



# **Loving....Whatever: Alienation, Neoliberalism and Pet-Love in the Twenty-First Century**

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I French-kiss my dog all day & night  
and sometimes in the morn,  
Uptown folks with sideways glances  
turn away and scorn.

As if it's doggy-porn

But it's true love, the best I've known  
I stopped kissing frogs because I've grown.  
And if you think it isn't good  
I'm sure you've just misunderstood.

Try it first; I know you should.

French-kissing my dog melts my troubles away  
As if dog spelled backwards has something to say.

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What works for me will work for you  
Get rid of the zanax and prozac too.  
Why pay the therapist all that dough?  
When it's the magical doggies we really owe.

Spend it on doggie-treats tied up with a bow.

For they will love you no matter what  
I know it's embarrassing when they sniff your butt.  
Those loving eyes, those wagging tails  
Are quite impossible to resist,  
Let's not forget those floppy ears  
Just waiting to be kissed.

Think of the good-lovin' that you have missed.

Go to the pound & adopt today,  
You won't be sorry or have cause to dismay.  
Oh my God I love doggies & can't get enough  
Although French-kissing my dog  
Leaves my lips very rough.  
A small price to pay for this limitless love  
Doggies bring the olive branch  
So forget the dove.

I'll French-kiss my dog till the end of time  
It's supremely exalting & profoundly sublime.

("I French Kiss my Dog" by Gail Glassman in *Urban Dog* 2004)

In 1986, Marc Shell wrote a lengthy paper in *Representations* from an anthropological and psychoanalytic perspective exploring, "the sexual, familial, and finally social role that the institution of pethood plays in contemporary politics and ideology" (122). He was particularly interested in documenting how pet-animals (especially dogs) in recent years have served as children, grandchildren, spouses, parents and, most generally, as family members. As an anthropologist, he wanted to explore the limits of that familial relationship, both ideologically and in practice: can one love or marry a pet (leading to a discussion of petting, puppy love, Playboy bunnies, and so on); and would physical love with a pet (especially dogs) be akin to bestiality? Incest? Or neither? He inserted his questions into a much larger investigation of how pets are used to negotiate notions of family, species, and, ultimately, otherness. Drawing on a considerable body of literature, he documented how pets have in the west become valued anew according to

modern and postmodern sensibilities: “Pets, they say, provide pleasure, companionship, and protection, or the feeling of being secure. Pet owning decreases blood pressure and increases life expectancy for coronary and other patients. Pets provide an excuse for exercise and a stimulus to meet people. They help children to learn gentleness and responsibility; they help young couples to prepare for parenthood; and they give their owners some of the pleasure of having children without some of the responsibility. Pets help people to deal with the loss by death of a friend or relative. Not least of all, pets are useful in many kinds of psychotherapy and family therapy” (121).

His work points importantly to the beginnings of a new and highly *commodified* valuation of, and love affair with, pet animals that has coincided politically, libidinally, and economically with the demise of industrialization and the rise of post-industrial spaces and intensified consumption. Today, in post-industrial, post-modern worlds of pastiche, pet animals allure in part because they can be anything and anyone you want them to be; and remarkable new kinds of spaces to accommodate them are being created. Haraway’s repeated condemnation of the recent infantilization of dog-pets in her essay *The companion species manifesto* is in this case incorrect. In post-industrial places pet animals (especially dogs and cats) are not merely ideal love-object substitutes for children: their anthropomorphic malleability and their insertion into an economy where mobility of labor and capital is an advantage, means that pets (especially dogs) today supersede children as ideal love objects; they are more easily mobilized, require less investment, and to some degree can be shaped into whatever you want them to be—a best friend, a lover, an occasional companion. Within post-industrial worlds of pet places, products and services, your dog can now go hiking with its own pet camping gear, be trained for pet Olympics, signed up with Dog Scouts of America ([www.DogScouts.com](http://www.DogScouts.com)), or treated to an herbal massage. Dogs can be dressed up as boys when they are girls; or vice versa. They can be your baby forever. If a pet-animal becomes onerous (scratching furniture, pooping on a carpet, or spraying the house when you are gone too long), you can have them de-clawed, euthanized, or given away. If a pet becomes a financial or mobility burden (you change towns or jobs), it can be given up for adoption or taken to the SPCA. And if it dies, you can have it cloned. All advantages that human children do not share.

Two new shared-experience activities representing this new malleability of, and affection-love for, pet animals and, in particular, dogs, are dog yoga (or doga) and formal dancing with dogs. While the former began in the U.S. in 2001 and is gaining in popularity internationally perhaps more rapidly, the latter began in Canada and England in the late 1980s and involves considerably greater investments of time and money. The emergence of pets in post-industrial contexts as highly commodified and valued objects of affection and love in the 1980s and especially in the 1990s helps explain why science has begun of late to study pets, again, mostly dogs, and why the 1990s saw the emergence of, and a groundswell of

popular support for, a national ‘No-Kill’ movement in pet shelters across the US. Moreover, celebrity culture took to dogs *en force* in the 1990s, stories of celebrities’ love affairs with their dogs now commonplace; consider, for example, the 2005 launching of *Hollywood Dog*, a glossy dog-love magazine published out of New York, one of dozens of new dog magazines to be launched since the late 1990s (Nast forthcoming).

