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DEATH ENDS A LIFE NOT A RELATIONSHIP: THE EMBODIED
MOURNING AND MEMORIALIZING OF PETS
THROUGH MATERIAL CULTURE

by

Gemma N. Koontz

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

American Studies
(Folklore)

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ABSTRACT

Death Ends a Life Not a Relationship:

The Embodied Mourning and Memorializing of Pets Through Material Culture

by

Gemma N. Koontz, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2019

Major Professor: Dr. Lynne S. McNeill
Department: English

Many owners view their pets as family members and develop deep bonds of attachment with them based on sensory experiences. It is thus understandable why individuals experience grief upon their pet's passing. Just as with the loss of a family member, owners desire to both mourn and memorialize their "furry family member."

To embody and express the loss of human life, bereaved individuals often engage in traditional mourning rituals. However, "there are few socially recognised rituals to underpin the loss of an animal" (Williams and Green 2014:1). To compensate for this lack of expressive outlet, pet owners turn to and adapt established mourning and memory keeping practices previously reserved for humans. The most common of these is the retention and creation of items that are meaningfully connected or draw reference to the deceased, objects I refer to as "material memories."

Despite the widespread practice among pet owners, there is little research on pet material memories and their role in pet grief. Previous studies on pet grief are more

generalized and tend toward emphasizing the perceived negative aspects of such grief. As a result, there remains a need for folkloristic discourse regarding the individualized experiences of pet loss and the practices surrounding it.

This study fills a gap, by discussing and analyzing the types of material objects individual owners keep and create, and how these items are used to facilitate the embodied mourning and memorialization of pets, by functioning as “icons for the bereaved to contemplate as part of the extended mourning ritual” (Leming and Dickenson 1998: 392).

By combining a reflexive approach with perspectives drawn from a wide disciplinary base, I argue that sensory experiences constitute a central component of the human-animal bond and thus, material culture items are ideal mnemonic forms because they are embedded with meaningful sensory experiences related to deceased pets. These items thereby allow owners to literally and symbolically recreate the multisensory experiences of their pets postmortem.

In doing so, this study adds to and deepens the understandings of the complexities surrounding the human-animal bond and the role folkloristic behaviors and principles have in these non-human relationships and experiences.

(161 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Death Ends a Life Not a Relationship:

The Embodied Mourning and Memorializing of Pets Through Material Culture

Gemma N. Koontz

Many individuals develop strong bonds with their pets, viewing them as close “furry” friends or family. When these beloved companions die, both their relational and physical absences are deeply felt. Lacking socially recognized rituals to mourn and memorialize their pets, owners turn to and adapt traditional “human practices,” primarily that of keeping meaningful or significant items of the deceased.

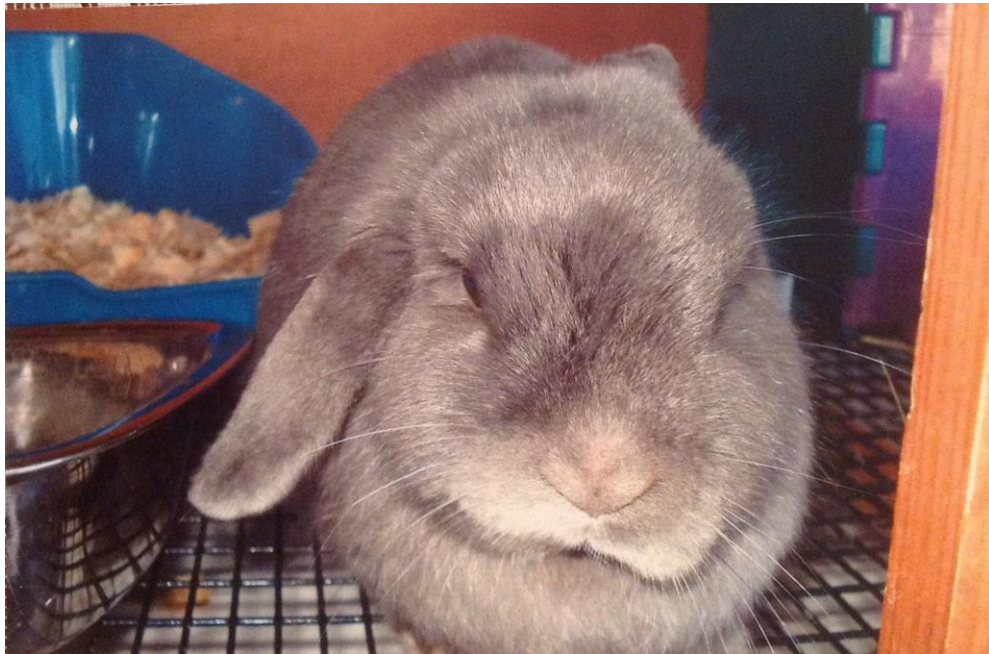
Using both personal experiences and perspectives from multiple fields, this thesis discusses the life-cycle of the human-animal bond, examines the types of items owners keep or create, and how these are used to facilitate both mourning (the outward expression of grief) and memorialization (the practice of remembering). I argue that because they allow owners to both literally and symbolically recreate the sensory experiences of pet ownership, material items such as hair, impressions, collars, cremains, and models are ideal ways to remember deceased pets.

As a result, this study adds to and deepens the understandings of the complexities surrounding the human-animal bond, in addition to how owners use and extend folkloric behaviors and principles, such as tradition and the material culture genre to include experiences and relationships with pets.

DEDICATION

For Sparkle (2005-2016).
The Quintessential Disapproving Rabbit,
Her Royal Highness,
Queen of All Rabbits,
Evil-y.

I honestly do not know where I would be without you my dear Blue Bunny.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There is a whole herd of people and animals who need my acknowledgment. First, are my committee members. Thanks, Lynne, for not only listening to my crazy ideas about dead animals but also for being excited. Also, thank you for reading my very rough drafts and finding the potential in my thoughts. Jeannie, thank you for your insight and your recommendations for sources and listening to me go on about death. Finally, thank you Star for being the bright light who kept checking in on how I was coming along and for being enthusiastic about the project.

Thank you to my participants for sharing your experiences and allowing me the privilege of getting to know your dear pets.

I want to thank the faculty and staff of the Utah State University English Department for being cheerleaders, helping me wade through the realities of graduate school, answering my questions about paperwork, and broadening my perspectives. Additionally, I want to recognize the English Department and College of Humanities and Social Sciences for their financial support.

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I certainly could not have done this without my amazing, loving family. My Mom who listened to my woes helped me with the little things and made a lot of delicious pizza. My Dad who acted as my sounding board for ideas, labored away at being my revision assistant, and reminded me that folklore is what I am meant to do. My sisters

Heidi and Nicole who told repeatedly told me I could do it. My brothers-in-law Tom and Greg who also encouraged me. My nephews Emmett, Jonas, and Rowan and my nieces Pippa and Everly who made me smile and laugh when the cares of the world were particularly burdensome. Finally, my extended family who supported me while at times, questioning my choice of program and especially thesis topic, but now (sort-of) appreciate its importance.

Last but certainly not least, all of my sweet critters past, present, and future. My dogs Foxy, Bandit, and Hercules who kept me company (mostly while sleeping, it's hard to be a dog) during the long hours of researching and writing. My puppy Price Kennel's Marquis de Lafayette, aka Gilbert, for raising my spirits during the revision slump. My rabbits Lady Iris, Buttermilk Pancake, Nestle (RIP), and Supreme Leader Tribble Khan Kylo Ren who provided a welcome respite from working with their adorableness and extreme begging for banana chips. My horse Aryk who gave me a needed break from reality, and who with his kitty partner-in-crime Ruger, were particularly helpful by snuffling through my books. Also, thank you to my pets who have since crossed the Rainbow Bridge; Sparkle, Honey, Pipkin, Dr. Watson, Dr. Leonard H. McCoy, Twix, Nestle, Black Jack, Tye Dye, Snickers, Rocky, and Fudge. You were the inspiration for this project, and even though your corporeal form is no longer, you are forever remembered and cherished, for Death cannot claim my love for each of you.

-Gemma N. Koontz

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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

*"Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains
unawakened"*

-Anatole France

Calling Sparkle my pet does not even begin to capture the entirety of all she meant to me. She was my first pet, my best friend, my confidant, my source of comfort and solace, my playmate, my inspiration, my constant in a world of change, my pride, my joy, my light in the darkness. I remember that crisp, not-quite-spring day in March 2005. Shy, gawky me was finally getting a rabbit after years of asking. Dad and I arrived at the rabbitry and were inundated with rabbits. Medium-size brown rabbits with sleek fur stretched over lean bodies, muscles quivering with energy. Big white rabbits, too lazy to hop over. Small black rabbits with doe eyes. I looked at all of these but kept coming back to a small, blue-gray, Holland lop contentedly relaxing on a table. Out in the early spring sunshine, her fur glistened, the light sparkling off in radiant flecks. That day I did not choose Sparkle, she chose me. I remember carrying her around the house, my own furry baby. I remember watching Star Trek and Jeopardy with her snuggled on my chest. I remember how she was friends with our guinea pig, Fudge. I remember running home to play with her after the regular bad days at school. I remember getting her ready for yet another move. I remember having a tea party with her, my only friend. I remember whispering all my secrets, fears, and desires into her lop ear, her warm blood pulsing between my fingers.

I remember all this, but the thing I remember most about Sparkle is her embodied presence and essence. Her smoky blue-gray fur like crushed velvet beneath my hand. The sticky residue of banana on her lips as she kissed me. The sharpness of her teeth when she nipped me. The staccato of her nails on my chest as she nested my shirt. Her fresh scent, a mixture of hay, sawdust and a hint of banana. The near-constant disapproving expression complete with downturned corners of her mouth. Her semi-lopped ears standing at half-mast. The crown of downy fur haphazardly sticking up between her ears. The way she hopped along like a German tank from World War I, low and slow.

How she would charge out of her house and feign an attack. How she solemnly surveyed her territory from atop her plastic house, head held high. How she flopped out in her litterbox, feet kicked out. How she deftly pivoted around for a treat. How she impatiently snatched treats from my hand. The squeak of her snore as she snuggled in her hay nest. The low growl of annoyance. The metallic clink of the water bottle as she slaked her thirst. The crinkle of lettuce as she chewed. The snap of her thumping feet. The soothing softness of her ear as I wiped away bitter tears with it. The reassuring weight of her body tucked in the crook of my elbow. The tickle of her whiskers against my face. The comforting warmth of her head pressed against my neck. The shushing rustle of fur as I stroked her. The contented chatter of teeth.

I also remember feeling the decrease of her body. The sharpness of her pointed vertebrae as they pressed against her tented skin. The wheezy breathing. The spreading shadow in her eyes. The progressive dullness of her coat. The bitter smell of sickness. The brush of brittle whiskers as she kissed me one last time. The sickly-sweet smell of anesthesia. The ironic blue tint of the liquid in the syringe as it mixed with the scarlet of

her heart. The soft escape of air from her lungs. The glassy glaze over her soulful chocolate eyes. The quiet repose of her body. The softness of that last stroke. The rough material of the towel I pulled over her. The hollow ache in my heart and the sting of tears in my eyes. The empty cage. The numbness, sorrow, guilt, relief, anger, sadness, the gnawing of my stomach, the fog, the fear of forgetting.

Sparkle is not my only pet whom death has claimed. Over the years I have lost Honey Bunny, Tye Dye, Black Jack, Twix, Nestle, Dr. Watson, Dr. Leonard H. McCoy, Pipkin, Rocky, and Fudge. Each death proved painful but disposing of their material items was equally hard. If I did not have something tangible, how would I remember them? Sparkle was my everything, so I kept everything of hers, her food bowl, salad bowl, water bottle, litter box, house, and cage. Unable to bear the thought of essentially washing him away, I preserved the shirt I wore the last time I held Pipkin in zip-top bag the front of it covered in his short black fur. The plastic urns containing their cremains reside in my closet, my own pet cemetery, also open for visiting hours. Missing their presence, I made custom portrait models of Watson, Pipkin, and Sparkle that sit on my desk. These items helped me grieve, but more importantly, as repositories of memory, they help me remember.

Project Background and Methodology

I am not alone in my love for and bond with my pets. In 2012 in the United States alone there were an estimated 69,926,000 pet dogs, 74,059,000 cats, and an unrecorded number of farm animals, birds, and exotics (U.S. Pet Ownership Statistics). These pets are described as family members and friends using terms such as “fur babies,” “fur kids,”

“my child/son/daughter,” “four-legged friends,” and “furry friends.” I am also not alone in my grief or desire to memorialize my dear pets. The animal memorialization and after-death care industries are two of the fastest growing sectors of the pet industry (Mihelich 2018). Despite their widespread occurrence, pet grief and memorialization are still widely viewed as a social anathema: “research suggests that there is a taboo against grieving pets openly” (Redmalm 2015:19). This is in part due to the socio-cultural constructs of death and the characterization of the nature of pets as liminal beings which makes such grief unacceptable, for “grievability is made possible by a normative framework which allows for some human or human-like lives to be grieved, while other lives are rendered ‘lose-able’” (Redmalm 2015:1). As a result, outside the pet community, pet loss is not largely recognized as a valid source of grief.

This study, therefore, analyzes the embodied experiences of pet keeping and pet loss, in addition to how and why pet owners keep and create material memories of their deceased pets. I argue that material objects related to pets are embedded with sensory meaning and are therefore ideal means for mourning and memorializing deceased pets. A combination of fieldwork, personal experiences, and library research frame my study. My fieldwork participants come from a variety of backgrounds, ages, and professions, and include both males and females. This diversity of participants is relevant to note as people who grieve for pets “do not fit one particular category,” (Chur-Hansen et al. 2011:256) an issue that is further discussed later in this chapter. I contacted these participants through shared and previously established social networks, both in person and online. Some participants and I were well-acquainted, while for others this was the first time we engaged in extended contact. Familiarity, therefore, became a determining

factor in how we communicated. While I found that individuals were generally open to discussing pleasant experiences regarding their pets, the issues of pet death, grief, and memorializing were understandably more intimate topics of discussion. I conducted in-person interviews with the participants whom I was more familiar with, as I knew they felt comfortable openly discussing such a potentially sensitive topic with me. For those I was less acquainted with, I provided them a survey of specific questions about their pets, their experiences and memories of the pet, how the pet died, their grief experience, what items they kept or created, and sensory experiences related to the pet. I did this, so individuals would be able to comfortably share their emotional experiences without the added pressures and constraints of a formal interview. In addition to engaging in fieldwork specific to this project, I draw on my previous fieldwork regarding personal narratives of pets.

As illustrated by the introduction, I have extensive personal experience with pets, pet death, and the practice of material memories, examples of which I include throughout this thesis. These personal experiences are adaptations of sociologist Jennifer Mason's facet method (2011). Similar to the folklore genre of personal experience narratives, these facets are variable in form and length and are usually concerned with first-person experiences (Jorgensen 2016; Mason 2011: 79). However, whereas personal experience narratives fulfill various functions,¹ facets function primarily as *explorations* of an experience that focus on “strategically and artistically chosen” details rather than “attempting (and usually failing) to describe and document all dimensions of the problem in its entirety” (Mason 2018:4).

Through these focused explorations, facets give “flashes of insight,” whose effectivity lies in the ability to “offer strongly resonant and evocative forms of understanding and insight” (Mason 2018: 4). Additionally, because facet methodology “requires a blend of scientific and artistic or artful thinking, involving not only *deductive* but also *imaginative, inventive, creative and intuitive* reasoning” (Mason 2011:80), the approach potentially provides avenues for unique analytical perspectives on issues and topics, regardless of discipline or field of study.

Because of pet death’s profound impact and the ability of material memories to elicit remembrance, these topics are inherently resonant and evocative, making facet methodology an ideal approach. Additionally, my approach ostensibly combines the elements identified by Mason as the requirements of facet methodology. Therefore, facet methodology both legitimizes and enables the use of narratives in scholarly arguments. My objective for including facets in this thesis is to illustrate the multi-dimensionality of the human-animal bond, to which sensory experiences are not only central but integral.

Apart from my personal experiences, I rely primarily on my participants’ examples and the conclusions of previous studies. However, I felt that some types of material memories, while not discussed by participants, warranted inclusion as they added depth and breadth to the study. These include data collected from consumer testimonials, YouTube users, and documentary films.

In addition to these sources, my fieldwork data, and my personal experiences, I augment my study with the work of scholars from a variety of fields. I draw on commentary from historians, anthropologists, veterinarians, sociologists, psychologists, folklorists, biologists, neurologists, and healthcare providers. My approach aligns with

those of the recently formed section “Folklore and Science Section” (2018) of the American Folklore Society, which seeks to

explor[e]the relationships among folklore and science... Though often approached as polar opposites, the two—like their sister notions *tradition* and *modernity*—are mutually constituting. We are invested in overcoming the vexing disconnects that arise from considering disciplines and domains independently. The Folklore and Science Section and its members are committed to initiating and perpetuating dialogue across various disciplines and traditions, including the academic fields of animal behavior, agriculture, ecology, engineering, history and philosophy of science, information science, medicine, physics, political science, psychology, and public policy, as well as other fields concerned with cognition, physiology, technology, and the health of living systems more generally... By applying folkloristic theories and methods to scientific problems and by employing scientific theories and methods to understand vernacular culture... we can better investigate how understandings and applications of *folklore* and *science* inform, maintain, contest, and complement each other. (American Folklore Society 2018)

Within these identified fields, disciplines, and domains, those of human-animal studies, thanatology, material culture, folklore, and sensory studies are key areas of focus in this study. The influence and importance of these areas are discussed further in the proceeding sections.

As my study is concerned with embodied, material items, I have also included appendices of relevant images. Most are my own, but participants also provided examples. To fill the gaps in photographic documentation, I have additionally pulled images from web sources as necessary.

While I work to draw from and include discussions and examples from a wide base of sources to create a holistic study, there are limitations due to the study’s scope. First, there are predominantly more female than male participants. This is foremost the result of who responded to my call for participants as they are the predominant demographic within the social networks I worked in. Although “research indicates that

women have stronger bonds with companion animals than men” and “report greater feelings of despair following the death of an animal,” (Chur-Hansen 2010:16) it is erroneous to say females grieve more than males. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, most studies tend to focus predominantly on women (Chur-Hansen 2010:16). Other demographic issues regarding the study of pet loss include focusing primarily on children, the elderly, and “vulnerable populations and people experiencing stigma” (Hutton 2016:700). While the experiences of these populations are revealing, they nevertheless skew the perceptions and understanding of both the wider population of pet owners as well as the individual. For my study, I focus on the individual pet owner and do not discern by age, gender, or personal situations.

Another limitation is the scope of animal species. While my definition of pet is based on the bond between owner and pet, not on species, I was nevertheless constrained by species. As dogs and cats are the most commonly kept pet in the United States and worldwide, many of my examples pertain to them. Other animals in my study include horses, a goat, and a rabbit. The type of animal is another constraint. As described, most pets were mammalian, despite people also keeping avians, fish, insects, arthropods, reptiles, and amphibians for pets. In future, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study that focuses primarily on animals of these types to compare and contrast mourning and memorializing practices among these pet owners. Finally, the scope of the project is, by its nature, limited. To condense the historical and individual lifecycles of the human-animal bond down to a thesis is difficult and inhibitive. Additionally, there are numerous examples of material culture related to pet death, and an exhaustive study of all these examples is not the primary focus of this project. Nevertheless, this study provides a

strong background of information relative and necessary to the topic at hand, the embodied, sensory mourning and memorializing of pets through material culture.

Human-Animal Studies

While I love animals, I do not particularly like people. This “dislike” predominantly stems from a lack of social understanding. Being on the Autism Spectrum, I find it difficult to relate to people. Perhaps an academic lens is my way of trying to understand people in a controlled setting. Although, as the name suggests, the focus of the humanities is humans, I invariably look for the animals. Despite their integral roles in human ventures, both direct and indirect, often times animals are not included in studies or are mentioned only in passing. I found myself asking why this is the case. It turns out I was not the only scholar to question this.

The Animal Turn is a recent movement in academia, namely the humanities and social sciences, to push back against the central focus on the Anthropocene. Human-animal studies (HAS) is a branch of this field. Although the field is relatively new, having been developed over the past twenty years, it has garnered a lot of attention in academia and the general public because of its immediacy and relevance. Margo

DeMello, one of the founders of HAS defines it as

an interdisciplinary field that explores the spaces that animals occupy in human social and cultural worlds and the interactions humans have with them. Central to this field is an exploration of the various ways in which animal lives intersect with human societies. (2012:4)

DeMello continues by stating that “human-animal studies is not the study of animals—except insofar as the focus of our study is both nonhuman and human animals...rather, we study interactions between humans and other animals” (2012:4-5).

While my study analyzes pet death and the role of pets in human lives, it is more concerned with how humans interact with pets and how they experience and deal with pet death. My study is still founded on French theorist Jacques Derrida's concept of "real animals," which anthropologist and HAS scholar, Jane C. Desmond, argues is fundamental in any study of human-animal relationships (2016:14). Derrida remarks on his experience regarding real animals: "the cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, a little cat" (2008:14), or as Desmond iterates, "he is writing about a *real* specific cat, not the intellectual, or imaginary, or figurative, or literary *ideas* of a cat" (2016:236). While I talk about the idea of a pet, all my examples as gathered from participants, are founded on living, breathing, embodied, sensory animals.

