matter how fragmentary or dispersed. Driven by an obsessive zeal and an indefatigable determination, researchers and collectors deploy similar strategies: they compile and compose, each new element reconfiguring the whole in such a way that this process could be carried on indefinitely and it still would make sense. Unlike artists, however, who usually “make” meaning, researchers and collectors don’t make anything but act as cultural archeologists.

Research is taking stock of cultural merchandise, as well as of the personal baggage often tagged onto it, and attempting to reestablish its value anew, whether to discard and leave it behind or to bring it back into circulation. It is a way of “finding” ourselves, quite literally, through an activity where subject and object are interwoven enough to become indistinguishable. It is going through the “trash of history,” as Benjamin might have called it: rummaging through piles of dead stock, either fetishized as the objects of collections, formalized in the documents of archives, or scattered in those residues of experience we call memories. Reconstituting them provides us with the enormous pleasure of getting in touch with something that we thought forever lost, or even nonexistent, but that was there all along.

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1. For a condensed explanation of Lacanian theory, see Paul-Laurent Assoun, *Lacan* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2003), as well as Dylan Evan's excellent *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Sussex: Brunner, 1996; New York: Routledge, 2003). Perhaps the most problematic psychoanalytic proposal, castration theory has been exposed and debated by feminist theory. One of my early favorites for its lucid point-by-point deconstruction of Freud's essays on female sexuality is Luce Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1974). Despite all this and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's massive *L'anti-oedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1972–73), the reformulation of the structural exclusivity and centrality of the phallus in psychoanalysis is still pending, so to speak. I would like to thank Dr. Isaura Verón for her help in elucidating certain aspects of psychoanalysis, as well as for providing important bibliographical references.

2. Lacan's gliding of registers between penis (the "graspable" organ) and phallus (the symbolic referent) is quite apparent in the following quote in Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire. Livre X. L'angoisse (1962–63)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 51: "La coupure peut y instituer deux pièces différentes, l'une qui peut avoir une image spéculaire, l'autre qui, littéralement, n'en a pas. Il [s'agit] du rapport entre moins-*phi* et la constitution du petit *a*. D'un côté la réserve insaisissable imaginativement, encore qu'elle soit liée, à un organe, lui, Dieu merci, encore parfaitement saisissable, cet instrument qui devra tout de même de temps en temps entrer en action pour la satisfaction du désir, le phallus. De l'autre, le *a*, qui est ce reste, ce résidu, cet objet dont le statut échappe au statut de l'objet dérivé de l'image spéculaire, c'est à dire aux lois de l'esthétique transcendantale" (The cut can establish two different parts, one that can have a specular image, and another that, literally, doesn't have one. This regards the relationship between *moins-phi* and the constitution of *Object(a)*. On one hand, the imaginarily ungraspable reserve, even though it is linked to an organ that, thank God, is still perfectly graspable, an instrument that all the same should be brought into action once in a while to satisfy desire, the phallus. On the other, the *Object(a)*, which is that remainder, that residue, that object whose status escapes the status of the object derived from the specular image, that is to say, from the laws of transcendental aesthetics). English translations for Lacan are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

3. According to Lacanian theory, the maternal fusion would be disrupted by the child's discovery of the mother's lack of penis, a lack that sets the stage for the castration complex but also makes the mother the first Other. The issue of the penis's centrality for the recognition of Otherness begins here.

4. Lacan, *L'angoisse*, 57: "A cette place du manque où quelque chose peut apparaître, j'ai mis . . . le signe 'moins-*phi*.' Il vous indique qu'ici se profile un rapport avec la réserve libidinale soit avec ce quelque chose qui ne se projette pas, ne s'investit pas au niveau de l'image spéculaire, qui y est irréductible, pour la raison qu'il reste profondément investi au niveau du corps propre, du narcissisme primaire, de ce qu'on appelle auto-erotisme, d'une jouissance autiste. C'est en somme un aliment qui reste là pour animer éventuellement ce qui interviendra comme instrument dans le rapport à l'autre,

l'autre constitué à partir de l'image de mon semblable, l'autre qui profilera sa forme et ses normes, l'image du corps dans sa fonction séductrice, sur celui qui est le partenaire sexuel" (In the place of lack where something may appear, I've put . . . the sign *moins-phi*. It indicates that here is outlined a relationship to the libidinal reserve, that something which is not projected nor invested at the level of the specular image, which cannot be reduced to the specular image because it remains deeply invested in the level of the body proper, of primary narcissism, of that which is called auto-eroticism, an autistic pleasure. In sum, [the libidinal reserve] is a nourishment that remains for what will intervene eventually as instrument in the relation to the Other, an Other constituted from the image of my fellow, an Other who will delineate with its shape and its norms the image of the body in its seductive function on the sexual partner).