The desire to invest in pet animals, especially dogs and cats, and related processes of pet-place-making and commodification have led to an irruption of this love-affection out of traditional domains of pet ownership (dogs, cats, fish, etc) into the animal world at large, evident in much greater *popular* interest in animal rights and in much broader *popular* participation in animal rights activities. At times, this broadened interest has used the rights of animals to ‘other’ those cultural groups that have different sensibilities about the animal world, in some ways construing all animals as innocent pets whose death at the hands of humans can only be considered savage. To wit, popular outcry over Inuit killings of seals, or celebrity animal rights activist Bridget Bardot’s hateful incitements in France (in the name of animal rights) about the savagery of Muslims because of their slaughtering practices (Elder et al. 1998). At another popular cultural level, increased investments in the ‘animal’ infuse an international cultural phenomenon known as “furry fandom” (FF)—one more practice that gained momentum in the 1990s. FF involves persons who identify strongly with one or more animal characters in any number of ways, be these intellectual, emotional, spiritual, social, or (much less so) sexual, re-shaping an animal characters into a kind of pet.

This paper briefly overviews the pet-animal phenomena outlined above to explore a range of newly commodified and spatialized pet-human relations and fantasies that have emerged over the last ten to twenty years, ones linked to a new range and intensity of affective work that pets are now required to do in the twenty-first century, something poignantly described for dogs in Jon Katz’s (2003) *The new work of dogs* and presaged in Marjorie Garber’s (1996) *Dog love*.

Increased investments in the animal world parallel a burgeoning of critical scholarly interests in human-animal relations and, in geography, the emergence of a new “animal geography.” As Wolch and Emel (1998, xi-xii) point out: “Over the past two decades, a willingness to take animals seriously appeared both within academe and beyond. This concern with human-animal-relations—or what we term ‘the animal question’—has expanded dramatically *in the last few years*, leading to radical reconceptualizations of the nature of human-animal relations” (my emphasis). Such expanded interest culminated in human geography in Wolch and Emel’s (1995) special issue in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* on animal geographies, later re-elaborated into their edited collection, *Animal geographies* (Wolch and Emel, 1998).

Nonetheless, most popular and academic writing on the animal-human interface deal primarily with: cultural histories of pet or non-pet/human interactions; the various placements and meanings of pet or non-pet animals in different societies, locations, and times; the ethics of various human-animal encounters; or human-non-pet-animal ecologies. Such thematic range of literatures is vast and include Elizabeth Greier's (2006) cultural historical work on dog ownership in the U.S., Mark Derr's (2004) highly detailed cultural historical analysis of dogs around the world, and many of the chapters in the edited geography collections of Wolch and Emel (1998) and Philo and Wilbert (2000).

By contrast, this paper focuses on how the creation of pets over the last two decades is linked to certain post-industrial processes and sensibilities that involve not only commodification, but love, dominance and affection. In this sense, this paper builds in part on Yi Fu Tuan's (1984), *Dominance and affection: the making of pets*, a work that shows how pet-making is an appropriating process that cuts across a wide swath of creative human endeavors—from the making of topiary gardens to the capturing of nature in landscape painting to the subordination of slaves, women, and children, to the production of animal pets for humans, an activity that goes back several millennia. For Tuan (1984, 2), the dominance involved in all kinds of human, animate, and inanimate pet-making goes hand in hand with affection and, I would add, love: “Dominance may be combined with affection, and what it produces is the pet.” This paper elaborates on Tuan's premise by exploring how dominance-affection-love (DAL) relations with pet-animals are today linked to post-industrial forms of hypercommodification and alienations. In so doing, the paper conjectures how and why pet animals have assumed such tremendous libidinal, economic, cultural, and spatial importance over the last twenty years, especially since the 1990s. On the one hand, it is clear that post-industrial places are characterized by certain conditions that facilitate pet-love—a decline in family size concomitant with de-industrialization, an aging demographic, and elite footlooseness in both work and leisure (here I am not concerned with the footlooseness of the migrating poor). Such conditions produce a plethora of human alienations, such as loneliness and alone-ness, and an erosion of long-term place-based communities. On the other hand, post-industrial places are characterized by alienations produced through patterns of narcissistic consumption that depend upon locating, valorizing, and anointing the individual and mobility; an atomization and “liberation” (to consume and move) into which pet lives are inserted with greater ease than humans; even as many pets (especially dogs) seek one another out in urban contexts, forcing owners to meet and compelling dog-mediated communities of the human. In a sense, post-industrial isolations and narcissisms have made pets into screens onto which all sorts of human needs, desires, and investments can be and are being projected, such projections part and parcel with larger sociospatially uneven processes of wealth accumulation and investment.

This is not to say that pet-animal ownership or pet-centeredness is radically new. In the U.S., for example, dog populations swelled after WWII in tandem with suburban populations (Derr 2004, 223), suburbanization setting off a new round of land ownership and nature enclosure (concomitant with the creation of lawns and pets). Moreover, pet-animals have been for millennia pampered in numerous societies around the world, especially by elites (Derr, 2004; Tuan, 1984). What *is* different is the degree to which post-industrial humans are investing in pet-animals—financially, emotionally, and culturally—and on a geographical scale and at a level of intensity unheard of even twenty years ago. Much of these investments course and gain momentum through a variety of commodity circuits and related cultural practices that have profound social geographical consequences.