While there are many topics of study within HAS, the most recent one, the focus of my project, is the examination of animal death, which despite how "the death of an animal can have significant effects on the owner" there remains in "this area...minimal research and associated literature" (Williams and Green 2016:1). This turn itself follows the overarching trend of thanatology within the humanities and social sciences.

Thanatology and Animal Death

Because the chronically ill and special-needs ones tend to find their way to me, during my undergraduate career I, unfortunately, experienced a consistent string of rabbit deaths. Two months before graduation, I lost Sparkle, my best friend, and partner of the last eleven years. Her loss was profound. I am fortunate to have a supportive and understanding social network, but outside of this group, some individuals could, or would, not fathom my grief. These losses were my first meaningful confrontation with

death, the only constant in life. Yet, as with human death, there is a cultural reluctance to constructively discuss pet mortality and death, despite the profound effects these have on owners. The field of thanatology strives to create an open dialogue with death.

Named for Thanos, the Greek god of death, thanatology is “the scientific study of death, its causes, and related phenomena. It encompasses the study of the effects of approaching death and of the needs of the terminally ill and their families.”² Although the term and field of study are generally applied to humans, there is a recent turn in the field of HAS to analyze similar ideas surrounding animal death and the importance of such issues.

One of the first of its kind, the recent work *Mourning Animals: Rituals and Practices Surrounding Animal Death* (DeMello 2016), focuses on a variety of thanatological topics including the disposal of euthanized shelter animals, archeological investigations of animal burials, discussions on pet cemeteries, pet preservation, and roadkill. Additionally, there is *Displaying Death and Animating Life: Human-Animal Relations in Art, Science, and Everyday Life* (Desmond 2016). While these studies analyze and discuss animal thanatology, they do so on a broad level and focus very little on the personal experience of pet bereavement.

In addition to animal thanatology, there are numerous, recent studies on a variety of perspectives related to pet bereavement, primarily from sociological and psychological perspectives. These include identifying at-risk owners during the euthanasia process (Barnard-Nguyen et al. 2016), grief and bereavement issues at the loss of a companion animal (Chur-Hansen 2010), cremation services (Chur-Hansen et al. 2011), death, anxiety and projection (Hutton 2016), and exploring issues of complicated grief (Luiz et al.

2009). These studies on pet bereavement focus primarily on the experience of grief, not coping with it or the forms this process takes.

Although my scholarship is founded in the study of animal death, the focus is the complex, human response to animal death. My project fills the gaps between previous studies by drawing on a wide base of knowledge and takes an individualistic approach towards the study of pet death and how owners use material culture to express grief through mourning and memorializing. This individualistic approach is essential as it narrows the focus and thereby makes conclusions more relevant and applicable to a wider population. Animal deaths occur every day be it roadkill, slaughter, natural causes, or euthanasia. It is the human response to non-human death, and why these responses are important, that drives the continuation of thanatological studies of and regarding animals.

Further research topics regarding the study of animal death and its impacts include insights from various purveyors in pet after-life-care services, perspectives from both sides of pet loss hotlines, personal and professional perspectives from the veterinarian field on animal death and grief, a detailed study regarding individual experiences of caring for older or sick animals, and experiencing the event of pet death.

Material Culture

I like things. I like looking at, making, and collecting all kinds of things. To me, museums with their many artifacts, are hallways to heaven. If you come to a museum with me, plan to spend at least five hours as I have to see everything (much to the chagrin of my family). Objects say so much without a single word. My first introduction to

folklore, and where I discovered my passion for the field, was in a course on material culture and folk art.

Material culture is a term used in sociology, archeology, and folklore to describe the physical objects produced by a social group and reflect the group's cultural beliefs and practices. Folklorist Henry Glassie states "material culture is culture made material... Beginning necessarily with things, but not ending with them, the study of material culture uses objects to approach human thought and action" (1999:41). In my study material culture is the physical object itself and the ideas it represents. However, it also refers to material behavior defined by Michael Owen Jones as the "activity involved in producing or responding to the physical dimension of our world" (1997:202). He continues by arguing that, "material behavior includes not only objects that people construct but also the processes by which their artificers conceptualize them, fashion them, and use them or make them available for others to utilize" (Jones 1997:202). In addition to studying the physical object and the ideas, memories, or sensation it represents as presented by Glassie, my study also analyzes the behaviors surrounding the use of the object, as presented by Jones, to re-create the sensory experience of pets. I also apply cultural anthropologist C. Nadia Seremetakis' (1994) reception theory of material culture which holds that meaning is founded in the senses.

There are previous studies on the material culture of animals and deceased animals as material culture, but these generalized studies tend towards either a historic consumer perspective³ or an institutional perspective.⁴ While such studies separately examine the issues of pet material culture and animal death, unlike my project, they do

not jointly analyze these issues through the lens of pet grief or consider the individualized experiences of pet owners.

Material Memories as Folklore

I find folklore both fascinating and freeing as it covers an expanse of topics, everything from ballads to food and all that individuals and groups say, make, do, and believe (see Ben-Amos 1971; Dundes 1965; Oring 1986). This variety, the interconnectivity between genres and topics, and use of theories from multiple fields are what drew me to folklore in the first place. Folklorists Robert A. Georges and Michael Owen Jones define folklore

as expressive forms, processes, and behaviors (1) that we customarily learn, teach, and utilize or display during face-to-face interactions and (2) that we judge because they serve as evidence of continuities and consistencies through time and space in human knowledge, thought, belief, and feeling” (1995:1).

In other words, “folklore is informal, traditional culture” (McNeill 2013:16; see also Bronner 1992) that is characterized by and disseminated through repetition and variation (Ben-Amos 1971:9).

By these definitions, material memories of pets are items of folklore. Pet mourning and memorial practices are inherently informal since, “there are few socially recognized rituals to underpin the loss of an animal, and others often do not recognize the significance of the loss” (Williams and Green 2016:1). As a result, individuals often apply previously established modes of mourning and memorializing to pets, thus drawing on traditional forms in the process. Material memories are also variable because the forms of pet memorialization continually develop and expand into areas and mediums outside of traditional human practices, such as cloning and preservation through freeze-

drying. Because material memories of pets are examples of folklore, folkloristic approaches and principles are integral to my study. These include tradition, context, function, expression, and the dynamics of folk groups. In so doing, this study as a whole explores the roles of folkloristic principles and behaviors in non-human relationships and experiences, a research area that has received little attention in the field's scholarship.⁵

Sensory Studies

Everyone lives in a sensory world unique unto themselves. The manner through which I smell, see, taste, touch, and feel the world around me is different than anyone else and vice versa.

Indeed, “the task of reconstructing the senses therefore calls into being a “complex system of representations and an intricate network of personal and cultural associations” that have varied with time and place” (Reinarz 2014: 6). Regardless of the time or place, in order to protect the organism from potentially dangerous information overload, one of the brain's tasks is to prevent this by processing the numerous sensory stimuli experienced at any one time and filter out anything that is not relevant. Because the brain typically does this job well, for many individuals “in our postmodern world” sensory stimuli “is often a notable (or increasingly scarcely noticed) absence” (quoted in Reinarz 2014: 209). However, some individuals experience the opposite, where sensory stimuli are heightened, and the brain's sensory processing abilities are compromised.⁶ This neurodevelopmental disorder is known as Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) or Sensory Integration Disorder, and it is my normal. Too much movement or color makes it difficult to listen. Faint smells become prominent, and certain odors make me physically

sick. Every type of sound is amplified. Some foods are impossible to eat because of their texture, no matter how good they taste. Clothes have to be a particular cut, length, and fabric otherwise they feel wrong and drive me crazy to where I want to tear them off. These sensory experiences go beyond merely being irritating or distracting, they are overwhelming and at times, distressing and debilitating. The number of tears I have shed because it was too loud, too bright, smelled, or my clothes too uncomfortable, cannot be counted. Because my life is influenced by sensory experiences, so too is my study.

Developed in the 1980s, the field of sensory studies “involves a cultural approach to the study of the senses and a sensory approach to the study of culture.” It challenges the monopoly that the discipline of psychology has long exercised over the study of the senses and sense perception by foregrounding the sociality of sensation” (Howes 2013), for as Constance Classen argues, even though “we are accustomed to thinking of perception as a physical act” it is also “a cultural act” (quoted in Smith 2014: 3). As such, scholars from multiple disciplines, including cultural anthropologists, cultural historians, and literary scholars, use sensory studies to construct a deeper, more relevant level of cultural detail and insight, or what Clifford Geertz famously refers to as “thick description” (1973:6).

Because of its ability to bring “increasing definition,” through details, sensory studies continues to develop and expand into new fields including archeology, communication studies, philosophy, gender studies, and religious studies, and—most relevant to this thesis—the cultural study of memory (Howes 2013). Despite the continued expansion of sensory studies, because of Plato’s sensory hierarchy, which asserts that individuals derive varying levels of truth from each of the standardized five

senses, the cultural importance of smell, sound, touch, taste, thermoception, proprioception, equilibrioception, and nociception, and their roles have long been overlooked in general academic discourse across multiple fields. For as folklorist Kathy Neustadt argues

The faculties of smell, taste, and touch—traditionally and significantly termed “the lower senses”—have largely been excluded from aesthetic and epistemological discussions because, among other things, it has been suggested that their sense-data “cannot become the vehicle of our individual and social conference and communication,” that is, because they are so personal and subjective, we cannot share much about them, and they therefore do not constitute “relational fact.” (1994:184)

Among these potential fields of expansion, I feel that material culture studies and folkloristics, stand to benefit significantly from a sensory approach as both of these interdisciplinary fields study various genres that involve multiple forms of sensory embodiment. These include folk art, vernacular architecture, textile arts, foodways, ethnomusicology, and performance genres such as dance, to name a few. Despite the potential to explore the numerous sensory facets of these genres, by focusing on visual objects and events, written texts, and transcribed audio recordings, these fields often fall prey to what cultural historian of sound, Bruce Johnson, describes as

the anglophone tradition [where] authority is embodied in information conceived in terms of visual order: perspective, vision/visionary, envisage/envision, point of view, discover, disclose, observation, speculation, illustration, demonstration, reflections, insights, second sight, revelation, theory. (2017:9)

Although scholars in these fields, including Neustadt and Simon J. Bronner (1986) have spoken out on the fields’ sensory shortcomings and have worked to integrate and emphasize an embodied approach, the roles all the senses (including those beyond

the standardized five) have in these discourses' studies, especially those based in ethnography, continue to be overlooked.⁷

Yet, because “sensations are central to what makes these connections and associations *potent*” (Mason 2018: 39), it is not only important but essential to incorporate sensory experiences into ethnographic studies. However in doing so, historians Joy Damousi and Paula Hamilton caution that as scholars

“we should be engaged in not simply a description of many past experiences through the senses, but our work should be capable of interpreting the meaning of those experiences, in particular, those that make little sense if only known through the visual.” [emphasis added] (2017:2)

Or as historian Mark M. Smith argues, “taking...the senses seriously—and not simply invoking them as a literary device to spice narrative—is challenging” (2014: 19).

As a counter to Damousi and Hamilton’s point, when including a sensory approach, it should likewise be understood that while these “meaning[s] of experiences” can be representations of beliefs and ideas, they can also equally stand on their own: “sensations are manifest and of interest in themselves; they do not simply stand for or tell us about or express something else” (Mason 2018: 46). For example, the warmth of my dog sitting on my lap is an important part of our relationship. This thermoceptive experience could be viewed as representative of the comfort and security I feel when my dog is near, or it may simply be a pleasant sensation, or a combination of both.

In this study, I have sought to follow these counsels by drawing from my personal experiences and observations, participant responses, and the works of sensory scholars to both describe sensory experiences and discuss the multiplicity of reasons why owners value these meaningful sensory experiences and in turn seek to re-create them through

material memories. As a result, I hope that my study, which works to include and analyze a variety of senses, is just one of many to emphasize both the cultural and personal significance of the senses. For in the end, when death claims our bodies, is not our mortal experience simply a collection of sensory experiences and memories?

Note on Terminology

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but would it still convey the same meaning? The meaning of concepts has much to do with the words used to describe them. In my study I have sought to be "semantically nuanced" or in other words, carefully define and frame terms within the specific bounds of my arguments. While I provide these definitions and discussions in the text, three terms deserving of extended discourse here in the introduction are "pet," "material memory," and "embodiment."

Pet

"Pet" is a ubiquitous term for any animal kept in a household. The usage of the term is one that has developed over time and is now considered controversial. The sixteenth-century use of the word is the one that most closely dovetails with the modern use regarding animals that are "domesticated or tamed and kept for pleasure or companionship" (Grier 2006:6). Historian Katherine Grier (2006:6) and cultural anthropologist Constance Classen (2012: 99) both note the importance of humans in

relation to defining the term pet, for without humans caring for and engaging in the act of petting there is no such concept.

While “pet” is the term most often used to describe an animal that is kept for pleasure or one that is uniquely favored by humans, the term is now falling out of favor among the general populace and in literature concerned with animals. This move away from “pet” results from its seeming derogatory emphasis on animals as objects of human entertainment (Redmalm 2015:21). The in-vogue terms are “companion animal” or “animal companion” (Grier 2006, 6; Chur-Hansen 2010:14). These terms attempt to deemphasize the role of humans and in turn place emphasis on the animal as a sentient being, valuing the “emotional or psychological connection with an animal” (Kemp, Jacobs, and Stewart, 2016:534).

However, terms such as "companion animal" or "animal companion" are still problematic, for as sociologist David Redmalm discusses

it risks obscuring the paradoxical status of the category’s members. ‘Companion’ neglects the fact that humans are generally regarded as owners of their non-human companions, and ‘animal’ cements humans’ position as an exception from this category. (2015:21)

Additionally, these terms raise questions of how companionship is quantified and qualified for “not all pets are true companions, although some animals are indeed excellent company. Companionship suggests recognition on the part of the animal” (Grier 2006:7).

Although much of the literature now uses "companion animal" or "animal companion," for my purposes, I use the term "pet" as it is the one most commonly used by owners to broadly identify their animals. The “Defining Pet” section in Chapter 2

explores and discusses at length what characteristics classify an animal as a pet and how the concept has changed and evolved over time.

Material Memory

Throughout my study, I refer to the items pet owners keep to memorialize their pets as material memories. Terms like “keepsake,” “souvenir,” “memento,” “memory object,” and “objects of memory,” are used by the general public and scholars to refer to items meant to serve as keepers of memory. While such terms do convey the basic meaning of these objects, I feel they do not adequately capture all the memories, sensations, and experiences embedded within these objects and therefore are not semantically nuanced enough for my purposes. Additionally, relying primarily on the term “memento” is problematic because I use memento to define a category of mnemonic object that serves a particular function. To differentiate between the categories of mnemonic objects, I developed the term “material memory.”⁸ Material memories are objects of material culture that are kept or created and embedded with sensory meaning which aid in memory recall or reconstruction.

Embodiment

My use of “embodiment” is two-fold, a double entendre even. First, embodiment is the process of “giv[ing] a concrete form to (what is abstract or ideal); to express (principles, thoughts, intentions).”⁹ In this use, I argue that immaterial sensory experiences are given tangible character through the use of physical objects of material culture. Embody can also mean “to put into a body.”¹⁰ This definition places the senses

into a body thereby connecting them to the source from which they are derived, i.e., the body. However, here “the body” refers to and directly focuses on the corporeal body, and in the process does not “separate mind/body” nor does it “distance the proposed subject of analysis (the body, the social body, sexuality, the self, culture) from fleshy, sensory-kinaesthetic, experiential sensations” (Mason 2018:48).

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 2 explores the different stages in the lifecycle of the human-animal bond and acts as a literature review. The first section is concerned with pet life. It starts with the bio-socio-cultural historiography of pet keeping by first defining the term “pet.” Included in this discussion are the term’s etymology, key characteristics that make an animal a “pet,” the reasons for pet keeping, the role of species, and the types of bonding. Additionally, the liminal state of pets within the socio-cultural constructs of humanity and animality are addressed, followed by the development of pet keeping. Included in this discussion are evolutionary, cultural, societal, and social learning as reasons and explanations for pet keeping. Bonding and attachment theory, two key points of my study are also described along with the importance of the senses to human-animal relationships.

The next section introduces issues related to pet death. These include anticipatory grief, questions regarding quality-of-life, decisions to euthanize, and the actual event of pet death. Owner guilt and fear frame and define these issues. Unlike the preceding and proceeding sections, this section is comparatively short, for as mentioned in the text, the topic exceeds the scope of the project.

Chapter 2 concludes with human responses to pet death. These include the grieving process, how Judith Butler's phenomenological aspects define grief, pet bereavement's connection to disenfranchised grief, and ways mourning and memorializing function as outlets for grief expression. Henry Glassie's concept of tradition is introduced as it relates to pet owners adapting human mourning and memorialization practices and applying them to pets. To add depth and relevance to my discussions, I include a litany of scholarly perspectives and participant experiences.

Chapter 3 continues the discussion of memorialization and the relation between this, material culture, and the senses. Because they allow owners to both literally and symbolically re-create the multi-sensory experience of pet ownership while providing tangible, long-lasting form and embodiment to the ephemerality of memory, material culture and behaviors are ideal mnemonic genres for pet memorialization.

I provide a brief history of the field of material culture and the theories used for analysis. I argue that embodiment and meaning are tied to the senses, and therefore reception theory is the most relevant approach to the study of pet material memories. Additionally, I discuss how pet keeping is an inherently multisensory experience and how individuals gain knowledge, derive emotional responses, and create memories through multiple types of sensory experiences. As with Chapter 2, this chapter similarly acts as a literature review by pulling in discussions from scholars across multiple fields including sociology, cultural history, folklore, and cultural anthropology.

Chapter 4 uses case studies to explore the connections between memorialization, material culture, the senses, tradition, and embodiment. The chapter consists of five subsections that classify and analyze different categories or types of material memory

including mementos, material companions, miniatures, pet bodies, and other types of material memories. Each subsection opens with a facet to set the stage. The chapter then consists of a definition of the category or type of material culture, examples from participants, analyses of how these examples embody and re-create the sensory experiences of pets, and any existing historical precedents.

Chapter 5 completes the study by tying up ideas and drawing conclusions on embodiment, pet loss, and material culture. I provide reasons why pet owners keep material memories and the significance of these items.

Pet ownership is an enriching, emotional experience. However, it is also fraught with unique issues and at times, unwarranted social criticism. Through this study, I intend for readers to gain a broader and fuller understanding of the complexities surrounding the human-animal bond. In particular, those that result when death attempts to break the unique relationship between pet and owner. Yet, even in death, the special bond between pet and owner is not only maintained but reclaimed through the keeping of material memories to mourn and memorialize these exceptional beings who hold a special place within our hearts.

CHAPTER 2:
LIFECYCLE OF THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND

“With great love comes great grief.”

-Betty J. Carmack

A recent vet visit for a prescription turned into a real-time observation of others experiencing pet death. As I exited the car, a couple hurriedly jumped out of their vehicle, rushing inside holding a green towel, from whose folds peeked a limp, straw-colored canine. Besides the still body, it was evident something tragic transpired. The owners’ hands were covered with dry, rust-colored blood as were their clothes. I stood off to the side while, overshadowed by the numbness of grief, they made arrangements for the body. Having taken care of their furry friend, perhaps even their child, they left and stood under the overhang. Here, in each other’s arms, their tears flowed freely.

Watching this, I could not help but think, now what? When they return home will they notice the quiet? Where there were once nails clicking on the floor, the tinkling of tags, the excited exclamations expressed in barks, and the crunching of kibble, now there is nothing but suffocating silence. Did they get him as a puppy? Did they think they would gracefully age alongside each other? Will they believe everything was merely a nightmare and any moment they will wake up with him curled up next to them snoring? How will their routine change? Did they take him for a walk first thing in the morning? Was he their reason to get out of bed? Was he a source of comfort? Will they feel physically sick with anguish? Who else will understand their grief? Will others say, “he was only a dog, get another one”? Will they ever want another dog? Are they feeling sad, angry, guilty? Is the question on their mind “what now”?

Just as animals experience different life-cycles, so too, does the human-animal bond. These cycles include the connection to the pet during its life, the quality-of-life decisions before death, the pet's death, and the human response to death. This chapter analyzes each stage and discusses the issues related to them. In doing so, this chapter provides a contextual foundation for why individuals develop bonds with pets, subsequently grieve for the pet at its passing, and how they express and resolve their grief through memorialization.

Defining “Pet”

It is necessary to define "pet" to understand why individuals develop strong bonds and attachments to them. Scholars from various fields have discussed what characterizes an animal as a pet. Cultural historian Katherine Grier analyzes the etymology of the term. Turning to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Grier posits that “pet” is derived from the root related to the French “petit” meaning “little” (2006:6). She notes that "pet" was first used in the 1500s to denote “an indulged or spoiled person; any person indulged or treated as a favorite' ” (2006:6). By the mid-sixteenth century, this term encompassed animals "domesticated or tamed and kept for pleasure or companionship" (Grier 2006:6). While etymology is a starting point for defining “pet,” it does not convey the complex characteristics which qualify an animal as a pet.

