

**KEEPSAKE:**  
**MEANINGS, PRACTICES AND TACTICS OF**  
**MAKING AND PRESERVING MEMORY**

**A THESIS**

**SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF**  
**GRAPHIC DESIGN**

**AND THE INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS**  
**OF BİLKENT UNIVERSITY**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS**  
**FOR THE DEGREE OF**  
**MASTER OF FINE ARTS**

by

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December, 2010

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **KEEPSAKE:**

## **MEANINGS, PRACTICES AND TACTICS OF MAKING AND PRESERVING MEMORY**

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December, 2010

This study is an attempt to conceptualize what a “keepsake” is within the context of subjective and social usage in relation to death and mourning. The phenomenon of memory keeping is examined not only as a subjective collation but as an objectifying, inalienable practice during which material qualities and mnemonic value of the keepsake are revealed. Ancestral memorials’ encoding continuity between and across generations, types of display of a keepsake as well as types of mourning/object keeping, are the foci of the study. A test study aiming to provide an understanding and a basis for more profound researching of keepsake as a social phenomenon is conducted, borrowing methods of ethnography and sociology. The discourse of “object-cathexis” and the “perennial nature of objects” as Zygmunt Bauman argues are discussed in order to analyze human-object relations within the framework of mourning.

**Keywords:** Keepsake, inalienability, (un)mourning, memory, biography of objects, tactility

## ÖZET

### YADİGAR:

### ANI YARATMANIN VE SAKLAMANIN ANLAMLARI, UYGULAMALARI VE YÖNTEMLERİ

Kalben Sağdıç

Grafik Tasarım Yüksek Lisans Programı

Danışman: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Dilek Kaya Mutlu

Aralık, 2010

Bu çalışmanın amacı yadigar olarak saklanan, kullanılan ve sergilenen eşyaların öznel ve toplumsal kullanımlarını, ölüm ve yas tutma pratikleri bağlamında kavramsallaştırmaktır. Hatıra saklama olgusu sadece öznel bir tanımlama olarak değil, nesneleştiriciliği ve devredilemezliği sırasında yadigarın maddesel özelliklerinin ve belleksele değerinin ortaya çıkmasını sağlayan bir olgu olarak ele alınmaktadır. Nesiller arasında ve boyunca sürekliliği düzenleyen atadan kalma eşyalar, yadigarın sergilenme biçimleri ve yas tutma/obje saklama yöntemleri çalışmanın odaklarını oluşturmaktadır. Yadigarın sosyal bir olgu olarak daha derinlemesine anlaşılması ve araştırılmasını hedefleyen sınırlı bir deneme grubu çalışması, etnografi ve sosyoloji dallarının yöntemlerinden faydalanarak yürütülmüştür. “Eşya enerjisi” ve “eşyanın kalıcı doğası” söylemleri insan-eşya ilişkisini matem bağlamında ele almak maksadı ile incelenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yadigar, devredilemezlik, yas tutma(ma), bellek, eşyaların biyografisi, dokunulurluk

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor Assist. Prof. Dr. Dilek Kaya Mutlu for her endless belief and support. I would have given up earlier if she had not been there for me with her courage and determination. Tough I have let her down and ignored my responsibilities on a daily basis; she never stopped to provide me with her guidance. I would also like to thank Dr. Aren Emre Kurtgözü who put his time in my work and broadened my horizons with his comments on material culture, subject-object relations and how they should be theorized. I would also like to thank Özlem Savaş who has shared her experiences, studies and perceptions with me and prevented me from being biased. I'd like to thank Assist.Prof. Dr. Ahmet Gürata who kindly accepted to read my work and evaluate it. I would also like to thank my family for constantly asking about the direction of my thesis and life so that I could have an image of myself as a responsible, hardworking person whom I wish to be someday before I die and become a keepsake.

I would also like to thank all my friends who have actively participated during my thinking, planning, talking, talking, talking and finally writing process with their presence and keepsakes. I need to thank Irmak Özdemir, who is not only my best friend but my inspiration, light and half-mother. She has had the patience to stay in my life for so long when I could not bare the thought of being me. If it weren't for her and her beloved computer, this thesis would not exist. I also would like to thank Emre Durmaz for being such a loyal and supportive friend and never hesitating to use all his means, including his dearest camera for this work. I would also like to thank Pelin Aytemiz whose previous studies have broadened my horizons more than I could imagine.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother who would have been so happy to read it if I could have the chance to translate it for her. Her loss marked every fragment of my life and each of the things she gave me has become unique reminders of a past I will long all my life and whose glimpses I seek in my present. The aim of this study is to feel closer to her and every loved person lost, but never forgotten.

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“As we looked at her straw bag, filled with balls of wool and an unfinished piece of knitting, and at her blotting pad, her scissors, her thimble, emotion rose up and drowned us. Everyone knows the power of things: life is solidified in them, more immediately present than in any one of its instants.”

Simone de Beauvoir, *A Very Easy Death*.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In the world of kept, preserved and cherished objects, it is possible to find traces of familial histories; aesthetical values of both their owners and times, kinds of negotiations with death and loss; and the preservation of self-identities. These objects create a core for memory construction as they move with people, wandering different domestic spaces and lives. They cannot be valorized in pursuit of profit maximization or utilized as a fashion item depending on their being unique due to the uniqueness of their original owner(s). These kept things may be outmoded, sleazy or cheap and their materiality may contradict with prevailing conditions imposed by contemporary consumption dynamics. Far from their personalization, in some cases, people possess objects which they normally would not buy or think of displaying in their houses and carrying on themselves. Such possessions are not simple commodities that become props of “erosion of life, time and history” (Foucault, 1997, p. 351). They embody connections with the past, create simultaneity between past and present and gain new meanings and functions within the context of loss and death during mourning and its aftermath. Therefore, their status changes as they become a surrogate artifact, a loved object from a loved person, inheriting the mobility of person(s) of remembrance.

This study takes as its objective a vaguely defined cultural phenomenon which is referred to with the name of keepsake. Keepsake will be described as a thing with a socio-historical life that is freed from need/desire binary opposition. What I briefly mean by this term is an inherited gift from a family member, a friend or a loved person, not interchangeable, which “should not be given or sold but kept within the confines of a close group’s inalienable

wealth” (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004, p. 609). In addition to the conceptualization of keepsake, its placement within the domestic realm and becoming of an altar or a cherished object of use/display will be discussed within the domain of Turkish middle-class family members in Ankara. A limited study conducted by borrowing methods of ethnography will explore how keepsakes are preserved and used during negotiating with loss, death, and mourning; and in the aftermath of these processes. The emphasis will not solely be on the object itself, relieving the object from matter of value (whether use, exchange or sign); but on the origins of it and the association with the person(s) who had it previously. The keepsake will be defined as an object which defies silence of the object.

### **1.1. Scope and Purpose of the Study**

This thesis’ object of study is an elusive material which is hard to define depending on different dynamics and processes surrounding the keepsakes within cultural context. There are several kinds of keepsakes. They have different exchange values when their mnemonic value is eliminated from the picture. Their sizes and durability also differ causing some of them being thrown away while some can be protected (Cwerner and Metcalfe, 2003, p. 230). The keepsakes can be rare or ordinary. Furthermore, are we saving an object from extinction and decay or is the object saving our family and tradition structure from extinction and decay?

This thesis seeks to discover what happens to the belongings of a loved person in the aftermath of her/his death after the belongings are preserved and treasured. Why are specific possessions of the lost people kept? How do these objects create a medium of communication through senses, past memories and new meanings embedded in them? In which ways are they accepted and cherished? And how do their values, meanings and functions change in time?

The question in relation with keepsakes is what kind of objects they are and what their distinct impact on their keepers' lives from other belongings is. The question I am particularly interested is that how they can evoke sensations and moments of the past in the present and how they are repossessed by their keepers. This thesis aims to show that object-subject relations are changed, rearranged and recreated by death, mourning and loss within personal and familial context. This can most clearly be observed in the case of "keepsakes" that are replaced in their keepers' lives after being taken away from their original "owners" by death. A keepsake is no longer owned but possessed and cherished; it is irreplaceable and inalienable; and although it is a mass produced object, it differs from its duplicates once its materiality is altered by loss.

The keepsake's materiality and impact on memory will be explored with the aim of having a deeper insight on the ecology and biography of such an object. Repossession of the object after the loss of its original owner will be described under the light of material culture, anthropology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology and ethnography.



**Figure 1.** A sample keepsake: Diary

Keepsake “instigates a process of remembering directed not to any particular vision of past and future, but which repeats itself many times over in point-like momentary ... awakening of the past in the present” and recreates the persona of the lost one(s) as pointed out by Suzanne Küchler and Adrian Forty (2001, p. 63). This treasured object does not disappear and lose its value unless it is literally lost; and the void it carries, which is the loss of a loved person, can never be filled with a new import from outside despite its being better, newer or more functional (Bauman, 1992, p. 189). Context of naming an object as a keepsake will be determined before looking into the world of keepsakes.

In order to narrow down such a wide topic of study, I have intended to take a closer look into how people that are close to me place such possessions in their homes and lives; and what kind of value and mobility these objects gain over time. Their objects are invested with “ancestral memorial encoding continuity between and across generations” (Parkin, 1999, p.

317). Thus, through these keepsakes, death customs, the analytical deconstruction of death through the mobility of burial place and the emasculation of loss beyond mortality through object-cathexis are also revealed.

The reason of my peculiar interest in the topic is initially rooted in my personal experiences which have made me think that an object in the form of a keepsake has the power to loyally keep the color, texture and sight of those whom we have lost, maybe even better than these people themselves. In addition to my personal interest, I find it quite interesting to reach out to meanings clustered around visualized memories becoming more than mere objects inside our homes where traditional ways of life combined with daily routines conceal imperfections of familial values and rules.

## **1.2. Literature Review**

Drawing upon the growing literature on material culture, this study explores the realm of memory keeping, the external and internal body of the keepsake and meanings clustered around concepts such as mourning, unmourning, tactility, materiality and inalienability. There is a broad critical literature on material culture and subject-object relations. However, specific references to culturally constructed and defined objects such as keepsakes are not outnumbering. I will draw upon the writings of Zygmunt Bauman (1992), Judy Attfield (2000), Arjun Appadurai (1988), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1981). In the conceptualization of

the word “keepsake,” references will be made to relevant articles on inalienable wealth, death rituals, mourning and object-subject relations.

Apart from this literature, I will examine Daniel Miller’s (2001) works on objects forming the symbolic center of the house where there is the right of selection and pleasure of throwing away is negated or delayed. Furthermore, Miller’s (1991) concept of humility attributed to objects will be reconsidered in the context of keepsakes and how they overcome their silence by the recreation of personal and familial memories. *Passing On: Kinship and Inheritance in England* by Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason (2007) will be one of the primary sources for both the conceptualization of the keepsake and its domain. The ethnographic methods of Finch and Mason who have looked into people’s relations with their treasured objects will be borrowed.

Objects as makings, inventions and perpetrations of people, embody emotions, social relations and cultural traditions. There is a reciprocal relation between objects and their possessors. This reciprocity has become a concern for scholars during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the term “material culture” was first used by Prescott in 1843 for the “material civilization of Mexico in his travelogue” (Buchli, 2002, p. 1). Main developments in the field have occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century depending on the widening of the world of objects and an obvious change in their impact on lives. Transferring objects into words is the aim of material culture so that they become apparent outside the subject world. Objects do not only speak for themselves but also for their owners, inheritors or finders. A human’s clinging to an object can never be simply understood as a habit or a like but rather a preference, selection and infliction of wanted meaning upon. Social and individual identities are shaped by objects that are constantly replaced by better, newer, more modern and fashionable versions of themselves. Things create

a hierarchy among people as well as themselves and they contribute to the creation of personal dwelling spaces in addition to public spaces. They “contain the house” and the world in a sense (Miller, 2001).

Objects such as keepsakes, on the other hand, have distinct entities that extend the entities of *ordinary* objects which are “rich in functionality but improvised in meaning” and whose “frame of reference is the present moment” and “possibilities do not extend beyond everyday life” (Baudrillard, 1996, pp. 80-81). In Sigmund Freud’s words, “the instinct of self preservation found in every living creature” reveals itself through these objects which become an altar, a mnemonic device, a micro-museum and a crypt (as cited in Clewell, 2001, p. 45) Objects have a pressure of abundance in Daniel Miller’s (2001) words and this pressure is eliminated within the traditional cultural framework by not disposing and getting rid of the dead but keeping their integrity and familial continuity by rituals such as having keepsakes (p. 81).

The reasons of keeping an object, protecting it and the desire to pass it onto next generations are to be studied comparatively in this thesis. Different definitions such as recollection object mnemonic device by Nadia Seremetakis (1994), micro-museum by Marcia Pointon (1999) and transitional object by Donald Winnicott (1971) will be attributed to keepsakes and the contextualization will be made before exploring people’s relations with their keepsakes.