Today, in mostly but not exclusively post-industrial urban places and enclaves around the world—from China to Britain and France, to Mexico and South Korea, *new* practices of pet-animal DAL are emerging, evident in an explosion of commodity forms, landscapes, services, and places (Nast forthcoming). The range of offerings is enormous: from pet perfumes, couture, and housing; to pet cafes, diners, spas, parks, and beaches; to pet airlines, hotels, cemeteries, and therapists. Such commodified expressions of DAL have been mainstreamed, many persons of lesser means now able to invest in commodity types and services once affordable only by elites. Their investments have been occasioned by producers and purveyors of mass-produced goods who now recognize the tremendous profits to be had. In the U.S., this mainstreaming is emblemized in the chain store, PetSmart which currently holds 11% of the US market in pet goods, estimated by the American Pet Product Manufacturers Association to be more than \$36 billion in 2006 ([www.appma.org](http://www.appma.org), accessed July 18, 2006). Founded in 1987 as an Arizona-based company having two stores, by 1992 PetSmart had 32 stores in four additional states, with 83 new stores opened in 2004 alone. Whereas in 2002 total sales were 2.5 billion, by 2005 sales were up over 50% to 3.76 billion and its name was changed from PetsMart (which connoted the company's emphasis on merchandise and business), to PetSmart (connoting company recognition of, and great esteem for, pet intelligence).<sup>2</sup>

This paper thus contributes to what Philo and Wilbert (2000) have called a “new” animal geography within cultural and social geography, albeit from a largely pet-animal perspective, a geography concerned with understanding how animals are placed within everyday spaces of human activities. In this case, however, my emphasis is not (as is theirs) on documenting the “agency” of largely non-pet animals that trip up human intentions; or on the ethics or politics of finding ways to share space more equitably with nonhuman animals; or in documenting the

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=93506&p=irol-timeline> (accessed July 13, 2006)

rampant human abuses of the nonhuman animal world. Instead I focus on how a critical social geographical analysis of pet-animals might offer insights into how profiteering from (post-industrial) alienations has been married to pet-mediated modalities of domination, affection, love, family, community, and sociality in the twenty-first century. Such a critical sensibility is important in that this century is witnessing an escalation in human cruelty to, and dominance over, humans (Nast forthcoming, Hewitt 2001). I conjecture further that the political economic and cultural material ways that pet-love circulates and is rendered innocent in some instances diverts political momentum away from community organizing that might change the violent human-human order of things.

The questions raised speak obliquely to Michael Watts' (2000:302-03) observation about the paradoxical rise of animal rights discourses in modernity in light of modernity's violences toward, and commodification of, nonhuman animals, more generally. As he notes, Nazi Germany promoted strongly the rights of non-human animals in law and in practice; here, "[c]ruelty was not associated with the notion that human sensibility must be protected" (302; see also Wolch and Emel 1998, xii). What is significant, then, is that the beneficence and commodified affection-love with which pet-animals are treated (and to which the opening poem alludes), is not necessarily unproblematic, but may derive from or operate in tandem with ideologies and logics of violence toward humans (see also Elder et al. 1998). Whereas the increasingly troubling abuses of 'nature' and the nonhuman animal world inform Wolch and Emel's (1998) concerns that animals be positively brought into critical geographical study ("building a progressive politics for the twenty-first century means combining critical analysis with a commitment to inclusive, caring and democratic campaigns for a justice capable of embracing both people and animals" xii-xiii), their concerns with the human-animal interface are here taken in a radically different direction: to explore how commodified pet-animal affections and love might be working against radical democratic impulses, providing mainstreamed pet-love elements of society with intensely time-consuming cultural work divested of the human.

This paper, then, documents in a very cursory and curatorial way how the libidinal economies of pet-animal DAL have expanded and deepened in certain post-industrial spaces, something I surmise is fueled by a dual process: the hypercommodification of pet-lives and love (especially dogs); and the many alienations attendant to post-industrial lives and places, whether these be related to the dissolution or downsizing of traditional family forms, the increasing footlooseness of individual and community life, or the aging of post-industrial populations. The dual process is in any event tied firmly to neoliberal processes of capital accumulation more generally and the attendant growing gap between rich and poor. In so doing, the paper expands upon the new animal geographies outlined so articulately by Wolch and Emel (1998) and Philo and Wilbert (2000), as well as

geographical literatures that have begun to assess more critically the pet-animal/human bond (e.g., Howell 2000 and 2002, Fox 2006, Nast forthcoming).

### **Dog dancing and dog**

According to the World Canine Freestyle Organization, Inc. (WCFO), dancing with one's dog originated informally in the late 1980s in Canada and England, growing into formal initiatives (such as Canada's Musical Canine Sports International or MCSI, founded in 1991) that eventually carried the sport to the U.S. later in the 1990s. In 1993 the MCSI held its first competition under formal rules developed over the previous two years, and the U.S. hosted its first two musical canine events—one in Tacoma, Washington and the other in Memphis, Tennessee. By 1994 two different dog-dancing styles were recognized: "In Canada you had very dramatic, theatrical routines with highly costumed competitors. In the USA, the demos were illustrating tightly controlled, heeling and dressage type movements with attention mostly on the dog and very reserved costumes in general" ([www.worldcaninefreestyle.org/intro\\_history.htm](http://www.worldcaninefreestyle.org/intro_history.htm), accessed July 18, 2006). Two kinds of freestyle dog dancing in the U.S. were developed by 1995: musical canine freestyle and freestyle heeling or heelwork to music. Dog dancing almost immediately assumed larger international proportions and was seen by pet industries as a potentially lucrative marketing tool for promoting pet goods and services. The main public relations firm for dog-dancing in the U.S., *Ventre Advertising Inc.*, for example, right away started to receive requests for instructional dog-dancing videos from persons in post-industrial places around the world, including Japan, Germany, Finland, Netherlands, Australia and Canada; and Heinz Pet Products increased significantly corporate sponsorship of dog-dancing, recognizing its public relations value. In particular, Heinz sponsored Canada's MCSI and the U.S.'s Canine Freestyle events. That year, the Canine Freestyle Federation (CFF) was founded and gave its first demo at the U.S. American Kennel Club Invitational.