Grier furthers her analysis by discussing historian Keith Thomas’ three characteristics that define an animal as a pet. Thomas posits that “(1) the animal was allowed into the house, (2) it was given an individual name, and (3) it was never eaten” (1983: 112-115). Although Thomas’ seeks to identify the unique nature of pethood with

these characteristics, not every pet meets these criteria. My rabbits live in the garage, not the house. While I deeply contemplate what to name my pets, some owners do not name theirs. Nor is it certain that the animal is not destined for the dinner table as in the case of my grandmother's rabbits who were eaten when they died of natural causes. Despite not meeting these criteria, many individuals still identify such animals as pets and subsequently develop bonds with them. Grier argues there are many reasons humans keep pets such as beautiful bodies and sounds, companionship, status symbols, as living toys, as performers of a particular task, or any combination thereof (2006:7). For Grier, the fundamental characteristic that defines a pet is not its function but rather "the act of choosing a particular animal, differentiating it from all other animals" and have, in some manner "been singled out by human beings" (2006:6,8).

The act of favoring an animal is not constrained by species. While dogs, cats, and other select animal species are most commonly identified as pets, as psychologist Anna Chur-Hansen argues, many species are considered pets, for "people also share their lives with myriad other species besides canine and feline. These can include rabbits, fish, horses, rodents, reptiles, and miniature pigs" (2010:14). Participants in my study identified dogs, cats, rabbits, horses, chickens, turtles, and fish as pets. Additionally, pets are not strictly limited to traditional domestic animals as "some people also consider wildlife as pets, such as birds, possums and other native animals" (Chur-Hansen 2010:14). Instead of defining pets by species, mental health leader Bronwen Williams and veterinary surgeon Rebecca Green argue it is "the level of attachment to their animals, not the species that was important" (2016:1).

Regardless of species and function, current societal constructions identify pets as animals that are, to some degree, regarded as part of the family (Adrian, Deliramich, and Frueh 2009: 177). This construction of a pet's place and function within the family differs amongst individuals and impacts the type of bond owners develop with their pets. Psychologists Lorri Greene and Wallace Sife both discuss these different classifications of pets and the consequential responses to their death, the latter of which are addressed later in this chapter.

For some individuals, pets are members of the family, but are not given the same status as human family members. These individuals nevertheless provide a loving home and responsible care (Greene and Landis 2002:16-17). Others view pets as integral members of the family, equal to any human family member, even as surrogate children, and therefore, they receive the same level of care and attachment (Greene and Landis 2002:17). Many owners form deep attachments with pets and lavish them with care and attention. These individuals often refer to their pets as "close friends" or as "my son/daughter" (Green and Landis 2002:17). Indeed, the relationship between these individuals and their pets can take on the quality of a parent-child relationship (Packman, Carmack, and Ronen 2012:336).

In contrast to those who view pets as part of the family, some individuals view them merely as things that perform a service (Sife 2014:23). These animals often do not make it past the classification of "it."

With these differing and even conflicting classifications of a pet's status, sociologist David Redmalm defines pets as animals that "exist in the liminal position between socially constructed categories of person/being and that of nonperson/object,"

(2015:2). Redmalm concludes that since they are regarded as neither fully human nor completely animal, pets are essentially “werewolves of Western society” (2016:106). Based on these discussions, I define a pet as any species of animal that has been singled out for a particular reason is bonded with and is subsequently regarded as part of the human family.

Development of Pet-Keeping

Just as a variety of scholars have tried to define what a pet is, scholars have also attempted to trace the beginnings of and reasons for pet-keeping. Although the exact origin of the first pet is unknown, using DNA and other evidence, experts have traced the history of pet-keeping as far back as 12,000-15,000 BCE (Anderson, Hill, and McCune 2015:33). Twenty-first-century pet-keeping practices and ideas are founded in the changes in socio-cultural values and ideals of the nineteenth century. According to Grier, these include the emergence of a self-conscious middle class with more disposable income, religious discussions on the nature of animals, changing ideas of and focus on domesticity and childhood, and advances in manufacturing and marketing (2006:13-16). Although many historians to include Grier, point to the nineteenth-century, historian Ingrid H. Tague argues that these values and ideas have root in the eighteenth-century (2015:2-5). These historical changes contextualize pet-keeping practices. However, they do not explain why humans initially kept pets and continue to do so. Psychologist Harold A. Herzog outlines potential theories that explain pet-keeping. These include pet-keeping as an evolutionary adaptation, cultural construction, and societal response.

Evolutionary Theory

One type of evolutionary adaptation theory holds that humans keep and develop bonds with animals as a means of developing the skills necessary to care for human children. Caring for animals “functions as an honest signal of the parental abilities of the owner” (Herzog 2014:298). Pets act as a visible, external indicator to others regarding the capabilities of the owner as a provider. Similarly, pet-keeping may facilitate “the development of empathy and parental skills that could be applied to the care of human infants and children” (Herzog 2014:299). The skills needed to care for humans can first be developed and applied to animals, ensuring that the care of children may be successful. For example, when I fostered orphan kittens, I followed the guidelines of “feed them, keep them clean, ensure they are warm and safe.” Later, when I cared for my nieces and nephews, my family instructed me to treat the kids like kittens. This ability to transfer and project human-based skills and traits onto animals results as “the consequence of anthropomorphism, the tendency to project human mental states onto non-human species” (Herzog 2014:299), a trend that continues to positively and negatively influence modern human-animal interactions.

Another type of evolutionary adaptation theory posits that animals provide health benefits to those who bond with them and engage with them through the sense of touch. Although inconclusive, scientific studies show a correlation between pets and lowered blood pressure, increased survival after heart attacks, facilitated social contact, the effectivity of animal therapy, and reductions in levels of loneliness, anxiety, and depression (Sable 2013:93-94).

Anecdotal evidence also points to the benefits of pet keeping. Additionally, my participants shared their ideas on the benefits of pets. Shelley commented that they improve mental health, provide companionship, and promote responsibility.¹¹ Steve N. similarly related that pets provide companionship, comfort, and reduce stress.¹² Sandy and TJ both identified unconditional love as benefits.¹³ While evolutionary theories attempt to explain the reasons behind the human-animal bond and in turn, pet-keeping, Herzog argues that such theories fall short. Instead, he claims that pet-keeping as cultural construction is more plausible.

Cultural Construction

Although many cultures worldwide keep animals, not all view them as pets. The concept of a pet as previously defined is unique to the Western tradition, as Herzog discusses, "the affection and resources lavished upon pets in the United States and Europe is a cultural anomaly" (2014:300). My Dad, a retired Air Force Colonel, likes to tell about the time Soviet personnel visited the Air Force base in England in 1989. He was part of the escort team who monitored the Soviet team. Of all things they experienced, they were most perplexed by the grocery store aisle entirely dedicated to pet products. Observing this, my Dad inquired of the translator why the interest and curiosity. The translator responded that pets were not regarded the same in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as reflected by the lack of diversity and availability of pet products.

Additionally, Herzog poses that "attitudes towards pets sometimes vary considerably between subgroups within society" and are namely founded in religious differences (2014:300). Relatedly, Chur-Hansen states that "the roles and functions of

companion animals are located firmly within a cultural and historical context” (2010:15). In addition to his experience with the Soviet personnel, Dad frequently recounts how the Saudis disdained dogs. During his deployment to Saudi Arabia in 1993, Dad noticed a large population of unkempt, feral street dogs. When he asked his Saudi colleagues why this was the case, they informed him that dogs were culturally regarded as unclean animals or curs. As a result, Dad’s colleagues could not understand the American affinity towards dogs and the desire to care for these pariahs of the animal world. Therefore, pet-keeping ideas, practices, and the human-animal bond as discussed in this project are based on those primarily found in the Western, Judeo-Christian tradition as discussed by Herzog and Chur-Hansen.

Societal Response

Herzog discusses how fluctuations in pet popularity directly correspond with changes in societal attitudes towards pets. Interestingly, Herzog notes that the most notable increase in pet popularity and change in attitudes towards animals coincided with the years following World War II (2014:300). However, Herzog does not provide reasons for this change. Similar to other changes in the nineteenth-century, possible explanations for this popularity may include the wide-spread increase in disposable income, re-emphasis on familial relationships, increased availability in and access to veterinary care, advances in parasite control, and as pushback against the cruelties of war (Grier 2006). Other scholars propose the reason behind the most recent upswing in pet popularity “stems from the social isolation and marginalization of nature that characterizes contemporary Western society” (Redmalm 2015:20). Pets are real, readymade social

beings that are accessible pieces of nature which act as pushbacks against the seeming artificiality of society.

While each of these theories may account for the Western obsession with pets and the valuation of the human-animal bond, Herzog concludes his discussion by arguing the development of and continued engagement in pet-keeping practices likely results from “a mix of innate predispositions and social learning” (2014:304). Because of this “mixture,” the human-animal bond is “unique...unlike other relationships” and is difficult to classify (Packman, Carmack, and Ronen 2012:336). In an attempt to explain and classify this unique bond, scholars turn to human relationship theories, primarily bonding and attachment theory.

Bonding and Attachment Theory

A primary tenant of pet and human interactions is the concept of the human-animal bond. Bonding refers to the “process of forming strong attachments or close relationships with a significant other” (Nugent 2013). Owners form different types of bonds based on how they characterize the pet's place within the family. As previously discussed, some individuals consider pets as members of the family, but not having the same status as human members. These individuals provide a loving home and responsible care but experience little grief and recover quickly when the pet dies. Greene refers to this as a conventional bond (Greene and Landis 2002:16-17).

In contrast, an intense bond is one where owners form deep, emotional attachments to their pets. These pets are integral members of the family and given the

same level of care as human members. When a pet within this type of bond dies, the grief is long and the loss more personal (Greene and Landis 2002:17).

Finally, a unique bond is one in which individuals, for various reasons, form intense attachments with pets and provide extreme care and attention. Following pet death, they experience long-lasting and devastating grief (Greene and Landis 2002:17).

Individuals who keep pet material memories are generally intensely or uniquely bonded because the bond, and therefore relationship, is more strongly valued. Chur-Hansen argues that these strong bonds may be more valued and intimate than relationships with humans, for

the degree of intimacy shared with an animal may exceed that shared with parents, spouses, friends or siblings. People may develop an attachment with an animal that transcends any relationship they share with another human being. (2010:14-15)

Because individuals form strong bonds with animals and may value them more than human relationships, some may erroneously conclude that pets serve as substitutions for human relationships or the inability to form human relationships, thereby pathologizing the human-animal bond. However, this is not always the case. Instead, the human-animal bond and its resulting relationships “should not be viewed as more or less important than any other relationship: rather, it should be conceptualised as different...but worthy nevertheless of the same affirmation, validation and respect” (Chur-Hansen 2010:15). Social science scholars argue that human-animal bonds and relationships share many of the same characteristics as human-human relationships when evaluated using social theories. Using social theories is “intriguing as they support the notion that the relationships we form with our pets often parallel the attachment patterns of our relationships with other humans” (Barnard-Nguyen, Breit, Neilsen, and Anderson

2016: 422). Sociologist Pat Sable similarly argues that “a relationship with a pet...reflects certain dynamics of attachment which may account for the feelings of affection and devotion directed to them” (2013:94). This argument validates the bond between pet and owner and also legitimizes the actions and responses of bereaved pet owners. Attachment theory, as put forth by psychoanalyst John Bowlby, is the theory scholars most often apply as an explanation.

Attachment theory holds that “humans...are biologically predisposed to seek out and sustain physical contact and emotional connection to selective figures with whom they become familiar and come to rely on for psychological and physical protection” (Sable 2013:94). Physical contact equates to sensory experiences, and familiarity with relationship. Emotional connection is the same, but it is important to note here that emotional responses are frequently derived from sensory experiences (Johnson 2017:16). Individuals look to these “selective figures” for protection because they have a relationship with them that is based on and fostered through sensory experiences that in turn, influence emotions and thus emotional connections. Therefore, senses are central to relationships and thus “constitute a *‘core seam’* in our relationships with others, rather than simply our way of perceiving them, or a kind of adjunct to them” (Mason 2018:9 emphasis added). Individuals interact and develop relationships with these “selective figures,” or attachment figures, through four behaviors (Meehan, Massayelli, and Pachana 2017:275) While these behaviors are initially rooted in biology, they are subject to social learning, corroborating Herzog’s argument that pet-keeping and bonding are the result of biological programming and learned behavior.

The first attachment behavior is proximity seeking and maintenance, wherein accessibility and closeness to the attachment figure are prioritized (2017:275). Second is separation distress, where individuals experience distress when the attachment figure is not present (2017:275). Third is seeing the attachment figure as a safe haven, where the attachment figure is used as a source of emotional support and comfort when the environment is perceived as threatening (2017:275). Finally, there is the perception of the attachment figure as a secure base and a dependable source of support, allowing exploration of the environment (2017:275). In turn, these “affectional relationships,” which are facilitated primarily through sensory experiences, “serve as a lifelong source of security and comfort, unique in their ability to reduce stress, regulate affect, and restore emotional balance” (Sable 2013:94).

Pets do not have other obligations or jobs. Nor do they judge, bully, or have expectations of individuals. Instead, they listen and are readily available for whatever is asked of them. Or as Shelley commented, “I know that even if I fail spectacularly, my pets will love me just as much.”¹⁴ For these reasons, social scientists posit that many individuals turn to pets as dependable attachment figures. As a result, individuals engage with pets through the four attachment behaviors, as identified and described by my participants.

Beverly and Shelley identified all four behaviors as key to defining the bond they shared with their dogs. However, Beverly noted that physical proximity and emotional support were most important to her “I could hold him when I felt stressed, depressed, confused, or just in need of comfort.”¹⁵ Regarding separation, Steve N. commented he was distressed when Max was not near, as “he was my constant companion... he was

never more than a couple feet from me."¹⁶ Of the four attachment figure behaviors, most participants identified emotional support and comfort as the most important. Beverly, Sandy, Paula, and Steve N. all related that they suffered from anxiety or depression and their pets eased their distress. Indicative of all their experiences, Steve N. said: "Max provided comfort from depression."¹⁷ Additionally, Shelley commented that her pets provided a sense of security: "I don't think they would physically defend me, but I generally feel safer when I'm alone, and they are there."¹⁸

While attachment theory provides a general explanation of the reasons why individuals form strong bonds with pets, there are issues with relying solely on it. Sable suggests that pets do not fulfill all attachment figure criteria, particularly safety (2013: 94). Instead, she holds that pets serve attachment related functions (2013:94). The previous comments from participants about how pets increase the feelings and realities of safety refute such claims. Despite being regularly applied to quantitative studies on human-pet relationships, attachment theory is not an end-all theory. While it is useful for identifying and explaining behavior, it needs to be used in conjunction with other theories and approaches (Kemp, Jacobs, and Stewart 2016: 535). In spite of such issues, for the purposes of this study, attachment theory provides a strong framework for the study of human-animal bonds. However, perhaps a more useful approach is to combine these two issues to create a new perspective that looks at pets not as attachment figures, but as individuals who are part of a larger social network within which they may fulfill these functions.

Pet Death

Attachment-related beliefs and behaviors characterize pet life. Individuals hold their pets in high regard and value their bond. As a result, it is readily apparent that the events leading up to and surrounding pet death are traumatic for owners because attachment theory holds that it is emotionally distressing to lose an attachment figure or one who fulfills such functions. Unlike many other relationships, the human-animal bond is defined by its ephemeral nature. Unless the pet is one with an unusually long lifespan, such as some species of birds and reptiles, owners acquire a pet knowing that at some point they will have to deal with the decline and ultimately the pet's death. Because of this, some owners' grief may begin even before the pet's actual death because they "know that at some point their animal will die or need to be euthanized" and "may experience anticipatory loss" (Williams and Green 2016:1). When trying to decide what to do with her older cat, TJ disclosed "it was especially difficult because he still acted like he was enjoying life...I cried for a month before."¹⁹

This anticipation is further compounded by issues of quality-of-life decisions, providing hospice care, being involved in choosing how/when the pet's life ends and ultimately experiencing the actual event of the pet's death. Paula said the choice to euthanize her dog, Happy, was one of the most difficult choices and she struggled with indecision even as the veterinarian prepared to do the procedure.

It is an enormous decision to end another soul's life. Was HE ready? It was overwhelming...The decision to take him to the vet was tough because we both knew it was time. The vet agreed. A memory I'll never forget is that when the doctor started administering the medicine, I felt so conflicted. I actually thought, "NO, stop the medicine, I'll just push him around in a wheelbarrow. I meant it as ridiculous as that sounds, but the pain was too much."²⁰

Just as it was for Paula, many pet owners find the most difficult part of pet death is the choice of when to end their pet's life and the associated guilt over the decision (in addition to not choosing to act sooner).

Beverly said of her toy poodle, "he was in a lot of pain and had to have so much pain medication he would just sleep. I finally decided I was being selfish and had to put him to sleep."²¹ Sandy commented "I was the caregiver and it was difficult to see him so miserable. He was in diapers...gradually got thinner and could walk less. The spouse and I had some pretty heated arguments about it being the right thing to do or not."²² Carly noted "whatever neuro disorder she had was clearly deteriorating her. And I had to come to the decision to let her go, as her quality of life was falling by the wayside."²³ While owners find the decision to euthanize difficult and distressing, so too is experiencing the pet's actual death. Steve N. said "I held him and stroked his head as he slipped away that day. I bawled like a baby at the loss of my best friend."²⁴

While death is an impactful stage of the lifecycle of the human-animal bond, even a brief overview of the related multifaceted issues and concerns is beyond the scope of this project. However, because "end-of-life care for our animal companions is worthy of attention... pet owners and veterinarians face moral quandaries every bit as complicated as those we face with human loved ones," (Pierce 2012:3), it is a topic that warrants a future in-depth study.

Response to Pet Death

Owners become bereaved upon the loss of a pet and must deal with the associated grief of such loss. Before discussing how pet owners experience and handle grief it is first

useful to define the concepts of bereavement, grief, and mourning. Although these three terms are often used interchangeably, there are subtle nuances between them, as put forth by sociologists Michael R. Leming and George E. Dickinson (1998).

Bereavement is the state of having lost a significant other (Leming and Dickinson 1998: 431). For the sake of this project, it is assumed this loss is due to the death of a pet. However, pet owners can experience bereavement through a number of circumstances, including the disappearance of a pet and a change in ownership. Upon being bereaved, an individual typically experiences grief, which is the emotional response to death (Leming and Dickinson 1998:430-431). This response is usually an internal one but can manifest itself through outward reactions, making grief similar to mourning.

Mourning is the outward expression of grief and consists of “a series of behaviors and attitudes related to coping with the stressful situation of changing the status of a relationship” (Leming and Dickinson 1998:478). Mourning helps individuals resolve grief and move towards reestablishment. Reestablishment is the process of moving towards life without the deceased (Leming and Dickinson 1998:483). This process is usually extensive and emotionally complex, but “fully experiencing each of these feelings as normal ... will provide ... a new life filled with order, purpose and meaning” (Leming and Dickinson 1998:484). Working through the grieving process followed by mourning and memorializing enables the bereaved to resolve their grief and work towards reestablishment.

The Grieving Process

As previously discussed, grief is the emotional response to bereavement. Bereavement, and therefore grief, are related not only to the physical loss, but it is “the response to the loss in all of its totality-including its physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual manifestations” (Kemp, Jacobs, and Stewart 2016:534). As discussed in the following chapter, pet ownership is a multi-sensory experience. Additionally, many individuals structure their days around caring for their pets. Thus, for many individuals, pet death is a total loss in every aspect. Because grief is complex, the grieving process is similarly dynamic.

Unlike the five-stage model of grief proposed by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, many sociologists now favor a process consisting of complex, nonlinear/noncyclical states which move towards reestablishment. These states include shock and denial, disorganization, volatile reactions, guilt, loss, and loneliness (Leming and Dickinson 1998:478-483). Additionally, these states are made manifest in a myriad of ways for as grief specialist Thomas Attig states,

It is misleading and dangerous to mistake grief for the whole experience of the bereaved. It is misleading because the experience is far more complex, entailing diverse emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual, and social impacts. It is dangerous because it is precisely this aspect of the bereaved that is potentially the most frustrating and debilitating. (Leming and Dickinson 1998:477)

My participants commented on these feelings. Steve N. said that when Max died, “it was unbearable, it shook me to my very soul!!”²⁵ While this experience focuses more on the emotional aspects of grief, it nevertheless speaks to the complexity of pet grief. Paula described not only her grief experience but also that of her husband:

I've only seen my husband cry twice and he cried. Our grief was deep, and we both busied ourselves over the next months to keep our minds off it. I do not think this is the best way to handle grief. It's the only way we knew at the time. There was a part of this that made me feel like I never wanted to bond with another pet in this way because I never wanted to feel this pain again.²⁶

Grief

Despite grief being a complex natural response to loss, many individuals feel their grief should not or cannot be expressed. Grief, like attachment, is rooted in biology. However, it is also a social construct. Individuals only grieve openly when they feel it is appropriate; otherwise, the grief is seen as comical (Leming and Dickinson 1998:472; Desmond 2016:107). Outside the pet community, pets and their lives are frequently viewed as replaceable or disposable, or as not belonging in the same category as human loss. As a result, the loss of a pet is not socially recognized as a legitimate reason for grief. For a loss to be valid and therefore considered grievable, it must meet philosopher Judith Butler's (2004; 2009) three phenomenological aspects of grief: irreplaceability, unpredictability, and embodiment. While most often applied to types of human loss, these aspects can be similarly applied to pets and in so doing help understand why pet owners grieve.