### **1.3. Methodology**

The first part of the study is mostly based on literature review. In the second part some qualitative research techniques will be utilized to disclose meanings clustering around

“meanings of memory keeping”. Mnemonic objects, located inside houses or carried on/with their keepers will be explored. I have decided to conduct a test study, which includes seven participants and my personal attitude towards my keepsakes. The context of this study is rather individualistic, aiming to provide a basis and an understanding for further research on keepsake as a socio-personal phenomenon. I use interviewing and participant observation as my key research techniques. Data are gathered from in-depth interviews conducted with people living in Ankara, who own keepsakes from first/second/and more generations and prefer to display or keep mementoes. The interviews were conducted live and face to face in domestic space and at social surroundings. Photographs of keepsakes were also taken in order to observe the closeness of relations with them and ways of their display or storage. I have been to the houses of keepers at intervals. I have preferred to talk about the participants’ keepsakes not only for once, but almost every time I had the chance to arrange meeting or visiting them. My purpose has been to gain more profound information and insights with each of these meetings. Meanings attached to these keepsakes have been revealed progressively. I have tried to comprehend the differences in attitudes depending on whether the structure and material of the keepsake or the age of the keepers or whether there was a peculiar and personal relationship between the mnemonic object and its keeper beyond what was made visible to me and other people as well. I did not prefer using questionnaires for I have decided to ask open-ended questions which helped people to reveal their connections with their keepsakes and the stories attached to these performing objects. I have decided to interview close friends and family friends in order to be more comfortable so that I could achieve conclusions or questions that would lead my study to larger scales in my future studies. It has been a very limited and private study however becoming too personal and subjective were tried to be eliminated by conducting various interviews and talking about these keepsakes at different times and places, especially with my friends that I could meet any time and place.

Since the test study has become progressive and continuous over a time period of almost a year, I could have the chance to ask more questions and even get answers without asking any over time. The flow of information and sentiments evolving around these objects has helped me avoid any kind of personalization and prepossession. The advantage of such a limited and private research has been that the stories of these monumentalized objects have been easier to learn depending on my sample group being very comfortable and at ease while talking to me. The difficulty of talking about death, loss and grief was rather inoperative during our conversations.

As to the selection of the people interviewed, I have preferred purposive sampling.

Interviewees are chosen among a certain group of people with a specific aim, knowing their interest in the topic due to informal conversations I had with them and though this study has internal validity, its practical conclusions cannot be applied to general situations and all people.<sup>1</sup> I have preferred open-ended questions like “Who left you this memento?”, “why did you choose to keep it instead of giving it away or throwing it along with other possessions?”, “how does this keepsake make you feel?” and I have recommended the interviewee to tell the journey of the keepsake from its owner to its keeper and the placement of keepsake inside the house, why it has been placed like that and for smaller items how they are used were the main questions. There is no strict order of asking questions since people have been willing to tell the biography of their keepsakes and how they plan to pass them on to their children. Notes on my observations and photographs will be helpful in transcribing the interviews as well as personal interpretation and establishment of a theoretical framework in accordance with the experiences of people with their cherished objects.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/>

#### **1.4. Overview of the Chapters**

The discussion on keepsake begins with a theoretical framework in which different scholars argue upon the nature of object-subject relations, death, mourning and basis of object keeping. Chapter 2 examines “keepsake” in its materiality, relation with memory and biography. Dynamics of mourning, their relation to kept objects and an altar-like structure of keepsake will be explored as well. In the first part of Chapter 2, keepsake’s objectifying power and inalienability are discussed. Inalienability is linked to death, loss and mourning and how affinity between the owner and keeper influences the keeper’s relation with the keepsake is defined. Implications of the object’s material and durability are also briefly discussed. Second part of this chapter is on memory. The gathering of past and present embedded in the object blurs the distinction between memory and history. Distance between the dead and the living takes another form in the keepsake and bodily absence is filled by it, providing connections with someone no longer seen, heard or touched in such a way that imagining the lost person results in the formation of a concrete image. Third part examines biography of the keepsake. The object’s power to evoke sensations and create re-perceptions is discussed. Affinity between the keeper and the owner is also studied since affinity offers a more profound relationship with the object depending on past experiences attached to it. Therefore, the need to construct a new relationship is diminished and the tactility of the object becomes solidified. Affinity also transforms the keepsake into a transitional object which takes the physical form of grief and loss.

Chapter 3 stems from my insights and observations on keepsakes and their possessors. Perspectives of possessors and documentation of family histories as well as individual integrity through loved objects are explored. In the first part of this chapter, mapping of

keepsakes is defined. The context of these keepsakes, culturally and personally, is determined and information of the keepers is also given. Second part of Chapter 3 offers an examination on “keepsakes” on the basis of interviews and personal experiences. How the meaning of a keepsake is constructed in the discourse of middle-class family members? I also seek to examine keepsakes in the light of the theories of Csikszentmihalyi and Tilley (1991). Their discourse is discussed in the subsection entitled “Negotiating with Loss.”

## **2. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE KEEPSAKE**

This chapter explores keepsake in its materiality, through its relations with its owner and keeper, by the senses it evokes in the keeper and how direct or indirect experiences with the owner and the object influence the biography of the object. Meanings of concepts such as objectification, inalienability, inalienable wealth, material durability are examined under the topic of materiality. Furthermore, the association of memory and the memorialized object are discussed in relation with time and history. Theoretical framework evolves in accordance with arguments related to loss, grief, mourning and the impact of death on subject-object relations. The distinction of keepsake is aimed to be determined from other objects of the living and the deceased. As an object of a specific culture which is not a whole but debris, keepsake is saved from that destruction and corrosion. The potentially faded waste object of the past enables

people to find the image of that past since it is not lost but protected as the remains of loss (Benjamin, 1970).

## **2.1. Materiality of Keepsake**

Materiality of the keepsake is a significant matter to look into because of the distinct qualities it acquires such as not being owned anymore since it cannot be bought and sold and becoming a memento mori with a mnemonic value beyond exchange value. The keepsake signifies more than what its physical body implies and reveals. However, it is not completely independent from its material structure and the relationship it entails with the keeper is also influenced by its materiality. Its objectification practices, inalienability, durability and physical affinity with the lost person are to be examined in this section.

### **2.1.1. Objectification**

Things decay, fracture, decompose, disappear and go extinct everyday unless they find a way to hide under the cranes of history such as relics or they are protected and cared about by people for the sake of personal as well as familial reasons such as keepsakes. Tangibility of a past, which bears the possibility of becoming unreliable or extinct in time, might depend on the stories and meanings attached to simple objects. Despite the human mind being “a recording instrument” which preserves “the records, traces and engram of past events analogous to records preserved in the geological strata” according to Hans Meyerhoff (1995, p. 20), the constitution of self-image and personal past cannot be separated from attachments with objects because they enable “a sophisticated and realistic sense of self” where “self love

yields to objects love and gives rise to an image of the self mediated by the external world” (Clewell, 2004, p. 45).

Being aware of the past and producing a consciousness of it, both in personal and collective terms, is rooted in memory through which families and communities realize the scope and boundaries of their experiences. Recognition of differences between yesterday and today; creation of an existence in the form of an idea by “translating one's freedom into an external sphere” as Hegel (1952) defines; and clarifying the uncertain forms of a past dangerously forgettable, all require the fabrication of a mnemonic system (p. 40).

A mnemonic system has a specific form which can be described by objectification -an inevitable process, contextualizing expressions, conscious or unconscious; social or individual-, which is in Daniel Miller's words

the material resolution, the making of an idea into a reality, whether of temporal kind as in ephemeral, the seemingly eternal type as in authentic, or more often than not a combination of both in which some sort of mediation takes place at the point of materialization and form an internal logic of sorts characterized as an ecology of personal possessions.

(as cited in Attfield, 2000, pp.154-55)

It is a projective process during which “the material world comes to provide the individual with images of fragments of himself” (Munn, 1971, p.158). The things we make ours, also make us theirs since subject-object relations are bound to be reciprocal. Thereof, the process of objectification can be defined as a dialectical relationship in which the object and subject

are conjoined and become “same, yet different; constituting and constituted”; and the consciousness and social ties embodied by the keepsake form a “medium through which we make and know ourselves” (Tilley, 2006, p. 61). So, a person is objectified as a relative, as a family member by the keepsake while the object defies its humility, its placement inside “a silent and unconscious level of discourse” (Miller, 1991, p. 85). The keepsake tells what is not written and conceals meanings which are reappropriated. It occupies mobility across people and places it wanders in time through the transactions attached to the object by its donor and its keeper. Relations of people with places and other people as well as distinct ways of dwelling become overt while biography of a person and even a group of people, as in family are objectified.

The accumulation of a lifetime interpenetrated to the keepsake goes beyond the habitual interactions people have with their objects. The keepsakes do not “embody memories of past events but have themselves become embodied memories; objectified and condensed as a thing” (Rowlands, 1993, p. 147).

### **2.1.2. Inalienability**

The impartibility of objects from people, which helps the achievement of social ties, effectuates a culture where possessing indicates an abstruse relationship with them, always potentially alienable (Miller, 1991, p. 75). There are substantial factors that change or reverse the dynamics of alienation with regards to the keepsake. These factors depend on the closeness of association between people and things. In the case of the keepsake, the association is emphasized and recreated by death, tangible domestic history and traditional framework. The particular situation of loss marks the loss of significance attributed to

elements like taste, preference and style, and this differentiates the criteria of keeping an object from owning an object. Therefore, the context of keepsake-keeper relationship observed and studied in this thesis does not aim to consider these objects on the criteria of their exchange value and demandable eligibility. Repossession of keepsakes and negotiation with loss through them are apprehended in an independent manner from the possibility of selling or bargaining these objects.

People have been investing “aspects of their own biographies in things”; for this reason the belongings of the dead gain an altar-like specialness with a certain level of inalienability (Hoskins, et al. Tilley, 2006, p. 74). All the furniture, clothes, souvenirs<sup>2</sup> and even a piece of paper inherited from the lost person may achieve an otherwise unexpected prominence, despite these objects might be useless, sleazy or outmoded. The worthiness of such significance lies in the fact that, in some cases, people keep things they would never think of buying, possessing, carrying on themselves or displaying in their houses. These objects might even contradict with the general setting of the house and look distasteful when compared to preferred decoration. The acquisition of the keepsake is not the same as the objects of everyday consumption. The intimacy established with it does not depend on having it once and for all because of the altar it becomes despite new meanings and functions the keeper attaches to the keepsake. It is a member of a triangular relationship between the lost person and the keeper. It occupies a space and a time that is specific to one's past, known or unknown; witnessed or told. Its affinity with death brings in the element of inalienability where the object signifies privatized relations outgrowing the driving forces of production and consumption.

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<sup>2</sup> A souvenir is peculiar to where it has been brought from, reminding of one's journey destinations and memories far from home. The main difference between a keepsake and a souvenir is that a keepsake does not have to carry a mark of a place. For further information, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Souvenir>

### **2.1.2.1 Elements of Inalienability**

Annette Weiner (1992) claims:

What makes a possession inalienable is its exclusive and cumulative identity with particular series of owners through time. Its history is authenticated by fictive or true genealogies, origin myths, sacred ancestors and gods. In this way, inalienable possessions are transcendent treasures to be guarded against all the exigencies that might force their loss. (p. 33)

Taking an object that has been subjected to destruction in the aftermath of its owner's death and saving it from extinction because of its appeal to the keeper or the significance of its original owner, qualify inalienability to the keepsake. This "recollection object" in Laura Marks' (2000) words is capable of establishing a memory and making it concrete like other inalienable possessions; and it can transmit knowledge and substance across generations (Weiss, 1997, pp. 164-5). The keepsake transforms loss into subsistence and should be protected against loss as Weiner also suggests.

Another study on inalienable wealth by Curasi, Price and Arnould (2004), has determined six criteria for being regarded as inalienable wealth. First is hierophancy, which is "the capacity of expounding sacred mysteries" that are particular rather than universal. Second is the distinction it provides for a group of people who are guaranteed emancipation in Godelier's (1999) words. There is also a hierarchy that inalienable possessions create because not every object can be kept by every member of the family. Therefore another criterion is born and it is

the acceptance of this social order legitimated by inalienable possessions. Fourth criterion is sacredness depending on such objects' detachment from space and time and their roots being lost inside familial history, recreated by stories of family members and myths surrounding them. Fifth criterion is that inalienable possessions cannot be owned for ownership has always been an alienable construct with choices of buying and selling. An inalienable possession cannot be bought or sold for it is unique and peculiar to one's personal and familial past. The last criterion is the fear of loss that "entails a loss of identity, authority and mythology" (p. 610). Loss of an inalienable possession is described as "the most serious evil which could befall a group" (Pannell, 1994, p. 28).

The main difference between inalienable wealth and the keepsake as an inalienable object is that, a keepsake's place within the system of objects such as commodities, relics, gifts and even garbage in Igor Kopytoff's (1986) words has been fixated by death (p. 67). It has been observed by Kopytoff that possessions may be "sold, and then given as a gift, later preserved as inalienable, and still later passed back into the alienable domain" (cited in Curasi et al., 2004, p. 611). Changed circumstances do not change the status of the keepsake. It is either a keepsake or something else. Once it is lost, the connections it provides and its contributions to personal and familial identity and mnemonic integrity are lost. Despite there are millions of objects which have been thrown out or sold in the aftermath of their owners' death, then ended up in second hand markets, these cannot be regarded as keepsakes since they have not been kept for various reasons which cannot be known anymore after they lose their ties with their owner(s).