Funding from Heinz Pup-Peroni (a subsidiary of Heinz that produces dog treats) allowed for the sport's national expansion and development over ensuing years, *Ventre* receiving some of these monies to sponsor demos across the country. In 1996, the so-called Pup-Peroni Canine Freestylers Teams came into existence and dog dancing demos were conducted across the U.S. The Teams became so popular that U.S. television shows vied to have them on the air that year, including the Oprah Winfrey Show, the Today Show, and Good Morning, America ([www.worldcaninefreestyle.org/intro\\_history.htm](http://www.worldcaninefreestyle.org/intro_history.htm)). Their popularity also led to the creation of two U.S.-based canine freestyle websites, one of them supported by Heinz Pup-Peroni. That same year Heinz sponsored the first U.S.-based canine freestyle competition (the first-ever competition where titles were granted), the Pup-Peroni International Canine Freestyle Championship. Here, twenty entries



played to a ballroom overflowing with 650 onlookers, hundreds of others turned away. National and international opportunities for the sport increased in 1997 after Sandra Davis published her first instructional video, "Dancing With Your Dog." A dog trainer for almost fifty years, Davis has been a major figure in canine freestyle's evolution in the U.S. ([www.dancingdogs.net](http://www.dancingdogs.net), accessed July 13, 2006).

Today the sport has expanded to include all kinds of dogs and all kinds of dog owners in Australia, Canada, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Scotland, and the U.S. Because "dog dancing" involves significant investments of time and money, few persons of color participate in it, and it is absent in poor countries. It is also, like dog agility and obedience training, dominated by women.<sup>3</sup>

The practice of "doga," or yoga for dogs, is more recent than dog dancing. It began in 2001 when a yoga practitioner named Suzi Teitelman began incorporating her black cocker spaniel, Coali, into her regular yoga routine (she says he joined in). She apparently thought it important enough to start classes for humans and their dogs at the U.S. gym chain, Crunch, where she worked. At the time, she called it Ruff Yoga, and over time her practice of doga became more elaborate. Her classes were so popular that she was soon highly sought after, offering doga demonstrations in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, and London. In 2003, another U.S. yoga instructor, Jennifer Brilliant, and William Berloni co-wrote the somewhat tongue-in-cheek instructional book *Doga: Yoga for Dogs* to much acclaim. Their dogs (or "dogis") are listed on the cover as collaborators. Doga soon spun off other related interests and found international acceptance. According to a 7 April 2004 [telegraph.co.uk](http://telegraph.co.uk) article by Fiona Matthias about the first doga workshop in London in 2004 offered by Suzy Teitelman, another yoga practitioner, Bruce Van Horn "is taking the phenomenon [of doga] seriously enough to be studying the physiological effects of yoga on dogs."<sup>4</sup> She goes on to elaborate on why Teitelman thinks doga is gaining in popularity in New York ("it's just something else to do with the dog") and how her work diffused to Britain: Andrew Saville-Edells, of Pet Pavilion in Chelsea, London ("the department store for discerning dogs and cats") saw her work and introduced her to "trainers for the UK market."

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<sup>3</sup> For a fascinating look into how the web has facilitated the transmission of information and resources about the sport, see <http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=309610> (accessed July 13, 2006)--a google query from a woman who saw dog dancing in Germany and Amsterdam and "googled" GoogleAnswers to find out where in Europe she might get lessons for her and her dog. GoogleAnswers provided a lengthy reply, outlining resources available in Europe, complete with names and phone numbers.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/07/04/ndoga04.xml> (accessed July 13, 2006).

Dog-dancing and doga represent two new activities in which humans and pets are portrayed as interactive subjective equals, even though it is clear they are not. Van Horn's desire to study the physiological benefits of yoga on dogs is in keeping with experimental science's recently increased interest in studying pet-animals, especially dogs.

### **Pet-animal science**

As Budiansky notes in a 1999 *Atlantic Monthly* article, “[f]or years science...maintained a rather aloof stance toward domestic animals in general, and toward dogs in particular.... [Z]oologists...considered domestic animals to be uninteresting, and have generally classed them as ‘degenerates’—unworthy of ecological scrutiny because they have lost their adaptive behaviors.” Budiansky argues that scientists seldom conducted dog-based research because a dog is culturally considered to be a person's friend, making it difficult for scientists to imagine working on a dog as a laboratory beast. This reticence changed in the 1990s when scientists sought to show just how intelligent dogs actually were, linking dogs to humans genetically. The multi-million dollar Dog Genome Project was launched in 1990, for example, funded mostly by private breed clubs. Moreover, once it was determined that dog and human diseases are genetically similar, various canine genetics work began to be funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the American Cancer Society (ACS). Accordingly, as a result of collaborations between Cornell University's Baker Institute for Animal Health and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, the first linkage map of the dog genome was published in late 1997. The results showed that 90 to 95 per cent of the dog genome is identical to that of the human genome. *Science* also reported recently about the biological interconnectedness of humans and dogs. Its June 2004 issue details the study results of a border collie in Germany named Rico, a house dog that has shown “an uncanny talent for human language...[leaving] scientists wondering if man's best friend is smarter than they thought” (*Chicago Tribune*, June 11, 2004). What is important, here, is not whether or not the monies invested in these studies are warranted or not, but that well respected research communities are now choosing domesticated dogs as their subjects. In Rico's case, moreover, they tested linguistic abilities, in part to investigate human owners' assertions that their dogs deeply understood and communicated with them. The desire behind these assertions are captured fictionally in Carolyn Parkhurst's (2003) novel, *The dogs of Babel*, where a dog figures as the only witness to the death of a linguist's wife, her husband subsequently getting involved with a group of amateurs who surgically alter dogs' vocal chords, convinced that the dogs will then be able to speak. It is also captured in the Japanese toymaker Takara's 2002 invention of the Bowlingual dog collar, a radiomicrophone collar that purports to

translate a dog's bark into words that express how the dog is feeling ([www.bowlingual-translator.com](http://www.bowlingual-translator.com)).