Phenomenological Aspects of Grief

The aspect of irreplaceability holds that the thing which is lost must “be conceived of as irreplaceable” (Redmalm 2016:102). Pet owners often refer to pets as friends or family. Paula, Lisa, and Sandy referred to their dogs as a baby or child. Steve L., Karl, and Judi called their pets their family. Shelley said her dog was like a sibling.

Carly called her dog a friend. In using these terms, pet owners identify individual pet lives as irreplaceable, for no other animal is or will be like the pet they lost.

Unpredictability is the notion that it is, "impossible to predict our reactions to a loss of someone important to us," because "we cannot know who we will be when a relationship ends that has defined us" (Redmalm 2016:104). TJ remarked, "I cried for a month before he died."²⁷ As discussed throughout this chapter, the bond and relationship between human and pet is not only valued but is viewed as a critical and even defining one. For Steve N., who struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder, the loss of Max meant the loss of "my constant companion and confidant, [with] whom I could share the horrors of the things I had witnessed. I had raised him from a puppy, and his loss left a huge void in my soul. I no longer had him to confide in, take care of, or have as a constant companion."²⁸ Indeed, the sense of oneself is significantly tied to the pet, so much so that when an individual loses a pet, they feel they have lost part of themselves.

Embodiment is the final phenomenological aspect described by Butler, where the loss produces "not only a relational void, but also [a] physical void" (Redmalm 2016:105). As described previously and discussed at length in the proceeding chapter, pet ownership is a multi-sensory experience involving the totality of the senses, senses that are fundamental to the human-animal bond. Therefore, as in life, pet death is both relational and physical and is thus embodied.

Pet life meets the standards for each aspect of grief and is indeed grievable, as "animals are often considered to be friends or family members and when they die the emotions felt can be as intense as those felt when a close person dies or even more intense" (Williams and Greene 2016:1). However, pet life is not only grievable, it is also

traumatic, for attachment theory says that the loss of a loved one can be the loss of an attachment figure, which is destabilizing to the bereaved individual (Sable 2013:96). Yet, despite evidence to the contrary, pet loss is not largely recognized outside the pet community for “still research suggests that there is a taboo against grieving lost pets openly” (Redmalm 2015: 19). Although there are many reasons why this is the case, Redmalm suggests one reason is “grieving the pet openly becomes a challenge to human exceptionalism” (2015:21).

Disenfranchised Grief

Because pet life and loss are not recognized at large, the grief experienced by pet owners is also not recognized. Coined by gerontologist Kenneth J. Doka, this type of grief is referred to as “disenfranchised grief,” which is grief that is “not openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned, or publicly shared” (Leming and Dickinson 1998:472). Doka describes four situations that may lead to disenfranchised grief: 1) the relationship to the deceased is not socially recognized, 2) the loss is not acknowledged by others as genuine loss, 3) grievers are not recognized, and 4) the death is not socially sanctioned (Leming and Dickinson 1998:472-474). Pet death falls under situations 1 and 2. Not only are pet loss and grief not recognized, they are sometimes actively belittled, for as poet Mark Doty describes “our culture expects us not only to bear these losses alone, but to be ashamed of how deeply we feel them” (2007:9). Even professionals are not exempt from belittling, “instead, most scholarship treats pet grief as a psychological problem” (Redmalm 2015:21). Because others do not recognize their grief, pet owners “might not feel encouraged to mourn that loss” (Adrian, Deliramich, and Frueh

2009:177). As a result, they are left with "a significant loss with a profound emotional reaction that they cannot express or share with anyone else" (Williams and Green 2016:1). Not only do pet owners feel discouraged for grieving, they are additionally left with fewer social support structures to help them sort through and resolve their grief.

This lack of social support further complicates grief, causes stronger grief reactions, which may result in long-term maladjustment due to unresolved grief (King and Werner 2011: 127,121). Additionally, as director of Center of the Human-Animal Bond, Alan M. Beck reminds us, "we must remember that pet loss occurs in lives that are already complex and, at times, challenging" (Greene and Landis 2002: xii). Age, lifestyle, family relationships, and living arrangements can also impact an individual's response to grief.

Another influencing factor is the pet's connection to other individuals such as parents or spouses. If the pet was connected to a deceased individual, acting as a linking object, then the loss of the pet can trigger a renewed sense of loss and grief (Chur-Hansen 2010:18). Although none of my participants have experienced this, Sandy was intrigued by the thought: "my husband and his cat sure love each other...I can imagine Basil (the cat) being quite an important connection should something ever happen to Tom. I had never thought of that, wow."²⁹

The grief pet owners feel upon the loss of a pet is complex, dynamic, and unique to the individual and their circumstances. While there are many ways to resolve this grief, the practices of mourning and memorializing provide outlets for the expression and resolution of grief.

Mourning and Memorializing

Whereas grief is the emotional, and usually internal, response to death, mourning is the outward expression of grief that enables the bereaved to sort through and resolve their experiences and work towards reestablishment. Mourning typically takes form through rituals. For pets, these can include last meals, final walks, and funerals. Before going to the vet's office, Sandy took her dog out to the park for a turkey sandwich.³⁰ Similarly, Lisa took Xanadu to the beach before his appointment.³¹ Rituals work to resolve grief by "transforming something sad into something that is easier to accept" as "rituals have the ability to focus and calm us as they convert something painful into something less so. They can also be transformative by helping us move on while still holding onto memory" (Packman, Carmack, and Ronen 2012: 346,351).

While the grief of pet loss can be the same as other losses, the mourning process is different. This is because "there are few socially recognised rituals to underpin the loss of an animal" (Williams and Green 2016:1). There are also no traditional religiously sanctioned memorials or rites to mark the passing of a pet (Chur-Hansen et al. 2011:257). Indeed, many organized religions do not officially recognize animals as possessing eternal souls (Sife 2014:223-234). Because there are no outlets to frame and transform that which is painful into something easier to cope with, this lack of rituals also influences and further complicates grief (Chur-Hansen et al. 2011:249). To resolve this void, owners create their own forms of ritual, usually patterning them after previously established models of human death ritualized practices. In so doing, pet owners engage in tradition. Defined by folklorist Henry Glassie, "tradition is... an innovative adaptation of the old" (2003:177). This adaptation of the old includes holding pet funerals that are

structured according to religious beliefs and practices, holding wakes, cremation spreading ceremonies, and the keeping and creation of material memories. Because “they provide comfort and facilitate closure for the bereaved,” (Chur-Hansen et al. 2011:256) pet memorials function similarly to those for humans.

Ritual and memorial practices additionally function to encourage the development of “continuing bonds,” a practice which encourages grief resolution. Continuing bonds is the notion that one still maintains a relationship with the deceased, just in a different way. Socio-cultural views prior to the twentieth-century held it was important for the bereaved to continue their relationship with the deceased, namely through mourning practices such as hair jewelry. However, psychologists of the twentieth-century viewed it unhealthy to maintain such relationships as they prevented the bereaved from finding reestablishment. The only effective way to move forward and engage in new relationships was complete detachment from the deceased (Encyclopedia of Death and Dying. n.d.). Continuing bonds aid in bringing about reestablishment, or the adjustment to life without the lost individual, by allowing the bereaved to “be emotionally sustained through a continuing bond with the deceased. Thus, resolving grief does not involve ending a relationship (detachment), but instead involves the reorganization of the relationship with the deceased” (Packman, Carmack, and Ronen 2012:337). Therefore, continuing bonds allow the individual to still be involved in the relationship with their pet while enabling the individual to recognize the changed status of the relationship without completely cutting ties with the attachment figure.

Conclusion

Complexity characterizes the human-animal bond throughout its many stages. In life, the bond between owner and pet can take on a variety of meanings based on how owners view the pets' role and place within the family. These bonds take on new meanings and levels of complexity when owners have to ask and answer questions of quality-of-life. The experience of pet death further complicates matters. Grief, which is characterized by varied responses, is often the result. Pet owners face the added challenge of dealing with disenfranchised grief. Mourning and ritual function as outlets for owners to resolve this grief and work toward re-establishing their lives in the new reality without their pet. The lack of widely institutionalized pet death rituals can further compound grief. To push back against this deficit, owners adapt traditional human practices for the purpose of mourning and memorializing pets. While these rituals promote continued bonds and act to memorialize pets, material memories encourage embodied memorialization as these items fully encapsulate the multisensory experience of pet ownership.

CHAPTER 3:
MEMORIALIZATION, MATERIAL CULTURE, AND THE SENSES
AS EMBODIED MNEMONICS

“The senses are saturated with meaning and history.”

-Jonathan Reinarz

“Our sensory experiences, our perceptions, our actions—change us continuously and determine what we are later able to perceive, remember, understand, and become.”

-Richard F. Thompson and Stephen A. Madigan

Most people use their closets for clothes, but then again, I am not most people. My closet is a veritable cabinet of curiosities, my own mini-museum of material memories. There are many artifacts in my collection, such as the slightly dusty taxidermied chicken with bedraggled, scarlet plumage whom I have christened Ms. Pennyfeathers, and the aged piece of horse harness constructed of now-cracked leather and yellowed fleece that still retains its heady scent of tanned animal hide. These items conjure flashes of the 2012 trip to Pennsylvania that are tinged with the scent of buttery rolls, the sticky feel of peach juice, and the uproarious cacophony of my family sharing stories. Scattered among the shelves are the tin, heart-shaped cookie cutter, the tiny plate ornament, the crystal bowl filled with flocked, fantasy horse figurines, lemon and lime colored boxes labeled “Important Things” and “Memories,” the starship Enterprise pizza cutter, and so much more.

All of these items are meaningful, but it is the objects on the bottom shelf that occupy much of my mental meanderings through memory. This shelf is dedicated to the pets who have crossed the Rainbow Bridge. White and gray plastic urns stand upright in

formation of two-by-two columns. This sight brings back the sick, heavy feeling of dread in my stomach that was present when I received the corporeal remains of my once lively rabbits. When I pick them up, they do not weigh quite as much as they should because the body is primarily composed of water, which evaporates at high temperatures.

Sparkle's dishes reside next to the urns. I can still hear the clink of the bowl as she begs for dinner and the rhythmical grinding of her teeth as she chews. Flanking these are the photo albums brimming with glossy depictions of my pets: the curious tilt of a head, the soulful color of eyes, and the juicy aftermath of snacking on strawberries.

While interesting in and of themselves, these items are significant because they are tangible fragments of memory. In turn, these fragments allow me to remember experiences and individuals by reconstructing the chronological and emotional minutia made meaningful by sensory details.

Pet owners use multiple mnemonic genres to both mourn and memorialize. Of these genres, material culture is most commonly employed to encapsulate and express memories, in conjunction with related material behaviors. Because they allow owners to both literally and symbolically re-create the multi-sensory experience of pet ownership while providing tangible, long-lasting form and embodiment to the ephemerality of memory, material culture and behaviors are ideal mnemonic genres for pet memorialization.

Through various discussions on memory, material culture, and the senses, this chapter provides a contextual framework on how these concepts function both separately and together as mnemonics of pet ownership.

Memorialization and Material Culture

Owners memorialize pets through various genres including thoughts, the creation, and dissemination of narratives, to include obituaries and stories, in addition to visual images such as photographs. While these less tangible genres function as memorials, they do not fully encapsulate the embodied experiences that characterize the human-animal bond because of the limitations of memory and language. Many pet owners instead turn to the creation and collection of objects to provide a tangible form to ephemeral memories and sensations. Poet and critic, Susan Stewart, posits:

We might say that this capacity of objects to serve as traces of authentic experience is, in fact, exemplified by the souvenir. The souvenir distinguishes experiences. We do not need or desire souvenirs of events that are repeatable. Rather we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable, events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative. (1993:135)

Material memories, through their embodied form, capture those experiences that are fleeting and cannot be thoroughly or wholly detailed through narrative genres, such as the distinct texture of fur or a pet's unique auditory repertoire.

Memory

Memory refers to both that which is remembered and the process through which it occurs. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines memory as “the perpetuated knowledge or recollection *that which is remembered of* a person, object, or event [emphasis added]” and “the *faculty* by which things are remembered; the capacity for retaining, perpetuating, or reviving the thought of things past” (emphasis added).³² Conversely, from a psychological perspective, memory is “the structures and processes involved in the storage and subsequent retrieval of information” (McLeod 2013). The importance of

these cerebral structures and processes to self-awareness cannot be understated for “indeed, without memory there can be no mind” (Thompson and Madigan 2005:1).

By these definitions, the abstract concept of memory resides within the mind. Because of the nature of the mind, memories are readily forgotten and subject to dimming over time and consequently are innately ephemeral. On the contrary, owners’ bonds and memories of their pets are long-lasting. Not wanting their memories “to be confined to the purely mentalist or subjective sphere” (Seremetakis 1996:9) of the mind, owners use material culture to make their memories “take on substance via metaphor. The immaterial aspect of an inner world... that are unavailable to any direct gaze, is fused metaphorically with material objects which possess distinct structures and boundaries” (Hallam and Hockey 2001:27).

Connections Between Memory and Material Culture

The symbiotic relationship between objects and memory results from the common Western conception that memories are items to be kept and preserved. Allegorically, thoughts and memories are constructed as tangible objects such as one “losing their marbles” to represent a mental breakdown. This construction of memory “assume[s] that material objects can hold and preserve memories, ensuring their continuity over time” (Hallam and Hockey 2001:49). Because Western tradition maintains that material culture transforms the metaphor of memory into a tangible, durable reality, pet owners turn to material culture as a stable mode of memorialization. This concept is illustrated by social anthropologists Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey: “the perceived duration of an object—its capacity to endure time and to operate across time by encoding aspects of the

past or future in the present moment—is crucial to its memory function” (1996:48). This attribute then serves as a mechanism to structure memory wherein memories are associated with and in essence transferred to objects. At a later date, these individuals can pick up both the object and the memories stored in it, a type of mental time capsule that aids in memory reconstruction.

In her article “Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review,” folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett maintains that much like “prayer, or other expressive forms,” artifacts “call up in paradigmatic fashion memories of the many contexts” (1989:330) where the object was and is used. She further argues that folkloristics has long neglected this area of study for “though they have long studied how people make things, [they] have yet to explore how people save, collect, and arrange their possessions in ways that are profoundly meaningful through the life span” (1989:330). This study contributes to the field by examining how pet owners review their pets’ lives through both the keeping and producing of material memories along with how such items are used in differing capacities to mourn and memorialize.

While the durability of material cultural objects affords owners the opportunity to keep and create long-lasting memories, the real value of tangible mnemonic genres lies in their penetrating effect, as anthropologist Alfred Kroeber argues: “what is seen and touched is always made part of ourselves more intensely and more meaningfully than what is only seen,” for objects “have an emotional presence beyond the physical presence” (quoted in Bronner 1986: 5,12). It is this emotional presence that is embodied by material culture and enables it to be transformative in nature. As discussed in Chapter 2, “rituals” (i.e., objects) “have the ability to focus and calm us as they convert something

painful into something less so. They can also be transformative by helping us move on while still holding onto memory” (Packman, Carmack, and Ronen 2012:351). Similarly, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests “people can make, arrange, and remake themselves” by making, arranging, and remaking significant objects (1989:329). Therefore, in keeping material memories, pet owners work towards reestablishment, through the maintenance of continuing bonds as previously discussed “resolving grief does not involve ending a relationship (detachment), but instead involves the reorganization of the relationship with the deceased” (Packman, Carmack, and Ronen 2012:337). Material memories transform the metaphysical relationship between pet and owner into a tangible object and in so doing, transform owners’ emotional perceptions of the death of their pet.

As discussed at length in the proceeding chapter, the fact that owners keep a variety of material memories upon the loss of a pet supports the point that “the range of materials available for analysis in the study of memory and death is staggering and this is testimony to the cultural investment in memory at times of personal, social...crisis invoked by the cessation of life” (Hallam and Hockey 2001:8). Whether it is the cessation of human or animal life, individuals seek resolution by preserving memories, primarily through mnemonic objects of material culture.

The Study of Material Culture

History and Purpose

Traditionally, the field of folkloristics has primarily focused on the oral or text-based narrative which constitutes the “lore.” To provide an added dimension of understanding to the lore, over time the field has moved to include the study of “folk

objects.” In this way, material objects act as, what early folklorist Fletcher S. Bassett termed, “visible proofs” (Bronner 1983:127). These visible proofs were initially the relic artifacts of past traditions and civilizations. As the definitions of who and what constituted the folk and the lore progressed and diverged with the development of the field, so too did the types of objects that are collected and studied. Speaking on material culture studies, folklorist Simon J. Bronner remarks that the field now “looks for the current and everyday in addition to the past and exotic” (1983:129). While there is still a fascination with the “exotic,” much of modern material cultural studies now focus on commonplace objects. Material culture scholars must, therefore, contend with, what folklorist Brian Sutton-Smith, describes as the “triviality barrier” which alleges that the objects of every day are inconsequential and therefore, their study is of little value (1970: 4-5). However, it is precisely the “mundanity” of these objects that provides for a greater depth of understanding regarding the beliefs, values, and practices which constitute the everyday experience of the folk for “objects serve to convey more of the intimate and everyday. The objects, too, give added dimensions to the words we have to study” (Bronner 1986:14).

It is, in part, because of their perceived triviality that pet material memories have heretofore received little attention as significant items of material culture that provide insight to the beliefs, values, and practices of bereaved pet owners. Yet, these distinct items of embodied memory speak cultural volumes.

Defining Material Culture

Over time, scholars have provided many definitions of material culture as academic discourse. As its name suggests, the study of material culture is divided into two parts, the material, and the culture. On a fundamental level, material culture is primarily the study of "materials," or tangible objects. However, as American Studies professor Thomas J. Schlereth argues, the inclusion of "culture" as a defining term "suggests...a strong interrelation between physical objects and human behavior" (1985:3). Therefore, material culture is not merely a study of objects but is also "that segment of humankind's biosocial environment that has been purposely shaped by people according to culturally dictated plans" (Schlereth 1985:5). This definition includes such human-made objects as "art, architecture, food, clothing, and furnishings" (Bronner 1983:129) as well as "natural materials that have become materials of culture" (Schlereth 1985:5) such as pet fur, pet bodies, and stones. Regardless of source or form, material culture is that which is purposefully shaped as a result of or in accordance to cultural plans founded upon or directed by socio-cultural beliefs, values, and practices. Therefore, objects of material culture reflect and reveal both the conscious and unconscious workings of the individual who created it and their cultural influences. In this way, material culture is "a mirror of culture, a code from which the researcher can infer beliefs, attitudes, and values" (Bronner 1983:131). Pet material memories reflect individual owners' perceptions of their pets and their cultural understandings of animals' roles.

Approaches to Material Culture

Within the study of material culture as defined, scholars use multiple approaches to analyze objects. These approaches can be divided into two main types: object characteristics and material behavior. An object characteristic approach focuses on the qualities inherently present in the object such as form, size, color, and material.³³ In contrast, a material behavior approach analyzes the actions surrounding the creation, display, and function of an object. While these two approaches overlap, material behavior is more applicable to my study of pet material memories.

Because “objects command attention... not as isolated phenomena but as products of activities, embodiments of otherwise intangible processes, or palpable stimuli that trigger responses” (Jones 1997:202), a thorough study of material culture necessitates the inclusion of a material behavior perspective. Defined by folklorist Michael Owen Jones “material behavior—short for ‘material aspects and manifestations of human behavior’—refers to activity involved in producing or responding to the physical dimension of our world” (1997:202). In other words, material behavior analyzes the issues and actions concerning an object’s function, context, and meaning. By analyzing these aspects, a greater understanding of the reasons why owners keep and create material memories is gained.

Function and Context. An object’s function is its “purpose or intended role.”³⁴ Archaeologist Lewis Binford proposes that objects fulfill one or multiple roles which fall into three levels of function including; technomic, socio-technic, and ideo-technic functions (Deetz 1996:74-75). These functions are then tied to the context in which the object is used and who uses it. Cultural archaeologist James Deetz notes that “technomic

function is strictly utilitarian and relates directly to the technology of culture" (1996:74). For example, a collar's utility is based on its ability to restrain an animal. The socio-technic function refers to an object's "use in a social rather than a technological way" (1996:74). Just as a collar can restrain an animal, it can also serve as a means of conveying someone's socially constructed ownership of that animal. Finally, the ideotechnic function "sees the use of artifacts in religious and ideological contexts" (1996:75). A collar can also serve as a representation of humanity's authority over animals. However, objects of mnemonic material culture function differently. It is, therefore, necessary to remember that "artifacts as memory forms cannot only be viewed from the perspective of their sanctioned use and literal functions" (Seremetakis 1994:11).

In their original context, pet material memories serve a particular function, typically a technomic one. But, by "moving (being transported, translated) from one cultural or temporal zone to another" these "objects are re-contextualized and made to mean in different ways" (Hallam and Hockey 2001:7). In life, the collar served its intended function in its original context. When the pet dies, the collar is then transposed from these contexts and functions to serve as those of a material memory.

Not all pet owners keep or create material memories. This apparent lack may result from a variety of factors including grief, opportunity, and circumstances. It is therefore erroneous to conclude that owners who do not keep material memories do not care or wish to memorialize their pet. Regardless of approach, Deetz argues that drawing conclusions based solely on those objects which have been preserved is a primary error routinely made by material culture scholars because "the question of the factors that favor survival of certain objects and the disappearance of others is important here. For a variety

of reasons, surviving artifacts cannot be taken as necessarily representative objects” (1996:8). The issue of pet owners not keeping material memories is addressed at length in the proceeding chapter.