Another difference is that, sacred qualities do not apply to keepsakes of members of middle-class Turkish families which have been the focus of this study, unlike the keepsakes of some

tribes such as Makoni's and Haya's. The keepsake symbolizes the lack of someone's presence that has been of importance to the keeper in addition to representing a kin group across generations and over time (Finch and Mason, 2007, p. 142). It might occupy a mystical value because of concealing a time which cannot be repeated and perceptions of someone lost. However this mystical value is different because the definition of mystical differs from culture to culture. From this study's point of view, the distance between the living and the dead, both bodily and timely speaking; and how the keepsake dislocates this distance in addition to the distance it has from its own materiality can be the mysterious aspects of it.

Hierarchical features of inalienable possessions are not entirely irrelevant for keepsakes. In some cases, the keeper is granted the object before death happens and this particular object is given to the keeper depending on the belief that s/he is the best choice for keeping and preserving it while bonding with it, too. This selection entails forgoing ownership and accepting that a keepsake cannot be bought and sold as is the case for other inalienable possessions. Letting go of owning an object but possessing it, relates to irreplaceability of the keepsake which comprises fear of loss, too.

#### **2.1.2.2 Loss, Death and their influence on Inalienability**

This kind of inheritance practices

suggest that death has long been a defining moment in the character of objects and the status of an object as a possession is reconfigured by death. A person's death has the capacity to transform the nature of their possessions, it heightens their desirability- for both the living and the dead- and whether they are

dismantled or maintained, the ways in which such objects circulate  
are unambiguously restricted as a consequence of death. (Weiss, 1997, p. 168)

The keepsake, then, is remembering the “brute fact of death” by trying to forget it which is *unmourning*<sup>3</sup> since the relation between physically lost person and his/her object is reconfigured inside a new relation between the keeper and the keepsake. This is not only a renunciation of death but also vitiating death drive which is our desire, by enriching life with objects instead of losing it (Marcuse, 196 p. 185; Bataille, 1987,p. 142). It is, then, one of the post-mortem rituals along with funerals and family reunions-whether religious, formal or informal-, carrying the implication that death has to be negated and separated from the sphere of the living somehow without rejecting it all together.

So, “the death of someone is an event in the world of objects out there” which is any other event linked with any other object, unlike the death of self which is “not an event of that knowable world of objects” (Bauman, 1992, p. 3). The relation encrypted in the keepsake and how it is defined by death becomes more significant since this definition marks an agency of persons and things as well. The process of occupying the keepsake “objectifies social relationships and brings together the dispersed agency of the deceased,” making the potential energy of the deceased visible to others (Gell, 1998, p. 225). Life force of a relative is mediated and transacted among people privately. By the keepsake, death circulates in social relations until the mourning is concluded during which the acts about letting go, forgetting, forgiving and finishing off become objectifying practices, ensuring “death will be alienated

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<sup>3</sup> Unmourning is conceptualized with the intention to imply a situation following loss, where the mourner can be disturbed by the level of grief and pain and finds a strategy to negotiate with the fear and yearning caused by death. At a stage where one mourns for mourning, longs for a loss which cannot be forgotten and overcome; a healing and transformative moment should come in the form of a negotiation (Gibson, 2004, p. 289). This negotiation can take the form of an object, like keepsakes, that are the memorialized objects of mourning; or photographs that capture the aura of the living and re-enact this liveliness in the aftermath of death

from a community of mourners” (Weiss,1997, p. 170). Otherwise, if the person in charge of the keepsake which is a prop of memory, chooses to get rid of the object or loses the object, then loss is not confirmed and the death ritual cannot be finalized. The keepsake “organizes the relations between the living and the dead and the insertion of this relation into the flow of time” (Bennett, 2009, p. 42). The profound mark of loss is projected onto the keepsake and if this mark is erased from one’s life, then personal history which cooperates with memory, will be missing crucial pieces.

The keepsake signifies a strategy and embodies an ambiguity because of the traces attached to it at different times and places by somebody whom the keeper could never know completely. This strategy intends to alienate death by mediating between past and present and creating a transcendent comprehension of a linear life span, even making it non-linear. The object is “a tool for reflexive autobiography and introspection” (Hoskins, 1998, p. 198). The keepsake, in relation to time and space, is a biographical object which gets old and even might be old when acquired, unlike the souvenirs and gifts; it is rooted in the lost person's life span and experiences while limiting the *concrete space* of its keeper for it “imposes itself as the witness of the fundamental unity of its user, his or her everyday experience made into a thing” (Morin, 1969, pp.137-8). In a recent study, conducted in England by Finch and Mason (2007), a participant states

I have got this ornament-a pair of pot clogs- which I have always treasured. I don't think they are worth anything. It's just that I remember grandma with these pot clogs. They were in the farming community and these clogs always seemed to mean a lot to her. I don't know if they're really worth anything. It's just the sentimental value. It's grandma. (p. 146)

Here, the biographical aspect of the keepsake becomes clearer, while it is at the same time a “recollection object” in Laura Marks' words. It has to be kept at all times once it is inherited and there is a pressure of abundance when the keeper disposes or gets rid of the object somehow (Miller, 2001, p. 81). The keepsake does not have to fulfill neither its use nor exchange value anymore once it gains the status of a recollection object. It tells or reminds the keeper a lot about the life style and taste of its previous owner; and its sentimental value along with the intention of alienating death, both reconstruct its materiality. This crippled object which has been taken away from its original owner gains a new skin and mobility in time and participates in making of re-memory.

### **2.1.3. Implications of Durability and Material of the Keepsake**

The material from which the object has been made can have an impact upon the choice and ways of keeping it. In cases where the keeper is not granted with the object but has to go through a process of choosing it among the other possessions of the deceased, durability can become an issue to consider. Apart from the possessions which used to have special meanings for the keeper already, durability can become a criterion for choosing to keep a newly encountered object. It should not be overlooked that the narrative of the object and its biography are vividly influenced by the nature of the material. Linda Hurcombe (2007) claims:

Cloth and baskets can have symbols or mnemonics literally woven on them or the elements can be reconstituted to take on new or refreshed significance.

The performance of manufacture and renewal can be part of these narratives

where sensory perceptions may vary through time. For example, as objects are used, or even unwrapped, they are subtly altered. (p. 536)

The biography of the object goes beyond production/consumption divide. It can be broken, fixed and/or its function can be refigured by its owner in such a way that it also affects its mnemonic value and status as a keepsake. The phases of its life are reflected in its cuts, holes and cracks which can tell very intimate stories both about the owner and the keeper. A simple object which has been produced to serve practical and specific purposes goes through a change of its lived form by the distinctive texture it gains due to its material. The material does not only affect its durability but the senses it evokes, too. The material of the object intersects with certain places and times since “the technical or instrumental features of an object and its aesthetic and status-related features are usually inseparable aspects of its material constitution, jointly comprising its social character” (Marcoulatos, 2003, p. 253).

Usage of paper, metal, and other raw materials such as glass gives clues related to the society where the object has been produced in addition to the owner’s taste and style. Questions on which material has become more frequently used during what certain time periods; why this material was preferred instead of others; whether there were favored colors for certain objects and why they were chosen among other colors can be asked in order to gain a more profound insight on the socio-economic and cultural conditions of a particular society. Individuals from different societies and different histories shape their objects and “bring a different symbolic system to bear organizing the same material of sensory experience” (Ingold, 2000, p. 160). Despite there is still a narrative of the object without recourse to its materiality; and memory, oral representation and other symbolic forms of action surrounding it, can help create another realization for the biography of the object, its material, shape,

color usage and age cannot be overlooked in order to achieve a more complete and accurate narrative. Beyond the social relations and familial histories it has inherited and witnessed; the keepsake is not completely ripped off its materiality because its material, durability and other physical features can be the reasons of its being bought in the first place. So, one should not ignore how the keepsake hails her/him. The choice to make a particular object a keepsake with the aim of preserving it as long as one can, is a very subjective and sentimental state of mind, however it is not freed from cultural aesthetics that is closely associated with the community's welfare and other physical characteristics.

On the other hand, such physical features cannot be the only reasons and motives in the process of becoming a keepsake. A tendency to ignore the object's materiality and concentrate on its mnemonic value is always an option when it comes to relations with the lost person and the object. For instance, Robert Dessaix (2000) tells the story of how his father suddenly stopped working and started to write a letter to him one day. The father "wrote about half a page and in mid-sentence, he died" (p. 154). The letter, a piece of paper, an object which lacks durability and strength to face resistance of time and being used becomes a crypt of mourning and irreducible grief and symbolizes the urge to unmourn because Dessaix "cannot read this letter from his father" (p. 154). A letter is one of the most valuable keepsakes because of its power to speak directly to the keeper. Even if it is written to another person, it still has all the traces of the lost person's character and life. Yet, one does not have to read it to bond with it. The keepsake's presence can be satisfactory and the object's functionality can be reduced depending on the keeper's ways of handling loss and organizing her/his things.

The keepsake's relationship to the deceased and the bereaved; and the grief experiences it has been interfused with, have an impact upon the understanding and evaluation of its materiality and what kind of significance will be attained to its existence. However, its material properties and strength do have implications and influences on some matters as have been mentioned above. Though it is not always possible to know why this particular object was bought in the first place; preferences, taste, social class structures (if there is any) and diachronic textures can become self-evident in the material body of the keepsake. The properties of material that are perceived by a society are the ones that have mattered to them and "if a property is not perceived, it is as if it does not exist" (Hurcombe, 2007, p. 537). The materials and what they provide to persons along with the interactions inclusive of their performance in a life span carry clues related to cultural values and differences.

## **2.2. On Memory**

### **2.2.1. Poesis**

The reality of having personal archives by means of photo albums, keepsakes and other mnemonic devices "implies that this new historical consciousness married history and memory in new personal and material terms" (Rowlands and Tilley, 2006, p. 505). However, it is a contradiction to have the obligation to make memories like the making of commodities when memorial artifacts are not to be valued as ordinary commodities. It has gained an utter importance to remember that subjects should remember to remember. Michael Lambek (2009) remarks:

Self-conscious remembering permeates life. We must remember to take photos on a family vacation, and subsequently remember to look at them and to be cognizant of the fact that we are remembering. (p. 211).

Then, memories are also acquired and consumed like souvenirs on one hand but lacking memories makes a person less of a self on the other. The difference of keepsake's memory processing lies in *poesis*, that is "any action which is the cause of something to emerge from nonexistence to existence" (Platon, 1976, p. 150). The *making* attributed to memory and props surrounding it, like keepsakes, mediate the extremes of both objectification and commodification at one point and form a microcosmic side of history, where the individual does not solely observe and reveal past events but is history and makes history herself/himself (Lambek, 2009, p. 213). There is a new relationship to be built between the keeper and the object which is at first a triangular relation along with the original owner. In time, a transformation occurs in the perceived relationship to the lost person through a period of unmourning where "the keeper has to confront her/his memories with the deceased one by one" and come to terms with the fact that their literal and actual ties have become void and their relationship no longer exists (Conklin, 2001, p. 171). The detachment process is not always about "tie breaking" practices (Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson, 1976, pp. 67-8) but is also about creating new ties with the revision of old meanings attached to new ones, which according to Tolia Kelly, who has worked on the subject of re-memory making, enables reconfiguring the narration of the past imbued in the object (p. 315). Out of death, a new relationship and a new narrative can come into being.

Then, making of memory (or remaking of it) is isolated from the daily dynamics of production and reproduction of memorial objects when internal object relations are

considered. The figures of one's internal world are not generated by general rules applied to making of external figures like gifts. Representational accuracy of a recollection might not be completely understood through the keepsake, however the nature of subject-object relations becomes prominent such as whether one loves or hates the keepsake; whether the keepsake is controlling or liberating; whether one uses the keepsake or prefers to keep it hidden. These preferences reveal truths about owner's relation and familiarity with the keeper in addition to the keeper's self-identity and cultural background.

### **2.2.2. Time and Distance**

There is a distance inherent to the keepsake and this distance is freed from the distance between the original owner and the keeper. The keepsake is a "material reminder of the dead; in the distancing process between rememberer and remembered, for the memory of the body [was] replaced by the memory of the object" (Stewart, 2005, p. 133). This distance, highlighting not only a bodily distance but also a timely one, might become an obstacle for relating with the lost person if the keepsake is broken, missing or lost. The "radical escape from everyday life" into a time which no longer belongs to the past or the present, can also be disrupted if the keepsake is treated like the reduced objects of commodity world which are "rich in functionality but impoverished in meaning" whose "frame of reference is the present moment" and "possibilities do not extend beyond everyday life" (Baudrillard, 1996, pp. 80-1). The keepsake provides a point of intersection between "past and present, memory and postmemory, personal remembrance and cultural recall," pointing a moment in time which has the power to highlight the intersection of spatiality and temporality as well (Hirsch and Spitzer, 2006, p. 358). The past is no longer stored in a far away, foreign place waiting to be

discovered and revealed; it is not before but now and not there but here when it comes to keepsakes.

