

Subversive Memory: Material Practices in Grief as Anti-Capitalist Relationality

Presented to

The Feminist and Gender Studies Program and The Department of Sociology

Colorado College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree

Bachelor of Arts

By

Grace Tumavicus

I made it out by the skin of my griefs.

- Ocean Vuong, "Not Even This", *Time is a Mother*

To my Mom who had such wonderful clothes, to my Dad who tenderly saved them, and to my friends who lovingly borrow them. This love sustains me.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	1
Historical and Political Context	4
Literature Review	7
Theoretical Framework	17
Methodology	25
Analysis	34
Conclusion	45
References	49
Appendix	51

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was made possible by so many different people over the course of not only the year-long process of research and writing, but my entire time at CC and before. I first want to thank my capstone advisors, Dr. Rushaan Kumar and Dr. Chantal Figueroa, for your careful critique and constant investment in this project. I am so grateful for what we were able to make together! I also want to thank my academic advisor, Dr. Nadia Guessous, for your tenacious and unwavering commitment to radical methodology, pedagogy, and care. I truly see the world differently because of the work you have guided me through. To Dr. Heidi R. Lewis, thank you for welcoming me into the world of FGS four years ago, and sustaining such an invigorating FGS home. To Kathy Guiffre, thank you for introducing me to the ideas of symbolic subversion and hegemony -- your excitement and zeal for these threads of sociology inspire me. To the broader FGS and Sociology departments, thank you for providing a nurturing academic home for me for the past four years.

To the FGS seniors-- Amanda, Mar, and Pardes -- thank you for creating generative spaces of support from the very inception of this project. Having such an encouraging and reassuring cohort was essential to my belief in this project, and I deeply appreciate you all.

To my lovely friends and housemates -- Ellie, Sophia, Maeve, Ruby, Eugenie, and Kate -- this process was made all the more loving, collective, hilarious, emotional, powerful, and do-able by your support. The ways in which we care for each other is the sweetest part of my life. This project was truly a labor of love, and the love is not mine alone -- I will always be grateful for this collectivity.

To my interlocutors, thank you for your vulnerability. We hold each other!

INTRODUCTION

I've sat down to write this paper wearing my mom's pants. I've read over analysis materials wearing her sweater in the morning, then gone out in her necklace at night. I've read over her grocery list on my bedside table when I can't fall asleep, I've pinned her brooches on my stuffed animals as I never thought I could pull their elegance off myself, I've tried, unsuccessfully, to fix her bike, I've obsessed over every photo and memory and story of her wittiness and laugh and love. My mom died when I was a young child, leaving the only co-present, or living at the same time, relationship that we shared one of a new mom and a young toddler. I have spent the rest of our unconditional relationship, however, wrapped in her clothes and surrounded by her things.

These objects are employed in the love we, and I, continue to feel for our loved ones who have died. This love, in my experience and in those of my research interlocutors, is a continuous, shifting, growing relationship in some ways despite, and in some ways because of the lack of present temporal coexistence with those who have passed. People get *creative* in this love. They are forced to become imaginative, to generate new ways of relating and new conceptualizations of intimacy. For me, this love has looked different over the years. It has been writing letters to my mom in old journals, naming my mealworm after her in second grade, arranging the rocks sweetly by her gravestone, asking for stories, making my dad cry.

Now, because I live 3,000 miles away from my family, I don't have our old camcorder or her grave down the street or my dad to pester. What I do have is her sweaters, her jewelry, and her pants; I wear her to class, to the gym, to dinners with friends and for walks on my own. Even though I excessively love all my clothes, these pieces are different. Of course they are. I knew

anecdotally that everyone (everyone that's lost someone, which is pretty much everyone) keeps these little things. And I knew that these things were special, powerful, and different in some way.

In long meetings with my professors and even longer talks around the kitchen table with my housemates, we got around to the *difference* of these things; our 'special' relationship to them, their affect, and their staying-power. Under the all-encompassing regime of late-stage capitalism, our 'things' (objects, materials) are supposed to be instrumental and throw away-able. However, not all of our objects and possessions under capitalism are purely instrumental. Oftentimes, they are imbued with mystical qualities – to change us, better us, and care for us in ways that only that thing can¹. This type of material-human relationship illustrates indoctrination into a thing-person fetishization (Marx 1867). This fetishization principally works to alienate folks from each other and from themselves by ascribing magical qualities to materials while erasing the human labor that constitutes the condition of possibility and existence of objects and commodities (Marx 1867). This erased labor is principally labor that exploits people of color, primarily in the Global South – the erasing of this labor soothes the conscience of consumers in the West as we need not confront exploitative labor conditions when we interact with our material possessions.

As is articulated in the theoretical sections below, capitalism dictates our relationship to our materials in prescriptive and alienating ways. However, when I love my mom's sweater more than one 'should' maybe love a piece of clothing, it is not for the means of personal prestige nor to the ends of interpersonal alienation. It both *feels* and functions differently than that, incongruous with capitalist logics of materials as instrumental and disposable, and our utilitarian

¹ For example, white U.S. based musician Macklemore's song "Wing\$" details the promise of Nike shoes turning him into a world-class athlete -- "So much than just a pair of shoes / Nah, this is what I am" (Macklemore 2011)

relationships to them. It feels loving, connecting, and, to borrow (and repurpose) Marx's term on commodity fetishism, fantastical (Marx 1867: 165).

In this project, I explore how objects are re-valued through this different feeling that grievors imbue their loved ones' belongings with. I argue that material memory practices, used in grief, are quotidian subversions of the logics of consumerism under capitalism and its' prescription of human-material relationships, namely through commodity fetishism and alienated labor. This argument is informed by a study that I conducted of myself and my community and our material grief practices.

In this paper, I will begin by situating the project in this specific, potent historical and political moment of grief and remembering, as well as in our particular late-capitalist context. I will then review the informative literature, focusing principally on capitalism's visceral impossibilities, memory labor, and reimagined materiality as employed in memory. Focusing in on materiality, I then turn to Marxist theories of embedded capitalism, commodity fetishism, and alienated labor, as well as anthropological theories of material culture and behavior. Moving specifically towards my own project, I detail my methodology as centered on ethics of shared vulnerability and community research and articulate my method as following such ethos. Progressing onto my own research, my analysis focuses on three codes from my data of material memory practice photos and descriptions: Use, Construction of Self, and Constancy. I detail here how these material memory practices are related to in ways that divert from prescriptive material relations under capitalism. Finally, I utilize theories of hegemony to illustrate the political potentiality of this reimagined relationality. The paper is concluded with an overview of my contribution to the existing literature on death, grief, materiality and memory studies.

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

I come to this project in a time of tremendous and collective grieving due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are innumerable communities, families, and friends grieving, remembering, and relating to their lost loved ones, and questions of how to grieve and how to remember those that have died are at the front of the mind for millions. Over 6.9 million people have died from COVID-19 since the spring of 2020, which leaves an even larger and growing interrelated web of families, friends, and loved ones who are grieving and remembering (WHO 2023).

Additionally, because of the intense and everpresent publicization of the deaths and grief of COVID-19 in the news, informal conversations, workplaces and schools, even those who have not experienced a personal loss both understand and are affected by this worldwide grief context. There is a notion of collective grieving because of such a widely recognized death context that reaches all of us. In this way, COVID-19 does not just operate as an illness; it is a historical event, an epoch, and a political tool, as well as a site of personal devastation, illness, and grieving. This requires us to grapple with specific and personal ways that grief is experienced within a more expansive grief context; COVID-19 exemplifies our constraints and opportunities of grief in specific conditions. How do we understand grief and ourselves as grievers in this larger moment of mass death-worlds? How does attending to specified grief interact with institutional and state impetuses to both generalize and forget? How does exploring deeply situated grief attend to an ethic of care?

Contributing to a larger grief context long before COVID-19 is the devastation and violence of human-made climate change. These losses encapsulate a more expansive definition of grief – grief of loved ones, yes, but also of place, of home, safety, natural landscapes, and resources. Climate change, like COVID-19, is both a felt experience and a perceived one; those

who have not suffered personal loss are exposed to this collective grieving through various forms of storytelling, whether that be news or otherwise. The World Health Organization predicts that between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause an additional 250,000 deaths per year (WHO 2023).

Both COVID-19 and climate change highlight two of the most politically recognized death contexts, representing the larger acknowledgement of a time of collective grieving. However, writing on death and grief requires an attendance to the fact that there are ongoing collective grieving contexts that are not recognized in the same ways. While death is experienced by all, it is not experienced at the same rate, by the same causes, and in the same ways by everyone. People marginalized and made vulnerable by bigoted ideologies of racism, colonialism, transphobia, classism, and ableism are constantly violated and killed by the state, by predatory medical systems and other institutions in the form of “slow death” (Puar 2017, Mbembe 2011). This institutionalized and omnipresent death is not felt by all. Grieving and remembering a loved one who died in prison, or to police violence, or to medical malpractice, or to cancer, all look and feel very different. Additionally, as is important to this project specifically, the grieving practices we have access to or are appropriate in different death contexts vary greatly. For example, having a loved one die by state-inflicted violence while crossing the U.S. Mexico border could have little allowance for the use of material memory practices; materials could have been discarded, left behind, forcefully taken, and other grief practices must be adopted. The employment of materials as both loving and subsequently subversive is only available to specific grieving people.