The pet-animal object choice of popular and academic science is similarly evident in the mushrooming of psychological and behavioural research and popular psychologizing around dogs, evident in dog biographies, positive dog training guides, magazine articles, and research articles with titles like, *The hidden life of dogs*, *Think dogs*, *Why we love dogs* and *Why we really love dogs*. Then there are scientific studies like the one conducted in the U.K. and reported in a *Psychological Reports* article (Stubbs 1999) which shows, "that people who strongly dislike dogs exhibit an obsessive or anal character." Moreover, numerous dog psychology centers and specialty practices have opened up around the U.S. of late, including the renowned Cesar Millan's Dog Psychology Center in Los Angeles, started in 1997 ([www.dogpsychologycenter.com](http://www.dogpsychologycenter.com); see also [www.think-dog.com](http://www.think-dog.com)). The Center assumed such popular renown that National Geographic [TV] Channel provided Millan with a prime time slot on which to air his show, "Dog Whisperer" (see [www.ngcdogwhisperer.com](http://www.ngcdogwhisperer.com), accessed July 13, 2006). In northern England, a similar dog psychology center opened out of Cumbria, called the Canine Behavior Centre. A virtual institution, the Centre offers home study certification in dog psychology via the internet ([www.caninebehaviour.co.uk/](http://www.caninebehaviour.co.uk/), accessed July 13, 2006).

It is perhaps in recent efforts to clone pets, however, that one sees how thoroughly science has become embedded and invested in circuits of pet-animal DAL. Pet-cloning fuels, and is fuelled by, human fears about death and loss as well as human hopes that science can overcome death through replication. California, the hub of PetCo marketing and a national epicenter for pet-related product innovation, is also where Genetic Savings and Clone (GSC) began, the first company in the world to offer pet cloning services. In February 2004, after several years of research, the company launched the first-ever commercial cloning initiative, "Nine Lives Extravaganza," with two test kittens born in June 2004, and the first commercially produced kittens sold in November 2004 ([www.savingsandclone.com/news/press\\_releases\\_10.html](http://www.savingsandclone.com/news/press_releases_10.html), accessed September 2005).<sup>5</sup> GSC's experience in cat-cloning grew out of its earlier participation in the

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<sup>5</sup> GSC initially was founded to investigate the possibilities of commercial dog cloning, its commercial aims wrapped around a human interest story about a "special dog" named Missy. According to its official website, "Genetic Savings & Clone has its roots in the Missyproject Project, which began as an effort to clone a beloved dog named Missy. In 1997, news that Dolly the sheep had been cloned inspired Arizona entrepreneur John Sperling to find out whether Missy could also be cloned. Missy had an exceptional genetic endowment but, because she was a spayed mutt of unknown parentage, it was otherwise impossible to continue her "breed."

"When in the following year Dr. Sperling launched a multi-million-dollar project to have Missy cloned, news spread quickly. Calls and emails poured in from people around the world who

world's first cat cloning enterprise (Operation CopyCat) at Texas A&M University, which produced a kitten named "cc." That cloning research is fueled by fantasies of resurrection through duplication is evident in the welcoming remarks of GSC's CEO, Lou Hawthorne, on the company's official website who notes that, "Cloning is the most precise method of duplicating a pet — both for appearance and behavioral tendencies" (see "CEO Overview," [www.savingsandclone.com/about\\_us/index.html](http://www.savingsandclone.com/about_us/index.html), accessed July 13, 2006). Nonetheless, according to a BBC (UK Edition) News report, the company disavows that it produces exact replicas, or as Hawthorne says, "Personality-wise there are differences" (Shiels 2004).

The expense involved in cloning is enormous. Five persons who initially bought into GSC's cloning enterprise, for example, paid \$50,000 each for the opportunity to clone their cat. The company guaranteed a full refund if the customer is not satisfied, with the returned animal to be put up for adoption (Shiels 2004). Whereas cat-cloning prices dropped to \$32,000 by 2005, GSC anticipates that cloning costs will soon be lowered even further to \$10,000 for a cat and \$20,000 for a dog, still a significant price to pay ([www.savingsandclone.com/services/index.html](http://www.savingsandclone.com/services/index.html), accessed July 13, 2006). For those who desire to clone their dog or if the expense of cloning your cat is beyond your immediate means, for \$900 a year and \$150 in maintenance costs, you can preserve tissue from your pet for future cloning (Shiels, 2004).

In 2005, GSC moved to a new 8000 square foot, state-of-the art cloning facility in Madison, Wisconsin. That same year, scientists at Seoul National University, South Korea beat out the GSC and produced the first cloned dog, an Afghan hound called Snuppy, hailed as a scientific breakthrough in popular presses around the world, including U.S. magazines like *People* (2005). Whereas the difficulties and expense of dog cloning have prevented it from being commercially available today, no expense is being spared to make it a future reality.<sup>6</sup> The enormous resources being funnelled into the endeavor begs all kinds of theoretical, ethical and moral questions. Is this pet-animal service established for (and/or

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wanted to gene bank and clone their own remarkable pets. Dr. Sperling and other members of the Missyplicity Project founded Genetic Savings & Clone in February 2000 in response to this demand.

"Missy died at age 15 in 2002 before efforts to clone her had succeeded. Thanks to gene banking technology, her DNA remains available for use in cloning. We remain confident that our ongoing research efforts will result in the birth of her clone.