5. Typically, Lacan presents the leftover in algebraic terms: "Il y a, au sens de la division, un reste, un résidu. Ce reste, cet Autre dernier, cet irrationnel, cette preuve et seule garantie, en fin de compte, de l'altérité de l'Autre, c'est le a." (There is a remainder in the sense of division, a residue. This remainder, this final Other, this irrational, this proof and sole guarantee, when all is said and done, of the Other's otherness, is the Object(a)). Ibid., 37. See also note 2, above.

6. For the Lacanian difference between *jouissance* and pleasure, see "Jouissance," in Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*, 91–92. Although *jouissance* implies a sexual, orgasmic pleasure that is kept at bay by the restrictions of the pleasure principle, for the effects of this essay I will use these two terms interchangeably.

7. "It's not because she is not-wholly in the phallic function that she is not there at all. She is not not at all there. She is there in full (*à plein*). But there is something more (*en plus*). . . . There is a *jouissance* . . . a *jouissance* of the body, that is . . . 'beyond the phallus.'" Lacan, *The Seminar: Book XX, Encore (1972–1973): On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 74.

8. I'm using "no-man's land" facetiously, although the same cannot be said for Lacan, who maintains to the end a distinction between phallic *jouissance* (associated to language and knowledge, and therefore contingent on absence and the impossibility of love) and this "other," female, corporeal *jouissance* that women enjoy without understanding and that is only legitimate insofar as it is transcendental (the case of mystic ecstasy), leaving aside the "minor considerations" of clitorian or vaginal pleasure. Ibid. In order to avoid this type of pitfall, I will not equate the leftover with this female *jouissance*, although much could be said in that respect.

9. See note 4, above.

10. Lacan speaks of a *plus de jouir*, which is both "surplus meaning" and "surplus enjoyment." Evans writes, "Object(a) is the excess of *jouissance* which has no "use value," but persists for the mere sake of enjoyment." Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*, 125.

11. One of the paradoxes of capitalism is that it "liquidates" (figuratively but at times also literally)

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its excess production when storing it becomes too cumbersome or costly. My father, to whom I owe a certain understanding of the logic of capitalism, always said that in business, if you don't win, you lose; that is, if capital, whether money or merchandise, is sitting there doing nothing, it is as good as nonexistent.

12. "Primary circuits" refers here to an original meaning and/or a predominant place in the market, secondary to an appropriated/recycled meaning and a marginal circulation. "Dead stock" usually has fallen from the first onto the second.

13. I trace the "from riches to rags" trajectory of collections of natural history in *The Artificial Kingdom: A Treasury of the Kitsch Experience* (New York: Pantheon, 1998).

14. See Hildegonda C. Rietveld, "Vinyl Junkies and the Soul Sonic Force of the 12-Inch Dance Single," in Charles R. Acland, ed., *Residual Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 97–114. Exploring a vast array of technological dead stock, and following the line traced by Raymond Williams (see below), this compilation of essays shows the contemporary relevance of cultural leftovers.

15. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

16. Benjamin's metaphorical use of ruins begins with his discussion of allegory in "Allegory and Trauerspiel," *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 1963, trans. John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977), 159–235, and permeates his work from then on. See Susan Buck-Morss, "Historical Nature: Ruin," *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 159–201.

17. Georges Bataille, *La part maudite* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1949).

18. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," 1919, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 42 (London: Hogarth Press, 1955). Freud's double is the basis for Lacan's notion of the leftover. Women are often associated with the monstrous double, as Julia Kristeva shows in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (Paris: Seuil, 1980).