As the backdrop and catalyst for many complications with COVID, causes of climate change, and other violent death contexts, late-stage consumer capitalism dominates our current

moment. We live in a time completely engulfed in these logics of competition, individualism, and exploitation. As is articulated by journalist Annie Lowery in her Atlantic article titled “Why the Phrase ‘Late Capitalism’ is Suddenly Everywhere” (2017), late capitalism is specifically characterized by a rise of consumerism, globalization, and the ascendancy of the internet, as well as descriptive of the “tragicomic inanity and inequity of contemporary capitalism”² (Lowrey 2017: 1). The qualifier of *late* refers to Marx’s writings on capitalism’s inherent instability; Marx articulated that the contradictions and ballooning inequality of this system were not to stand the test of time. Indicated by the rise in popularity and curiosity of the term, explanations and understandings of our capitalistic moment are being heavily sought out (Lowery 2017: 1). The crises of this all-pervasive system are unignorable; we have reached a point where nothing is untouched by capitalism. This begs the necessity of finding ways to continue to live our lives under the violence of late capitalism and subvert these logics, especially in everyday life, where we can exert the most individual and specified agency. This is where I seek to position this project – in a state of grappling with the daily realities of late-stage capitalism, but containing the hope of subversion and resistance to these violences.

Death and grief mangled and permeated with our conditions and constraints under capitalism is all around us. Grief is a widespread experience, as capitalism has grown to be, and the interrelatedness and tugging of these two things bears our attention. That is not to say that the ways in which we conceive of memory in grief must adhere to capitalistic logics, but it does mean that they must contend with one another. I argue that griever’s material memory practices enact subversion by utilizing the tools of consumerism (objects, commodities, and material possessions) in ways that are antithetical to the alienation of late-stage capitalism.

² “Nordstrom selling jeans with fake mud on them for \$425. Prisoners’ phone calls costing \$14 a minute. Starbucks forcing baristas to write “Come Together” on cups due to the fiscal cliff showdown” (Lowery 2017: 1)

This section is to say that death and violence are omnipresent and especially heightened in the moment we are in now -- however, merely documenting that damage (Tuck 2009)³ is not the project I am undertaking. This contextualization is more to say that writing about and studying grief in this moment is an incredibly important way to understand who my community, as U.S. based contemporaries, is right now, in ways that are both heartbreaking *and* loving. This project aims to attend to the devastation of our current grief context while focusing on nurturing, subversive, and powerful forms of memory that bring us love and connectedness both despite and because of our grief contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Here, I will explore the informative literature, focusing on three themes: capitalism and ‘bad feelings’, memory labor, and material memory. I cite both academic and non-academic sources, such as books and podcasts, in an attempt to pay homage to the valuation of the quotidian, both in this project and in larger feminist thought.

Capitalism and ‘Bad Feelings’

Interactions between capitalism and what we have come to consider as ‘bad feelings’⁴ (such as trauma and grief) have been explored in the literature through discussions of the impossibility of coexistence between capitalist logics and these emotional (and physical) realities. The pace and spirit of capitalism has been identified as disallowing ‘bad feelings’, but bad feelings have also been identified as a space of refusal to abide by capitalist logics and ways of life. The identification and articulation of this impossibility has been informed by critical

³ Eve Tuck, a Canadian, Unangax̄ scholar and professor of critical race and Indigenous studies at the University of Toronto, writes on the colonial, violent history of damage-based research directed at Indigenous communities. While attempting to not misappropriate Tuck’s methodological insights, as they are specific to the Indigenous and colonial context that she writes from, I am deeply indebted to her methodology of desire-based research, and hope to, in some ways, enact her framework in this project.

⁴ Discussed and defined further in Methodology in exploration of Ghassan Moussawi’s work.

disability studies/disability justice work, that, among many other things, focuses on the constraints of capitalism on particular bodyminds and ways of life (Clare 2017). Here, I am drawing on Julie Avril Minich's proposition of disabilities studies as a methodology; instead of simply an identarian field, disabilities studies offers us a mode of analysis, a way in which to see the world, to scrutinize modalities of power such as ableism, but not limited to it. Though my project does not focus on disability identity, it is indebted to the insights of disabilities scholars (and those enacting disability scholarship, though not self identified) on pace, time, anti-capitalist thought, and emotive and physical knowledge.

Amanda Diserholt, a Lacanian scholar and lecturer on fatigue and psychology from England, directed a study in 2021 aptly titled "Fatigue as an Unconscious Refusal of the Demands of Late Stage Capitalism". Diserholt's interlocutors, who experience intense fatigue, feel the embodied contradiction between the pace of capitalism and the pace of their needs firsthand. The patient's expressed that the demand to 'keep going' "... asks for perpetual, productive movement of all, but, if met by the subject, [they] are reduced to a concrete object of productivity where [their] needs, wishes and desires are excluded" (Diserholt 2021: 519). She writes that "the fatigued subject emerges through a desire 'to do nothing' as a defense against being reduced to a machine-like object and the unknowability and anxiety accompanying it" (Diserholt 2021: 525). Here, Diserholt illustrates the detriments of the demand of an unforgiving, unemotional, unrelenting capitalist logic. Though Diserholt is discussing bodily illness, her argument speaks to the harmfully prescriptive and alienating ways that capitalist logics dictate both our emotional and physical behavior, that I hope to illustrate with material/emotional behavior. These restrictive demands work to erase (and make impossible) more capacious understandings and embodiments of emotional (and here, physical) realities.

This piece identifies the crux at which traumatic realities (physical, as is with illness, and emotional, as is with grief) contend with capitalist logics and subsequent demands. Diserholt illustrates how bodily fatigue refuses the pace of capitalism; here, I hope to illustrate how material memory practices refuse logics of commodity fetishism and alienated labor. I appreciate how Diserholt identifies these realities, in illness, win out against the antithetical pace of capitalism – one physically cannot keep up with their body as a capitalist machine. Though I am exploring emotional realities, I take solace in Diserholt’s faith in quotidian refusal as steadfast.

Moya Bailey, a Black feminist, scholar, and professor of media and marginalization, provides us with a theoretical, disability justice-focused backing for Diserholt’s findings. Bailey, in her piece titled “The Ethics of Pace” (2021), articulates how the modern capitalistic imperative provides “exponential pressure” for humans to be working faster, harder, more efficiently, more productively, just in order to survive by capitalist logics (Bailey 2021: 285). She describes this as an “impossible expectation of pace” that works to render lives less livable (Bailey 2021: 286). In search for solace in the face of this impossibility, Bailey turns to critical disabilities studies, writing that disability studies asks us to “rethink these demands on our bodies and time by reminding us that not all humans are able to move and produce in line with these ever-mounting societal expectations” (Bailey 2021: 286). Bailey’s theoretical offerings map seamlessly onto Diserholt’s analysis, but also offer us a broader, disability studies frame⁵ to imagine pace differently, outside of a prescriptive capitalist imperative. She is urgent in her call to heed disability studies warning, to slow down, refuse the capitalist logic of break-neck efficiency, writing that our current pace is unsustainable for survival (Bailey 2021: 296). Instead, she suggests moving at the speed of trust (brown 2019), at a sustainable pace, focusing on

5

relationships and critical connection. By situating relationships as a key strategy for the refusal of capitalist pace, Bailey supports my intervention that loving relationality through material memory subverts capitalist alienation. Bailey recognizes the impossibility of a capitalist pace, and importantly draws our attention to the labor of disabilities studies/disability justice in rendering this impossibility visible and dreaming/imagining/enacting something otherwise.

Micki McGee, a white sociologist of neurodiversity and American studies, also takes up the issue of capitalism's inability to care for 'bad feelings'. Akin to Diserholt's argument that capitalism mechanizes the body, McGee argues that capitalism projects market values, including scarcity and finiteness of resources, onto our emotional lives. In this capitalistic conceptualization of emotions, you cannot share your care, because you would lose that which is for yourself. This creates a care-crisis, where capitalism dictates that there is not the time nor the resources to give or share care to one another. This is yet another example of the spirit of capitalism pervading "the most personal and intimate spheres to new levels" (McGee 2020: 52). I include McGee because of her attendance to our emotional realities and our care capacities, which are both at the forefront of conversations of loving grief.

However, unlike Diserholt, McGee believes in the political opportunity of this felt contradiction. She writes, "the ubiquity of personal care catastrophes ... can and do open spaces for political mobilization, and sometimes for legal recourse" (McGee 2020: 59). Ending optimistically, McGee positions the growing care crisis as an opportunity for political mobilization – when we challenge the bandaid fixes (namely the self-help market), we have the opportunity to reimagine what kind of care could actually help. "Self-care turns radical when it's turned inside out" (McGee 2020:59). I appreciate the identification of this contradictory space as one of political action and subversive power, as this is the intervention that I aim to make in this

project. Additionally, care bears heavy on this project as I am principally concerned with how *caring* and loving relationality with material memory practices is subversive. McGee's understanding of care as contending with capitalist logics, but also as a space of political subversion and intervention of these same logics is central to this project's analysis.

Lastly, looking specifically at grief, Will Hector, a therapist and writer, focuses on capitalism's interaction with grief as our most 'human' emotion. Hector's principal concern is that capitalism and capitalist logics do not have room for "any feeling other than forced optimism" (Hector 2016: 45), separating us as humans from our most grounded and intimate selves – the self that lies in acknowledgement and embracing of grief, specifically. Hector argues that capitalism's disallowance of grief alienates us from ourselves. Citing the power of grief – as the catalyst for "intimate connection, brilliant creativity, and our clearest thinking when we allow it to" (Hector 2016: 44) – Hector posits that capitalism cannot survive grief at the frequencies that each is moving at now. I disagree with Hector's final point, which suggests that if we incorporate grief into a climate-friendlier capitalism they could coexist. However, I do appreciate his articulation of the impossibility of coexistence of capitalist logics with our most intimate selves in grief. I especially cherish his empowering argument that in the antithetical, impossible relationship that grief and capitalism inhabit, it is *capitalism* that will not survive – not the other way around. This is akin to Diserholt's understanding of fatigue as refusal of capitalist demands – not capitalistic demands as refusal of fatigued bodies. Both Diserholt and Hector position quotidian physical and emotional realities as being the immovable wall, *not* capitalism. This offers a hopeful and imaginative reality in which capitalism is porous, can be molded, changed, reimagined, or ultimately done away with. Our grief, our sleep, our bodily and emotional needs cannot. Though Hector does eventually posit that grief will incorporate into capitalism, he sets

the stage for a much more radical position – that grief’s loving power will unravel the alienating violences of capitalistic relationships, as I am attempting to articulate here.