**The following anecdotes, written by Missy's human "mom" Joan, and accompanying photographs illustrate some of the features that made Missy such a special dog.**" (original in bold; [http://www.savingsandclone.com/about\\_us/index.html](http://www.savingsandclone.com/about_us/index.html)).

<sup>6</sup> See report and video at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/4742453.stm>.

partially financed by) the wealthy, another investment emblematic of the increasing gap between rich and poor? How is Snuppy's innocence used to justify the formidable resources expended to produce a DAL pet-commodity, not unlike the resources mobilized in professional and industrial pet-breeding programs generally (see Derr 2004)? In what ways is the vastness of these pet-animal investments diverting resources and energies away from humans? Who cares?

The significant financial outlay taken up by this technology has upset the Humane Society which argues that besides the fact that there are four million animals killed yearly in U.S. shelters, cloning displaces fantasmatically the need to grieve a loved one. Various Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), meanwhile, have focused on spaying and neutering the pet population in an attempt to create a "no kill" nation.

### **A No-Kill nation**

In 1994 San Francisco advanced the pet welfare world when the city's SPCA and Animal Care and Control (ACC) agency teamed up to stop euthanizing adoptable dogs and cats. Thus began today's national "No Kill" movement. The no-kill movement is based on a reasonable premise; drastically reduce the number of animals born by spaying and neutering animal-pets at the same time that pet health and adoption rates are cultivated in shelters such that the number of euthanized animals significantly declines. Most programs are subsidized, making the process affordable to the poor. Bert Troughton, director of the ASPCA Strategic Alliance and former CEO of the Monadnock Humane Society in New Hampshire began such a program in 1994. By 2002, the state had spayed or neutered 34,265 animals, the euthanasia rate consequently dropping by 77 percent. San Francisco implementation of the program saw the number of dogs and cats entering the shelter system between 1990 and 2002 drop by 41 percent and the euthanasia rate decrease by 73 percent. San Francisco's now has the nation's lowest euthanasia rate for a major city (2.5 per one thousand residents) and a "save rate" of 78 percent, more than double the national urban average. In 2002, New York City committed itself to becoming a no-kill city by 2008. More than 40 nonprofit private shelters, government agencies, rescue organizations and veterinarian groups were brought on board to help make this happen. Today, low-cost spay/neuter surgery for pets of low-income residents is available through participating private veterinary practices, and special training sessions and incentives for public and private organizations are being made available to market and fund raise for pet adoptions.

The economic and social resources involved in these nation-wide initiatives is considerable and impressive, private and public organizations working together to coordinate efforts. The partnerships in San Francisco, for example, resulted in

the creation of a foster care network for dogs and cats, the establishment of an infirmary for sick animals in shelters, mobile dog and cat adoption units that traverse the city, and the opening of Maddie's Pet Adoption Center (below). Moreover, pet training and behavior specialists are now available to help with troublesome animals (a primary cause of pets being brought to shelters). The San Francisco SPCA, a private organization, is currently fundraising to build a large general hospital and specialty veterinary center that will accommodate veterinary specialists in oncology, radiology, neurology and cardiology.

As the American Society against Cruelty to Animals mapped out in its Winter 2003 *ASPCA Animal Watch*, four main ingredients are needed to make no-kill work: time, money, leadership, and collaboration. All of the success stories detailed by them and others attest to the importance of these four factors, Richmond, Virginia's SPCA efforts being salient among them. The latter made the transition to no-kill in January 2002 after more than four years of planning. To make the transition, the SPCA raised \$14 million dollars to increase its endowment and to build a larger and more modern shelter and adoption center. Like Maddie's Pet Adoption Center in San Francisco (below), the 64,000-square-foot Robins-Starr Humane Center hosts canine living rooms and feline condos. It also contains "a training center for shelter animals and public classes, and a spay/neuter clinic that...offers low-cost spay/neuter surgeries at \$30 to \$40 and free surgery for targeted areas of the community where outreach vehicles transport animals to and from the SPCA."

Maddie's Fund (MF) is a pet rescue funding organization out of California whose mission is to "revolutionize the status and well being of companion animals." It is among the most successful and powerful private organizations of its kind that funds and organizes the no-kill movement nationally. The Fund, named after the founders' miniature schnauzer, Maddie (he died of cancer in 1997), was started in 1999 with the express goal of promoting a no-kill nation by funding community collaborations of animal welfare organizations, state veterinary medical associations, and colleges of veterinary medicine. According to its 2004 Annual Report, since 1999 MF has supported projects in thirteen states, 211 counties, 1804 cities, 360 animal welfare organizations, 1457 private veterinary associations, five universities, and seven veterinary medical associations ([http://www.maddiesfund.org/aboutus/annual\\_reports.html](http://www.maddiesfund.org/aboutus/annual_reports.html)). In 2003, it shifted its funding emphasis significantly to address the needs of lower-income pet owners so as to better advance their no-kill nation goal. Project scales are large and all projects are funded for five years. From 1999 through 2003 over forty four million dollars were awarded, with most awards more than \$500,000, though one state-wide award totaled over nine million dollars ([http://www.maddiesfund.org/aboutus/about\\_pdfs/2003AnnReport\\_printable.pdf](http://www.maddiesfund.org/aboutus/about_pdfs/2003AnnReport_printable.pdf), accessed July 14, 2006).

What is remarkable is the organic way in which the no-kill movement emerged en force in the mid-1990s, inadvertently attending to the widening divisions between rich and poor. Assistance to the poor has been extraordinarily well organized, funnelled exclusively to pets. The U.S. no-kill movement is not unique. No-kill shelters are being promoted in post-industrial places and enclaves around the world, from Spain, France, and Germany, to Britain and Australia, to Hong Kong, which in early 2006 organized a “No Kill City Forum” to lobby the government to make all shelters no-kill.