Despite bringing the past to a point where the entirety of the lost person's entity unites with that of the keeper, this distance cannot be eliminated from the relationship of donor, object and keeper. All realities surrounding mortality are denied, displaced, mediated and manipulated by turning to heritage to avoid "death of the past, death of self" while family structure is monumentalized (Huysen, 1995, pp. 249-260). The past of a family becomes active and present in the consciousness of the keeper where knowing others can be identified with knowing self (Ingold, 1996, p. 204). Nevertheless, the keepsake keeps fragments of the past and its owner to itself no matter how closely the keeper and owner were associated.

### **2.2.3. Memory vs History**

Memory, trauma, heritage can all be regarded as Western concepts emerging from a Eurocentric base as Beverley Butler (2006) claims (p. 473). Non-western contexts of memorializing and mourning can alter dichotomies such as new/old; dead/alive; past/present. This is also valid for the keepsake which renegotiates tradition, family, identity, otherness and death for the keeper.

The keepsake secularizes memorial practice making it private and peculiar between people, creating a brand new historical consciousness with the power to subvert dichotomies of both "pre-modern/modern and memory/history" (Butler, 2006, p. 505). History is connected to places and traces of the past and is refracted by the keepsake in the private sphere since it circulates and gains mobility between people and houses. However, it can be argued that the

past embedded in the keepsake is constructed or even invented depending on various reasons such as the need to have a sense of time and place; the desire to mourn as well as achievement of unmourning. It is thought to be a common problem to mistake memory for history, as some scholars like Judy Attfield (2000) point out: “memory is a very personal and intimate form of recollection although it can be and is experienced collectively in ritualized public expressions of shared cultural traditions” (p. 233). Then, would history cease to exist without folk tales, elegies, memoirs, autobiographies, perceptions and insights of people who have taken interest in history and have become historians? There is no particular necessity to draw lines between memory and history because they both possess the recreation of “an unattainable time, place and person and an accepting, confronting of death through ritualized reminders” in Marcia Pointon’s words, be it a monument on a boulevard or a keepsake in a living room (as cited in Attfield, 2000, p.234). Consequently, history can become as personal and biased as memory depending on social and cultural frameworks it has to operate within.

#### **2.2.4. Mobility and Monumentality**

Physical structure of the keepsake is another significant issue to take into consideration when it comes to its role in the keeper’s life. Keepsakes such as cloths, wallets, pieces of jewelry or letters have a different role in the keeper’s life when compared to sofas, vases or old manuscripts. The usage and meaning of the keepsake for its keeper vary depending on its materiality. Some objects can be carried on or with the keeper if s/he prefers to use them however some become altars and gain a monumental value inside domestic space due to their dimensions. Bruno Latour (1999) explains this mobility as a circulation of references and places. When the object “reduces the monumental into a miniature representation to be appropriated by the gaze of the individual subject, to be grasped by his hands and thus

possessed,” the relationship of the keeper becomes more intimate and the externally realistic fear of loss is transformed into a more sincere and profound ownage (Stewart, 2005, p. 138).

The difference between macro level mobility and micro level mobility determines the function and placement of the keepsake in the keeper’s life. The biography of the object and its attached meanings “rest on multitemporalities, as much as on the various geographical contexts the object moves through” (della Dora, 2009, p. 348). The keepsake might gain more significance if it has been used by its owner more frequently and the frequency cannot be dissociated from the physical structure of the object.

Those which can become mobile at a macro level carry a monumental value in addition to their mnemonic value. The keeper should find a place for such keepsakes inside her /his home. This place should not undermine the value of the deceased. Monuments are fundamental figures of social memory and reproduction of cultural, historical and social values. Like keepsakes, they can also be regarded as ways to negotiate with loss, failure and grief on a mass scale. Mark Edmonds (1999) claims:

Recruited by the living, they can change in form and significance. They can bolster ideas or positions far removed from those which held sway at their first construction. They can even become a focus of competing visions of the order of things. At the same time, they retain a sense of the timeless and eternal. The assertion of new values often goes hand in hand with the evocation of continuity, of an unbroken line between present and past. (p. 134)

When keepsake is evaluated within the domain of home, it shows similarities to a monument. It is no longer associated with its original use and meaning and the conditions of its production are not valid for its function and meaning in the keeper's life. Even if a vase is still a vase, it has achieved uniqueness and its placement into the keeper's life is undoubtedly different than that of its original placement.

The keepsake's place can also change the order of other home possessions. It is very rare to come across with a keepsake in a kitchen when middle-class Turkish family houses are regarded. The general preference of locating keepsakes would be to display these objects in the living room which can be kept clean and closed for the purpose of guest entertainment or become a common dwelling space for all family members who spend a little time together depending on work and leisure conditions (Göker, 2009, p. 167). To locate keepsakes in inappropriate places can be regarded as contemptuous as to just throw them away or to make them idle by forgetting them in a cellar or a loft within the cultural framework of this study.

What is more, depending on personal experiences as well as insights gained during personal contacts with people who have keepsakes and locate keepsakes in their lives and domestic spaces, it would not be irrelevant to consider that such objects can also provide a medium of discourse for their keepers. By displaying one's keepsake on a shelf or inside a unit in the living room; or by wearing, carrying the keepsake, the keeper is given a way to communicate through her/his cherished things. It entails an opportunity to talk about one's loss and what kind of negotiations were made with that loss in addition to making references to a family's past. Profound meanings attached to the keepsake can even become a source of self-praise for its keeper. Both praising the object in order to praise its previous owner(s) and having a peculiar manner of keeping it, such as displaying the keepsake at a well-deserved space, keeping it clean and secure, are intimately personal ways of coming over loss and making

sense of it without eliminating its presence from one's life. The decisions to keep an object, display and use it are not made without referring to the relations' and ties to be protected which have all changed due to death. Mark of loss and void carried by the keepsake creates a new medium for its keeper where the obsolete gains significance through personal tactics of commemoration. Reasons of archiving objects of memory in the home do not solely depend on these objects' capacity to evoke memories; they also have other functions in the family home. Domestic environment has been negotiated and "social construction to the fabrication of home's ecology" is not independent from this negotiation (Kirk and Sellen, 2010, p. 3). The decision of keeping a particular object which belonged to a particular person before it became a keepsake and to store, display and use it are not made unfoundedly. There is a "complex ecosystem of familial archiving or storage practices" which is as significant as "personal reflective value" (Hendon, 2000, p. 45). The relation established with and through such objects of significance has an impact upon the creation of domestic topography where mnemonic objects become "an external expression of aspects of self identity" as Jennifer Gonzales (1995) argues (p. 134). She introduces the notion of "autotopography" by claiming:

It does not include all personal property but only those objects seen to signify an individual identity –the material world is called upon to present a physical map of memory, history and belief. . The autobiographical object therefore becomes a prosthetic device: an addition, a trace, and a replacement for the intangible aspects of desire, identification and social relations. (p. 134)

The keepsake can be a device for "defining the self, forgetting, honoring those we care about, connecting with the past, fulfilling duty and framing the family" (Kirk and Sellen, 2010, p. 16). Making of a home and spatial configuration of objects in one's life, such as enabling the

keepsake's encounter with visitors by putting it in the living room instead of the kitchen, is an act of "framing the family" suitably. The stories attached to the keepsake as well as its physical body both represents the socio-cultural standing of the family and the object performs in accordance with the face of the keeper/family that is desired. Therefore, the keepsake might signify a particular sense of family and home. The keepsake can reach beyond its materiality and even sentimental and mnemonic value through its placement into domestic and personal domain. The choice of which object to keep, which does not happen in all cases of loss, keepsake's functionality as to its display and use, and the values and references it embodies are not independent from the desired family image, giving a sign value to the kept object. A family portrait is constructed where values are inherited by following generations and organic bonds with the past are secured.

### **2.3. Biography of the Keepsake**

Objects have been considered as simply what they were made of and how they functioned for centuries. Their role and participation in lives of persons have become a topic of interest with the growth of "material culture," a term which was referred to by Prescott in 1843 for the "material civilization of Mexico in his travelogue" (Buchli, 2002, p. 1). Despite numerous monuments, ancient artifacts and museums, the objects of the past remained silent to be discovered fully until scholars took interest in the lives of them. The term "biography of things" belongs to Kopytoff (1986), however the biography of things have been a study area since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the rapid growth in the number of things produced and consumed, the place of objects in people's lives has changed and become more crucial. As the number of objects surrounding us has increased, it has become obvious that societies and individuals

have entered a state where their things began to speak on behalf of them. The fabrication of objects became prominent in the making of identities as well as social relations.

For such reasons, the objects of the deceased have a biography which is composed of tactility; emotions, sensations and moments the objects are capable of awakening in the keeper; the past of the object in relation to the affinity of the owner and the keeper and how they are bonded by the object; and how the keepsake takes part in matters of grief and overcoming the anguish of loss.

### **2.3.1. Tactility**

The enjoyment people have from an object and consumption dynamics make it easy to “lose one’s self in the object” (Simmel, 1978, p. 63). However, the act of remembering manifested in “ideas, impressions, insights, feelings” needs to be supported by “sensory modes-sounds, images, smells” and “we, in turn, capture into specific inscriptional forms, such as spoken or written words, still or moving images, recorded sounds or music” (van Dijck, 2004, p. 264). Then, the keepsake is not only “micro-museum” in Marcia Pointon’s words, but also a micro-present because of its tactility, providing a wide range of senses to the keeper (as cited in Attfield, 2000, p. 234). The texture of the keepsake is different from the texture of other objects, which can be mistaken for a keepsake such as souvenirs. It goes through a classified process aimed at generating meaning and this process, simply, cannot be regarded as material and linguistic -in other words, dependent on the stories of the owner of the object and the keeper. The reason for this is that the keepsake can serve “the language of ears, eyes, tongue and skin, too” and does not necessarily has to be supported in its existence with words (Auslander, 1996, p. 3).

Inner states do not disclose themselves on the surface of the object and the keepsake possesses a surface disturbance since it carries the traces of a time and a persona which are expected to be reached through it. The volatile content of a place and a certain time period are brought to the present by the keepsake by which “the present itself exists only as an infinitely contracted past which is constituted at the extreme point of the already there” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 98). The witnessing quality of the keepsake creates transcendence, embracing past, present and future; and it attains an auratic value which differs from the aura of other objects that seem alike. “Aura is the sense an object gives that it can speak to us of the past without ever letting us completely decipher it ... Auratic objects, then, are fragments of the social world that cannot be read from on high but only in the witness of the object” (Marks, 2000, p. 81). This object does not gain its aura on the basis of people and material practices attached to it because it can no longer own and lose an identity in different roles and it is free from the stories of the keeper as the recollection object it has become.

Despite the new relationship the keeper will have with the object and the new meanings, functions that will be attached to it, the keepsake has a singularity that creates a life for the object covered with a skin, concealing “maps of its travel, people who produced and came into contact with it and the shifts in its value as it moves” (Marks, 2000, p. 97). The perceiver is expected to connect and complete the inherent transition of the keepsake and this perceptual completion can be thought to be a kind of performance. This performance is not performative because it does not re-initiate codes of the past; however it is a *poesis*, “the making of something out of that which was previously experientially and culturally unmarked or even null and void” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 7). One’s unconscious sensations and the layers of (im)personal experiences become found, revealed and seen through the keepsake. A plate,

which would be garbage otherwise, relates to the stories of all meals and family unions it participated that were ordinary actions in the past for the family. In the aftermath of death of the owner, the plate's surface cuts, its age, its witnessing power, all become elements of its performance.

In order to attribute such a skin to a keepsake, one must rely on his/her personal experiences with the object (and the previous owner) in accordance with the focus of this study.

Discovering the meanings and memories concealed by the keepsake might occur immediately, suddenly or involuntarily where there is an expected recognisability. The keepsake goes under a breaking-down and settling process during its recognition and sensations are generated by memory in the body (Bergson, 1998, p. 179).

This process requires reclamation of past events so that the keeper can come across with odors, textures and visions of his/her past. This kind of particular resonance is conditioned to first-hand experience and knowledge. When tactility is taken into consideration, the distance embedded in the keepsake and the distance between the lost person and the keeper dissolve. The communication between the body and the object is reciprocal and this reciprocity is under the influence of the language of the keepsake. This language is created by one's senses and it defies the humility of the object whose silence is defeated by the mnemonic process intertwined with sensory order. There are moments filled with sensory modes introjected to the keepsake and therefore it does not solely remind the keeper of a certain time, event or person. The object has absorbed that certain time, event or person. It rubs off the dust, "not only on the object but also on the eye" (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 38).

The perceptions imbued in the object are rendered to *re-perceptions*. Two different people who share a kinship have a relationship with the same object. The original owner's perceptions attached to the object are altered in order that the keeper should also have perceptions on the object. When there are personal experiences with the object and the donor, such as a cookie box one used to see every time s/he visited the grandmother's house, it becomes possible to refer to the tactility of the object. Otherwise, senses will evoke other sensations and create different impacts on the keeper because the only elements that bind the object to her/him will be the elements of death, loss and commensality.