I do take issue with his positioning of grief as highly productive for creativity and thinking, as I believe that that is simply a continuation of capitalist, productivist logics that only see value in yielding capacity, but I admit I have fallen into this thinking trap myself. Ultimately, Hector seems to wish to mold capitalistic logics to be “friendlier” to our grieving selves, whereas I wish to posit that grief can undermine, undercut, and subvert these very logics altogether.

This literature intervenes at the point of contradiction between the values of capitalism and the reality of *being* – needing care, needing rest, needing love and community. I wish to build on this literature by zooming in on the antithetical nature of material memory in grief with the material-relationships that are prescribed under capitalism. Following McGee’s insights, I argue that this contradiction creates a political space where we have the opportunity to both question and subvert the logics of capitalism, through material memory.

Memory Labor

The methodology of memory work is oft cited to Frigga Haug, a German socialist-feminist. Having employed memory work as methodology in her research, Haug details the memory-work method in her article, “Memory-work as a Method of Social Science Research” (2000). Her insistence on memory as an important and resistive site of knowledge production stems from a valuation of what is considered traditionally women’s forms of knowing, and feminists have theorized as counter to dominant, patriarchal, ‘objective’ research. Haug describes memory work as emancipating, collective, partial and specified (Haug 2000: 28, 29). Though largely methodological, Haug’s work informs this project by articulating the ways in which a

focus on memory work as knowledge production is a feminist valuation of subjugated and quotidian knowledge.

Moving forward with Haug's insights, I now turn to the question of memory work as interacting with labor contexts. Here I explore the work of Eliana Moya-Raggio, a Chilean scholar of Spanish, comparative literature, and Latinx studies, as she discusses the relationship between memory work and labor. In her piece titled "'Arpilleras': Chilean Culture of Resistance", Moya-Raggio describes the art of arpilleras⁶ — a quilted picture — as resistive memory work. Moya-Raggio positions these arpilleras as a political response to the militaristic reality of Chilean existence at the time, including mass disappearances, incarceration, and unlivable economic realities (Moya-Raggio 1984: 278). She takes care to describe how an arpillera (a person, most often a woman, who creates arpilleras) relates to her work and labor. Moya-Raggio describes how work as an arpillera is radically different in goal and effect than some other alienating job — arpillera's are creating resistance, radically changing their lives, and working to achieve liberation (Moya-Raggio 1984: 278). In being involved in labor principally concerned with memory work (with specificity to the explicitly political memory work in Chile in the 80s), labor ceases to be alienating as it is under capitalist exploitation.

Moya-Raggio describes how, in this case, the difference between alienated labor and loving care labor is the intervention of memory and resistance. I do not wish to extrapolate Moya-Raggio's interventions to this project by erasing the geopolitical and historical specificities of her work. I instead hope to humbly learn from her findings, and broaden my understanding of the interactions between memory, resistance, and labor, as is relevant to this project's discussions of care labor. We can learn from Raggio the capacious potentiality of

⁶ Link to Moya-Raggio's personal online gallery of arpilleras -- <http://arpilleras-enlamemoria.squarespace.com/galeria1#galeria>

memory labor – understanding that labor need not be alienating, it can be living-giving and world-building. Though only a minority of my data has to do with labor, I appreciate how Raggio’s work identifies the very intervention that separates alienating labor from loving labor – that of politicized memory.

Material Memory

Through memory, material-use is reimagined to be incongruous with a utilitarian purpose. The theories I am working with to explore this reimagination of materials come from Mel Y Chen’s *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (2012) and Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2009). Both authors work to give complexity to what we consider to be ‘simply’ objects or materials. Chen begins by troubling the binary of animate and inanimate, , writing that when this hierarchy is taken on its own terms, “objects, animals, substances, and spaces [are] assigned constrained zones of possibility and agency by expectant grammars of animacy” (Chen 2012: 13). Chen also takes care to emphasize that this delineation follows violent anthropomorphic and racialized lines. Once one takes up the business of deciding what is and what is not animate/human and subsequently what that means for possibilities of existence, dehumanizing racism and humanism dictates where these lines fall.

Instead of this violent binary, Chen advocates for a conceptualization of all things as having differing and specified ‘animacies’. By adopting an inclusive definition of animate, we can “activate[] new theoretical formations that trouble and undo stubborn binary systems of difference... *rewrit[ing] conditions of intimacy, engendering different communalisms* and revising biopolitical spheres, or, at least, how we might theorize them” (Chen 2012: 3, emphasis added). By understanding all things to have animacy, we can begin to reimagine the roles that materials play in our lives, relationships and communities.

This is precisely the intervention that Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* takes up. Bennett argues that "the quarantines of matter and life encourage us to ignore the vitality *of* matter and the lively power *of* material formations" (Bennett 2009: vii). Bennett is interested in a vital materiality, one that acknowledges the animacy of matter, but specifically attends to the political potentialities and realities of "thing-power" (Bennett 2009: 14). The book introduces matter as an actant, a word adopted from Bruno Latour meaning 'the source of action'. We are encouraged to think of the collaborative actions between things and humans to reimagine political events as potentially catalyzed by material actants.

Both Chen and Bennett allow for a capacious and political conceptualization of materials. These authors empower us to think about our intimacies differently, as mediated by and through (and with) material objects. By understanding materials on a spectrum of animacy, we can further recognize their ability to powerfully, and somewhat magically, invoke the presence of a dead loved one through material memory practices.

Following this theoretical framework of reimagined materiality, I found many fruitful examples in more colloquial articulations such as in narratives, podcasts, or books. I appreciate the opportunity to include these non-academic sources, as I feel it speaks to the omnipotence and beautiful banality of material memory practices, as well as inhabits a more capacious and inclusive definition of research 'literature'.

Late into this project, I was out on a walk listening to the New York Times podcast, *Modern Love*, where they'll read an essay about any kind of love and then interview the author. On an episode entitled "A Lifetime of Good Loving", the host interviewed Bette Ann Moskowitz, a woman in her early 80s, about the recent passing of her husband. Moskowitz discussed how she and her husband met, how she was faring now, quarantined and alone in the

house they used to share, and how she likes to remember him and evoke his presence. Moskowitz described a tradition they used to have – sitting every night at the kitchen table to have a cocktail together, hold hands, and reminisce. Though that tradition looks very different now, Moskowitz continues to practice it, with the help of her material memory practices.

“I don’t know if you know anything about the Jewish ritual of *yahrzeit* candles they’re called. You light them on the anniversary of a death or something like that. But I bought a bunch of them, and I just light them whenever I’m feeling the mood come on. And lately, I’ve been deciding that what I’m going to do is light one around cocktail hour and clink my glass. So before I light it, I take a slug of my drink and say, “Here’s to you, babe.” And then I light it. But it just struck me so funny.” (Moskowitz 2020)

The candle allows Moskowitz to continue on this tradition, even without the physical presence of her husband. She even speaks to it, having the candle stand in physically for her husband. This illustrates Chen’s understanding of the animacy spectrum – though a candle is normally thought to be an inanimate object, it’s inanimacy is morphed through its use in a material memory practice. As Chen articulated, this animacy spectrum allows for new intimacies, such as this cocktail tradition. In this way, we can see how this material takes on special qualities separate from its exchange value or instrumentality.

Another inspiration came from one of my long-time favorite memoirs, by Alexi Pappas, a Greek-American writer, poet, and Olympic runner. Her debut book *Bravey: Chasing Dreams, Befriending Pain, and Other Big Ideas* covers her life and accolades but all largely through the lens of her ever-changing relationship to her mother, who died by suicide when Pappas was a young kid. Because her mother died when she was so young, Pappas employs many material

memory practices to remember and relate to her, because we work with what we have for who we love. Pappas writes that following her mother's death, a group of women from the neighborhood came into Pappas' house to clean out her mother's belongings. She writes, "These women were not just throwing my mother's things away – they were trying to throw *her* away, to erase her. ... I wish I had been able to keep more of her clothes and other heirlooms, but I was denied this inheritance." (Pappas 2021: 26). Pappas articulates how, when someone dies, their materials in some way become that person, taking on animacy, in a way. Setting up the importance of materials for her in the above quote, Pappas continues on to demonstrate different types of practices with material memory. For example, she writes that she has "found a way to create a shared tradition with my mother: when I moved into my own place, my dad gave me a stainless steel cooking pot that my mom had bought...I think of her every time I use it, and in this way, we have our tradition of cooking together" (Pappas 2021: 267). Pappas invokes tradition often, which I appreciate, and describes how these material memory practices allow her to carry on these traditions that include her mother.

These examples further illustrate widespread use of material memory practices, supporting the importance of studying material memory as a space of knowledge production. Both Pappas and Moskowitz attribute somewhat animate qualities to their materials, illustrating Chen's conceptualization of an animacy spectrum that allows us to find new intimacies and communalisms with our materials, and, subsequently, with our lost loved ones.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I will detail the informative theories of capitalism, commodity fetishism, alienated labor, and material culture as they relate to my project. I frame capitalism, commodity

fetishism, and alienated labor as capitalist prescriptions to be subverted, and I use material culture as a framework to understand human-material relationships.