Reception Theory: Meaning Made Through the Senses. Material culture, like folkloristics, has few, if any, grand theories distinct to the field that define and direct its study. Instead, as an interdisciplinary study, material culture draws on multiple fields including “art, architectural, and decorative arts history; cultural geography; the history of technology; folkloristics; historical archaeology; cultural anthropology, as well as cultural and social history” (Schlereth 1985:6). Material culture’s interdisciplinary nature is both a weakness and a strength. The lack of grand theories leaves scholars without a theoretical framework to guide their study. However, this same interdisciplinary nature allows scholars to ground their studies in those theories that are most applicable because they provide the best arguments through which to analyze the issues in question. Because of this theoretical flexibility, material culture scholars are afforded the opportunity to apply unique perspectives to their studies. As such, the theory best suited for the study of pet material memories and how these material culture objects mnemonically encapsulate and re-create the multi-sensory experience of pet ownership is the reception theory of material culture, as explained by cultural anthropologist C. Nadia Seremetakis.

Developed by cultural theorist Stuart Hall and rooted in literary theory, reception theory is a type of reader response/audience theory. This theory holds that the reader’s personal interpretation, or reception, of a text is considered valuable in the making of a text’s meaning (Hall 1973:3-4, 8). Similarly applied to material culture, wherein the object (pet material memory) is the text, this theory holds that the perceiver/audience (pet

owner) creates, endows, and derives personal meaning from the object because “the surround of material culture is neither stable nor fixed, but inherently transitive, demanding connection and completion by the perceiver” (Seremetakis 1994:10-11,7).

Stewart similarly comments that

the souvenir displaces the point of authenticity as it itself becomes the point of origin for narrative. Such a narrative cannot be generalized to encompass the experience of anyone; it pertains only to the possessor of the object. It is a narrative which seeks to reconcile the disparity between interiority and exteriority, subject and object, signifier and signified.” (1993:136)

In other words, the object is significant because the owner endows it with personal meaning, namely as the embodiment of their pet, their relationship, and their experiences.

Seremetakis argues that meaning and completion is based in the senses: "re-perception is the creation of meaning through the interplay, witnessing, and crossmetaphorization of co-implicated sensory spheres" (1994:9). Mason likewise argues “sensations are not simply derived from single sensory stimuli, or perceived through singular sensory receptors” (2018:42). Instead, experiences and their meanings are “an atmosphere of multiple sensations” (Mason 2018:44). As a result of this co-mingling of multiple sensations across sensory spheres, every one of the senses is integral to any singular experience, both separately and in conjunction with each other.

Roles of the Senses and Connections to Pets

The senses—which go beyond the standard five of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste—are one of the primary modes through which humans and animals experience and interact with their environment on a daily basis.³⁵ It is from these senses and their related

experiences, pleasant or otherwise, that individuals frequently gain knowledge, derive emotional responses, and additionally create and recall memories. Every sense serves these functions in human-animal interactions, as exemplified by pet-keeping experiences.

Knowledge

“Unlike the unknown or unknowable personalities possessed by wild animals, pets are intimately known to us; by living closely with them, we come to recognize their quirks, tendencies, dislikes, and preferences” (Colvin 2016:68). Pet owners gain this intimate knowledge through sensory experiences. Types of knowledge include the pet’s emotional, physical, and mental state of being, their identity, what they have done, what they are currently doing, their presence, proximity, location, and movement, in addition to their needs, wants, and intentions.

Sound is a particularly distinctive means through which owners both gain and act on knowledge. Karl said Chloe will wake him with “a snarfle bark” to go outside.³⁶ As a result of this, and previous, aural experiences, Karl knows Chloe is in need. Because he is familiar with Chloe’s “quirks, tendencies, dislikes, and preferences,” Karl knows this particular type of bark means Chloe needs or wants to go out, likely to relieve herself. Heidi likewise describes how one night she “put Cyris to bed in his kennel which was in the living room. He started...making awful dog sounds, so I went out to check on him.”³⁷ Aware that these sounds were not typical of Cyris, Heidi knew he must be in a state of distress and required attending to. These experiences exemplify Steve Feld’s notion of acoustemology, or “knowing through sound” (Johnson 2017: 9).

However, knowledge may stem from any of the senses or sensory experiences. This can result from a single sense, such as hearing Iris thump her feet and knowing she is upset because a dog is nearby, or it can derive from sensory co-mingling, as described by Mason. For example, before I see which dog is walking down the hall, I am able to identify who it is based on the combination of their smell and the jingling of their tags produced by their particular gait.

While the presence of sensory experiences is a crucial means of gaining knowledge, the lack of sensations can be equally informative. Kim recounted that she recognized Abbey really was gone the moment a knock at the door was answered not with barking, but with silence. It was this absence of sensation that made Abbey's death resonate with her.³⁸

Emotional Responses

“Sound produce[s] emotional responses—ranging from happiness through sadness to fear” (Johnson 2017:16). Steve N. illustrates how profoundly impactful aural experiences of pets are, “a dog's whimper is very distressing to me (my Max whimpered quite a bit during the many days he suffered from cancer).”³⁹

Although he refers specifically to sound, Johnson's point is equally applicable to the emotional responses that result from any other type of sensory experience. In addition to the negative emotional effect of sound, Steve N. describes the positive effect of Max's scent, “his smell right after I gave him a bath, when he had dried in the sun I would bury my face in his fur. It was a very comforting thing for me.”⁴⁰ Pet owners' responses to sensory experiences of their pets go beyond merely being “pleasant” and “unpleasant.”

Instead, these experiences are deeply penetrating, emphasizing the importance of the senses in relationships, both physically and emotionally.

Memory

Sensory experiences and their details define memories, incite their recall, and provide framing for them. Speaking specifically on smell, Helen Keller describes how the details of sensory experiences are

a potent wizard that transports you across thousands of miles and all the years you have lived... odors instantaneous and fleeting, cause my heart to dilate joyously or contract with remembered grief... The faintest whiff from a meadow... in the hot sun displaces the here and the now. I am back again in the old red barn. (1910: 66)

Additionally, numerous scientific studies substantiate the neural interconnectivity between the parts of the brain that process memory and those that process sensory input (Schwartz 2011:54). Although all sensory experiences may relate to memory, those of smell and pain, or nociception, are particularly defined and memorable.

Like Keller, American physician and poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes, noted “memory...[is] more readily reached through the sense of smell than by almost any other channel” (quoted in Reinartz 2014: 6). Neuroscientists explain this mnemonic phenomenon as resulting from the direct line of communication between the nose and brain,

cells in the nose transmit directly to the brain. Neurons capture odors and send signals to the smell center at the base of the brain, known as the olfactory bulb. The signals then go to different areas throughout the brain. Some of the areas the olfactory bulb transmits signals to are related to thinking and memory. (Collins 2017)

Whereas Max’s fresh scent after a bath was memorable because of the resulting positive emotional response, the time he and Buddy were sprayed by a skunk proved

memorable because “it was a long time before I could get that smell out of them and my pickup truck.”⁴¹ For Steve, the odor’s overwhelming persistency defines this experience and its memory. As a result, for Steve N., the scent of skunk triggers memory recall of Max and Buddy’s misadventure.

Within the realm of memories, those associated with pain, and to a lesser extent, discomfort, last longer and are more readily recalled than other types. From a scientific perspective, this is the result of Hebbian plasticity which,

states that in the face of trauma...more neurons in the brain fire electrical impulses in unison and make stronger connections to each other than under normal situations. Stronger connections make stronger memories” therefore this “brain mechanism...translates unpleasant experiences into long-lasting memories” (Wanjek 2014)

These “pain-filled,” long-lasting memories can be connected to any number of sensory experiences. For David, it was thermoception, both the heat and the cold. He commented that growing up in Pennsylvania, the seasons, and thus temperature, defined everything. His family's house further compounded his experiences. Built in 1864, the unrenovated house did not have insulation, and the heat source upstairs consisted of a circle vent in the floor that received updraft from the basement furnace room. David recalled how the winter nights were always freezing and despite a pile of quilts, he and his brother with whom he shared a room, were constantly cold and how, “my brother John, and I would fight over whose turn it was to sleep with our dog Charlie Brown in our bed because he used to burrow down underneath the blankets and kept us warm like a furry heater.”⁴² David’s memory of this sensory experience reinforces Classen’s argument that “part of the appeal of pet dogs lay in the physical warmth they provided. Having a dog in one’s lap was a good way to keep warm on a cold day” (2012: 99). Conversely,

David remembered the summers as oppressively hot and made worse by the house's tin roof and lack of ventilation. He, therefore, slept in the less-stuffy summer house, where he did not necessarily want Charlie Brown, the furry heater, sleeping under the sheets with him.⁴³ Because of their potency, which result from sensory details related to discomfort, these thermoceptive experiences frame David's memories of both Charlie Brown and those of growing up in Pennsylvania.

Conclusion

When individuals experience the loss of a pet, they not only lose a shared bond and companionship, they also experience a type of complete sensory deprivation. This deprivation further influences grief for "such sensations can form part of the weight of grief" (Mason 2018:7). As a result, owners desire to fully remember the embodied experience of their pet, as manifested through the sensory components inherent to pet ownership. To fully capture and re-create this, both literally and symbolically, owners turn to material memories as a genre of material culture to produce a meaningful, tangible form to a memory which is ephemeral and fleeting. Due to its unique characteristics as discussed throughout this chapter, material culture proves an ideal vehicle for embodied memorialization as evidenced by the keeping and creation of pet material memories.

CHAPTER 4:
CASE STUDIES OF MATERIAL MEMORIES

“The recycling of materials is a common method of embedding tangible fragments of the past in an object that reviews and recaptures the experiences associated with those fragments.”

-Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

This chapter analyzes the types of material memories owners keep and create upon the death of a pet and describes several examples of each as defined by their specific type of material culture. Each subsection provides an in-depth consideration of the different types of material memory as derived from my conclusions based on my fieldwork and research. These include mementos, material companions, miniatures, pet bodies, and other examples. Each subsection is further broken down into specific examples. These are defined, followed by discussions of participant experiences, and analyses of how the items embody and re-create the multi-sensory experience of pet ownership, in addition to any historical precedents that exist.

Mementos

Under her unique classificatory system of material objects relating to memory, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines mementos as objects that “are from the outset intended to serve as a reminder of an ephemeral experience or absent person” (1989: 331). In the case of pet mementos, these objects fulfill both of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s functions. They serve to remind the individual of the absent pet and the ephemeral sensory experiences that define pet ownership. Pet owners keep a variety of mementos, but the most common

examples are hair/fur and impressions.

Fur and Hair

Originally named Button, rescue rabbit Pipkin was the sweetest bunny. He had a dapper coat of short, black fur with accents of white on his chest and chin and one milk white paw. Because of his outfit, I called him my tuxedo rabbit. He was ever the gentleman, politely taking treats without grazing his teeth against fingers, asking for head scratches by nudging hands with his velveteen nose, and offering soft, warm kisses in return. He was the James Bond of bunnies. However, through shedding, his furry tuxedo left behind traces of his presence. Unfortunately, like all iconic heroes, Pip had an arch nemesis, not Goldfinger, but a Goldnose resulting from recurrent nasal infections. I held him close for hours before his final mission, his noir fur covering my scarlet shirt (Figure 1.1). Returning home in solace, I could not find it within myself to wash away Pip's spectre from my shirt. Folded into a neat square in a plastic bag, it resides next to my other material memories.

Fur and hair are acquired antemortem, perimortem, or postmortem. Regardless of when it is collected, the uses of fur and hair differ among individuals. Some owners choose to leave the fur or hair as is and put it in a receptacle that is then kept with similarly significant items. When Lisa faced the euthanasia of her yellow lab Xanadu after a battle with bone cancer, she shaved off a patch of his fur and saved it in a Ziploc bag⁴⁴ (Figure 1.2). Likewise, TJ has a bag of fur from her cat Stanley Tweedler that she stores in a keepsake box on her dresser.⁴⁵ Shelley also keeps a lock of fur from the ear of her dog Thorpe in a box of keepsakes.⁴⁶ When their horse died, Equestrian H. cut a lock

from the horse's tail and safely retains it in a bag labeled with the horse's name, and keeps it in a drawer designated for special items.⁴⁷ Although fur or hair retained by owners is usually put aside for safekeeping as a symbolic re-creation of petting, owners may engage in touching the fur. Lisa stated that as a way to remember Xanadu, she “would open the bag of fur and touch it.”⁴⁸

Keeping fur enables Lisa, TJ, Shelley, H., and other pet owners to re-create the tactile component of their pets, thereby reinforcing Classen's notion “that one of the key functions of the pet [is] to be “petted” (2012: 99). When a pet dies, the most noticeable absence is that of its body, and consequently its hair or fur. Not only does the body disappear in death, but it decays, a process that destroys this central form of bonding between pet and owner, for

All animals, however, ha[ve] a general association with touch. This [is] due to touch being considered the primary sense of the body and animals being considered virtually all body. Furthermore, many familiar animals [are] eminently touchable (furry, sleek, and warm)—and their speechlessness ma[kes] touch an essential medium for human-animal interaction...A whole system of tactile acts, each with associated meanings, animate the network of human-animal relationships. (Classen 2012:93)

To lessen the separation resulting from this corporeal decay and to preserve some essence of the pet, individuals reclaim a non-living piece of their pet's body, such as fur or hair because “material that was regarded as ‘dead’ while the person was living, is thus transformed into a ‘living’ substance at death in the sense that it is reanimated as a possession capable of sustaining the deceased” (Hallam and Hockey 2001:136). Because fur or hair does not deteriorate quickly, thus “stand[ing] in stark contrast to the instabilities of the fleshy body,” it is an ideal mnemonic form (Hallam and Hockey 2001:136).

Visual culture scholar Marius Kwint notes that the “‘dead margins of the self,’ including hair, have carried a ‘charge’ that is almost magical” (quoted in Hallam and Hockey 2001:136). This magical quality is a type of sympathetic magic discussed by anthropologist James George Frazer, wherein “things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy, the impulse being transmitted from one to the other by means of what we may conceive as a kind of invisible ether” (1922:118). There are two types of sympathetic magic, contagious and homeopathic. Contagious magic “is founded on the association of ideas by contiguity... that things which have once been in contact...are always in contact” (Frazer 1922:117-118). Homeopathic magic “is founded on the association of ideas by similarity” (Frazer 1922:117). Fur and hair can be classified as both but is most closely associated with homeopathic magic through the concept of synecdoche, wherein the part refers to the whole for “hair retains reference...as a potent if not ‘sacred’ fragment that...readily evokes the human ‘whole’ from which it is derived” (Hallam and Hockey 2001:140).

In keeping their pet's fur or hair, owners engage in and adapt the time-honored tradition of keeping human hair as mnemonic objects of loved ones. The practice of keeping locks of hair as mementos dates to the Old World, but the collection of hair saw its peak of popularity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe and America, particularly among the white, middle-class (Shuemaker 2007: viii). Hair is an embodiment of self as it is the most visible and the most changeable aspect of a person and is one of the most personal items one could freely give (Shuemaker 2007: xiii). Keeping loved ones' hair and creating material objects from it, especially upon their death, reflected the innermost emotion of sentiment and was love entwined both

figuratively and literally by making that love and grief material (Shuemaker 2007: viii-ix). Like the historical collecting of hair, the practice of retaining pet fur and hair reflects a pet owner's innermost and outermost love for their pets as fur or hair is often the foci of bonding.

In addition to collecting, hair was often turned into art, mainly jewelry or other adornments to be worn on one's person (Figure 1.3). Historically, amateurs and professionals alike worked to produce such goods (Shuemaker 2007:1). Modern pet owners engage in a similar practice. Amelia took a lock of fur from her cat Guinevere and placed it in a locket she already owned.⁴⁹ Other owners choose to create their own jewelry or accouterment using their pet's fur or hair. Kasey took a lock of Bert's hair which she described as "fairly soft for horse hair," braided it and attached a keyring and photo locket to it⁵⁰ (Figure 1.4). Although not jewelry, Callie similarly crafted her own memento from the tail hair of her horse Belle, turning it into a hat band that she wears on her cowgirl hat.⁵¹ While these participants chose to personally create their memento, other owners send their pet's fur or hair to professionals to craft a memento.⁵² Although these companies are experienced in producing mementos, pet owners are in many cases, reluctant to send off their beloved pet's fur or hair because it is often the only reminder they have of the pet. Celeste said of the hair from her horse Scotty, "I still have [it] because I am scared to 'make the wrong decision' on who to send them to and what I want exactly as a commemorative piece. Because of the limited supply, I'm terrified to not use it in the best possible way."⁵³

Finally, pet owners also commission clothing and handbags made from pet fur or hair. The collected fur is spun into yarn, which is then knitted into vests, sweaters, and

handbags (Figure 1.5). Companies such as Catty Shack Creations offer this service, marketing them as “the hand-designed creations [that] are spun and crafted from your own pet’s hair fibers. Each one is embellished in such a way as to reflect the natural beauty and personality of your pet” (Greeding 2007). Such pieces allow the bereaved to closely carry the deceased with them as it “connect[s] the body of the deceased with that of the living” (Hallam and Hockey 2001:137) through the principle of contagious magic. Additionally, these items symbolically re-create the experience of having clothing covered in pet fur.

Impressions

We were not in the market for another dog, but Bandit beguiled us with his big eyes and resemblance to a baby black bear. His ebony vulpine sister, Foxy, likewise finagled her way into our hearts accompanying Bandit home. Because puppies are not messy enough, one day I thought painting with them would be fun, and we would create a “masterpaw” that would withstand the test of time. I cordoned off the kitchen, spread out large sheets of paper, and proceeded to dip the puppies’ paws in the prepared paints. It worked out about as well as one would imagine. Their midnight fur flecked with pink and purple paint, Foxy and Bandit haphazardly walked across the paper, leaving nary a distinct paw print. They did leave some on the laminate floor though. After eleven years of holding their paws for comfort, to trim the pointed tufts of fur off their “Grinch-feet,” and to check the rough, calloused pads for thorns, Foxy and Bandit, their paws now

tipped with silver, still leave dirty prints on the kitchen floor and the leather furniture, although I have yet to capture one on paper.

Impressions are another common memento most notably of paws, but also noses. These impressions are frequently made of clay or plaster. Karl retained a clay impression from his dog Rio.⁵⁴ Sandy has “a small plaster of Paris paw print with his name stamped in it” of her Corgi, Kirby.⁵⁵ In addition to Stanley Tweedler’s fur, TJ also has “a clay imprint of his paw.”⁵⁶ Lisa kept and created many mementos when her dogs Xanadu and Zoey died, most of which are paw impressions. In clay, she has “his cremains...in a wood box that has a clay imprint of his paw on top (Figure 1.6),” and “a coaster with his paw print as well as an ornament with his paw print hanging on the bulletin board in my office”⁵⁷ (Figures 1.7 and 1.8). Paw impressions are also made of paint. Kim has “a painted paw print on a card” of her Beagle, Abbey.⁵⁸ In addition to clay ones, Lisa also has “paw print canvases” of Xanadu and Zoey⁵⁹ (Figure 1.9).

Participants made little distinction between the significance of the two types, but clay better captures the physical dimensionality of the paw. In the absence of the physical one, impressions enable owners to figuratively capture the embodied gesture of holding pets’ feet in life like Steve N. did with Max who was “always getting thorns and cuts during our many hikes.”⁶⁰ Additionally, while the sound is difficult to capture, paw impressions symbolically re-create the aural experience of the movement of pets’ paws, such as the sound of “a dog’s nails on tile or wooden floor.”⁶¹ Impressions, both clay and paint, also imitate trails of dirty pawprints which are a common occurrence with pets and happen for example, “on more occasions than I can count, because they [Max and Buddy]

were drawn to water and dirt.”⁶² Similarly, Steve L. commented that on rainy days, Harlie would leave trails of dirty paw prints around the house.⁶³

While paws are an important bodily aspect for cat and dog owners, owners of other animals also keep reminders of their animals' feet. YouTuber *skinnypigs1* has paw impressions of her deceased guinea pigs (*skinnypigs1* 2018: Figure 1.10). Although impressions of hooves are produced, horseshoes are another way to capture the same concept as impressions. Additionally, in life, shoes amplify the sounds made by hooves. Both Callie and Kasey have horseshoes from Belle and Bert respectively⁶⁴ (Figure 1.11).

Aside from paws, nose impressions are also available. Companies, such as Precious Metal Prints, send customers an impression kit that they prepare at home, make the impression, and then send it back to the company where it is cast in metal (Precious Metal Prints, n.d.: Figure 1.12)). Like fur or hair, these impressions are often turned into jewelry, specifically necklaces.

Nose impressions function similarly to paw impressions by symbolically capturing and re-creating the various sensory components centered around the nose. For example, the coolness of metal is reminiscent of a dog's cold nose and the bumps of the impression's surface, the texture of the nose. Again, nose impressions can act as symbolic re-creations of the sounds associated with noses, such as snoring. Jan recalled how Snickers and her husband would snore every night, but never in sync.⁶⁵ Likewise, Judi said one experience she always remembers is the sound of “dogs snoring.”⁶⁶ Additionally, paw and nose impressions emphasize the unique, individual nature and characteristics of a pet. Just as human fingerprints, an animal's paw, and nose prints are unique to the individual (Coldea 1994: 60S). Through the impression process, the pattern

of the animal's body part, which is unique to the pet, is captured and preserved, thus acting as an embodiment of the pet's one-of-a-kind sensory nature.