Pat Kirkham's (1996) powerful recalling of her mother is another example of showing how the keepsake mediates feelings, relations and personal histories:

I had already decided upon some of my mementoes, including a 1940s black velvet coat which my mother bought second-hand from the local bookmaker's wife (who could afford more expensive clothes than any of the other women in the pit village); an object still so powerfully redolent of memories of the gutsy ways in which one woman negotiated enjoying life to the full... that my wearing it almost makes her real and almost makes me her. (Preface, p. xiv)

Clothes provide distinctive kind of keepsakes since they are closer to the persona of the lost one and more frequently used objects such as pot clogs from the previous examples are also distinctive because the distance between the owner and the object used to be so little and this creates an intimacy for the keeper as well. Such keepsakes "have particularly intimate qualities because they lie next to the skin and inhabit the spaces of private life helping to negotiate the inner self with the outside world" (Attfield, 2000, p. 121). They can defy the

dualities that separate culture from nature and form from content while helping one to read the ideas, feelings and memories embedded in the existence of a physical thing (Phillips, 1988, pp. 113-26). They used to touch and absorb the object of the lost person before death and they were almost integrated to the persona of her /him.

Then, bodily absence sets a stage on which an intensification of the senses is experienced by the keeper. The velvet coat speaks the language of senses and the memories it has witnessed. It brings two people closer in such a way that none of the other objects, despite their use, exchange or sign value, could have achieved. There is an ambiguous tension between the keeper and the keepsake because it is here and now despite the lost person being there and then. What is more, it cannot be reproduced or framed. It is either used or kept hidden depending on the level of tension and interest. Looking through the keepsake, the keeper and the owner still share something beyond death and life. When the object is familiar and there are remembered ties with the lost person. This act of sharing is not simply protecting an object left from a valued family member but a contribution to one's self. There is a cathexis to be considered in the case of keepsakes and that is "a form of emotional investment transferred into an object to form a link between a person and the outside world, so that a simple object like a mug or a sweater becomes a mediator and is experienced as a reinforcement to the sense of self" (Attfield, 2000, p. 130). The keepsake discards the distance to one's past and offers simultaneity with it, disrupting the linearity of time. It, "the epigraphic witness of the absent other, is brought from the depths of forgetfulness and history burns with the memory of senses" (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 144). Sharing of the keepsake is different from an exchange of goods, depending on the ways of acquiring it; however it helps exchange feelings and sensations, and even makes them tangible.

Ordinary purposes of our lives decorated with ordinary objects are tied to specific conditions through which such ordinariness is no longer perceived as a normal practice but a special one which is the case for the keepsake (de Certeau, 1988). A black velvet coat is approached as any black velvet coat by neither the keeper nor the people who comprehend its tactility.

Time's linearity is broken by the keepsake and it hinders loss by establishing a commensality supported by senses. Personal experiences with the object and the lost person enable the flow of sensations and feelings. Beyond respecting and remembering a family member, the keeper has a continuing relation with this person and this relation is made tangible by the object. Old is renewed in new perceptions and these are re-perceptions for they are not completely independent from the lost persona.

What is more, the object, itself, has a color, sound and texture which can all become criteria of keeping it. The keepsakes I have studied for this thesis are clocks, bibelots, books, manuscripts, bracelets etc ... which are used or displayed by the keepers. One of the most interesting commonalities of these objects is that they are speaking to senses directly. One needs to be close to them in order to perceive their nature and what kind of an altar they have become. Before storytelling, there is a sensory phase where the keeper has to touch, smell, hear and see the keepsake. The sensory mode has an impact upon the relationship with the keepsake. These objects coming from a past and bringing it along with themselves carry information about their society as well. They can become a powerful tool for a better insight on certain time periods and production/consumption dynamics of their societies. According to Linda Hurcombe (2007), a pot, for instance, can be a mnemonic for a smell or taste and stand for the "smells and tastes of the cuisine of its society" (p. 539). The dye of the object, the colors of it as well as its shape can all give out clues related to the aesthetics of its society, the society's modernity level and how conservative or liberal it is. More thought should be given

to the palette of colors available to a society as well as dye stuff which has issues of cultural circulation and meanings. By looking at the keepsakes that were produced at a specific time, it is possible to learn more about cultural history when one can learn about self-identity from the choices made in relation to which objects to be kept and to keep.

### **2.3.2. Impact of Affinity between the Owner and the Keeper**

Isolation and dispossession of the belongings of a dead person whom we knew or heard about from other family members, become problematic in the sense that man is not outside space and time but occupies a territory with roots in land and history (Kibreab, 1996, p. 53). This dwelling territory of a person is her/his house and history is related to either her/his personal or familial past and the past cannot be ignored in the aftermath of death.

This house is “corner of the world ... our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word” in Gaston Bachelard’s (1994) words (p. 4). It becomes a home through things such as keepsakes as Hecht argues, for these things are not just things but a sum of meanings we have appropriated and filled with meaning and memory, a material manifestation of our identities as persons, where we have come from and even where we are going to be at in the future (as cited in Miller, 2001, p. 123). Keepsake, the culturally constructed object, connotes and intensifies the events of the past in relation to its surface, context and function and comes “to assert its own memories, its own forms of commentary and therefore comes to possess its own personal trajectories” that has been referred to as “biography of things” by Igor Kopytoff (Rowlands, 1993, p.144). Jewels, books, pencils, and even less usable objects such as wine bottles, rotten flowers, empty cookie boxes become post-mortem memorials, “a monument, and an object, in its imminence” achieving and conjuring up an “impossible presence”

(Wright, 2004, p. 76). It is not essential to have a direct knowledge of this “impossible presence,” the lost person, in order to keep an object left from her/him. The urge to keep something of a person from one’s family and past does not depend on first-hand knowledge and personal experience in this case, but rather on the meaning of having a resource about one’s family and a particular family member who used to live and possess this object for it had an importance in his/her life. However, direct contact does not lose its meaning when it comes to trying to understand one’s relationship to the object and its tactility.

Stories evolving around the object and the amount of enthusiasm about displaying the object or telling about its previous owner can certainly be influenced by personal experiences with the previous owner and the object itself. For instance, when the keeper is a grandson who never had the chance to meet his grandfather and has to keep a ring from him, the keeper should produce a new story about the ring and the grandfather under the light of other people’s experiences and statements. Still, such a situation does not change the reality of the notion of embodiment and keeping of material connections since “what is at issue here is the response that is predicated on the assumption of presence, not the fact of representation” (Freedberg, 1989, p. 28).

The keepsake is transformed from an ordinary commodity to a unique object with a peculiar singularity, beyond the level of affinity between the keeper and the lost person. It has always been a disposable and not necessarily owned thing in its materiality however, when the shifting dialogue between the past and the present is considered, despite the impossibility of attaining a pure and complete mnemonic system, the keepsake “feeds our unconscious desires and guides our most conscious actions” for the bonds we make with our family, background and ourselves (Huysen, 1995, p. 250).

‘You see this bag?’ he asked rhetorically, holding up a simple betel bag with no embroidery or decoration. ‘This is how I became a storyteller; this is where my words come from. My grandfather put them in here many years ago, and I go back to this bag if I forget them, if I forget the names of my ancestors, or if any other members of my family forget the seeds we store here.’ (Hoskins, 1998, p. 37)

A simple betel bag, by recreating a past and contributing to the solidification of a present, becomes a keepsake after it is transferred from a grandfather to his son where the son accepts the responsibility of not forgetting his traditions while rewriting the familial history that continues to evolve and can never be buried. Such a choice as to live as a storyteller is a “form of intellectual exploration, stimulated by outside influences” that makes a person think about “the world where s/he grew up” (Hoskins, 1998, p. 37). This world is not completely authenticated by the keeper and her/his exploration does not establish a nostalgic approach to a familial past. There is a social and cultural transition of an object from “being perceived as ordinary human remains” to being valued as the remains of someone to be remembered in bright memories rather than bad ones (Appadurai, 1988, p. 177).

Yet, identification with bright memories is not necessarily one of the principles of becoming a keepsake. There are various examples on the contrary, where the object occupies the power to remind very unpleasant experiences but protects its value because the integrity of a human is made up of distinct phases of life, bright and dark, just like the integrity of the object which simulates this integrity of the owner for the keeper and the audience of the object. The keepsake is not an object to put a sad smile on people’s faces about good old days or make up

notions of a fake past which would be preferred to the actual one. In a world where “nothing seems to be for life and none of the things in life are approached, embraced and cherished as if they were irreplaceable,” the keepsake becomes irreplaceable by carrying the void of someone whose loss can never be filled with an import from outside, except the keepsake itself, along with other relations it has with death, objectification, historical consciousness and mobility (Bauman, 1992, p. 189).

On the other hand, the recontextualization of the object and its deformation should be evaluated before one makes a reference to bright and dark memories attached to it. Different and discordant phases of the keepsake’s life, along with the mutations it has to go through for it is no longer owned but kept, give a non-identity to the keepsake. While filling a loss as a unique structure, the object is reshaped to become a keepsake and it takes part in the cultural construction of history. History is brought to the present through “the semantic potential of a material artifact and relations” it carries (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 135). The intense and embodied communication between objects and people is not merely a quick exchange between surfaces but a clash between memory and history; and a stage on which salient social identities are made, destroyed and remade, and passed on. For the keepsake, this intensity is even more extensive due to the void it has to carry and its intermediateness of different time lines.

### **2.3.3. Keepsake as a Transitional Object**

Some objects die<sup>4</sup> whereas some belong to those who have died. Keepsake as a belonging of the deceased survives and comes to stand for the absence of the deceased. It has a role in grief process because it is “embedded in the construction of identity and trajectories between persons” (Komter, 2001, p. 59). Through this role it attains in relation with loss and grief, the keepsake displays the properties of transitional object.

The term belongs to Donald Winnicott who has defined that objects such as toys, blankets or other comfortable things, can become mediators of separation and threat of loss due to the psychic and bodily differentiation between the child and mother (Gibson, 2004, p. 287). The child has to acknowledge that s/he is now a distinct entity from her/his mother both mentally and physically and during this period s/he has the need to hold onto some object. The “transitional” is not the object but “the object represents the infant’s transition from a state of being merged with the mother to a state of being in relation to the mother as something outside and separate” (Winnicott, [1971] 1997, p. 14 – 15). Transitional object expresses the misery of separation from the mother and taking precautions against this separation which is a kind of loss as well. Margaret Gibson (2004) claims:

If the child negotiates the outside world and existential anxiety of absence partly through the transitional object, it is not surprising that the grieving might also negotiate their lost object with emotional props and buffers. In grieving, as in childhood, transitional objects are both means of holding on and letting go. (p. 258)

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<sup>4</sup> Lost or forgotten objects which do not have associations with their owners and the persons they have interacted with will not perform anymore and they will not have an impact on memory. This is why they are dead.

By the transition of grief, the object changes its status and becomes a keepsake and its functions can change in addition to its status. A pen may be framed and pinned on a wall to be looked at; a car can never be driven again but kept as if it is an altar. Françoise Dastur (1996) articulates the paradoxical influence of absence in relation to presence in *Death: An Essay on Finitude*. He argues that “through mourning we are more with the other than was perhaps in life because the very fact that we have lost him or her, the dead person, is more totally present to us than he or she ever was in life” (p. 46). Separation from someone loved for eternity by death and threat of losing life has caused people to keep things from their lost ones and the keeping is culturally guaranteed to continue even if life for the keepers does not.

### **3. KEEPSAKES IN THE DOMAIN OF THE PERSONAL AND FAMILIAL**

#### **3.1. Mapping Keepsakes**

It is possible to discern networks and practices of keeping objects from the deceased as a distinct cultural domain whose principles are vaguely defined and constantly shifting. Nevertheless, these principles become tacit in the transition of the keepsakes from their owners to keepers. Perceptions on the material and cultural value of the object are recreated without breaking its connections to its past. The object has to be taken from its original context due to its owner's loss and relocated in the life of the keeper. The keepsake's journey from one personal/familial domain to another can have different patterns depending on various issues related to its physical structure as well as the sensations it evokes in the keeper with psychological and sentimental implications. Its meaning is not stable and the object cannot be fixed at a certain place because of the mobility it has achieved. Once an object becomes a keepsake, its biography evolves around the principle of continuity and this

continuity will be observed across generations. The keeper is also aware of the fact that the keepsake once acquired by her/him, will be acquired by another person for her/his memory one day. Having a keepsake is not a one time/one person event. It embodies the tradition of remembering the deceased person's life and stitching it to the lives of those who survive her/him (Jonker, 1997, p. 187).

The construction of an imagery of the past is a controversial agreement between the living and the dead. Having the possessions of a lost person is not simply an act of remembrance or tribute but a state of remaking memories and adding them up to the present, bringing two phases of life together as well as people some of whom are not present. The keepsake adapts to the world of its keeper even if it does not adapt to the world of her/his possessions. Some of the keepsakes that have been studied do not fit the life style of their keeper; however they have been appropriated in order to continue keeping it. The keepsake is an "as is" object whose modification, change or betterment might shatter both its surface and kernel because it is not an object of aesthetics but an object of the mnemonic system. Therefore, its appropriation requires care and caution. World of the keepsake is a delicate and hermetic world where loss, change and make over carry the danger of breaking off the original ties and disrupting the continuity of familial character of memory attached to it.