Capitalism and Commodity Fetishism

Karl Marx defines capitalism as a mode of production characterized by the delineation between those who own the means of production and those that work under them. Capitalism is positioned in this project as more than an economic system contained to the ‘market’, but also a pervasive and permeating ethos of life and purpose; “its widespread reach now also guides – or rather determines – answers related to questions of what it means to be human” (Diserholt 2021: 517). This includes questions of how to love, care, grieve. Marx writes that the values inherent in capitalism (progress, production, hierarchical individuality) indoctrinate those living under the system, rendering the lower/laboring classes degraded and alienated as humans, not just as workers (Marx 1867).

This all-encompassing conceptualization of capitalism is central to my claim of material memory practices as subversive. My intervention understanding that even the most visceral and vulnerable facets of our lives, such as our grief journeys, are constantly interacting with capitalist modalities of power and logic, without extinguishing possibilities for subversion or resistance. I understand there to be no space outside of capitalism, and thus am interested in exploring the ways in which it permeates, oozes, and quietly crawls into everything we do – even the most personal corners of our lives, such as ourselves in grief.

Commodity fetishism is a Marxist theory of our relationships to material objects, specifically commodities, under capitalism. Marx contends that capitalism encourages consumers to attribute magical or mysterious qualities to a commodity, both obscuring and erasing the human labor that went into creating that object, and relying on that erasure to ascribe

mystical qualities to the material. Marx first articulated the mystique of commodities in his seminal text, *Das Kapital*, in Chapter 1, Section 4, “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof”. A fetish, for Marx, is an object imbued with magical qualities by those who fetishize it (Marx 1867: 163). Commodity fetishism comes from the duality of object worth under capitalism: the use value and the exchange value. Sole appreciation for a commodity’s exchange value does not take into account the useful qualities of the commodity, nor the labor that went into creating that commodity. This perpetuates the alienation of workers/people from the products of their labor, while also alienating people from each other because of the individualistic competition that capitalism requires. The social relation of labor and exchange is erased, swapped for the illusory “fantastic form of a relation between things” (Marx 1990: 165). People are treated as ‘things’ in this commodity relationship, because their humanity and labor is stripped from the conceptualization of commodities; “they become alienated because their own relations of production assume a material shape which is independent of their control and their concise individual action” (Marx 1867: 187). It is important to note here that the erasure of labor in late capitalism is overwhelmingly the erasure of the labor of marginalized people, oftentimes from the global south. Their involvement in the production of commodities purchased and used in the global north is completely disregarded in conceptualizations of the commodity itself and its circulation and consumption in the global north.

In analyzing material memory practices, and from my own experience, the objects of memory *do* take on some magical, mystical, or imaginative quality; the quality of allowing us to relate to and remember our dead loved ones through these materials. This exemplifies Marx’s idea of the fetish, and his articulation of an object’s powers under commodity fetishism. However, for Marx the pre-condition for ascription of fetishized magical qualities is the

alienation of people from their labor, and particularly from each other through material exchange. Conversely, objects that are employed in material memory practices are principally relationship building; there is both the synergistic relationships that we have with our materials, and the loving relationships between someone and their lost loved one. communicating of love between someone and their lost loved one. This connecting power of materials is antithetical to Marx's articulation of commodity fetishism as alienating – this intervening hinge is where I identify the difference between fetishistic relationships with objects and subversive object-person relationality in memory.

With an understanding of embedded capitalism and commodity fetishism, I now turn to modern Marxist insights on refusal and subversion of capitalism. David Harvey, a white British Marxian⁷ geographer, illuminates Marx's traces of a visionary socialist future in his collection of lectures on *Kapital* titled *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (2010). Harvey writes that only when the perceived 'naturalness' of capitalism is interrupted can we begin to conceive of and imagine alternatives; when a hegemonic power like capitalism is naturalized "we foreclose on revolutionary possibilities if we blindly follow that norm and replicate commodity fetishism. Our task is to question it" (Harvey 2010: 26). I argue that material memory practices bear the potential of reconfiguring our fetishistic relationship to commodities, thereby questioning that relationship whether explicitly articulated as doing so or not. Harvey states that there are two ways of moving beyond the fetish – first, a focus on "fair trade" and a tracing of labor and labor relations in all commodities, and secondly, a "critical theory... a mode of investigation and inquiry that can uncover the deep structure of capitalism and suggest alternative value systems based on *radically different kinds of social and material relations*" (Harvey 2010: 46, emphasis

⁷ His own preferred term.

added). I position this project, and my exploration of material memory practices, in the tradition of Harvey's latter suggestion. Though not a comprehensive investigation of the deep structure of capitalism, I do believe that the way my interlocutors and I relate to our materials as memory practices is based on imaginative and radical material relationships, that subvert and complicate capitalist logics. This reimagination, as Marx suggested, is central to a radical, anti-capitalist future.

Alienated Labor / Care Labor

In this project, I define care labor as the work or praxis done to nurture, love, or care for another or oneself. This is inspired by bell hooks', a Black feminist author and social activist, conceptualization of love as action/labor in *All About Love: New Visions* (1999) – our love-actions are our care labor. This conceptualization is in direct opposition to Marx's articulation of our universal state of alienated labor under capitalism. Marx argues that, in a capitalist system, our labor ceases to be our own; work has been externalized from the laborer and they have no ownership over it. For Marx, capitalism notwithstanding, our capacity for labor is what makes us human. In this basic presupposition of our humanity, individual people and labor enter a synergistic and mutually beneficial relationship; when one is built up, so is the other. However, under a capitalist system, when the products of our labor are not ours to own, the worker lessens themselves to enhance their production -- "the depreciation of the human world progresses in direct proportion to the increase in value of the world of things" (Marx 1867: 16). We give and give to products of labor that we will never own, depleting ourselves to bolster the material market. The worker does not feel connected to the product of their labor at all, but instead feels increasingly distanced from the very thing they spend every single day creating. But that is not the extent of the alienation — the worker also becomes alienated from themselves. Marx writes

that when “the worker puts his life into the object ... this means that it no longer belongs to him but to the object. ... So the greater the product, the less he is himself” (Marx 1867: 17). Under the capitalist system, the labor that workers are subjected to is depleting, exploitative, and alienating.

Exploring care labor as a loving and relationship building practice, and as labor all the same, is a life-giving alternative labor conceptualization. Care labor in grief is specific in its intention to be relationship building. Though only a few of my interlocutors discuss labor in their memory practices, I understand the labor context to be important to explore in this discussion of grief and capitalism. More care labor is required in these unconditional, dead and living relationships, but unlike under Marx’s alienated labor, increased care work in this way does not deplete those taking part in it – in fact, it is life-giving, world-building, and loving.

Importantly here, both commodity fetishism and extractive labor under capitalism work, principally, to *alienate*. To alienate us from one another, to alienate workers from the product of their work, to alienate objects from their history of production, etcetera. The subversion of commodity fetishism and extractive labor in the material culture of grief is on the basis of this alienation. When commodities are not ascribed magical qualities in themselves but are instead instrumentalized in the work of relational and intimate memory, they are no longer alienating. When labor is not extracted to be outside of the worker, but instead is used to love and nurture interpersonal bonds, it is no longer alienating. These capitalistic and oppressive practices become repurposed and reimagined in the banal, everyday journey of grief.

Material Culture Framework

In the contemporary, capitalist U.S., we live and operate in a context completely mediated by things; what we have, what we don’t have, what we could have. Hence, though this

project began out of a curiosity of our relationships to the dead, it quickly focused in on an exploration of these relationships as mediated through the materials that our loved ones leave behind. This archive of physicalities constitutes an emotional, personal, and physical exploration of a loved one, through the lens of material culture. Material culture is the sociological and anthropological description of a community, culture, or people through their physical objects, including the contexts of their creation and use, and what these objects communicate about a group's beliefs or practices. Henry Glassie, author of *Material Culture*, describes the theory as beginning with things, but not being constrained to them; instead using material objects to explore individual or group thought, action, and practice (Glassie 1999:41). The focus of the study of material culture is as much on the physical material itself as it is on the communication of culture through these materials: the "beliefs... values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions... of a particular community or society at a given time" (Prown 1982: 1). It is the search for cultural meaning and significance as communicated through material objects or physical environments. However, material culture does not always communicate homogenous group-thought. Micheal Owen Jones, an American folklorist, writes that objects can both "embody a collective world view" *and* "serve as escape from the pressure of behavioral norms... or challenge a society's values or power structure" (Jones 1997: 201).

Material culture, as Glassie theorizes it, is inherently tied to the pursuit of remembering. When our physical presence ceases to exist, our identities are tangible only through material objects. In this way, the study of material culture lends itself well to anthropology, specifically of the past, but also means that the study of material culture is particularly fruitful in the exploration of grief. When we are grasping for all traces of a dead loved one, material objects provide solace in their physicality, usability, and capacity for symbolization in remembering. In the U.S.'s

consumptive context, we spent our lives creating these material archives of our personhood. When we lose someone, these archives are left for us, communicating on an individual level exactly what Glassie articulates on the cultural level: beliefs, practices, actions, and values. The material culture of grief is expansive, ranging from individualized mementos like hand-me-down clothes, to pricey bejeweled urns or satin caskets. The materials that we choose and use for memorialization embody our grief practices, mediate them, and can be personalized to the specific death context and relationship.

For this project, material culture must be married to material *behavior* to create a rich understanding of material memory practices. Material behavior refers to “activity involved in producing or responding to the physical dimension of our world” (Jones 1997: 202). In material behavioral studies, objects do not act as autonomous, isolated physicalities, but “as products of activities, embodiments or otherwise intangible processes, or palpable stimuli that trigger responses”; it includes “the processes by which their archivers conceptualize [objects], fashion them, and use them or make them available for others to use” (Jones 1997: 202). Material behavior encompasses questions of personality, emotion, meaning making, and relational interaction with the objects of material culture.