Just as there is a historical precedent for collecting fur or hair, a similar precedent known as "live casting," exists for the keeping of impressions of the deceased, particularly of the hands and face (Figure 1.13). This practice dates back to the seventh or eighth millenniums BCE, the first written documentation of "live casting" is found in the 1392 treatise *Il Libro del Art* (Ann Lyneah Curtis 2012). While live casting is an historical practice, the creation of death masks was common until the mid-twentieth century. Casts are either produced antemortem (live cast) or postmortem (death mask/death cast). Typical body parts that are cast included the face and hands, or, in the case of pets, paws, and noses.

Material Companions

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines material companions as "things that have aged with their owners" and are "valued for their continuity" (1989:330). Unlike mementos, which are inherently endowed with meaning, material companions' meaning is accrued and embedded over time. In the case of pet material memories, these objects are made more meaningful because they come in contact with pets. This principle is regarded as contagious magic, a type of sympathetic magic. As previously discussed, contagious magic holds that "things which have once been in contact with each other are always in contact" (Frazer 1922:119). Because a collar had contact with the dog in life, it retains

that connection even in death, thereby metaphysically tethering the deceased pet to the object and subsequently to the owner who retains the object.

Unlike mementos, material companions typically are not set aside; instead, they are put to continuous use (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989: 330). However, because of the sensory memories and endowed meaning embedded in these objects, when such items are no longer useful, they are sometimes transformed into mementos, thus fulfilling a new function, to serve as "a reminder of an ephemeral experience or absent person" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989: 331). When a pet dies, the material objects used by and for them are often functionless as they are no longer needed in the care of pets. Yet, because they are embodiments of sensory experiences, owners retain them nevertheless. Upon reaching memento status, material companions can be completely set aside, or are used for other pets if they still have utility. Examples of material companions include collars/halters, tags, dishes, equipment, toys, and bedding.

Collars and Halters

Made from economic grade, brown leather that still feels tacky and has a slight, tangy earthy odor despite several scrubblings with leather cleaner, and metal buckles that are turning an odd green color and are just a bit too narrow for the width of the straps, it is not really much to look at or smell (Figure 2.1). This is Aryk's shipping halter, the one he wore on the lengthy trailer ride from out-in-the-middle-of nowhere South Dakota to Cache Valley, the Alps of Utah. After years of waiting, I finally got my own pony! What emerged from the trailer was more hippo with a buzz cut than a horse. As a hardy Norwegian Fjord on an unrestricted diet of premium prairie grass, Aryk had become a

greasy, rotund pasture potato, not the sleek equine of my dreams. Yet, as I took hold of his slightly sticky halter, looked into his warm, chestnut eyes, stroked his velvet muzzle, and felt his warm, moist breath on my hand, I knew he was the one for me. Of course, one of the first things I did with my new pony was to crown him with a shiny new, scarlet red, nylon halter that brought out the sandy brown of his coat. I had no use for the leather halter, and eight years later I still have no practical use for it. However, I cannot bring myself to throw it out a, and so it hangs stiffly on a hook in the garage where it catches my eye multiple times a day, a reminder of the day Aryk became mine.

Collars and halters are by far the most common material companion kept by participants. Kirby's collar is stored in Sandy's desk drawer. Among the many items she kept, Lisa has Zoey's collar and Xanadu's collar and harness⁶⁷ (Figure 2.2). Callie saved pieces from multiple pets including Nigerian Dwarf goat, Clover's "purple collar with gems on it," "several halters" from Quarter Horse Belle, and Labrador/German Wirehair Pointer, Squirtle's "bright pink collar."⁶⁸ Finally, Jan has Chow/Golden Retriever, Snickers' blue collar, which was his last collar before he died⁶⁹ (Figure 2.3).

Because they are used to restrain and identify, collars and their equivalents are typically worn frequently or continuously. As such, the collar essentially becomes part of and at one with the pet. Thus, collars, perhaps more so than other material companions, reflect the properties of contagious magic. Consistent contact with the pet causes traces of the pet's physical essence to become embedded within the object thereby connecting the pet to the object. Jan notes that despite, "smell [being] a fleeting sense, said by some to leave no traces" (Reinarz 2014: 6), Snickers' collar nevertheless still smells like him.⁷⁰ Collars can even re-create the texture of an animal. Callie said of Squirtle's collar, "I have her

bright pink collar that is faded from me scrubbing it clean so many times. She was a greasy dog.”⁷¹

Halters and collars are among the oldest items of pet equipment, dating to the early days of domestication when humans discovered the necessity of restraining their animals while at the same time signifying their ownership (Grier 2006: 304). Historically, collars were made from inexpensive leather or more expensive brass. Due to the expense of producing brass, these collars "were used over the lives of several dogs" (Grier 2006: 305). Even though this practice arose out of financial and practical interests rather than strictly emotional or nostalgic reasons, it nevertheless set a precedent for modern pet owners retaining their pets' collars.

Tags

It is not hard to know where Hercules is, just follow the persistent jingle of tags. Compared to Foxy and Bandit, Herkie is noisy, whether he is on the move or at rest. His animated gaits produce a plenum of kinetic energy causing his tags to ping off each other much like a doggy Newton's Cradle. Because of his single-layer, cottony coat, Hercules suffers from itchy skin, so even at rest, he is easy to locate due to the frequent clatter of tags as his collar see-saws against his neck due to his hind foot scratching for purchase against the irritated skin. When Hercules is outside or at the groomer, the first thing I notice is the dread silence resulting from the absence of tinkling tags. What will happen

when those tags are forever silenced? Despite knowing he is gone, will I still hear their phantom jingle?

Tags are a typical accessory for collars and halters. Attached to the collar by a key ring, these items provide specific and unique identifiers to the animal, such as pet name, owner address and phone number, city license information, and proof of vaccination. Because they are integral pieces of equipment that are particular to the pet, owners often keep tags when their pet dies.

Steve L. noted that he kept Miniature Aussie, Harlie's tags.⁷² In addition to their collars, Lisa also has Xanadu and Zoey's tags that are still attached to the collars⁷³ (Figure 2.3). Jan saved two different sets of Snickers' tags, turning both into Christmas ornaments (Figure 2.4): "they go on the top of the Christmas tree every year, and it's the special ornament that everyone is 'like where's Snickers' dog tags' and we just have to get them out and put them on the tree"⁷⁴ (Figure 2.4). Steve N. kept Max' tags and "slid [it] onto the antenna of my motorcycle."⁷⁵

As material memories, tags function similarly to collars and paw impressions, by recreating a pet's presence. Steve N. did so by putting Max's tags on his motorcycle: "I did this, so he could always be with me, wherever I go—just like it was when he was alive (he followed me everywhere)."⁷⁶ Additionally, tags, like paw impressions, enable owners to symbolically re-create a soundscape. Steve L. commented that one of the sounds he associated with Harlie was the "jingle of her tags."⁷⁷ However, tags also allow owners the opportunity to literally re-create a soundscape by manually shaking the tags. As material memories, tags remind owners of the times when the pet produced such sounds.

Material Companions Turned Memento

A rabbit's cage is her castle, and Queen Sparkle was quick to defend hers with a grunt, a growl, and a frontal attack. Inside she had everything neat, tidy and perfectly and particularly arranged. The blockhouse went up front, the litterbox in the back-left corner, hay nest to the back right, food and salad bowls in the front left, and water bottle next to her house (Figures 2.5; 2.6; 2.7; 2.8). After a cage clean, when I took everything out, she was sure to put everything back if it was not precisely in place, nudging it along with her nose or throwing items around her cage with a bang. After her death I kept everything. I put her dishes, litterbox, house, and water bottle away, as I did not want any bunny else using them. It made me sick to think of seeing any other face pressed against the door or teeth chewing the wire with a metallic snap demanding food and attention. But the practicality of the other bunnies needing housing upgrades made it a necessity to lease her cage to a new occupant. It has since housed Pipkin, Iris, and most recently, Tribble. After fourteen years of use and four tenants, it has seen better days. The wooden legs are scarred from gnawing rabbit teeth, the rubber coating on the wire floor is peeling, and the slide latch is not as smooth as it once was. It recently needed some repairs and structural reinforcements, but it is back to ship shape. Because it is brimming with memories, it will have to completely disintegrate before I tearfully relinquish it (Figure 2.9).

Pets require a plethora of equipment. While these items are important in pet care, not every item is necessarily significant for pet memorialization. Like mementos, they are often kept but are still put to use as a material companion. In this way, these items become material companions turned memento. These items are valued for their continuity, contact with, and connection to the pet. However, because of utility, they tend

to be put to continued use. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, mementos are usually set aside whereas material companions are typically kept in use. As both, material companions turned memento can be used in either way.

Jan saved Snickers' water dish but now uses it for her current dogs⁷⁸ (Figure 2.10). When her horse Scotty died, in addition to saving his hair as a memento, Celeste "also kept all his tack, blankets, and other daily items" because "there's just no reason for me to get rid of them since it all fit my other horses."⁷⁹ Practicality and expense (horse equipment is costly), led Celeste to reuse Scotty's equipment even though these items were reminders of him. While she still uses the equipment, she notes that "I do usually tell whichever horse is wearing something of Scotty's that they should feel honored and they better take care of it though."⁸⁰ In both keeping and reusing Scotty's personal effects, Celeste lets Scotty's memory live on through her other horses. Therefore, through the principles of both homeopathic and contagious magic, Celeste's other horses and Jan's dogs are inexplicably connected, both physically and metaphysically, to Scotty and Snickers, respectively.

Although practicality is generally behind the reuse of items, these intentions can be clouded by sentiment. Equestrian H. kept the effects of their horse with the intent of using them for other horses. Like many equestrians, H. color coordinated their equipment, red in this case. However, when H. went to use the red items from the deceased horse, it "never felt 'right' with me."⁸¹ Seeing another horse in the deceased horse's color produced a visceral reaction in H., illustrating the strong associations of visual cues, such as color, with the pet's appearance.

Miniatures

In addition to keeping items from the pet (fur, hair, impressions) and items closely associated with the pet (collars, tags, dishes, beds), pet owners also collect or create miniatures of their deceased pet. As the term implies, miniatures are scaled down versions of individuals or objects. Despite their size, miniatures are highly detailed for “in their extreme iconicity and radical smallness, miniatures offer an economy of scale coupled with a plenum of detail” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989:334). Miniatures enable pet owners to capture every bodily aspect of their pet, no matter how small.

Portrait Models: Non-Textile

Shortly before Pip’s death, I fell down the internet rabbit hole of model customization. I started painting for pleasure, but soon found a practical application for my new-found hobby, pet portraits. Watson was the first followed by Pip. Both were goofy in life, and I found the cartoonish design of Littlest Petshop figurines captured that essence. A fresh coat of nail polish captured the likeness of their fur coats. Sparkle, who was more severe in personality and particular in posture, proved challenging to embody in plastic until I stumbled across a Schleich model of a lop-eared rabbit flopped out on its side complete with a grumpy glare. Painting these models made it feel like I was interacting with their furry counterparts, seeing a tiny bit of them come back in miniature. As I write, I am being judged by small Sparkle, encouraged by petite Pip, and entertained by wee Watson as they sit on my desk helping with homework, much as they did in life (Figure 3.1). However, the miniatures cannot chew the corners of my papers like their living counterparts were apt to do, taking pleasure in sinking their teeth into crinkly

paper. Nor do they leave “dust bunnies” of fur behind or get in the way by laying on my hand, their warm, squishy underbelly pressed against my skin.

Portrait models are a common type of miniature material memory. Such models are customized to look like a unique animal, a form of three-dimensional portraiture (Figure 3.2). Just as with fur and hair mementos, individuals may produce these models themselves or commission their production. While some portrait model artists do create the model entirely themselves, most tend to create miniatures by repurposing already made, commercially available, plastic models.⁸² While plastic is a common medium for custom portrait models, clay is also used (Figure 3.3). In taking a previously made object and refitting or reworking it, portrait models are a type of appropriated object.

Appropriation refers to “the practice of artists using pre-existing objects or images in their art with little transformation of the original” (Tate: Art Term, n.d.). Portrait models vary in the level of reworking, from just a paint job to look like the subject through to a complete re-sculpt.

Specializing in horses, portrait artist L., scales each detail.⁸³ L. notes the most difficult, yet rewarding, part of the process is “achieving on the sculpt, facial likeness instantly recognizable to the owner.”⁸⁴ Each portrait model reinforces the unique, individual nature of a pet as manifested through visual characteristics to which each owner is acutely attuned. Posing the model also proves challenging as each horse, or pet has “known idiosyncrasies in movement or posture.”⁸⁵

It is this “snapshotting” capacity that makes miniatures extraordinary material memories as “miniatures also have the effect of freezing time” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989:335). Even in still repose, miniatures capture and evoke a pet’s unique bodily

movements. This “freezing” ability also has the added benefit of freezing pets in an ideal stage of life or, “the target age.”⁸⁶ This allows owners to capture, and thus remember, the pet at their physical prime and not when they were aged or ill.

Portrait Models: Plush and Textile

Long before I was able to have a real-life rabbit, I had, well still have, a pantheon of plush bunnies. My BSBFF (Best Stuffed Bunny Friend Forever) was a mint green TY Beanie Baby whom I creatively christened Bunny. He came everywhere with me. I hugged him close when frightened, feeling the comforting weight of him pressed against my chest. I stroked his velvety green fur to calm myself. I filled my lungs with his crisp scent, a mixture of laundry soap and that indescribable odor that is one's home. When sad, I wiped my tears away with the pointed end of his lopped ears. I transferred most of these behaviors to Sparkle where they became important components of our relationship.

In anticipation of the inevitable loss of Sparkle, I stumbled across the concept of plush replicas of pets. This item combined my two loves, stuffed toy animals and real pets. I tried many times to fill out the customization form, but I was never satisfied with my customizing abilities. What if I chose the wrong shade of brown for her eyes? What if the picture I send does not adequately convey Sparkle's facial expression? How do I decide to position her ever-changing ears? Despite multiple attempts, I never could click “Submit.” I thought the idea of having Sparkle back in plush form would ease my grief and ensure I never forgot how she looked or felt. However, I am not presently ready for the weight of emotions brought on by the simulacrum sensations of plush. Perhaps one

day I will finally click that button and bring my bunny back, or at least some small re-creation of her.

Customized miniatures are also available in plush like those made by Cuddle Clones (Figure 3.4) and Petsies (Figure 3.5), textile varieties of felted wool like Shelter Pups (Figure 3.6) and fur or hair like those from Nine Lives Twine (Figure 3.7). Owners send in photographs and fill out a customization form detailing the position of each body element. Using these details, the company then constructs a veritable replica of the pet's unique traits by individually crafting each piece from high-quality materials and using airbrushing techniques to closely match the pet's markings and physical qualities (Cuddle Clones, n.d.).

Levi said of his Cuddle Clone "You had every marking EXACT, including some minor markings I didn't even think would be noticed in the photos. Every detail was absolutely perfect."⁸⁷ Similarly, Annette commented, "I received my Xavier plush on Saturday, and I have to tell you I was amazed at the likeness to my dog!!"⁸⁸

Look-Alike Readymade Objects

Like most horse girls I collect model horses, the shelves in my office are lined with various Arabians, Thoroughbreds, Mustangs, Quarter Horses, and Drafts in a rainbow of equine shades of black, brown, gray, and white. There is one shelf next to my bed that is the territory of a herd of Fjord horses (Figure 3.8). They all share similar features with only slight differences in shading and manufacturer. Like these models, Aryk looks like most every other Fjord horse. Short, compact, stocky, sandy brown coat, chocolate zebra-stripe legs, ebony tipped ears, a brown line starting from his forelock

running the length of his back to the end of his tail, and a bristly mane consisting of black hair sandwiched between white that stands upright when cut short. Due to their resemblances to the real Aryk, these “mini-me” Fjord models act as stand-ins that capture his likeness and spirit in some small part, happily reminding me of him when I am not able to make it out to see him. Although, perhaps after the day comes when his nicker no longer greets me, which as his swayed back reminds me, is sooner than I think, these models will bring a different kind of remembrance.

While some owners create miniature, customized portraits of their pets, others use look-alike, readymade objects as stand-in miniature material memories. Paula found two statuary figurines that were reminiscent of her dog Happy⁸⁹ (Figure 3.9). Similarly, Shelley has a statue of a Golden Retriever that her neighbor gave her when Thorpe died.⁹⁰ Jan has a Christmas ornament of a Golden Retriever-esque dog wearing mittens, and a scarf that she thinks resembles Snickers just enough⁹¹ (Figure 3.10). She attached one set of Snickers’ tags to the ornament and hangs it on the tree every year as a representation that reminds her of how Snickers would lie by the tree every Christmas morning.⁹² These readymade objects function similarly to custom miniatures, without the potential expense of creation.

Function of Miniatures

While these various types of miniatures function in slightly different manners, because of their resemblance to the deceased, all miniatures act as proxies through the principle of homeopathic magic wherein there exists an “association of ideas by similarity” (Frazer 1922:117). In this capacity, miniatures recreate or serve as stand-ins

for pets' bodily presence and fundamental physical interactions between pet and owner that are lost upon death. These include petting, stroking, carrying, holding, hugging, and the feel of bodies pressing together.

Testimonials on the Cuddle Clones' website attest to the power these objects have in filling both the emotional and physical gaps left at a pet's passing, gaps that are closely tied together. Facing the impending death of Holly, her sick dog, Mary purchased a Cuddle Clone remarking that "my arms won't be quite as empty when the time does come."⁹³ Annette says of her Cuddle Clone "he will bring me comfort as I can hold him and remember my dog with love and good memories."⁹⁴

The biological response to death is to "yearn and search" and "recover the missing figure" (Sable 2013:96). Miniatures enable pet owners to recover, in part, that which is lost, namely the body. Unlike other forms of material memories, such as taxidermy, miniatures are an acceptable way to reclaim and retain (to some extent) the body, taken by death. Jo noted that her plush version of Chewbacca, "has captured his body's essence (I just love his head shape, ears and the material used)."⁹⁵ JoAlice commented, "although we miss Sadie's loving personality and playfulness, this replica helps fill a piece of our hearts that has felt so empty these past few months."⁹⁶ Because of their ability to capture and re-create a pet's intrinsic bodily aspects, attributes, and presence, miniatures act as "a mini-reunion"⁹⁷ between bereaved owners and their deceased pets.

Pet Bodies

One of the first issues of concern, when a pet dies, is how to dispose of the body, with burial being the most common option. When Honey Bunny died, I buried her body in the former berry terrace in the backyard. I planned on following suit with each subsequent rabbit, their final resting place each marked by a unique headstone.⁹⁸

However, as the number of live rabbits slowly climbed to eight and foreseeing their passing, Dad declared there would be no more backyard burials as a house with a pet cemetery is a hard resell.⁹⁹ Not wanting to be separated yet again from my pets, I set out to find a way to have them forever by my side in death as in life. Likewise, there are owners who for various reasons, do not opt for burial, but instead choose to retain the pet body, although usually in a transformed state.

The desire to retain whole bodies of the deceased is a natural behavior rooted in the biological response “to protest and preserve affectional relationships. The process of grief, therefore, after a brief period of “numbing,” is followed by a “yearning and searching phase” that is associated with a strenuous effort to recover the missing figure” (Sable 2013:96). Sometimes this recovery effort goes too far as illustrated by the following childhood experience recounted by Kay:

My dog, Queenie was her name, she was my buddy. She was a black and white mixed dog and was medium size. Somebody fed her hamburger with poison and glass. It cut up her insides, and of course, she died. We buried her in the yard. She had been out there about two days. My mom looked out the window one day and there I was dragging Queenie around by her hind leg, I had dug her up to play with her, I was only little. Mom had me put her back in the hole.¹⁰⁰

Kay’s experience highlights the natural tendency towards keeping the bodies of loved ones, especially pets. Digging up a deceased pet is not socially acceptable as an

adult, yet the desire to recover that which is missing remains. In an attempt to work around this social taboo, some owners retain their pets' bodies in transformed states. Some of these states are socially acceptable such as cremains, whereas others, such as taxidermy/freeze drying and mummification, are viewed with discomfort just as Kay's mother's reaction to the disinterment of Queenie. The social verdict is still out for other states, such as DNA.

Cremains

Like Pandora, I cannot resist the urge to open the blank-white, plastic boxes and peek inside (Figure 4.1; 4.2; 4.3). Herein contained by a cellophane bag, lies all that physically remains of my rabbits. The ashy particles and charred bits of bone and fragments of teeth feel wrong to observe. Yet I am inexplicably drawn to this deathly dust of the earth. Like Mason, I have never “plunge[d] my hand in” but I too can “see it in my ‘mind’s eye,’ feel it in my mind’s fingers, sniff it with my mind’s nose” (2018:11). While I imagine that its actual texture is grainy, my imagination tricks me into thinking it would be silky like Sparkle’s fur. The container’s weight is likewise deceiving. It’s close to, but not quite the right heft. What vital parts burned away with the crematory flames, the moisture-rich organs of Twix's squishy belly, the watery orbits of Jack's soulful eyes? It is perhaps a morbid line of inquiry, but these thoughts flit through my mind. With each forbidden look, I see the fragments of tooth and bone and question if that is the tooth that caused Pip’s recurrent abscesses or is that the bit of bone that bowed Watson’s legs. I know I could release these seemingly alien ashes to the winds, but the thought of again

being physically separated from my pets is akin to Pandora releasing the last occupant of the box, Hope.