Making of memory is not a defined objective process where, in the case of keepsakes, solid materials occupy the power to activate lived environments, landscapes of the past and moments with people we know and are related to. These ephemeral and mortal things, decomposing, fading, breaking down and dying in time, are elements of a selective process of remembering which tells more about present than about what the past was really like.

This chapter explores keepsakes in their private domain with their keepers. There are various types of keepsakes which can be classified on the basis of their generations; direct or indirect transition; exchange value; material qualities however this study is limited to personal and familial keepsakes and object of love on the basis of their use and display. The keepsakes are either first generation, from the keeper's parents; or second generation, from the keeper's grandparents.

References to the general narrative conceptualized for the keepsake as a mnemonic device occur in the accounts of seven interviewees and my personal perceptions on my keepsakes. I have preferred to interview my friends and their parents, being aware of its limitations both in terms of scope and objectivity. Yet, it was less difficult to talk about their private conditions, mourning processes and relations with their keepsakes because they are familiar. The interviewees have found it easier to open up and tell about their keepsakes as well as their grief and remembering practices, perceptions and sensations attached to their keepsakes. These keepsakes have provided direct personal experience rather than third party experiences. This is a confined study which has been prepared, being aware of its possible traits of becoming too personal, nostalgic or unreliable and such possibilities are tried to be avoided by keeping track of them.

There is a commonality in the stories of the keepers which have all pointed out a crucial phenomenon: They have enjoyed appropriating the keepsakes into their lives, not by only physical means but also recreating perceptions and memories surrounded by a sense of time shared with a loved person. Despite they can control their things, when the keepsake is considered; the need to order, organize and classify the world of goods has become diminished. The control comes along naturally when the keepsake is repossessed. Its basics

are set by socio-cultural and familial traditions. The keepsakes represent an investigation of “the fundamental triadic unit of self, other and the material object” and embrace shared beliefs, traditions and identities (Dittmar, 1992, p. 36). These objects have a hierarchy among themselves, not other commodities. Some of the examples have shown that particular possessions of the deceased have been regarded as more treasurable depending on different criteria such as their closeness to her/his persona, power to resonate the keeper’s memories, or usage frequency of the object making it more of a witness of the deceased’s life span.

There is a thin line between remembering and forgetting one’s past despite its undeniable impact upon the present. Dwelling spaces, neighborhoods and familial conditions of a person change in time and a need to depend on possessions which take the form of material nodes and gain the power to resonate with personal and familial journeys, becomes concrete. The prismatic nature of a mnemonic object enables making other lives, places and homes a part of a person’s life span. These objects help prepare a collage of a familiar texture that avoids self-alienation (Kelly, 2004, p. 317). Furthermore, keeping of artifacts may be, per contra, a sanctification of lost ones in addition to a personal resolution of concerns related to old age, awaiting death and the fear of losing the fabric of life and self. The sanctification of the deceased happens depending on the fact that these possessions occupy the power to testify to the life history of the person we have lost (Unruh, 1983). The irreplaceability of a person yields to the irreplaceability of an object. Scenes of the object-subject relationship might not always be completely correct when it comes to keepsakes. One has to rebuild a connection and refill it with preferred memories, so the keepsakes entail a creative process on remaking of memories and perceptions.

### **3.1.1. Context of Keepsake’s Domain**

Keepsake represents a kind of mourning which in this study will be considered within the context of familial relations and commemoration of lost ones in Turkey, Ankara.

Transformation of psychosocial and sentimental ties between people by death, grief and principles of a culture which includes a religious aspect as well will be evaluated.

Detachment from the dead is not about tie-breaking but more about creating new ties. Before it comes to collection of objects and their redistribution, survivors gather in the home of the deceased and prayer halls (mosques) and graveyards which offer further possibilities to commemorate the lost person (Jonker, 1997, p. 190). Through these rituals the past becomes accumulated and timeless which contains the sum of personal experiences along with the sum of experiences of past generations. This accumulation differs in meaning for different genders, socio-economic classes and age groups. This study explores this accumulation with the intention to have a deeper insight on how keepsakes, that do not have particularly high exchange values but high mnemonic values instead, have a place in the houses and lives of members of middle-class families. Middle class is defined as the social group between the upper and working classes, including students, professional and business people and their families.<sup>5</sup> Members of this class live under secure and comfortable but generally moderate and not luxurious conditions.

Tough it is a concern to find the right person for the right possession, selecting the most appropriate recipient is not always a pattern in the triangle relationship of the donor-keeper and the keepsake. Sometimes, death and acquiring the possessions of the lost one happen in such a way that the interest to keep these things happens naturally, not in a planned manner.

The questions asked to the keepers are about how they have acquired their keepsakes, how

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<sup>5</sup> Oxford Dictionary Definition

their relationship has been with its original owner; whether the keepsake evokes sensations and enables encounters with their memories and how this contributes to their present life; whether they prefer to keep the object in a hidden place or display/use the keepsake. The reason of asking such questions within the realm of their domestic spaces where keepsakes gain new functions and values is to discuss the process of repossessing the object, its role during mourning and its appropriation into the lives of the keepers in addition to the object's contribution to self-image in cases where keepsakes gain such significance.

### **3.1.2. The Keepers**

While mourning for the lost person, being at a close proximity to her/him increases the level of attention paid to her/his belongings. For this reason, the keepsakes of this study represent situations where stronger links with the past have been successfully established and the bereaved have retained their associations with their deceased through her/his belongings (Finch and Mason, 2000, p. 144). This is the most common version of the narrative told by the interviewees. Therefore, the data presented here contain examples of artifacts successfully becoming keepsakes in the aftermath of death.

There are three female and four male participants. Four participants are adults whose age average is 56. Age average of younger participants is 25. Age makes a difference in attributions to the keepsakes such that older keepers prefer to display their keepsakes in a well-deserved position and they are very keen on ensuring the object's safety. However, younger participants are more comfortable with their keepsakes. The integration of their keepsakes into their lives has distinct meanings when compared to older participants and such differences will be discussed as well. It has been observed that occurrence of the participants'

keepsakes has not decreased in time due to the decrease in the level of grief. They have taken new meanings in their keepers' lives as a result of the social disruption death creates for these people.

This disruption is peculiar in the sense that it comes along with responsibilities and perceptions related to an intangible cultural heritage which is:

transferred from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interactions with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. (Oğuz, 2005, p. 164)

Objects, artifacts and cultural spaces that have defined intangible cultural heritage, all create a social identity for the keepers, and is not ephemeral in its materiality. Death, on the other side of cultural heritage, is a complex social achievement, continuity, memory work and the sum of the ways of life and mourning (Dernbach, 2005, p. 122). Death rituals cannot be separated from a community's cultural heritage, so I will refer to keepsakes as not simple objects which define the meaning of a loved one's significance to people but also as objects which carry a heritage of traditions, beliefs and values from one generation to another.

### **3.2. The World of Keepsakes**

The first keepsake of this study is a wedding ring (Figure 2) which belongs to Meral Tanyeli, a 74 year old woman who has lost her husband, Seyfi Tanyeli in 2008. She has been living

with her daughter and her family in Ankara at the moment. The wedding ring on her right hand is slightly thinner than her own wedding ring and it used to belong to her husband.



**Figure 2.** Wedding ring

The possession of her deceased husband's wedding ring with her own wedding ring signifies a new communication with her lost husband rather than something tragic for Meral Tanyeli who states:

“I look at this ring and remember Seyfi. I have decided to put this ring on and never take it off until the day I die because it helps me imagine him next to me. When I sometimes talk to him, I realize I am looking at the ring.”

The lost husband has become objectified through the objectification of the wedding ring. It does not only represent the legal bond of marriage anymore, but evokes images and moments in the mind of the bereaved about the lost person. Closeness of the lost person and age create distinct factors in the bonding with the keepsake in this example. Death is not a distant

phenomenon for Mrs. Tanyeli who is trying to cope with it both for herself and her lost husband.

Tradition of wearing the wedding ring on right hand and Mrs. Tanyeli's choice of choosing to wear her husband's ring on her right hand instead of her own ring also reveal another value attributed to this keepsake. How can we explain this effort? Why does this choice become significant? The ring embodies "a relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances and the characteristically subtle logic of these ordinary activities comes to light only in the details" (de Certeau, 1988). It becomes possible to make a connection with the lost person and continue the sense of being married through this wedding ring. Losing familial integrity is redefined by wearing the ring on her right finger as if she is continuing to show respect and love to her husband. The keepsake is a "referent" in this case where "the object and its referent are glued together" (Barthes, 2000, p. 6). It becomes difficult to think of Mrs. Tanyeli's wedding ring as an object since the ring has gained certain invisibility as an object, becoming a source of recognition for its referent (Aytemiz, 2005, p. 78).

"I would like my granddaughter to have both of these rings after I am gone. She does not like jewelry but I was like her, too. I do not assume she will wear these rings every day and all the time as I do, but she will care for them."

Negotiating with losing a loved person and death of self is revealed in her will to leave the ring to her granddaughter. The belief that these rings will not be sold or given away in the aftermath of her loss shows these objects' inalienability for Mrs. Tanyeli who expects the

same attitude towards the rings from her inheritor. The decision of choosing the future keeper of her wedding rings is consciously made because when she states “I was like her” about her granddaughter, this goes beyond a common dislike of golden jewels. Personal desire of being recognized and remembered in the aftermath of death stimulates the search for a keeper like herself. Determining a future keeper and specifically leaving personal possessions to that person do not happen in all cases. However, such a determination adds up to the value of the keepsake even more since personal ties might become stronger through being the chosen keeper and being counted on. Another dimension of this particular situation is that the granddaughter will be granted with two different kinds of keepsakes, one making her a first-hand keeper and the other making her a second-hand keeper since her grandfather’s ring’s original keeper was her grandmother.

On the other hand, the distance between death and life is blurred through the keepsake because of the reciprocal relationship between the body of the lost person and the wedding ring. Then, it can be thought that the keepsake’s influence grows as the distance between the persona of the deceased and the object decreases. Physical closeness to the keepsake and being able to wear it everyday undoubtedly both have a significant impact upon the bonding of the keeper with her keepsake.

The wedding ring also manifests aspects of Mrs.Tanyeli’s life and represents something about her identity. When such an object is “left visible and on display, it is in essence being used to create a face for the owner” (Kirk and Sellen, 2010, p. 17). Personal preferences related to her husband’s wedding ring such as wearing it on her right hand, not taking it off even when she sleeps and not expecting the same attitude from her granddaughter are all peculiarities of her self-identity. Her connotations for her husband can never be the same as

anyone else's. Her connection with her keepsake and her own wedding ring will be reappropriated when they enter another life as her granddaughter's keepsakes and she is aware of it. She reveals her awareness, respect for marriage and her husband in person in addition to her loyalty to her past becomes visible in her keepsake as the keepsake becomes invisible as a golden ring.



**Figure 3.** Plastic Doll

Deniz Özdemir is a 54 year old, married, retired bank officer who lives with her mother, Meral Tanyeli. Her keepsake is a plastic doll (Figure 3) from her grandmother.

“We move a lot. We have changed many houses over the years. I could not keep everything that was left from my grandmother unfortunately. However, I remember this doll from my childhood and it seemed to be enough when it comes to remembering and cherishing my grandmother.”

The plastic doll is displayed in the living room and Mrs.Özdemir pays a lot of attention to it. It is a special keepsake because it belongs to two keepers, both Mrs.Özdemir and her mother. It has different implications for both of them and the sensations it evokes are also very different. Mrs.Özdemir was a child when she first saw this toy and when she was asked why this was the only thing she kept from her grandmother, she answered: “I have clear memories from the short time period I lived with my grandparents and I loved that doll very much back then.” There is an intensified relation with her keepsake which was established during her childhood. In the making of her life and home, Mrs.Özdemir has had the opportunity to reach out to her childhood and memories attached to that period through her keepsake. By displaying it in the living room which has been decorated by her, she has chosen to attend the plastic doll regularly and have it close at hand which results in an intimacy with the keepsake. The reason of intimacy is that these objects make up an identity for their possessors in addition to the control they provide to them when compared to the objects of the outer world (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 17). The doll in display is not related to her husband and therefore, it might also give Mrs.Özdemir the sense of having power over her domestic space where her preferences are also valid and respected.

In this case, the selection has happened in such a way that Mrs.Özdemir has control over her keepsake while protecting it from loss and harm. The object’s life has been independent from its keeper’s life until the death of its original owner and therefore, intimacy is refigured as a post-mortem ritual. The relation between Mrs.Özdemir and her grandmother along with shared memories are concealed by a plastic doll which was intended for mass production and has millions of duplicates. However, when this simple object is placed inside a familial domestic space with the value of a keepsake, it becomes an irreplaceable object whose qualities of being plastic, childish or retro become irrelevant with the aim of possessing it.

The doll is a “ready reminiscence” because it is “readily to hand and always present”, making the associations it carries with people and experiences a part of the present as if they have never gone away.