Using materials to remember someone after death constitutes material behavior; we are interacting with these materials, relating to them emotionally, and, oftentimes, using them in our daily lives. After all, I refer to these objects in this project as material memory *practices*. You wear your hand-me-downs, draw in your grandmother’s sketchbook, unload groceries from your sister’s bag. By understanding material memory practices under the framework of material behavior, we can better conceptualize them as a relationship: between the alive loved one and the

object, between the object and the dead loved one, and between both loved ones as an unconditional love.

METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

Methodology

In my methodology, I seek to principally center connectedness, vulnerability, and community. With deep gratitude to my FGS and community-based research training, my role as researcher and my ethos of research has been constantly fraught, complex, changing, and one of the, if not the very most, important parts of this project. I take time in this section to detail the feminist methodological choices prioritized in this project – principally, centering the importance and potentialities of researching one’s own community, and the significance of researcher vulnerability.

To begin, by focusing on myself and my own community, I am both acknowledging and privileging the reality of my situated knowledge. Donna Haraway, a feminist theorist of science and technology, writes on the importance, necessity, and reality of knowledge as deeply situated in her article, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” (1988). Haraway offers her definition of a feminist objectivity as departing from both complete relativism on one end, and uncritical objectivity on the other. She writes that “‘our’ problem is how to have *simultaneously* an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own ‘semiotic technologies’ for making meanings, *and* a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a ‘real’ world” (Haraway 1988: 579, emphasis in original). Her theory of knowledge, then, is defined by acknowledging how all of our individual knowledges come from a specific vision-point, aided by particular *tools* of vision. These insights are also indebted to Patricia Hill Collin’s

work in “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought” (1986), and her understanding of deeply specified and intersectional forms of knowing. Without diluting Collins’ insights about Black women’s knowledge production, I learn from her methodological meditation on the role and responsibility of outsiders within. In the context of my own research, I inhabit a fluid and contentious insider/outsider position within this research as a member of the community being studied, but also as a researcher observing, collecting, and analyzing the community. This continues to inform what my particular situated knowledge is, as both an insider and an outsider to the experiences of my participants/interlocutors. Hill Collins conceptualizes this contentious space as one of unique knowledge production and exposure, and I take solace in her belief of the potentiality of this position.

Not only does this project directly stem from my own personal experiences – not just as a griever, but as a student of anti-capitalist thought, a daughter, a friend – but it is indebted to the deeply situated knowledges of my interlocutors as well. By positioning all of my data as from the same larger community, I am attempting to create a deep understanding of specified and situated knowledge of grief practices from a particular location – that of my personal community. This project will offer a pin-prick of specified thought in the sea of death and material studies, but as Haraway posits, a valuation of partiality allows us to be specific, and in this way, to be closer to some ‘faithful account of the real world’. This project will not and does not aim to have a universal or generalizable claim. Keeping this front of mind in the research and writing of this paper, I am able to attend to deep specificity as well as continue to enact a practice of humility in the knowledge I am producing.

In implicating myself and my own community in my research, this project is not only deeply and personally situated, it is vulnerable as well. Through this entire project, I am

attempting to enact Ruth Behar's ethic of the vulnerable observer. Behar, a Jewish Cuban-American anthropologist, has pushed me to explore the potentialities of centering vulnerability, in both the power it can hold for the research itself, but also for the researcher/interlocutor relationship as well as the researcher/reader relationship. This centering includes choosing to build this project around grief and memory practices and intertwining and implicating my own experience with the insights and data from the research. In her book *The Vulnerable Observer* (1996), Behar asks us to reflect on the role of the researcher as a witness. She problematizes the conceptualization of a detached participant-observer, particularly in her field of anthropology but in speaking to a larger ethic of research. Through reflection on her own field work, Behar advocates for researchers to embrace the identity of a vulnerable observer: one that acknowledges and critically reflects on their role as an agent in research, and researches and writes from a distinctly personal and specific space. Behar argues that in doing so, anthropological truth can be found; pretending to hold objectivity as a participant observer does not erase subjectivity but merely masks it, whereas embracing the personal in the work expresses a relational reality more true to experience. In representing the connection between researcher and interlocutors, readers of research are invited to explore personal connection within the observations as well. In vulnerable observation, we can find more compassionate understanding and deep feeling for both those that we research, and ourselves as altered in the process of research.

I attempt to enact the ethic of vulnerable observation through a saturation of my own presence in the narrativization, data collection, and conceptualization of this entire project. This project is grounded in my lived experience and specific stakes with this content. By rendering myself vulnerable throughout this process, I hope that I have made a safer and more comfortable

space for my interlocutors' vulnerability, and for our *shared* healing and care. I also hope that shared vulnerability and connection laid bare can extend to the relationships readers form to this project and paper, inviting personal threads and traces to be drawn, as Behar suggests. This is, however, always with the acknowledgement that my vulnerability is situated in a very specific, very privileged space, and my sharing and centering of my grief experience does not immediately or naturally (if at all) allow for others occupying more marginal identities to render themselves bare in these same ways. Part of vulnerable observation, for me, is refusing 'inherent' and hierarchical distance between researcher and researched *and* taking specified care to recognize forms of distance and power-relations in this relationship at the same time. Though the vast majority of my interlocutors are white, mostly women, and more than half wealth-privileged, there are intricacies of varying vulnerability weaved throughout the data – for example, the experience of sharing a grief story and material memory from a parent that died of addiction in a context of state abandonment is different than sharing that of a grandparent who passed of old age. I am not attempting to create a ladder of marginality within grief, but I would be erasing specificity if I were to not recognize these distances.

Stemming from a valuation of vulnerability and recognition of the violences of detached research as Behar articulates, this project is centered around my own community. As is detailed in the method section, I conducted my research call over social media, collecting data only from people that I had a personal connection to, and oftentimes, to their grief journey as well. By studying and analyzing the material behavior of my own community, I continue to enact Behar's disavowal of a detached witness-researcher. I cannot feign sanitized detachment from my own community, nor do I wish to. I am personally implicated in the conclusions of this research – in the pitfalls, the potentialities, the musing and imaginations. By conducting research with and for

my own community, I am centering humility, vulnerability, and enacting the analytical insights of this paper of love and care as politically important – loving and caring for my community through this research is the most important affect this work could have.

Furthermore, by working on a thesis on grief and memory, Ghassan Moussawi's theorization of the role and potentialities of 'bad feelings' have been invaluable for this project. Moussawi, a Lebanese sociologist, wrote, "Bad Feelings: On Trauma, Non-linear Time, and Accidental Encounters in 'the Field'", wherein he focuses on his experience conducting his dissertation research on LGBTQ formations in Beirut. Returning to his hometown Beirut after training in the US to conduct his research in the height of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant residential suicide bombings and general post-war context complicated Moussawi's relationship to the 'field' and to his research. Moussawi attempted to separate the trauma and anxiety felt in both conducting the research and writing about it from his actual data to uphold some sort of limiting standard of universality and purity of knowledge. This unnatural separation closed off "the potential for me to think through what these feelings *tell* me about research, but also made parts of the research and the field *invisible* to me" (Moussawi 2021: 92).

This limit led to his main methodological intervention – "that being attuned to one's bad feelings is a method that helps us become more accountable to our experiences in and of the field, and makes possible the production of subjugated knowledges that ought to reshape how we conceptualize qualitative research and methodology" (Moussawi 2021: 80). Moussawi writes that bad feelings are often perceived as closing off potentialities or futurities, but in his experience, it was precisely when he acknowledged his trauma and anxiety that new knowledges were able to emerge in his work (Moussawi 2021: 89, 93). Bad feelings deserve curiosity and

attendance, and are unique and felt sites of knowledge production⁸. I attempt to enact his ethos of research through centering emotion and affect as feminist and sociological data, following his proposition that “rather than neglect bad feelings, we redefine, or decolonize, what rigorous research means” (Moussawi 2021: 93).

The conceptualization, research, and writing of this project has been seeped in experiences of bad feelings.⁹ By choosing to center grief in my exploration of memory-materiality and commodity fetishism, I am following Moussawi’s refusal of the separation between our traumas as people and our work as researchers. When we allow our personal bad feelings to permeate our work as researchers, unique specificities of knowledge become available to us in ways that are both enlightening for the research¹⁰ and healing for the researcher. I would have never arrived at my theoretical interventions concerning commodity fetishism and reimagined materiality if I had not first imagined this project to be one of relationality with loved ones that are dead, coming from my own relationship with my mother. Moussawi’s articulation and valuation of bad feelings as seeped with potentiality and futurity validates this project’s focus on grief practices as radical subversion. In reading Moussawi’s work, I am pushed to move beyond a hierarchy of emotions on the basis of productivity, and to instead interrogate and explore the complexities and offerings of all emotions as being both politically/socially constructed and constructing. By centering vulnerability and exploring bad

⁸ Also connected to Jack Halberstam’s “low theory” – potentialities of getting lost, failing, valuing the in-between, theorizing in ways that counter-hegemonic, undisciplined, etc (Halberstam 2011).

⁹ Here it is important to acknowledge that one of Moussawi’s main arguments was on complicating the boundary of the field, particularly when it is your home, and the circular nature of trauma and home that does not follow physical measures of distance. Though in ways I am writing from a field that I cannot leave – my grief and memory – the dangers and traumas discussed in Moussawi’s piece are obviously differently positioned and I do not aim to project his experiences onto this project. Rather, I appreciate and take with me his valuing of bad feelings as sites of knowledge production, particularly as felt by and implicated with the researcher themselves.

¹⁰ In gratitude to the insights of Sara Ahmed, particularly in her chapter “Feminism is Sensational” from *Living a Feminist Life* (2017). Ahmed describes feminist thought as both rooted and evocative of the senses and the felt, continuing the feminist lineage of a valuation of emotion as knowledge and theory.

feelings, we are able to reach new conclusions, saturated with emotional knowledges¹¹ and personal stakes.