### **Celebrity cultures**

The aestheticization of pet-animal DAL has been considerably advanced through the world of commodity-celebrity culture. Celebrities are now major purveyors of pet (mostly dog) commodities and love. Especially over the last several years, popular tabloids and news magazines have published special issues or articles about celebrities and their pets. The August 2004 issue of the U.S. tabloid *Globe*, for example, features a 2-page photographic spread, “Pet This,” featuring young and mostly blonde actress-celebrities doting on (mostly) dogs. Three different photos of Paris Hilton show her carrying (in order) a Chihuahua, a pug, and a ferret; Britney Spears hugs a white fuzzy bichon frise puppy, Jessica Simpson shows off her poodle, Kelly Osbourne holds her brown teacup poodle, and Jewel (in four separate photographs) is shown carrying her white bichon frise in a fluffy pillow-carrier, releasing him gently into “fenced play pen” in Central Park. The by-line reads, “Hollywood babes never leave home without their precious ‘fun furs.’” A 2001 *US Weekly* similarly features dog-loving celebrities, a small photographic inset on the cover featuring Drew Barrymore’s portrait with the by-line, “Hollywoof!: 26 Dogs and Their Stars” We learn that Drew’s life was saved by her Labrador-show mix dog when he barked at the smoke seeping out from the bedroom door of their Beverly Hills home. The author of “Hollywoof,” Russell Scott Smith, relays that in Hollywood:

Dogs are everywhere, and their movie-star owners are spoiling them rotten. John Travolta, Cindy Crawford and Brooke Shields take their pets on vacation; Jenna Elfman bought a \$465 purple chaise lounge for her two pugs; and Christina Aguilera totes her Chihuahua around in a \$550 camouflage carrier.

“For some stars, dogs are like fashion accessories,” says Penelope Francis, who co-owns Fifi & Romeo, a doggie boutique in Los Angeles. Since the store opened last fall, its tiny cashmere sweaters (\$200) and rains slickers (\$105) have been bought by Kate Hudson, Goldie Hawn, Meg Ryan, Cameron Diaz and Bette Midler. We also learn that Hollywood dogs are not just dressed luxuriously—they

live well, too, getting massages and herbal wraps at such canine spas as the Dog House, a favorite of Kevin Costner's white Labradors.

The same issue also tells us that Julia Roberts has seven dogs, Sandra Bullock four, Kelsey Grammer and his ex-playboy wife six, Goldie Hawn three, and Ashley Judd two. Edie Falco drove to a film shoot because she didn't think it fair for her Labrador-shepherd mix to fly in the luggage compartment, while Sigourney Weaver threw a wedding party for her greyhound in her New York apartment.

In a more regional streak, the *Chicago Tribune Magazine* has had two doggie-centered issues since the late 1990s, replete with doggie cover photos: one in July 2000 and the other in March 2002. The former issue is dedicated entirely to dogs, with articles about dog love and loss, haute couture (Haute Dogs), doggie health ("food, water and shelter are important, but can they satisfy the inner puppy"), doggie bakeries and doggie treat recipes, working service dogs (for the ill and for the blind), and how to choose the right dog for you. We learn that Oprah has eleven dogs, and that there is a celebrity hound called Sweetie, the first doggie ever to have her own monthly advice column (in *Elle* magazine; "Call her a pet pioneer, a mutt with a Mae West 'tude, a pooch with a poison pen. She's done rehab with Li'l Kim and shares a hairstylist with Madonna..."). The last page is dedicated to an article debunking the supposed inferiority of cats in relation to dogs. One might conjecture that celebrity culture's (and, hence, in the U.S., Hollywood's) importance in advancing the sexiness of pet commodities and pets as commodities and DAL objects explains partly why California has been such a mecca for high-end pet (especially doggie) goods and services. A twist on the importance of celebrity culture is seen in Chicago's posh and "pet-friendly" Hotel Monaco, which showcases its mostly lobby-bound celebrity-mascot dog, Stevie Nicks, a Lhasa apso mix (Strzalka 2004).<sup>7</sup> Dogs are now accommodated in most

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7 As Strzalka (2004) reported,

Pets are commonplace at Hotel Monaco, 225 N. Wabash Ave., a four-star, four-diamond luxury hotel where on average 10 to 12 percent of guests have pets with them, said general manager Nabil Moubayed. The concierge is ready to refer guests to dog walkers, pet-friendly restaurants, pet-friendly shops and other services. According to Moubayed, among places that welcome well-behaved pooches are Cucina Bella, 543 W. Diversey Ave.; Neiman Marcus, 737 N. Michigan Ave.; Chicago Horse and Carriage rides; and Billy Hork Galleries, 109 E. Oak St. Dogs are welcome at Navy Pier in outside areas only. Most restaurants with outdoor seating will accommodate leashed, well-behaved dogs, he said, including Brasserie Jo, 59 W. Hubbard St.; Bice, 158 E. Ontario St.; Bistrot Margot, 1437 N. Wells St.; and Ben Pao, 52 W. Illinois St. And it's not unusual for a guest to send a limousine to pick up a pet from the hotel, he said. "We've always had a lot of pets, mostly dogs, sometimes cats, every now and then a bird or a monkey," Moubayed said. "Pets have been accommodated because of necessity. It's difficult to tell someone who is paying a couple grand a night, 'You can't bring your pet,'" Moubayed said. "It is a different world."



upscale U.S. hotels (see [http://www.kimptonhotels.com/pdfs/pet/01\\_Leg\\_Up.pdf#search=%22Burnham%20hotel%20dogs%22](http://www.kimptonhotels.com/pdfs/pet/01_Leg_Up.pdf#search=%22Burnham%20hotel%20dogs%22), accessed August 24, 2006).