Another point is that the plastic doll has been carried around for years and also conceals the journeys of a family from one place to another. It is a significant part of Mrs.Özdemir’s family archive. Sense of familial duty being fulfilled on the one hand and associations with the places of the past being concealed in the doll on the other, there is a “ridding” of other objects of the material world whereas sticking to this single doll in order not to discard a past completely (Gregson, 2007).



**Figure 4.** English Language and Literature Book

Bahattin Görkem Yalım is a 23 year old, single, nonworking computer engineer who lives with his parents. He specifically demanded that an English Language and Literature book's (Figure 4) photograph should be in black and white since it reminded him that the book was representing old times and the abstract relationship it provided to him with his grandfather because he never met him apart from the stories this book revealed.

“The book contains his drawings and notes such as the sunglasses he drew to William Blake's face, or underlining sentences some of which are my favorites, too. This book has given me a grandfather that I could not learn by listening from my father or mother. I feel like I would not be mistaken about him if I had the chance to meet him.”

The book has paved “a way of mediating between concrete and abstract thoughts” on a lost person (Tilley, 1999, p. 8). The relation with Görkem and his grandfather is organized by the keepsake and it has brought them together for it has become a reflexive tool for his grandfather's personality. Then, the keepsake enables its keeper to explore the inner world of the lost person even if they did not have personal ties; especially it is a book, a diary or a letter. When the affinity between the keeper and the owner is as such, then object's texture and declamation to its keeper beyond senses become significant.

Görkem could have the chance to meet his grandfather indirectly through his keepsake which has become a “face” for his grandfather while contributing to his understanding of his own face, too (Goffman, 1959). Görkem establishes closeness with his grandfather's character by searching his self-representations in relation to his grandfather. He believes they have so much in common claiming “it is very good to know that I do not only have a middle name

from him as a keepsake but also aspects of my personality.” The book enables creating a grandfather figure that Gökem does not feel could be visualized otherwise. By saying it would not be satisfactory enough to listen to stories about him from his parents; Gökem privatizes and individualizes his relationship to his grandfather.

Despite “honoring someone is somewhat tied to public display”, Gökem prefers to keep this book in a box which is placed in his cupboard (Kirk and Sellen, 2010, p. 19). He states he wants to keep the book to himself and does not want it to become void. He makes rules about his keepsake and he is the executor of decisions related to this book. Authority over possessions can be best observed in keepsakes whose ways of being acquired differ despite the power they give to their keepers does not. These objects occupy the power to pull themselves from their previous owners and integrate themselves into the keeper’s life in such a way that they no longer carry the void of death but become a living object with a brand new aura and new meanings. For instance, Gökem’s book has a distinct tactility when compared to other things his grandfather left to his parents.

Another aspect should also be taken into account about such old and classified keepsakes. The keepsake is not just from another person but also from another time. Its journey can be divided into two realms: Its journey of transforming its materiality into something more than an ordinary object in the market and the journey through time which redefines its qualities and meaning for people from different eras and conditions. Every object indulged in such a way is, indeed, separated from its original context and framed within a new one. Its own historical and memorial past that makes it unique and gives it an aura is redefined by the keeper so that the object will be reactivated. The relation that Gökem’s grandfather had with the literature book is clearly distinct from that of Gökem. It is now a spectral image, “a visible ghost: an

apparition”.<sup>6</sup> Its physical appearance is not like new books alike. It carries the look of a faded and pale time. This attributes a mystical quality to it aside from its relation to memory and identity. Nothing can be definite about its value and meaning anymore when it passes from one generation to another in time. The object is destined to be recreated in its materiality and redesigned in a way. All that has been remains inside the object waiting to be told, re-narrated and manifested.

What is more, in this case, Görkem’s keepsake becomes an inspirational source for his imagination. Görkem imagines his grandfather and familial history in a particular way which cannot be interrupted by opinions and experiences of other people. He creates memory through his keepsake and forms a unique narrative of his grandfather and via himself.



**Figure 5.** Diary

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<sup>6</sup> Allen, Robert. Chambers encyclopedic English dictionary, Edinburgh: Chambers, 1994

Nursen Durmaz is a 52 year old, married housewife who lives in Ankara. Her keepsake is a diary (Figure 5) from her father. He gave it to her long before he passed away and she is “still keeping it with great care” in her own words. The diary consists of her family members’ letters to her, beginning with her father’s words. Tactility of a written source differs from other objects’ because of its direct defiance of humility of objects. It can speak both for the lost person and itself. Beyond the mnemonic process and sensory modes it triggers, keepsakes such as books and diaries enable “making sense out of the cultural and personal threads through which lives are made” for memory-work (Davies, 1994, p. 83). The keepsake speaks to its keeper directly with the lost person’s words, drawings or sketches. It cannot solely be felt but also be read.

Different from other kinds of written sources such as books and notebooks, firstly, a diary is one of the most intimate personal resources. It contains direct information about Mrs. Durmaz’s youth and experiences back then about her family and social life. There is a clear family portrait in this diary to which one can look back and read, not only remember. Objects are vehicles for “narrative excursions” and “some objects will of course tell stories, but those stories will be determined by the viewer who brings their own assumption to the object” (Kirk and Sellen, 2010, p. 24). However, a diary speaks for itself and its owner as well as people surrounding the owner. This case is, again, distinct in the sense that the diary was given to its keeper as a present and she preserved it while her father was still alive. This diary has always been “beyond price” for Mrs. Durmaz, and she adds:

“It became even more important and fragile after I lost him. I kept the diary neat and secure since the day I had it, then when my father passed away I felt like I had to do something more than just keeping it the way I used to.”

There are letters written by various family members, notes to self and personal experiences embedded in this diary which makes the diary valuable enough to be carefully protected even before its meaning is reconfigured by death. In the aftermath of her father's death, Mrs. Durmaz has encountered a situation which can be defined as fear of loss of a loss. The possessions that carry personal connections to the lost person are all of a sudden more crucial and "fragile". A new place, a new context and a new meaning has to be found in order to prevent losing the last reminiscences of someone lost. Reasons of having the diary are altered by death where it is no longer a personal belonging or a gift but a keepsake which should be repossessed in terms of coping with mourning and determining how to secure the object afterwards.

Becoming "fragile" is also another point which should be considered. There is a personification at this point where a humane characteristic is attributed to an object. The fragility mentioned by Mrs. Durmaz is not solely about the diary's raw material being paper. She refers to her keepsake as if it has a character. It can be argued that mourning her father's loss and coping with it has given a unique quality to this diary in addition to its containing written memories and therefore being a memento mori with voice. The explicit connection between the diary and its associations are not disturbing or compelling in the sense of its being "fragile" according to Mrs. Durmaz. Protecting this keepsake is a passing of some chapters of a family's story which could be played back by various readers who encounter the diary. Mrs. Durmaz wants her son to keep the diary when he moves out so that "wherever he goes, his family can be with him." The desire to make the faded past known to people who do not have the chance to experience it but "should not be stranger to it" is revealed through Mrs. Durmaz's will to organize the continuity of her keepsake's life.



**Figure 6.** Sofa

Onur Coşkun is a 26 year old, single university student who lives in Ankara. He was very thrilled when I shared my thesis topic with him and told me the story of his sofa (Figure 6) which is a keepsake from his grandmother; and is now placed in his own living room. The sofa was named as “Sister Hatice” by his grandmother and she made Onur promise to take care of the sofa after she was gone. Onur thinks “his children will take care of the sofa just like he does now.” He adds:

“I remember the true legends and surreal tales she used to tell me while sitting on this sofa. I remember her sickness and how she was getting smaller each and every day but keeping herself together. I remember how I feared death, not only hers but mine, too. When I have the same

fear now, I try to hear a folk song she used to sing sometimes and she relieves me again.”

This case presents a more intense situation of repossessing a keepsake since there has been an undeniable proximity between Onur’s grandmother, death and this sofa. In addition, the sofa was specifically left to Onur and now despite its dimensions, he claims “he has to carry the sofa wherever he carries himself.” There is a sense of duty which should be fulfilled by Onur in order to keep his promise and honor his grandmother who entrusted him the sofa. A tangible link is established through the sofa which connects the keeper to his childhood memories which help him feel relief even today. Onur has stated that “she relieves him again” creating an objectification which is the opposite of personification observed in the previous case. The impression is that his grandmother has not passed away but taken a new form in his life, the form being his keepsake. He bonds with his grandmother and turns evidence of an “already dead subject” into a form of life where someone he loved and lost is not discarded from his life (Aytemiz, 2005, p. 92).

There is an undeniable aura, “a quality of an object that makes our relationship to it like a relationship with another human being” in objects as such (Marks, 2000, p.80). The keepsake has the power of gazing at its keeper. It can call on moments that require all of one’s senses to be wide open so that s/he could capture a taste of past once more. The keepsake can be so privatized on one hand and immersed in the persona of the lost person, like the sofa. A new relationship may be useless depending on the previous affinity and direct experiences with the keepsake. The perceivable death embedded in the sofa remarks an inevitable future death to its keeper while reminding life’s continuity in its body, awakening sensations and recreating the songs and marks lost person has left in the keeper’s life. The feelings, sensations and

thoughts accumulated under the surface of the sofa cannot be fully covered and understood by a stranger and not even by its keeper, Onur. Yet, the obstacle between the keeper and the keepsake is eliminated from the picture depending on the elaborateness of the keeper's roadmap which displays the shared traces, meanings and memories.



**Figure 7.** Chain Watch

Aytaç Saka is a 26 year old, single real-estate agent who lives with his parents in Ankara. He has a chain watch (Figure 7) from his grandfather with whom he had a close relation. During the grieving process and family unions at his grandfather's house Aytaç found this chain watch in his grandfather's chest where he used to put old possessions. He tells that he had to ask other family members before taking the watch and make sure there was not an older member of the family who wanted the chain watch as well.

“I used to use this watch when I was younger but when one day its chain was broken, I decided not to use it but keep it in its covering. I would not forgive myself if something bad were to happen to this watch.”

Beyond the compensation of “the transitional nature of human corporeal existence”, the keepsake is also a micro-museum object which carries its referent with itself (Gibson, 2004, p. 291; Barthes, 2000, p. 13). The referent is taken out of the picture by loss and a new referent takes this place. There is a co-presence in all keepsakes, like this chain watch where the keeper does not only preserve a memory and the chance to evoke it but the lacking presence of someone as well. This chain watch, selected among various other possessions of Aytaç’s keepsake is not only the conveyer of an “unfathomable darkness, unbridgeable distance and unexpected reciprocity” but also a range of new meanings, mediations and negotiations for its keeper (Gilloch, 2002, p. 117). Aytaç made a selection which is not specific to all keepsakes and this selection gives away clues about his relationship to his grandfather, how he wishes to remember and respect him, and what part of his character Aytaç finds close to his character. Despite the chained watch is not used anymore, it still occupies an exhibitory value and adds a value to Aytaç’s identity, too.

While telling the production story of his keepsake, Aytaç felt quite proud of himself and his family. The chain watch with a train motif on it was specifically made for his grandfather after leading a major role in a railway road construction in Black Sea Region during the constitution of Republic of Turkey. Aytaç states: “My grandfather was a forceful man and I am reminded of that whenever I see this watch.” There is an ideal image of his family history embedded in his keepsake. Aytaç does not prefer to remember his grandfather as an old man with an old watch, but as a man who had power and wealth. By protecting the watch and not using it anymore as he used to do when he was “young”, he discloses his desire to be a grown up man who is ready to take the lead role like his grandfather did once for his family. Despite his age being 26, he does not prefer to refer to himself as being young anymore while talking

about his keepsake. There is an intense desire for growing old and becoming a man of responsibility hidden behind the chain watch.

There is also another familial aspect related to having to keep the chain watch. Aytaç had to ask to his elders whether he could keep it or not before declaring it his own keepsake. The respectful and hierarchical relation between Aytaç and his other family members becomes obvious for that matter. The keeper does not only go through a process of selecting the proper possession which represents the lost person and fits into the keeper's life most, but also a process of acknowledging his elders' wishes and being portrayed as a man who can handle keeping such an old and significant memento mori. The decision related to the keepsake is not made by its original owner but his heirs and the keeper would not be able to repossess the chain watch if his elders found it inappropriate or someone else demanded the watch. Then, it is possible to claim that the story of the chain watch depicts a family portrait with its set of rules, limitations and rewards. It is familial structure that determines the level of sense of responsibility and ease of using the keepsake among daily objects of everyday life. Aytaç's keepsake becomes special because he no longer can use it, but has to and wants to keep it until the next generation will have it which will not be his concern in his own words, "because he wants this story to be known by his children."

Then, the keepsakes do not come with a past but with a future, too. There is a familial or personal plan attached to them in almost all these cases where the keepsakes will be passed on to next generations. The idea of passing on stems from the idea of having a family which also exists in single keepers who do not have any children. There is an idea of having heirs to leave their possessions and keepsakes in the future in single interviewees. These keepsakes carry on this idea and the desire of not being forgotten and discarded from life completely.

Keepers expect the same attention and care from the people they will leave these keepsakes to and this is also the continuation of some peculiar values stemming from familial and culturally traditional ways of life.