Method

As is (hopefully) clear in the methodology section above, I am principally concerned with an ethos of ethical research, particularly because of the necessary vulnerability asked of my interlocutors. After a few different conceptualizations of the research call, I sent out an email to the sociology and feminist and gender studies listserv. I asked students to send me “photos of the objects that bring you closer/help you remember lost loved ones, or poems/other narratives about these objects for a content analysis”¹², with details about both myself and the project. However, I did not receive any responses to my email. This could be due to a number of reasons; the time that the email was sent (the day before winter break, right during finals), the fact that I do not know everyone on those email lists nor do I have a close relationship with many of them, and the inherent professional/sanitized nature of a mass email. Before sending a reminder email, I decided to put the research call out onto my Instagram story.¹³ Within 24 hours of the story being up, I received 18 photos and photo descriptions, with two more trickling in in the following days from word of mouth. The benefits of social media for this project are that it is especially catered towards young people, the focal group for my project, and that everyone that follows me on Instagram knows me in some capacity, and we share or have shared some sort of relationship with one another. Additionally, swiping up on an Instagram story feels very voluntary as evidenced by the 200 (ish) people that viewed the story and did not choose to participate or

¹¹ Drawing as well from Alison Jagger’s “Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology” (1989), where Jagger articulates how valuing emotion as research and a site of knowledge production is “epistemologically subversive”, refuses dominant Western traditions of knowledge construction, and contributes to specified and critical social theory (Jagger 1989: 1).

¹² Email in full is included in the appendix.

¹³ Copies of the Instagram story slides are included in the appendix.

inquire. As opposed to the obligatory nature of a direct ask, this method allows people to opt in consensually.

For all of its ilk, the breadth and uniqueness of social media as a connecting device showed itself in my content call. Because of my method, my interlocutors range from frisbee teammates, to an old boss, to an ex's roommate, to my middle school best friend, to someone I attended grief therapy with for eight years, with whom I haven't spoken to in at least a decade. I love this menagerie of my communities from all different places, parts, and times of my life and my grief journey. It speaks to the connectedness of grievers – we find each other, connect with each other, and, as one of my interlocutors said, “holding a space for this... feels healing”. I am grateful for my initial failure in the email research call, as turning to social media allowed the project to further enact a practice of community, shared vulnerability and grief, and connectedness – a practice of feminist methodology as detailed above.

Positionality Statement

I am white, wealth-privileged, U.S. based, non-religious, queer, and a student, daughter, clothes-lover and serial borrower, anti-capitalist, friend, and griever. I hope to weave my whole self into this entire project, but in this statement I would like to privilege particular aspects of my identity that position me in specific ways to this project; that of my whiteness, Westernness, and stake in grief practices.

In bringing myself into the project, it is important to have that be a whole self, not just my identities that are immediately congruent with this topic that have been illustrated in the introduction. As a white and Western researcher, I have always felt valued and capable in attempting research, and have never felt the violence of research that is so often entangled in colonial projects (Tuhiwai Smith 2021). Research has never been used against me or my

communities, as it has been both historically and currently for Black and Indigenous communities, so I have had the privilege of exploring an antagonistic relationship with research through class discussion and readings, not personal experience. My constructed distance from colonial research has completely dictated my relationship with research, my excitement for it, and my comfortability within it. Though a critical research sensibility is growing within me (with gratitude to all of the teachers and writers that have advised me), I also know that this project is carried out encased in that familiarity, hubris, and comfortability with research. With full recognition that total assuagement of this privilege is impossible as a white, U.S. based researcher, I am attempting to mediate my privilege through centering humble listening, personal vulnerability, and collective citational practices. This includes implicating myself and my own community in the research, creating safe and informed-consensual data collection space, and relying heavily on lineages of thought preceding this project from a varying number of disciplines.

Additionally, I have been reading and extracting knowledge from many writers of color for whom research has potentially been alienating and colonizing. This extraction for my own gain, as a white student, has been uncomfortable. I hope to extend as much gratitude, care, and responsibility as is possible to these inspiring authors by employing an intentional, heavily citational practice in my work, and working to center the communal and shared lineages of knowledge in this paper. I take some solace in the sentiments of feminist philosopher and theorist Sara Ahmed, when she describes students of feminist thought as being sponge-like: porous, soaked (Ahmed 2017: 22). I have attempted to write this paper in the sponge tradition. In some ways, this work is not my own, but is the squeezing out of my sponge-mind onto the page, seeping with gratitude for the lineages of knowledge I have had the privilege of drawing from.

Most importantly, I have attempted to learn from scholars of color/marginalized scholars carefully and with responsibility to their work and insights in my citational practices.

Finally, and perhaps most saliently, my stake in this project is personal, as discussed in the introduction, and is hopefully present in traces throughout this entire project. My entire conceptualization of this project has been dictated by my personal and emotional experiences with my own grief journey and material memory practices. I value this vulnerability and personal stake in this project above all. My positionality as a grieving person has paved the way for people to share their vulnerable grief stories with me – I intentionally cited my own loss of my mom and the ways in which I use materials to remember her in my research call, to communicate the possibility of a shared experience with my interlocutors. Though not ‘proven’ or articulated by any of my interlocutors, I believe that this vulnerability helped to create a space of comfortable sharing for other griever, harkening back to the insights provided by Behar as discussed in the methodology section.

My own grief journey has also dictated how I come to each reading, or art piece, or video that I have encountered in researching for this project. I am often personally and explicitly implicated, which is somewhat of a new experience for me as a white and U.S. based student who has spent most of my academic life not critically implicating myself in my school work. My affective relationship to the work is heavy, and while this has created some teary library sessions or re-re-re-re-reading of pieces, I am grateful for the relationship I have to this work and for those that encouraged me to pursue this vulnerable space.

ANALYSIS

In this section, I will move to explore the material memory practices I gathered in my research, and apply my theoretical frameworks to these materials to illustrate their subversion.

As discussed in the method section, I received 14 photos of material memory practices from members of my (broad) community. Here, I categorize them into three themes – Use, Construction of Self, and Constancy– and then focus on one example per theme to carefully apply my theoretical frames to the object. This is not in an attempt to privilege some material memory practices or grief experiences over others – it is an acknowledgement of the capacity of this paper, and an attempt to attend to detailed specificity in the examples I do explore. I chose to sort the data into themes as to employ Donna Haraway’s theorization of mosaics of partial knowledge (Haraway 1988) – though all of our individual knowledges are deeply situated and partial, our best shot at reaching some type of feminist, grounded truth is to combine these partialities together, as was discussed in the methodology section. I attempt to do so by sorting the data into these three themes, to both recognize deep specificity in each submission while appreciating what can be offered collectively¹⁴.

Use

Many of my interlocutors sent in photos of materials whose quality lies in the use of the object. *Doing* something specific with the object constituted their memory practice for their loved one. It could be something that they used to do together, or a tradition that the alive loved one continues to carry out, or using the materials as a way of bringing their lost loved one along with them for different activities. These activities ranged from wearing a specific pair of shoes to art museums, or wearing a special necklace to run races, or, as I explore here, building things with old tools.

¹⁴ All 14 of the photos I was sent, as well as their descriptions, will be in this paper’s accompanying slideshow. The slideshow serves to allow for my interlocutors to fully speak on their own terms, without the interruption of my analysis, as well as in the spirit of materiality, providing something material to the project.

The example for this theme comes from my pseudo-uncle, my dad's best friend, Ben. Ben has known me since I was a baby, as my parents were the odd first ones in the friend group to decide to have kids. There are many photos of Ben, looking about 14 years old in comparison to my sleep-deprived dad, holding me out at arm's length, not quite sure what to do with a baby. Since the time of those photos, he has watched me grow up into the person writing this thesis, with many family vacations and Christmas cards in between. Ben is a white, middle-aged doctor from Massachusetts, who surprised me with his vulnerability and detail in his photo submission. He wrote about his grandfather and the tools that he used that Ben still uses to this day.

I love using my grandfather's tools. It makes me feel like I am holding his hand. He spent one semester at MIT but then went to work at GE back when you could have a very good job for life without a degree. He was a machinist. My grandfather built this rack and all the handles for the files. I love using them as I know his hands held each one. Still covered in sawdust from one of his projects. Still just as precise. I love that I remember seeing him use these. He could fix almost anything. I was probably eight years old when I watched him build this bench. Built it with scrap wood from the machine shop at GE. Skilled and frugal.



Photo 1¹⁵



Photo 2¹⁶

The work that Ben talks about carrying out with the tools is not one of quick production or **prestige**, but of connecting and loving labor. These tools are not instrumental— they are a practice of love, and mean much more to Ben than just their use value. The end goal of using these tools is not defined by the production or exchange value of the outcome, and the products made are not separated from the labor put into them. Especially with the example of the bench, labor is the defining characteristic of the commodity, not the commodity itself. This inverts the logics of erased labor under commodity fetishism, by highlighting the labor put into the material instead of the autonomous material itself. Whereas under capitalism, labor is an extractive, alienating, and taxing undertaking, the labor carried out with these tools is relationship sustaining and

¹⁵ Image description: There is a tan tool rack on top of a table with metal tools sticking up from it. There is a white man's hand holding the rack.

¹⁶ Image description: Ben (my interlocutor), a white, blond, middle-aged man wearing jeans and a gray zip up is sitting on a wooden bench. Ben is crossing his legs and smiling. The photo is taken inside.

comforting – making Ben feel like he is holding his grandfather’s hand. This illustrates how the intervention of grief and memory in material culture and behavior can change the relationship that we hold to those materials in ways that do not subscribe to the capitalist prescription.