Cremation is the practice of reducing the body through incineration and dates to ancient times. In the recent past, cremation has become professionalized, institutionalized, and regulated for both humans and pets. The initial process involves placing the body in a specialized furnace, or crematorium, and bringing the temperature to between 1,400 and 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit. The length of cremation time depends on the weight and size of the body. This reduces the body to organic ash and bone fragments that are then collected and placed in a specialized grinding machine and undergo cremulation wherein the bone fragments are pulverized into fine particles. It is this accumulation of particles that is colloquially referred to as ashes. However, “cremains,” a portmanteau of “cremation” and “remains,” is the professional term.

Memorial boxes along with traditional urns are the most common method of retaining cremains. These vessels come in a variety of styles and mediums including traditional vase-like urns, figurines shaped like different kinds of animals, heart-shapes, and boxes made of wood, metal, and biodegradable materials. Companies, such as Agape Pet Services, offer both custom and premade options. Additionally, owners may choose to make their own. Aside from retaining them in vessels, owners can also use cremains in other material treatments such as jewelry.¹⁰¹

Steve N. and Lisa both opted for private cremations for Max, Xanadu, and Zoey and kept the cremains in memorial boxes with the pet's individual information. Steve N. said, "I made a small cedar box with Max's name, and date of passing and I filled it with his ashes."¹⁰² Lisa commented “when he was cremated his remains were returned to us in

a wood box that has a clay imprint of his paw on the top... and our second dog Zoey's remains"¹⁰³ (Figures 1.6 and 4.4).

In keeping cremains, pet owners reclaim their pet from the grave, allowing the pet to remain near in death as in life. Steve N. commented that "this box with his ashes is right where it belongs, with me and at his/my home."¹⁰⁴ Portability is another reason owners retain cremains "if we move or anything, we can take him with us" (Chur-Hansen et al. 2011:253). In this way, cremains function as "stand in[s]" for absent people by bringing a token of physical presence to a new location" (McNeill 2007:297). Another reason for pet cremation is so owner and pet can be reunited in death through mutual burial "they're both to be buried with me when I go" (Chur-Hansen et al. 2011:253). That owners ardently strive to keep pet bodies emphasizes the importance of the pet's body to the human-animal bond.

Pet Preservation: Taxidermy and Freeze-Drying

Taxidermy simultaneously unsettles and intrigues me, wandering through halls of natural history museums I am drawn to these animals, eternally frozen in time, a single frame in the film of life. These inert forms both look like and texturally feel like, and to some extent behave like live animals, but it is the glassy gaze of their eyes, rather than the lack of movement that is the dead giveaway to their mortal state. Seeing taxidermy in this context, I never considered pets could similarly have an eternal bodily presence until flipping through the channels late one night as a preteen I landed on National Geographic's *Taboo*. Death was the episode's topic of exploration and pet preservation one of the case studies. Since then, I sometimes toy with the idea of pet preservation

primarily in jest. Although perhaps it would be nice to have the opportunity to still stroke their fur, feel the familiar contours of their body, and still enjoy their presence even if it was merely an echo.

Whereas cremation is generally regarded as an acceptable means of retaining the dead body, the practices of taxidermy and freeze drying are not. This perspective may result from the understanding that since cremation is practiced with humans, the retention of pet cremains is likewise acceptable. On the contrary, since taxidermy is not widely practiced on humans,¹⁰⁵ then neither should pets because they are regarded as pseudo-humans. However, as literary scholar Christina M. Colvin argues,

“dismissals of pet taxidermy assume that grief for lost animals must replicate the same rituals and procedures. Even when we keep in mind that pets represent “humanized animals,” must we grieve them as we grieve humans for that grief to be valid? Or might taxidermy offer a possibility for grief work particular to the experience of losing a beloved companion animal?” (2016: 69)

Although used interchangeably, “taxidermy” and “freeze-drying” refer to slightly different processes of preserving animals. “Taxidermy” is derived from “derma” which refers to skin and “taxis” which is “to move.” Thus, taxidermy is the process of (re)moving the animal skin from the body and placing it on a body form made of foam and stretching it to fit or the original method of stuffing the skin with plaster and straw. Taxidermy is the process most commonly used to preserve hunting trophies, although it was used historically to preserve pets before the advent of freeze-drying technology. As such, most modern “taxidermied” pets are technically freeze dried.

“Freeze-drying,” or pet preservation as it is professionally referred to, is the process of removing the animal’s visceral organs (which are toxic to preservation) and then positioning the body with pins and putting what remains of the body in a machine

that slowly removes the moisture from the body (Figures 4.5 and 4.6). Depending on the size of the animal, this process can take up to six months to ensure stable and essentially eternal preservation. Animals are usually positioned in a sleeping position with their eyes sewn shut as it is a peaceful repose and is reminiscent of postmortem photography and draws on notions of death as the “eternal sleep” and the euphemism of euthanasia as “putting an animal to sleep.” Additionally, this sleeping position and expression is easy to achieve as recreating facial likeness is difficult. Taxidermist Mac McCullough practices regular taxidermy and pet preservation. In Amy Finkel’s documentary “Furever” he comments “with a pet you absolutely have to re-create every little thing they remember about their pet” (2013). It is because of these high expectations that many “traditional” taxidermists do not become involved in pet preservation.

For all its issues, pet preservation conserves important bodily aspects of pets lost through other means of disposal or preservation, primarily those features that are dependent upon the pet’s underlying anatomical structure including the pet’s unique appearance and the specific feel of their body. Additionally, because they are not toxic to stability, organs such as vocal cords, tongues, noses are not removed, but are instead maintained through freeze-drying. Although they are inert, these preserved organs have the “potential” to produce sensory experiences like barking, snoring, sneezing, licking, a quality that customers value (Colvin 2016: 69).¹⁰⁶

While many view taxidermy as disturbing or creepy,¹⁰⁷ a participant in the documentary who preserved his dog commented “having a bowl of ashes on the mantle, I think that is more freaky than having him freeze-dried” (Finkel 2013). Additionally,

participants remarked that pet preservation is no different than human embalming, and indeed it is less disturbing

the fact that having a pet preserved is creepier to people than viewing their dead relative in a casket that now looks like something out of the wax museum, that bothers me so much more. (2013)

Similarly, “I have a friend that’s a funeral director. I’ve seen what goes on. I honestly believe that if you knew what your loved one was going through, I don’t think you would do it” (Finkel 2013).

Freeze-dried pets function similarly to miniatures, but whereas plastic and plush facsimiles are acceptable, the "reanimated" body is not because preserved bodies "are abject in that they disrupt ‘identity, system, order’" (Hallam and Hockey 2001:133). Arguments against pet preservation are concerned with what it reveals about the individual who cannot relinquish that which is already gone. Museum curator Rachel Poliquin frames taxidermy as being “deeply marked by human longing” (2012:6). While “longing” has several positive and negative connotations, as discussed by Stewart,¹⁰⁸ Poliquin argues that the longing associated with pet preservation is excessive and therefore, negative. Additionally, she feels that pet preservation is the selfish act of a pet owner for “they are stuffed that the owners might find solace” (2012:211). In other words, pet preservation has nothing to do with the mutual bond between pet and owner for “it suggests that what has departed is not particularly missed” (2012:208). It is not missed because the thing that is preserved is not the pet, rather it “is a dead thing” (Madden 2011:27). This dead thing has made “the passage into otherness” and “as such, the corpse becomes ‘other’ not only in relation to the living body that it once was, but also in terms of the threat that it poses to the broader social system” (Hallam and Hockey

2001:133). Poliquin further comments on how these “dead, other things” are abominations

What exactly is being remembered? The pet itself, or the good times the owner enjoyed while her spaniel was alive? We remember departed companions because of their spirit, their charisma, and personality. Once dead, this liveliness departs, and all that remains is a husk. Preserving the husk and claiming that it is still the creature is a disturbing confusion of corporeality for presence. (2012:208)

Poliquin’s argument is dependent upon the complete deanthropomorphization (Arluke and Sanders 1996:169) of the pet wherein the pet is separated from their body, and the associated embodied sensory experiences. However, “a body that has passed the threshold of life, a body that is no longer a living form...through death can be reanimated as a material of memory” (Hallam and Hockey 2001:129). These concepts are not mutually exclusive, but rather they are bound together, for as discussed throughout this study, it is the distinctive bodily details inherent to the pet which “distinguish the dead dog *as* [Peanut] both before and after death” (Colvin 2016: 69).

Additionally, while some pet owners may hold delusions that the preserved form is synonymous with the living pet, many owners of preserved pets also understand the difference between their pet and the preserved form. As someone who had her dog preserved, Gretta Graves remarked

It seems to me that whatever makes us conscious and aware and animated is what's gone when we die and that Rudy by no means is still here. He's not. This is Rudy's shell, and I'm perfectly happy with the shell. If I thought that Rudy's soul still embodied that in any way, I probably would not have preserved him and kept him for eternity. (Finkel 2013)

Likewise, “I don’t feel like I brought him back to life. He’s not the same as he was, but it’s 100 times better than not having him” (Finkel 2013).

A follow up to the issue of preserved pets as things, is the idea that owners who keep pet bodies are unable to process grief or, at worse, are mentally disturbed. Creative writer and social investigator, Dave Madden remarks that

for grief to begin, run its course, and conclude, the cause of grief—the absence of the loved one—must be rendered material by the absence of the body... The owner of a stuffed pet must still be grieving, we imagine, or must never have fully gone through grief. The owner of a stuffed pet must not have been able to come to terms with the death of the pet. (2011:24)

While the disappearance of the body is traditionally regarded as a significant event, the historical existence of transi tombs suggests otherwise (Figure 4.7). These tombs, which consist of an above-ground effigy designed to look like a decomposing corpse, illustrate that the corpse's metaphorical continued visual presence, or the literal physical and tactile presence in the case of preserved pets, acts "as a site of contact and continued dialogue between the living and the deceased in ways that disturbed the subject/object boundary" (Hallam and Hockey 2001:134). This continued dialogue further encourages the formation of continued bonds which aid in the grieving process.

Historically, pets were taxidermied for similar reasons as modern preserved pets, as literal and symbolic re-creations of sensory experiences (Figure 4.8). These preserved pets were likewise similarly recognized not as the actual pet, but as an essential component of the pet that was central to the experience of pet ownership. A 1798 poem aptly titled "An Address by a Gentleman to His Dead Dog; Which Was Stuffed, and Placed in a Corner of His Library," captures these ideas

Yes, still, my Prince, thy form I view,
Art can again thy shape renew:
But vain I seek the vital flame
That animated once thy frame.
Extinct the vivifying spark,
That tongue is mute—those eyes are dark.
In vain that face I now explore;

It woos me with its love, —no more.
 No more thy scent my steps shall trace
 With wagging tail and quicken'd pace.
 Nor e'er again thy joyful cry,
 Proclaim thy darling master nigh.
 Alas! Thy shade alone remains,
 Yet Memory all thou wast retains;
 And bid that *Prince* may never die.

(Moody 1798: 20-21)

Pet Preservation: Mummification

As a child, I was easily frightened. Yet, surprising *The Mummy* (1999) became one of my favorite movies as an eight-year-old. What kid doesn't love the story of a reanimated corpse out for supernatural revenge? I read up on mummification and was excited when I learned about animal mummies. Ancient people loved their pets too and wanted to be forever united with them in the afterlife? This notion of pets possessing souls shaped my conceptions of my Christian beliefs regarding the eternal nature of animals. Would they be resurrected alongside me? How do I ensure the preservation of their bodies for that day? Influenced by my theatrical tastes, I briefly considered mummification. That is until sixth grade when Hall A, the “other hall,” mummified chickens for scientific endeavors. It is difficult to describe the pungent miasma of putrefying poultry that percolated and pervaded the halls, making my eyes water and nose wrinkle as the odor became deeply embedded in my olfactory system, and settled deep into my stomach, nauseating me. Nothing about this experience of decay was anything I wanted to associate with my beloved, lively pets.

Mummification is a unique form of pet preservation. The Summum Company headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah derives its mummification process from ancient,

religious practices, but with modern updates. Their patented mummification process, or Rites of Transference, is complex and is therefore lengthy and costly.¹⁰⁹ When the pet dies, the body is packed in dry ice and shipped to the company. The body is then bathed and cleansed and the organs removed. Unlike in freeze-drying, the organs are cleansed and returned to the body. After this initial cleansing, the body is placed in a baptismal font filled with special preservation fluid. The body is then removed, cleansed again, and covered in lotion before layers of gauze are applied. A polyurethane membrane that acts as a permanent seal is then applied to the body before it is encased in fiberglass and resin. While in this state the body is then taken to the Summum pyramid to continue rites. Upon completion of these rites, the body is further encased in a bronze or steel Mummiform®, filled with amber resin, and welded shut (Summum, n.d. c: Figure 4.9). Throughout the entirety of this process, Summum’s Thanatogeneticists read a spiritual will written by the owners to help guide the pet’s soul and aid in the transition from a corporeal form to a spiritual one (Summum, n.d. b). Mummification serves a similar function as freeze-drying, but with an added spiritual element and purpose that works to fill the void of “traditional” funerary rites.

DNA

Hercules and Foxy are both “licky” dogs. They view hands, feet, arms, and legs as lollipops and treat them as such with their warm, wet tongues. I have never considered

how the sticky residue of their tongues holds the potential to create a whole new, genetically identical dog. Would the replica similarly like to lick?

Although it is a more unconventional transformed state, the collection and retention of DNA are becoming more common. While not the corporeal body, DNA contains the genetic instructions to produce a unique individual's body. Companies such as Perpetua Life Jewels, offer memorials that contain a pet's DNA. Owners collect a sample of their pet's DNA through a process particular to the company, usually a saliva swab. The sample is then embedded in a piece of jewelry or a crystal "paperweight." Both types of memorials are usually in the shape of a double-helix, the nuclear structure of DNA (Figure 4.10). These material memories function similarly to other examples of mourning jewelry but are more potent as they contain the potential to physically re-create the pet anew.

While pet DNA is generally fashioned into an inert jewelry form, some pet owners take a viable sample of DNA to create a genetic twin, or clone, of their pet (Figure 4.11). This process is expensive, difficult, and rife with moral and ethical dilemmas, such as whether the clone possess the same soul or not.¹¹⁰ One of Finkel's participants who cloned his dog remarked "did Wolfie's soul reincarnate and reborn here? I don't know. There is talk about cellular memory...right off the bat they started exhibiting personality traits that the original Wolfie had" (2013). These issues aside, the clone is a living material memory that is a repository of the sensory experiences associated with the deceased pet with the added potential of creating new embodied experiences with the clone.

Other Types of Material Memories

While most material memories are purposefully retained, at times owners may find or keep unintentional material memories. Additionally, owners may, for various reasons, choose not to keep material memories of their pets.

Unintentional Material Memories

Watson is best described as dorky, but he was my little dork. He was a sight for sore eyes when I rescued him; someone's neglected Easter rabbit. His fur, which eventually grew in as frosted white with silvery accents, was yellowed from urine. His back legs, crooked from confinement and poor nutrition, were soaked with urine, burning his delicate skin which was an irritated, flaming red. In the process of healing, he lost all the fur around his buttocks and his legs. For a while, he had scrawny, naked chicken legs that quivered. His lovely lop ears were ragged around the edges, the pink skin puckered together, as a result of being chewed by his fellow bunny inmates who had no other means to vent their frustration. His saggy-baggy skin hung loosely from his skeleton, the outline of which was easily felt.

Despite his rough physical condition and much to the displeasure of his new bunny neighbors, Watson was extremely eager and outgoing. Never hindered by his crooked legs and peculiar gait, Watson set out on conquests. In his mind, everything belonged to him and as such, needed to be claimed by scent. Anything new was subject to dental investigation and a thorough chin rub.¹¹¹ On one occasion, my laptop was subjected to this claiming process. Watson grabbed hold of the left corner of the monitor frame, leaving behind a noticeable tooth mark as I “scolded” him. I see it every time I use

my laptop, and I cannot help but think of my “adorkable” frayed eared, crooked-legged rabbit, especially since his sudden, mysterious death left me with no other material memories of our time together.

Unintentional material memories, such as Watson's tooth mark, are typically the product of accidental creation, resulting from the automatic processes of pets' bodies, or "bad behavior" on the pet's part.

While Sandy did not purposefully keep any of her dogs' hair, she said that in addition to the material memories she did keep "there is still probably some of their hair floating through our house too, they were good shedders."¹¹² She also noted that Lily “chewed badly as a pup. Her teeth marks are on the rungs of our favorite rocking chair.”¹¹³ Jan also has an unintentional material memory that resulted from Snickers’ chewing

I have a yellow, Tupperware tablespoon that I’ve had for like thirty-five years that I just always use. The kids had gotten it down and were playing with it at some point and my dog Snickers, he didn't hardly chew on anything, once in a great while...he happened to get this yellow, Tupperware tablespoon and put his tooth-mark in the center of it...there’s a nice dent in it.¹¹⁴ (Figure 5.1)

These unintentional material memories are often the result of what many owners may view as the noxious sensory realities and behaviors associated with pets such as chewing and shedding that owners would rather not deal with in life. While owners may not initially view these items as meaningful while the pet is alive, after death, they become precious reminders of the pet's embodied presence, even if it was not always enjoyable. For Sandy the teeth marks on the chair “still make me smile when I glance at them.”¹¹⁵ Jan similarly said regarding her tablespoon, “I think ‘I should just throw this away since it's just a mess now.’ But I still use it because every time I look at it, I just

remember about Snickers... I just have a little thought of him each time I take it out of the drawer. It's just a reminder about my little furry, Snickers."¹¹⁶ Jan, like Sandy and her chair, gets an unexpected reminder each time she uses her tablespoon. Since Jan and Sandy still use their "damaged items," their function is similar to that of a material companion as an object that has embedded meaning, but it is still put to use. However, the items' accidental creation makes their significance even more embodied and therefore, excellent curators of memory.

No Material Memories

Black Jack was another rescue, this time from a backyard hoarder. With Flemish Giant ancestry and tipping the scales at twelve solid pounds being approximately the size of a small dog, Jack was one Brobdingnagian bunny in both name and appearance. Whereas physical neglect resulted in Watson's wounds, Jack experienced damaging psychological trauma, searing his psyche with deep emotional scars. The scratching swish of brooms proved terrifying, leaving him scrambling in fear, his nails clattering as he tried to gain purchase on the slick floor. His metal salad bowl produced fits of rage wherein he repeatedly flung the dish across his cage with a resounding clang. He had no desire for interaction of any kind, preferring to sit in the corner of his cage avoiding all contact. Attempts to stroke his silky, black fur resulted in him boxing my face with his powerful paws and dagger-like nails (imagine an angry kangaroo in bunny form), often leaving me with both a bruised nose and a heart.

It took four years of patiently peeling away layers of trauma before Jack emerged from his shell. For six months he eagerly sought attention by sticking his large head out

his cage door, his twitchy nose sniffing for treats as he bowed his head for begging for his satellite ears to be massaged. Then one morning, I was greeted with the unpleasant sight of him once again hunched in the corner, this time painfully staring at me with eyes bulging from the sockets, a sure sign of a retrobulbar abscess.¹¹⁷ With an extremely poor prognosis and not wanting him to suffer, I had him immediately euthanized. Fearing the spread of bacterial disease, I discarded every material item that was his, leaving me with nothing to remember him by except a few blurry photographs.

Although owners commonly keep material memories, there are owners who, for various reasons, choose not to retain items from their pets. Some erroneously assume that these individuals do not feel grief to the same extent as those who keep material memories. However, it is crucial to remember Deetz's arguments against drawing conclusions based solely on those objects that have been preserved, as "the question of the factors that favor survival of certain objects and the disappearance of others is important here. For a variety of reasons, surviving artifacts cannot be taken as necessarily representative objects" (1996:8). While the logic behind such decisions is just as varied, personal, and unique as pets and owners themselves, some reasons for not keeping material memories include practicality, grief prevention, respect, oversight, and expense.

Items used with pets are subject to all manner of dirt, damage, and general wear. Whereas Shelley kept Thorpe's bed, Lisa threw out Zoey's bed because she had urinated on it.¹¹⁸ While Lisa could have laundered the bed, practicality held that it was easier to dispose of it and keep items that were connected to Zoey that were not damaged nor reminders of the less pleasant aspects of pet keeping, such as bodily fluids. Additionally, not all items associated with a pet are endowed with the same type of sensory sentiment

as other items. The practical disposal of pet items also speaks to Deetz's point that material objects are subject to factors that favor and disfavor their survival (1998: 8).

The same qualities that make material memories ideal for memorialization and positive sensory memory recall, also make them potential grief triggers. The memories, experience, and sensations encoded in material objects can cause "a renewed grief reaction" (Chur-Hansen 2010:18). Because of this potential, Kim did not keep anything of Abbey's as she "didn't want to be reminded as it made me too sad."¹¹⁹ She, therefore, threw away all of Abbey's items, opted for communal cremation, and sent the one memento of a paw impression to her daughter. While owners may choose to completely rid themselves of any material reminder as Kim did, they may opt to set items aside until they are emotionally able to deal with the objects and all they entail.