### 3.2.1. Personal Keepsakes



**Figure 8.** Jacket



**Figure 9.** Various Keepsakes

The underlying reason and motivation of this study have been my personal keepsakes and the ways in which they have surrounded my life. They somehow helped me create an understanding of loss that would not occur to me as a painful and sorrowful event but rather a transformative one. My personal keepsakes are from my grandmother, grandfather and mother. I keep a bunch of these keepsakes in an old suitcase which used to belong to my mother so that they will not be lost or harmed. Yet, I prefer to use and display most of my keepsakes that are clothes, adornments, paintings and books.

The blue cotton jacket (Figure 8) is one of the most special and valued keepsakes within the hierarchy of my personal keepsakes. It used to belong to my mother and it is more than forty years old. It has gone to high school and university with my mother and then followed her in other phases of her life. I remember my mother wearing this jacket and whenever I wear it, the “as if” object awakens feelings and moments in me that none of the jackets of commodity world could achieve. I do not fear of losing or harming this jacket because now it has become

mine in a very peculiar way. The day I found this jacket among various clothes of my mother, I was struck by it. There was a clear moment of preferring to wear it as long as it would be worn. When I found a movie ticket inside its pocket, the jacket became almost alive. I felt like nothing could be thrown away and nobody could be forgotten. In order to erase a person from the face of the earth, all the belongings and people involved in this person's life would also have to be erased. Clothes have a special texture for they have been closer to the persona of the lost more than any other object. A strand on the shoulder of the jacket, a ticket in its pocket and the smell which takes longer to fade away than the physical existence of the original owner all have the power to complicate the manner of believing in having lost a loved person completely. How can someone actually take on the idea that death is the definitive end when surrounded by such objects? How can one mourn when distracted by such possessions? There is an ongoing conversation with the lost person(s) as long as these priceless keepsakes are placed into one's life. The act of keeping builds up an altar and this altar is not as unpleasant and poignant as a gravestone. The need to create in the aftermath of destruction becomes obvious. The desire to relate to the world of those who have passed away, to a non-place separated from the world of the living, to indistinctness that is a denial of a whole life span becomes obvious. The jacket is my desire to live and continue my mother's life, too. The sudden shock of death that is freed from the age or health status of the lost person cultivates a need to find ways of unmourning because mourning could last forever.

I certainly cherish these possessions due to their senility and immunity against death inherently. They are old but they do not get old anymore and it is such a pleasure personally, to be surrounded by things that could not be bought by any other person and be produced by any means. All these unique, recollection objects create a domestic space so peculiar and

singular. Since these keepsakes have filled the bodily absence of the people I loved and have spoken on behalf of them, I felt it was necessary to speak for these keepsakes in this study.

### **3.3. Negotiations with Loss**

Beyond the personal and private connections with keepsakes, there are differences in attributions to these objects depending on various criteria such as age, material structure of keepsakes and closeness to the lost person. The studied keepsakes are not comparable in terms of their materiality and biography. However, the ways of protecting and keeping an object and bonding with it in terms of re-memorialization are taken into consideration.

The attention paid to habitual activities as well as personal objects, including keepsakes may also enhance and increase as a person becomes older. It has been observed that older participants were more careful with their keepsakes and preferred to prevent any damage that could happen, so their keepsakes were “inside”, not outside. The underlying reason for this is independent from the type of the keepsake in terms of size, exchange value and dimensions as well as its mnemonic value. Older participants were inside themselves and so were their

keepsakes. Within the limits of this study, older keepers did not go outside very often and therefore, their keepsakes have also become fixated to their private spaces. An instance for this might be that I have conducted interviews with them always at their houses, unlike younger participants whom I could meet outside, too. On the other hand, material structure of these keepsakes also plays a significant role in the display and utilization of the objects. While drawing parallels between a sofa and a wedding ring, sentiments, connections and object love in general should be regarded since materiality and biography of these objects undoubtedly differ from one another. The studied keepsakes are approached from the eyes of their keepers and how they have gained significance through the sensations, values and meanings they have acquired over time.

Younger participants, including me, were bolder in using their keepsakes, carrying them around and displaying them in public except two participants. One of them had a keepsake from a grandfather he did not know and transformed the keepsake into a reflective object and the other participant had a chain watch that had been broken once and therefore he protected it carefully since then. Such protected and hid keepsakes may reveal authority over one's identity or family, too. A person may prefer to keep her/his memories and mnemonic systemization to herself/himself on the one hand and want to guard a signifier of a familial history on the other. Therefore, despite age might reveal facts clustered around these objects, it cannot be solely what matters. There are various other reasons lying beneath the relation established with one's keepsakes.

Selection of the object personally, can be another criterion while discussing such a relation. Younger participants generally selected their keepsakes among various possessions of the lost person, while older participants were given their keepsakes directly from the relative they

lost. Every keeper touched their keepsakes during the interviews as if reaching for the subtle feeling it radiates. They showed respect for the ways of the original owner and were quite fond of remembering her/him by trying to avoid the thought of death. Some of the participants showed expressions of the keepsake's distracting quality along with its appeal. For instance, when the conversations were interrupted for simple reasons such as telephones ringing or tea being ready, there was a discomfiting rush moment as if the keepsake was being kept waiting to be talked on. In addition, the subject of the keepsakes are not present at the present moment however are referred to by the keepsake, therefore not totally absent and disappeared. This is another distraction. It is like the lost person will come out of the object or her/his voice will be heard any minute inside a *mise en scene* of the past remembered or reconstructed.

These keepsakes have provided access to the inner world of their original owners and there is a sense of "voyeurism" in them which depends on the consent of the owner in most cases; this voyeuristic aspect of gazing into a lost person's life through her/his belonging is enabled by the keepsakes which will make the keeper visible when s/he is gone to her/his children and relatives as well unless the chain of passing on is broken (Aytemiz, 2005, p. 83). However, such "voyeurism" is disturbing and presumptuous at the same time since the owner of the keepsake is gone and this takes away the original identity of the object, transforming it into something else, something altered. Its original context and content are missing. Not letting go of things in order to preserve an image and idea of a person, a family and the past is somehow a bitter experience. The compulsion of clinging onto material things in exchange of real personal contact with the lost person creates a sense of decrement in the keeper. There is an unfair trade where a loved person can only be sensed and become tactile through an ephemeral thing. This causes a love/hate relationship with one's keepsake(s). Beyond duty,

responsibility, respect and protection of values stemming from various conditions these keepsakes embody despair and incurability of death. In the sea of disposed possessions of lost people which become garbage or second-hand goods which will most probably wait a long time to be found unless their material value is high, these personal keepsakes are lucky objects. They have had the chance to continue their journey, still being related to their original owners. These keepsakes might be even more valued and cared about in the hands of their keepers. Ideal portrait based on pre-constructed notions of middle-class family with values, sentiments and traditions as such, is in fact influenced by the disposal or keeping of objects and the destinations of their new journeys. Therefore, negotiations with loss are not freed from object choices of original owners and keepers.

#### CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

*All that is past we seek to treasure here,  
All that may make the past a thing of life;  
And we would save what else is worldly strife  
Might perish, though the present hold it dear.*

H.R. Wadmore<sup>7</sup>

Dust between the keeper and memory is removed by the keepsake which enables communication between two people who are separated by loss. It awakens the senses of its

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<sup>7</sup> *The Antiquarian Magazine and Bibliographer*, 1882

keeper by its auratic value and it provides a journey in time through which material distance is overcome. The ordinariness or valuableness of an object is transformed into uniqueness beyond the ordinary or the valuable through the change, rearrangement and recreation of object-subject relations by death and post-mortem conditions and rituals. This crippled object whose owner is not present in *now and here* makes its referent present by concealing the person, time and place it belonged to.

Objects do not disappear when their owners are gone. Their presence becomes mysterious when the link between their original owner and themselves is broken. Memories are stuck in the keepsakes with the chance of being expressed by their keepers. These objects will continue to be kept and cared for after their “owners” are gone for different reasons of culture, family and individual. This thesis is concerned with lives and journeys of keepsakes after they are separated from their original, private context. They continue to exist after the death of their owner and death changes the manner these objects are perceived and apprehended. New meanings and peculiarities are attached to these singular objects and their context is reconfigured within the domain of their keepers.

Daniel Miller (1991), in his accounts for ownership, argues that people’s indivisibility from forms, that is material objects, is required by the concept of culture (p. 75). However, private property does not create the closeness it implies on the surface, but an impassable distance between people and their things. This distance vanishes when the object’s connections with another person determines a new status of it for the keeper in the situation of keepsakes. A mass produced object, always potentially alienable, cannot be bought, sold and changed due to the irreversibility of death. Meeting with an impossible presence occurs through the object

and the keeper experiences a transcendental temporality and spatiality. S/he can be taken into a time and place that no longer exist outside individual sensations and perceptions.

Although these keepsakes present scenes and memories that are particular to a private domain and person, they also carry traces of the social, political and cultural history of their own time. Their material structure, shape, design and color give away related clues which should also be taken into consideration more profoundly in order to gain more general social results. They are not outside their society's norms so common patterns can be caught in order to deduce sociological, aesthetical, cultural and traditional realities. Material structure of keepsakes differing from one time period to another might reveal facts about socio-cultural and economic structures and phases of a society. A wider study on keepsakes from particular time periods, including their dimensions, colors, brands and exchange values could be conducted to achieve better and more general conclusions on this phenomenon. The conclusions of this study can be challenged with a more profound and wide-range study which aims to reach conclusions, not only in terms of sentiments, sensations and performative aspect of these objects, but also the impact of their material structure over the bonds they entail with their keepers.

The keepsakes occupy a "cult value" as they preserve memorial quality. They cannot be found or reproduced elsewhere but only be taken from their original owners. They have special names, meanings, values and definitions both for their owners and keepers and all these features are to be re-narrated by each transition from one person to another. Despite their recontextualization and deformation in the sense that their original roots are bound to change land, these non-identified objects can have many identities that are given by each keeper. Another question that could be asked for further study could be related to gender. How do

different genders relate and bond with their keepsakes and what kind of differences are there in the identities given to these keepsakes depending on the gender of their keeper? Are women better keepers and if so, what makes them better than male keepers?

The keepsakes are either in display or deep storage. While they are generally used for decorative purposes, in some cases of intense fear of losing the object or breaking it, they can be kept at a safe place only to be cherished and cleaned from time to time. They are ready reminiscences of their original owners or previous keepers and they support both familial and personal identities of their keepers. These keepsakes are not only contributing to remaking of memories and recalling of past events and experiences. They can give away clues about their keepers more than they do about their previous owners. Preferences such as wearing the keepsake wedding ring on right hand which is the hand for wedding ring, decisions related to the next keeper, very personal bonds established with the keepsake which might even add to one's character and choices of where and how to display these objects are, at some point, not affected by the love for the lost person and mourning process. A proud and an assertive attitude can be observed in the keepers who have shared their keepsakes with me. The tension of talking about losing a dear person can disappear when the story of the object is taken into hand as it is, not only as a mnemonic device.

Object love is revealed. The need to keep, protect and clutter do not simply stem from grief and familial values. There is another stimulus behind the concept of having keepsakes. People love their possessions and they want to show respect to other people's love of their possessions, too. The object gets respect from its keeper. The object is loved again with the certainty that it will be loved until it is completely lost. The enhancement of this respect and love may occur in time and this can never be known since it is not a conscious process for the

keeper. The keepsake enters its keeper's life in the aftermath of death, a time when things seemingly have the least significance. However, things are not that insignificant because they are selected, found among numerous other possessions, and saved from decay or they reach their keepers by being given to them directly by the previous owner or by another family member. As soon as a person loses someone, s/he enters the private domain of the lost person either directly or indirectly. There is a hunt for acquiring the keepsake or it has been hunted for and given to its keeper. The keepsakes signify something more than their use and exchange values in all these cases. These objects are remaking memories, establishing bridges between people who do not share the same time and space anymore and in addition they perform for the idea of family and self as well as culture. They are being searched for and found. They are displayed or kept hidden but their material existence can never be denied. They become a part of their keepers' lives, maybe even more than their owners did. They embody a certain level of fetishism. Their original function is no longer prevailing. Despite one may use a diary as a diary, the diary is individualized in a way that no other diary will ever match its significance. A shield is built around these keepsakes and the shield disarms the keeper since the object cannot be disposed without feeling guilty and pressured and it is also irreplaceable. Post-mortem rituals of acquiring these objects among other possessions of the lost person can also be linked to the process of repossessing keepsakes for further research. Object love and hunting for objects inside one private domain, then carrying these keepsakes to another private domain are also topics of study.

As a final remark, I believe all shifts in their status and meaning create a mystery and a distance which cannot be revealed by anything but the keepsake itself. This study ascertains that "keepsakes" have a significant role among other kinds of objects because they have a unique mnemonic value and make their keepers face with death, loss, mourning while

diminishing all the negative feelings and thoughts attached to them by providing a solidification of self-identity through the keeping and preservation of something very personal, intimate and no longer temporary like any other object. They present a very specific case within the system of objects because of the unique way of revealing object love both for their owners and keepers.

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