Memory within grief creates the conditions through which a reimagination of, in this case, labor can be enacted. Harkening back to the conversation about arpilleras, Ben’s labor as well as the labor of arpilleristas is saturated with memory practices. By partaking in labor that is toward the ends of love and memory, as opposed to the ends of profit, the labor exercise is reimagined. The labor becomes, as Moya-Raggio puts it, a deeply human activity, one that is no longer alienating to the self and to those around the laborer, but is interconnected and loving. The ways in which Ben relates to the labor does not follow these capitalistic logics of alienation, and therefore inherently (and through praxis) questions the necessity of those relational logics in the first place. Furthermore, Ben’s work with the tools moves even beyond construction of materials themselves, further layering the labor experience beyond alienating capitalist prescription. Ben’s tool work is principally the construction of a memory and of a relationship with her grandfather. The use-value of anything he makes with the tools has departed from material use, but serves immense emotional and memorial use. This emotional reimagination of use in labor further refuses the alienating labor imperative of capitalism.

Construction of Self

“I’m sorry for your loss, as if you’re lost, like a forgotten wallet or misplaced keys.

A phrase used to empathize, to quell unease. I have said it, too, about pets and strangers. But never about you. I find you in my deep set eyes and the cheekbones below. My hands match yours from 30 years ago. I see you in my summer tan that’s

dark by mid-July and in the lines that arc around my mouth if I laugh or cry. No, I haven't lost you, Mom. That could never be. You're present everywhere — most of all, in me.” - Alicia Gabe, “Seeing Her in Me”

I received 3 photo descriptions that accredited their memory practices with their ability to make my interlocutors feel something about themselves – something that they admired in their lost loved one, or something that they had in common. These materials possess the ability to create some sense of self for my interlocutors, often reminding them of traces of their lost loved one in themselves. As in the poem above, many griever wish to see their lost loved one within themselves – as I found in this project, materials are often a useful, physical reminder of this similarity.

I explore the materials that an old friend and teammate shared with me. Kira is a young, white, U.S.-based woman who graduated from CC in 2022. We played on the same frisbee team for three years, spent a COVID quarantine together, and shared many dinners and long drives. Kira is now living in Washington state, where she grew up. Though we haven't talked in months, Kira was quick to become involved in the project when I sent out my call. She sent along photos of her grandmother's earring collection, which I recognize from Kira wearing them constantly. She wrote,

I have a collection of my grandma's earrings that I wear all the time and I think of her every time I put them on. She lived with my family for years when I was a kid and I would always play dress up with her jewelry collection. Having and wearing them now reminds me of being a kid with her. She was also an overall badass and very glamorous

woman and I get to put on a little bit of that energy when I wear them.



Photo 3

¹⁷ Image description: This photo is a selfie of Kira (my interlocutor), who is a white, young woman with light brown hair and blue eyes wearing a red-tshirt. She is smiling with her mouth shut and pointing to her earring, which is a silver tear-drop shaped earring with a turquoise gem at the bottom of the teardrop.



18

Photo 4

These earrings, bestowing in Kira a sense of self and construction of character, take on a magical quality beyond their instrumental or exchangeable value. Alike to the ascription of magical qualities of objects under commodity fetishism, these earrings cease to be just a piece of metal that someone labored over to create into jewelry. These are qualities that align with the capitalistic prescription of commodity fetishism. However, under commodity fetishism, these qualities are constrained to the object itself - it is an object-person relationship, where the object is enriching the person in ways that are beyond their material thing-hood. The important intervention where Kira's material behavior and practice depart from logics of commodity fetishism is that of interpersonal connection. While commodity fetishism, and larger capitalist

¹⁸ Image description: 5 pairs of earrings are laid out on a white sheet. Earring descriptions from top left to right: Top right: Silver pair of dangly earrings in a triangle shape with little silver tear-drops hanging off of the bottom of the earring. In the middle of the triangle is a black gem. 2 Silver pair of dangly earrings in a teardrop outline shape. There is a turquoise gem at the bottom of the teardrop. Bottom right: Silver pair of dangly earrings: there is a black gem at the top of the earring, with multiple long, silver sticks hanging off of the gem. Bottom middle: Silver pair of dangly earrings: there is a turquoise gem framed by silver wire, and at the bottom of the earring, multiple silver sticks hang. Bottom left: Silver pair of dangly earrings: the top of the earring is a black gem, and hanging off of that is a solid silver tear drop shape. In the silver tear drop, there are three more circular black gems in a triangle.

logics work to alienate people from each other, themselves, and their labor, I argue that material memory practices intervene at the moment of alienation, subverting this capitalistic prescription, to reimagine the relationships we have to our materials.

With Kira's articulation of the importance of these earrings, she is utilizing them to connect with another person, her grandmother, who is not temporally or physically present with her. These quotidian habits, reminders, and connection-building materials allow us to feel connection in memory that is, in ways, based on a physicality that is impossible to achieve through interpersonal proximity in grief. These objects facilitate this loving proximity, as well as evoke emotional relationships as well – Kira's own glamour and badassery in memorial of the same qualities in her grandmother, furthering the interpersonal love that capitalist logics work to suffocate.

Additionally, bringing her grandmother's qualities to 'life' in this way subverts a linear conception of time in our relationships as well as in our conceptualizations of life and death. By utilizing the earrings as a physicality, Kira is able to, in ways, bring her deceased grandmother into the present moment, to feel her essence, to adopt it for herself. Queering this idea of linear time is a further anti-capitalist ethic, as capitalism dictates our lives in prescriptively linear time-worlds. The capitalist imperative to move *faster* and forward does not give allowance for more imaginative and fluid conceptualizations of time, like what is being articulated by Kira here (Bailey 2021). Kira's ability to 'put on' a bit of her grandmother, in ways that are not just decorative, is facilitated by the materiality of the earrings, allowing her to feel co-present with her grandmother in these moments.

Constancy

Over half of the submissions I received were photos of items that my interlocutors either saw, used, or wore every single day. It was this consistency that was special – never taking off a necklace, typing someone’s name into your computer password every day, keeping a box of trinkets next to your bed. Having the constant presence of one’s lost loved person made these materials invaluable.

I am grateful that I get to share the following material memory for this theme, as I was around to witness this person’s grief journey and general brilliance in real time. Elizabeth, a young white woman, was my older sister’s best friend in high school, and spent many meals and nights at my house growing up. She was and is forever the badass older girl that I got to watch from afar as I molded myself from kid to young adult. She is now a law student at the University of New Hampshire and is recently engaged. Elizabeth sent me the following short message about her material memory practice:



Photo 5

19

This is my moms necklace that I wear everyday and typically never take off. She didn’t wear a lot of jewelry but I have a lot of memories of her wearing this necklace and that’s why it has become important to me.

¹⁹ Image description: A silver necklace lays flat on a dark wooden surface. The necklace has a thing chain, and a square charm with a lopsided silver heart on it, and three little white gems scattered around the charm.

This necklace itself, its physical qualities, or its exchange value do not constitute the value of this piece to Elizabeth. Instead, it is her memories of her mother wearing the necklace, despite her aversion to jewelry, that makes this piece special. In evoking memory specifically, Elizabeth is demonstrating how materials can serve as physical reminders of lost loved ones, or specific moments with those that we grieve for. The fact that Elizabeth wears the necklace every single day is illustrative as to how materials can aid us in keeping our lost loved one close at all times. These material memories that are used every day allow us to create habits and traditions with our loved ones who have died. Harkening back to Pappas, both Elizabeth and Pappas employ their materials to create and sustain traditions and habits with their lost loved ones. The physicality of these materials allows for more tangible memory practices that are, in some ways, easier to enact everyday – such as wearing a necklace or cooking with an old pot.

Constancy is also interesting to analyze considering the throw-away culture of late-stage consumptive capitalism. The staying power of these materials reads in opposition to the constant cycling of trends, especially of wearable materials like clothing or jewelry. Many of the material memory practices that I coded under constancy were jewelry, including another mother's necklace and my dad's wedding ring from his marriage to my mom. The physical staying power of metal jewelry allows these materials to continue to be used as memory practices, even decades after the physical loss of the person. This speaks to a specific materiality that is defined by its staying-power, while also potentially being the most expensive/class privileged material memory practice. It is interesting to note here

that likely the most expensive, and arguably most fetishized²⁰ material that I received was my dad's wedding ring to my mother. It is also arguably the most everyday – I have never seen him without it on his finger, except to show my sister and I how to send a ring spiraling on the dining room table. This illustrates how fetishization, and capitalistic prescription need not dictate our relationships to our materials – the most expensive can be the most everyday, the (typically) most fetishized can be the most loving through the intervention of grieving memory.

CONCLUSION

“May I love in ways that devastatingly disrupt organized state violence.”

- Gabes Torres, @gabestorres on Twitter

In making sense of how quotidian material memory practices can be undercutting and subverting such an all-encompassing and pervasive modality of power like capitalism, I look to Raymond Williams, the late Welsh socialist scholar, and his idea of hegemony, and, more specifically, his theorization of how to defeat it. In this project, I understand capitalism to be a hegemonic system. Williams defines hegemony as “a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming” (Williams 1977: 110). Hegemony is everywhere all at once, constituting “a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives” (Williams 1977: 110). However, hegemony is not static, it morphs as needed to deflect

²⁰ Understanding wedding rings to be fetishized objects as they are positioned to represent emotional and romantic realities while being completely devoid of acknowledgement of labor context, specifically of metals and stones harmfully and dangerously mined for in the Global South by marginalized and exploited laborers.

opposition. In this way, hegemony subsumes its opponents, shifting only slightly to retain dominance. Capitalism, as the long-standing and grossly powerful system that it is, offers us a ‘lived system of meanings and values’ that, as detailed above, dictate how we live our lives as human beings. Important for this project, hegemony is only as strong as its acceptance by the masses. Hegemonic systems cannot stand when they are questioned.