Respect for the pet can also account for owners not keeping material memories. Although equestrian H. did cut off a lock from their horse's tail, they "could not bring myself to chop the entire tail, as I had worked so hard to keep it long and full when she was previously alive. It felt disgraceful, like chopping her tail would mar her body."¹²⁰ To H., the tail was an integral part of their horse's appearance and the bond they developed through grooming. Therefore, H. wanted to preserve that aspect out of respect and recognition of the horse as a unique, sensory being, even in death.

In the midst of dealing with the turmoil of pet death, it might not occur to owners to even keep anything associated with their pet. Beck reminds, "we must remember that pet loss occurs in lives that are already complex and, at times, challenging" (Greene and Landis 2002: xii). This was the case for the couple at the vet with their deceased dog. They handed the body over to the vet tech to handle, but before the tech went back the

couple's adult daughter inquired if they wanted the dog's collar. The owner responded that she did, and the thought had not even occurred to her until the daughter mentioned it.

Just as with humans, pet death can be expensive, and unfortunately, issues of finances play a part in owners' memorialization decisions. TJ wanted to keep Stanley Tweedler's cremains, but she could not afford a private cremation and opted instead for communal cremation.¹²¹ In place of cremains, TJ kept some fur as the two serve a similar function of reclaiming and recreating the bodily aspects of pets.

CHAPTER 5:
CONCLUSION

“Death ends a life not a relationship.”

-Mitch Albom

Three long years have passed since that silent February day when Death took my best friend. I still think about her every day. Whenever the Supreme Leader of Rabbits, Tribble Kahn, grunts and turns his back I think of Sparkle’s low growl that soon turned to contented chatter. As I stroke Lady Iris’ blue lop ears, I recall how many tears I wiped away with Sparkle’s similarly shaded velveteen ears. When I see Buttermilk Pancake snuggled down in her hay nest, I remember the artistry with which Sparkle created her hay nest, the rustle of hay, and her squeaky snore as settled in. As I dole out sticky banana chips, I smell the banana on Sparkle’s lips and taste the faint flavor of her kiss on my own lips. When I hold Tribble, Buttermilk, or Iris, I feel the familiar weight of Sparkle when she laid in the crook of my arm, warm against my skin.

Any time I come across her water bottle I hear the metallic clink of the ball as she drank. Her house reminds me of her lounging on top when young and then inside as age stiffened her body. When I open my closet in the morning, I see the urn containing Sparkle's cremains and remember the aged bones jutting through her loose skin. As I sit here at my desk, I look at her custom figurine and think of Sparkle's whiskers tickling my cheek and the snap of paper between her teeth as she helped with homework by sitting with me, nibbling the corners of books.

Pet owners keep and create numerous types of material memories in a myriad of forms. Regardless of type or form, material memories enable bereaved owners to

remember their deceased pet and everything they embodied. When asked why they kept or created material memories of their pets, most owners explained that it was a reminder or a way to remember. Judi said her items were “beautiful reminders of great beings.”¹²² Shelley remarked that she kept Thorpe’s items “to remember him by.”¹²³ Lisa similarly commented that her material memories are “to remember him by.”¹²⁴ Kasey noted that “I always want something to remember them by.”¹²⁵ While this desire to remember may be more general, at other times, it is for a specific reason. Paula responded that “at first we kept these items to help our grief, but now I think they are to remind us just how precious he was to us and that he cannot be replaced.”¹²⁶ For Paula, her material memories reinforced the notion that Happy was a unique, irreplaceable individual.

While the primary function of material memories is to assist in remembering, some participants said their material memories were not so much meant to remind them as to help them not forget. Carly remarked, “I keep mementos of animals that have made big impacts in my life, so I would never forget.”¹²⁷ Steve L. noted, “they are memories, good ones. I don’t want to lose that.”¹²⁸

For other participants, material memories are a reminder not only of their pet but their absence. TJ said, “it reminds me he isn’t really gone, just gone from “here.”¹²⁹ Callie commented, “I felt like keeping them would help me get over the loss of my fur babies and make it feel like they were still there.”¹³⁰ Whereas most participants had a particular rationale for keeping material memories, some owners may not know the logic behind their reasoning. Beverly noted, “I don’t know, I just wanted it.”¹³¹ Beverly’s uncertainty suggests that there may be an unknown, perhaps innate desire to retain items of meaning. These different responses reflect the desire pet owners have to remember their pets, but

Jan best answers the reason why pet owners choose material culture as the genre to do so “because I wanted something I could hold and see to remember my puppy. I have all the memories, but I wanted something tangible.”¹³² Because they can be looked at, listened to, touched, and smelled, material objects become concrete. It is this tangibility, realness, embodied nature, and ability to symbolically or literally capture the senses which make material memories effective mnemonic objects.

The bond between pet and owner characterizes the role and significance of the pet. Some are pleasant company or entertainment. Some are partners. Some are important members of the family. Others are regarded as children. They provide safety, emotional support, physical contact, and myriad health benefits. The relationship between pet and owner can be defining and reaffirming. However, the law of nature holds that all living things, including pets, must die. Yet these relationships do not cease with death; owners, myself included, keep and create reminders of their pets through mnemonic items made meaningful because of sensory embodiment. In so doing, owners reclaim and maintain their relationships with their deceased pets for even though death ends a life, it does not end a relationship.

NOTES

1. Folklorist Sandra Stahl Dolby argues that personal experience narratives function “to move us, to excite us, to entertain and teach us” (1989: x). Additionally, folklorist Jeana Jorgensen (2016) more specifically enumerates the functions of personal experience narratives as “broadly [linked] to entertainment, education, validating cultural norms, exerting social pressure, and providing wish fulfillment or release. More specifically...personal narratives about travel or extraordinary experiences can invoke wonder, while telling personal narratives about trauma or tragedy can be used to provoke empathy or pity.” Finally, in describing fellow folklorist Charlotte Linde’s (1993) work on life story narratives, Ray Cashman comments “this kind of storytelling [is] “a crucial arena for expressing a sense of self while negotiating that self in relation to others” (Cashman 2016:6).

2. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "thanatology," accessed February 20, 2018, <http://www.oed.com.dist.lib.usu.edu/view/Entry/200128?redirectedFrom=thanatology>

3. See Katherine Grier’s *Pets in America: A History* (2006).

4. These include Rachel Poliquin's *The Breathless Zoo* (2012), Joan B. Landes, Paula Young Lee, and Paula Youngquist’s *Gorgeous Beasts: Animal Bodies in Historical Perspective* (2012), and Liv Emma Thorsen, Karen A. Rader, and Adam Dodd’s *Animals on Display: The Creaturely in Museums, Zoos, and Natural History* (2013).

5. In his article “Banana Cannon” and Other Folk Traditions Between Human and Nonhuman Animals” (1989), folklorist Jay Mechling explores whether the play dyads between human/animal can be considered examples of folklore, especially since they are comparative to those of human folk dyads and meet multiple defining criteria as given by scholars in the field (1989: 315, 317). Mechling concludes by inquiring if this same line of reasoning can be similarly applied to other nonhuman dyads such as people/things and people/the imaginary.

6. Although over-reaction to sensory stimulation is a typical presentation of Sensory Processing Disorder or Sensory Integration Disorder, individuals may also under-respond or be slow to respond to sensory stimulation.

7. In his aptly titled book *Grasping Things: Folk Material Culture and Mass Society in America*, Bronner discusses how he incorporates a sensory approach in his study of material culture: "I bring out the priority of touch and sight, the sensory basis of material life, in American culture" (1986: xii) for "the object attracts inspection by many senses, especially those of touch and sight" (1986: 1).

8. Although visual cultures scholar, Marius Kwint, uses the same term in his edited collection *Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (1999) to refer to a similar concept, this specific definition is my own, as developed for this study.

9. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “embody,” Accessed August 15, 2018,
<http://www.oed.com.dist.lib.usu.edu/view/Entry/60907?redirectedFrom=embody#eid>
10. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “embody,” Accessed August 15, 2018,
<http://www.oed.com.dist.lib.usu.edu/view/Entry/60907?redirectedFrom=embody#eid>
11. Shelley. Personal communication, email, 23 January 2018.
12. Steve N. Personal communication, email, 26 January 2018.
13. Sandy. Personal communication, email, 23 January 2018.; TJ. Personal communication, email, 23 January 2018.
14. Shelley, 2018.
15. Beverly. Personal communication, email, 1 February 2018.
16. Steve N., 2018.
17. Steve N., 2018.
18. Shelley, 2018.
19. TJ, 2018.
20. Paula. Personal communication, email, 1 February 2018.
21. Beverly, 2018.
22. Sandy, 2018.
23. Carly. Personal communication, email, 23 January 2018.
24. Steve N., 2018.
25. Steve N., 2018.
26. Paula, 2018.
27. TJ, 2018.
28. Steve N., 2018.
29. Sandy, 2018.
30. Sandy, 2018.
31. Lisa. Personal communication, email, 3 April 2017.
32. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “memory,” accessed February 20, 2018,
<http://www.oed.com.dist.lib.usu.edu/view/Entry/116363?redirectedFrom=memory>
33. Folklorist Henry Glassie’s study “Folk Housing in Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts” (1976) is one example of this type of approach.
34. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “function,” accessed February 20, 2018,
<http://www.oed.com.dist.lib.usu.edu/view/Entry/75476?rskey=NsxJql&result=1memory>
35. Aristotle standardized the traditional understanding of the existence of only five senses. However, as Hiskey iterates, there are many senses, of which not all are consciously perceived. The other senses include equilibrioception (balance, in a general sense and as it relates to changes in acceleration and direction), awareness of the body in space and where body parts

are relative to other parts (proprioception), sense of time, sense of hunger, sense of thirst, sense of direction, muscle tension, stretch reception, sense of pressure, sense of itch, sense of chemical detection (chemoreception), sense of temperature (thermoception), sense of pain (nociception), and sense of detecting Earth's magnetic fields (magnetoception) (2010). Sense ability and strength also depends on species. Birds and cattle have strong magnetoception, whereas humans do not. Some species of fish also have electroreceptive organs (Hiskey 2010). Additionally, some individuals argue there exists sense/s of the paranormal or those relating to "beyond the range of scientifically known or recognizable phenomena" (Volk 2011: 4).

36. Karl. Personal communication, email, 26 January 2018.
37. Heidi. Personal communication, Skype, November 2013.
38. Kim. Personal communication, phone, 28 March 2017.
39. Steve N., 2018.
40. Steve N., 2018.
41. Steve N., 2018.
42. David. Personal communication, in person, 8 December 2017.
43. David, 2017.
44. Lisa, 2017.
45. TJ, 2018.
46. Shelley, 2018.
47. H. Personal communication, email, 24 January 2018.
48. Lisa, 2017.
49. Amelia. Personal communication, in person, 27 September 2017.
50. Kasey. Personal communication, email, 30 March 2017.
51. Callie. Personal communication, email, 3 April 2017.
52. SpiritHorse Designs, Equine Keepsakes, Tail Spin Bracelets, and House of Salmi are examples of companies who offer this service.
53. Celeste. Personal communication, email, 28 March 2017.
54. Karl, 2018.
55. Sandy, 2018.
56. TJ, 2018.
57. Lisa, 2017.
58. Kim, 2017.
59. Lisa, 2017.
60. Steve N., 2018.
61. Steve N., 2018.
62. Steve N., 2018.
63. Steve L., 2018.
64. Callie, 2017.; Kasey, 2017.
65. Jan. Personal communication, in person, 2 April 2017.
66. Judi. Personal communication, email, 23 January 2018.
67. Lisa, 2017.
68. Callie, 2017.
69. Jan, 2017.
70. Jan, 2017.

71. Callie, 2017.
72. Steve L., 2018.
73. Lisa, 2017.
74. Jan, 2017.
75. Steve N., 2018.
76. Steve N., 2018.
77. Steve L., 2018.
78. Jan, 2017.
79. Celeste, 2017.
80. Celeste, 2017.
81. H., 2018.
82. Models or figures from Breyer Animal Creations of Reeve's International, Inc., Hasbro's Littlest Pet Shop, and Schleich are among those used.
83. L. Personal communication, email, 30 January 2018.
84. L., 2018.
85. L., 2018.
86. L., 2018.
87. Levi, n.d. "Testimonials and Shout Outs." Cuddle Clones. Accessed January 14, 2018. <https://cuddleclones.com/testimonials/>.
88. Annette, n.d. "Testimonials and Shout Outs." Cuddle Clones. Accessed January 14, 2018. <https://cuddleclones.com/testimonials/>.
89. Paula, 2018.
90. Shelley, 2018.
91. Jan, 2017.
92. Jan, 2017.
93. Mary, n.d. "Testimonials and Shout Outs." Cuddle Clones. Accessed January 14, 2018. <https://cuddleclones.com/testimonials/>.
94. Annette, n.d. "Testimonials and Shout Outs." Cuddle Clones. Accessed January 14, 2018. <https://cuddleclones.com/testimonials/>.
95. Jo, n.d. "Testimonials and Shout Outs." Cuddle Clones. Accessed January 14, 2018. <https://cuddleclones.com/testimonials/>.
96. JoAlice, n.d. "Testimonials and Shout Outs." Cuddle Clones. Accessed January 14, 2018. <https://cuddleclones.com/testimonials/>.
97. L., 2018.
98. For more on how the material cultural items of pet gravestones provide insight into the conceptions of the human-animal bond and how it changes, see "The Meaning of American Pet Cemetery Gravestones" (Brandes 2009) and "Remembering Man's Other Best Friend: U.S. Horse Graves and Memorials in Historical Perspective" (Collison 2005).
99. Although backyard burial is commonly practiced without repercussion, due to the potential biohazard threat posed by the body, most states and some cities have laws and zoning regulations governing animal burial (Miller 2018). Primary biohazard concerns regarding animal burial include the potential for disease spread and the contamination of water sources. If burial is legal, laws may dictate which species are allowed, causes and manners of death precluding burial, the maximum length of time between death and burial, the minimum depth

of burial, the location and distance of the burial site relative to water and power sources, and the number of animal burials permitted based on property size (City of Poway n.d.; Domestic Horse Disposal 2014). An alternative to backyard burial is interment in pet cemeteries. While the number of such cemeteries in the United States and around the world continues to grow, current burial approximations show that roughly only 2% of the estimated population of U.S. household pets are buried in them (Desmond 2016: 81-82, 86).

100. Kay. Personal communication, in person, 25 November 2013.

101. Necklaces, bracelets, earrings, cufflinks, and brooches are some of the forms this jewelry takes. These pieces of jewelry primarily come in three kinds, miniature vessels, diamonds, and blown glass. Miniature vessels are comprised of receptacle wherein a small amount of cremains are stored. Because cremains are essentially pieces of carbon, they can be turned into diamonds through the application of high pressure and heat in an artificial process that mimics the natural creation of diamonds. Similarly, cremains can be added to molten glass or used in conjunction with sand to create glass which is then blown into beads to be used for jewelry.

102. Steve N., 2018.

103. Lisa, 2017.

104. Steve N., 2018.

105. Although not technically “taxidermy,” human bodies are preserved through the process of plastination as developed by anatomist Gunther von Hagens. Through a complicated, multi-step process, the body is impregnated with a polymer which then cures producing an odorless specimen that is virtually impervious to decay. Bodies preserved in this manner are typically used for scientific research or educational display in exhibits such as Bodyworks.

106. In a note to the pet preservationists at Anthony Eddy’s Wildlife Studio regarding his preserved cat, one customer writes “even though I can never hear his ‘cordlike’ voice or his frequent purring, it’s good to know that at least his vocal chords [sic] and mechanisms...are still there” (Colvin 2016: 69).

107. In their article “On the nature of creepiness” (2016), psychologists Francis T. McAndrew and Sara S. Koehnke conducted a study wherein participants identified taxidermist as the second creepiest profession. “Clown” was concluded to be the creepiest.

108. Stewart discusses longing within the contexts of three different meanings as “yearning desire, the fanciful cravings incident to women during pregnancy, belongings or appurtenances” (1999: ix). For Stewart, each meaning when taken separately and together provides both a positive and negative layered analysis of the concept of nostalgia. In turn, she uses these analyses to examine how individuals and groups use narratives and objects to convey the symbolic.

109. As per the Summum Company website, the process can take between four and eight months to complete. Price is based on weight and ranges between \$7,000 and \$128,000 (Summum, n.d. a).

110. Depending on the company, prices for cloning range between \$25,000 and \$100,000 (Morris 2018).

111. Rabbits use feces, urine, and scent glands to mark their territory. The scent gland most often used is located under the chin. Unsurprisingly, when rabbits rub their chin on objects, it is known as chinning.

112. Sandy, 2018.

113. Sandy, 2018.

114. Jan. Personal communication, in person, in person, 18 February 2018.

115. Sandy, 2018.

116. Jan, 2018.

117. This type of abscess, or pocket of infection, forms behind a rabbit's eye.

118. Lisa, 2017.

119. Kim, 2017.

120. H., 2018.

121. TJ, 2018.

122. Judi, 2018.

123. Shelley, 2018.

124. Lisa, 2017.

125. Kasey, 2017.

126. Paula, 2018.

127. Carly, 2018.

128. Steve L., 2018.

129. TJ, 2018.

130. Callie, 2017.

131. Beverly, 2018.

132. Jan, 2017.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
MEMENTOS



Figure 1.1 Shirt With Pipkin's Fur.



Figure 1.2 Bag of Xanadu's Fur.



Figure 1.3 Example of Historical Mourning Brooch Containing Human Hair. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 1.4 Kasey's Keychain Made From Bert's Tail Hair and Photograph.



Figure 1.5 Examples of Clothing Made From Dog Hair. Photo Credit: Ms. Fabulous.



Figure 1.6 Xanadu's Box of Cremains With His Paw Impression.



Figure 1.7 Coaster Made From Xanadu's Paw Impression.



Figure 1.8 Ornament Made From Xanadu's Paw Impression.



Figure 1.9 Canvases of Xanadu's and Zoey's Painted Paw Impressions.



Figure 1.10 Impression of skinnypigs1's Guinea Pig Nanook's Feet Made by PearTree Impressions. Photo Credit: Pear Tree Impressions.



Figure 1.11 Kasey's Horseshoe Art Made From Bert's Shoes with Keychain.



Figure 1.12 Cast Made From Nose Impression. Photo Credit: JaneWearJewelry.



Figure 1.13 Example of Live Casting Death Mask and Hand Casts of Martin Luther.
Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

APPENDIX B:
MATERIAL COMPANIONS



Figure 2.1 Aryk's Shipping Halter.



Figure 2.2 Xanadu's and Zoey's Collars With Tags.



Figure 2.3 Snickers' Collar.



Figure 2.4 Snickers' Tags.



Figure 2.5 Sparkle's Block House.



Figure 2.6 Sparkle's Food Dish.



Figure 2.7 Sparkle's Salad Dish.



Figure 2.8 Sparkle's Water Bottle.



Figure 2.9 Sparkle's Cage Currently Occupied by Tribble.



Figure 2.10 Snickers' Water Dish.

APPENDIX C:
MINIATURES



Figure 3.1 Customized Miniature Portrait Models of (Left to Right) Watson, Pipkin, and Sparkle.



Figure 3.2 Customized Portrait Model Example. Photo Credit: Michelle's Custom Keepsakes.



Figure 3.3 Cuddle Clones Customized Figurine Example. Photo Credit: Cuddle Clones.



Figure 3.4 Cuddle Clones Customized Plush Examples. Photo Credit: Cuddle Clones.



Figure 3.5 Petsies Customized Plush Example. Photo Credit: Petsies.



Figure 3.6 Shelter Pups Customized Felted Plush Example. Photo Credit: Shelter Pups.



Figure 3.7 Nine Lives Twine Felted Fur “Meowmorial” Example. Photo Credit: Nine Lives Twine.



Figure 3.8 Collection of Fjord Models Next to Photograph of Aryk and Gemma.



Figure 3.9 Paula's Happy-esque Miniatures.



Figure 3.10 Jan's Snickers-esque Miniature Ornament With Tag.

APPENDIX D:
PET BODIES



Figure 4.1 Sparkle's and Watson's Urns.



Figure 4.2 McCoy's and Black Jack's Urns.



Figure 4.3 Twix's and Pipkin's Urns.



Figure 4.4 Zoey's Box of Cremains.



Figure 4.5 Cat Preserved by Freeze-Drying. Photo Credit: Huffman Taxidermy.



Figure 4.6 Dog Preserved by Freeze-Drying. Photo Credit: Barcroft Media.



Figure 4.7 Example of Historical Transi Tomb from 16th Century Belgium; "l'homme à moulons" (cadaver eaten by worms). Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 4.8 Example of Historical Taxidermy Terrier by G Master Junior from Victorian Era. Photo Credit: Hansons Auctioneers and Valuers.



Figure 4.9 Buster and Cat Mummiform®. Photo Credit: Summum at www.summum.org.



Figure 4.10 DNA Necklace. Photo Credit: Perpetua Life Jewel.



Figure 4.11 Nina Otto Holding Picture of Sir Lancelot While Edgar Otto Holds Clone of Sir Lancelot. Photo Credit: European Press Agency.

APPENDIX E:
OTHER TYPES OF MATERIAL MEMORIES



Figure 5.1 Jan's Tablespoon With Snickers' Tooth Mark.