Hegemonic systems, such as capitalism and pervasive capitalist logics, depend on a mass ‘buy-in’ to keep their power. Their very power comes directly from the acceptance (and enactment) of this hegemonic system by the vast majority of people living under the system. Hegemonic ideology is lived out every single day by (almost) every single person, reinforcing the dominance of these systems. This is how it survives. Focusing on capitalism, we can think of how each individual person upholds and reproduces capitalist logics of production, individualism, and competition each day. I am not outside of this, nor is this project. Hegemony is not a top-down modality of power – it is omnipresent. However, this does not mean that hegemony is unbreakable. Williams writes that *because* hegemony runs on acceptance and relies on enactment, the very disruption necessary to subvert it is to *question*. By questioning hegemony, its mass acceptance is interrupted, and its omnipresence begins to break down.

This understanding of hegemony, and of capitalism as a hegemonic system, is central to my understanding of material memory practices as subversive to different capitalist logics. Though the wearing of a necklace, or the use of old tools, or shopping with an old grocery bag may seem trivial, it is the power of this banal *interruption* of capitalistic logics of materiality that questions hegemony, thus destabilizing its power. Under Williams’ conception of hegemony, all it takes is precisely the day-to-day, banal questioning of omnipresent modalities of power to extinguish their dominance.

By positioning the subversion of such an all-powerful, domineering system such as capitalism in the everyday practices of grieving people, I draw from the late bell hooks', "Theory as Liberatory Practice" (1991). hooks wrote that theory – instead of being a meta, sanitized, purely academic endeavor – is a space for making sense of the world. She believes that there is no distance between theory and practice, theory and feeling, theory and the personal. Even if we do not call it 'theory', with all the baggage of that word, those struggling, living through marginality, imagining new ways of life, articulating complications of being, are enacting and creating theory. Theory that speaks directly to the everyday experience of folks is the theory that hooks is interested in creating, and it is the theory that I hope I have articulated in this work. Though optimistic as to the benefits of theory, hooks warns that "theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end" (hooks 1991: 2). With all my humility, I hope I have directed this project towards a healing and revolutionary end.

As for my larger contribution, I hope that this project expands on the literature of the impossibility of emotional realities and capitalistic demands' coexistence. In following the lineage of McGee offers in her exploration of self-care and capitalist logics, I identify this impossibility as a generative problem space for subversive action and radical reimagining of capitalist realities. Through my analysis, I illustrate how, through the intervention of grieving memory, material relationships are reimagined outside of capitalistic prescriptions of alienated labor and commodity fetishism. This additionally contributes to feminist lineages of thought of valuing the everyday, such as what hooks' work describes, and understanding the powerful potentialities of the quotidian to lead us in political work and resistance. I also hope to have contributed to the literature describing the generative, uniqueness of bad feelings, refusing a

hierarchy of emotion. Principally, I hope to honor the ways in which myself and folks in my community are enacting politics of anti-capitalist relationality in ways that are loving, affirming, and memorial.

In summation, this project aims to illustrate how, by centering the unique knowledge construction of bad feelings and vulnerability, we can understand the ways in which we employ materials in grief-memory as subversive to capitalist logics of material relationality. By centering interpersonal and loving connection in relationships to these materials, the alienation that defines the capitalist imperative is refused, questioned, and reimagined. Understanding capitalism as a hegemonic system, this quotidian questioning and refusal has the political potentiality to fracture the omnipotence, and therefore violent power, of capitalism.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, Sara. 2017. *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bailey, Moya. 2021. "The Ethics of Pace." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 120(2):285–99.
- Behar, Ruth. 1996. *The Vulnerable Observer*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Bennett, Jane. 2009. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chen, Mel Y. 2012. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Clare, Eli. 2017. *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1986. "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." *Social Problems* 33(6):14–32.
- Diserholt, Amanda. 2021. "Fatigue as an Unconscious Refusal of the Demands of Late Stage Capitalism." *Psychoanalysis, Culture, and Society* 26:516–34.
- Gabe, Alicia. 2019. "Seeing Her in Me."
- Glassie, Henry. 1999. *Material Culture*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Halberstam, Jack. 2011. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14(3):575–99.
- Harvey, David. 2010. *A Companion to Marx's Capital*. New York, NY: Verso.
- Haug, Frigga. 2000. "Memory-Work as a Method of Social Science Research: A Detailed Rendering of Memory-Work Method."
- Hector, Will. 2016. "Grieving Ourselves Whole." *Tikkun* 31(2):44–45.
- hooks, bell. 1991. "Theory as a Liberatory Practice." *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 4(1):1–12.
- hooks, bell. 1999. *All About Love: New Visions*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Jagger, Alison. 1989. "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology." *Inquiry* 32(2):151–76.

- Jones, Micheal Owen. 1977. "How Can We Apply Event Analysis to 'Material Behavior,' and Why Should We?" *Western Folklore* 56:199–214.
- Lowery, Annie. 2017. "Why the Phrase 'Late Capitalism' Is Suddenly Everywhere." *The Atlantic*. Retrieved 2023 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/05/late-capitalism/524943/>).
- Macklemore and Ryan Lewis. 2011. "Wing\$."
- Martin, Anna and Bette Ann Moskowitz. 2020. "A Lifetime of Good Loving." *New York Times*.
- Marx, Karl. 1867. *Das Kapital*. Verlag von Otto Meisner.
- Mbembe, Achille. 2011. *Necropolitics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- McGee, Micki. 2020. "Capitalism's Care Problem: Some Traces, Fixes, and Patches." *Social Text* 38:39–66.
- Minich, Julie Avril. 2016. "Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now." *Lateral*. Retrieved 2023 (<https://csalateral.org/issue/5-1/forum-alt-humanities-critical-disability-studies-now-minich/>).
- Moussawi, Ghassan. 2021. "'Bad Feelings: On Trauma, Non-Linear Time, and Accidental Encounters in 'the Field', ." *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 10(1):78–96.
- Moya-Raggio, Eliana. 1984. "'Arpilleras': Chilean Culture of Resistance." *Feminist Studies* 10(2):277–90.
- Pappas, Alexi. 2021. *Bravey: Chasing Dreams, Befriending Pain, and Other Big Ideas*. New York, NY: The Dial Press.
- Prown, Jules David. 1982. "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method." *Winterthur Portfolio* 17(1):1–19.
- Puar, Jasbir. 2017. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Tuck, Eve. 2009. "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities." *Harvard Educational Review* 79(3):409–28.
- Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.
- Vuong, Ocean. 2022. *Time Is a Mother*. New York, NY: Penguin Press.

WHO. 2023. "Climate Change." *World Health Organization*. Retrieved 2023
(https://www.who.int/health-topics/climate-change#tab=tab_1).

Williams, Raymond. 1977. "Hegemony." Pp. 108–14 in *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford, UK:
Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX

1. Email Research Call

Hi all,

My name is Grace and I'm a senior sociology and FGS double major, currently working on my thesis, which is why I'm writing to you all! My project is on the material culture of grief, and how we use material objects to remember and relate to our lost loved ones. I am collecting photos of the objects that bring you closer/help you remember lost loved ones, or poems/other narratives about these objects for a content analysis.

Quotes from the information you send me, as well as your actual photos or narratives may be included in the thesis. If you would prefer the photo/narrative to not be included, please let me know when you send it over. In the study, I will default to use your real name, but can definitely use pseudonyms upon request.

Once finished, my thesis will be available in the repository of sociology theses and will be available to be read there! I will also send any analysis specific to your submission to you upon request.

If you are interested in participating, send me your photo, poem, narrative, etc to g_tumavicus@coloradocollege.edu along with a very brief description of the object/how you use it/how it makes you feel, or anything else you would like to add.

Please reach out with any questions!

Grace

Instagram story slides



Shamelessly asking
(shamefully)
Instagram for school
help



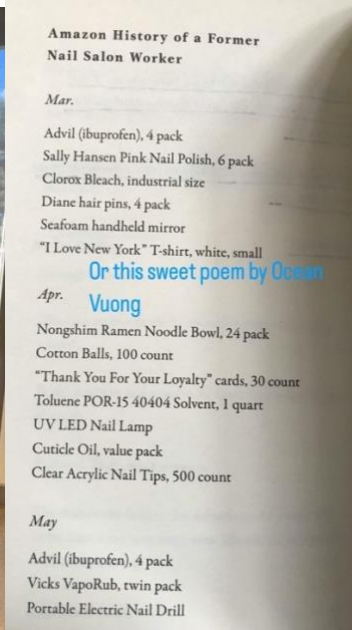
I'm doing a thesis
on the material
culture of grief and
how we use our
material objects to
remember and
relate to lost love
ones and would love
your help



I'm collecting photos of these
objects or poems/narratives
about these objects



Like this
pretty dress
of my mom's



**Amazon History of a Former
Nail Salon Worker**

Mar.

- Advil (ibuprofen), 4 pack
- Sally Hansen Pink Nail Polish, 6 pack
- Clorox Bleach, industrial size
- Diane hair pins, 4 pack
- Seafoam handheld mirror
- "I Love New York" T-shirt, white, small

Or this sweet poem by Ocean

Apr.

Vuong

- Nongshim Ramen Noodle Bowl, 24 pack
- Cotton Balls, 100 count
- "Thank You For Your Loyalty" cards, 30 count
- Toluene POR-15 40404 Solvent, 1 quart
- UV LED Nail Lamp
- Cuticle Oil, value pack
- Clear Acrylic Nail Tips, 500 count

May

- Advil (ibuprofen), 4 pack
- Vicks VapoRub, twin pack
- Portable Electric Nail Drill



If you want to be involved,
please DM me your things along
with a very brief description of
the object/how it makes you
feel/how you use it, or anything
else you would like to add



Analysis Materials Slideshow

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/15ZVA1B_nnzaT_zaYALxjVt_P_d_uxUUHLWTx6QtyFmI/edit?usp=sharing