The number of intersubjective fantasies with pet animals and the consequent creation of new kinds of pet-human activities, identities, and social sensibilities is growing: “furries” engaging in and relaying some of the most fantasmatic.

### **Furry Fandom (FF)**

From photographs of furries reproduced on various websites, FF appears to involve largely ‘white’ adult populations. According to an extensive website set up by and for furries to represent furry culture and history, <http://furry.wikia.com/wiki/WikiFur>, the “furry genre” (cultural media that use animals as anthropomorphic characters in largely serious rather than laughable adult ways, such as George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*), began in the early twentieth century. However, the term “furry” did not gain currency until the late 1970s, in tandem with the creation of the Cartoon/Fantasy Organization (C/FO) in Los Angeles, California; and it was only in the early 1990s that the genre started “to gain recognition as a unique segment of the arts with a specifically adult aged fandom *that products could be marketed to*” (my emphasis). Since then, the popularity of this adult-oriented genre has grown significantly and has spread primarily through the internet, with the mainstream entertainment industry, by contrast, creating furry genre works (e.g., Disney productions) largely for children ([http://furry.wikia.com/wiki/Furry\\_fandom#History](http://furry.wikia.com/wiki/Furry_fandom#History), accessed July 14, 2006). The internet has been enormously successful in cultivating international “furry” connections and communities, especially important vitiating components of furry life being member conventions, meetings, and informal gatherings (see <http://furries.meetup.com>, accessed July 14, 2006). One thread of adult furry interest is found in queer culture. In October 2004 a queer conference held in New York titled, “Transcending Boundaries” sponsored a panel, “Furry selves: Anthropomorphic Fandom and the Exploration of Identity.” I reproduce their web-based description of the panel here, since it describes succinctly what furries are and are not (<http://transcendingboundaries.org/about/past/tbc2002.php>, accessed July 14, 2006).

Popular culture has found a new community to sensationalize, the “furries.” Though MTV will tell you it's all about people having kinky sex in mascot costumes, the anthropomorphic culture is much more about playing with alternate versions of who we are, and who we could be, through costuming, role-play, art, and fiction. Furries have strong personal associations with animals or animal-people, and quite often include a not-quite-human sensibility as part of their identity. A subculture very high in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and

transgender presence [sic], furry is a safe place for many people to 'try on a new skin' and express themselves freely. Perhaps there is such a thing as species dysphoria?

FF also flourishes outside gay culture and is continuously taking shape. Its recency and growing popularity is significant, as is the well-developed character of many FF websites.

Fans of the furry (who constitute 'fandom') are varied and many. Some are egg-heads with more or less intellectual interests in how and why a society or group anthropomorphizes animals, such as Donald Duck or Bugs Bunny. Other furries assert a particular animal identity, either playfully or believing that they were animals in a former life, or that they are an animal trapped in a human body (species dystopia). A minority are zoophiliacs, that is, persons erotically and/or sexually invested in their animal-identity. Some pornographers have jumped on this last bandwagon, providing graphic on-line videos or images of young women having sex with animals, especially dogs and horses (e.g., [www.farmcum.com](http://www.farmcum.com), accessed July 14, 2006); others offer voyeuristic images of fursuited people (mostly white men) having sex in their fur suits ([www.fursuitsex.com](http://www.fursuitsex.com), accessed July 14, 2006).

At the end of 2002, Yahoo.com began deleting "furry" sites, purportedly because of adult content, setting off discussions about persecution of furries on a number of furry listservs, such as [www.furcentral.com](http://www.furcentral.com) (accessed September 2005), an intellectually diverse and active blog, and on-line newsgroups. The August 15, 2004 updated PeterCat's Furry InfoPage, "one of the top sites about furries on Google!" ([www.tigerden.com/infopage/furry/faqs.html](http://www.tigerden.com/infopage/furry/faqs.html), accessed September 2005; updated April 2006) listed a slew of popular media places that have showcased furries, including the TV Shows *Jimmy Kimmel*, *The Man Show*, *ER*, *Drew Carey*, and specials on MTV and HBO. The most controversially was a broadside in 2002 by the TV Show *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. *CSI* staged an episode on furries that made it seem like furries are interested primarily in fetishistic sex, a depiction hotly contested by furry fandom.

PeterCat is a furry who uses 'his' infopage to refute sensationalized portrayals of furries. His site offers a panoply of relatively innocuous links to self-published furry fanzines, furry comics, furry artists' portfolios, and furry apparel. Other links are to a Furry Novel List (e.g., *Watership Down*), Furry Films Lists (e.g., *Alice in Wonderland*), and a list of Japanese animation movies featuring furries. PeterCat argues that popular culture has sexified furry fandom because sex makes money, furries becoming just one more thing to be commodified. According to him, dressing up as an animal (as furries are hyped up as doing) is not all that common and is not considered glamorous even within the community:

At a typical furry convention only about 5% of those in attendance wear full costumes (fursuits), although many others will wear accessories such as ears, tails, etc. Fursuits are very expensive, starting at about \$800 for an "off the rack" mascot-type costume, with some custom-built suits costing thousands of dollars. Many fans make their own, at a cost of hundreds of hours of labor, as well as hundreds of dollars in materials. With that kind of investment, dedicated costumers aren't willing to wreck their fursuits by attempting to have sex in them. In fact, wearing a fursuit is damned uncomfortable. There is a real danger of heat exhaustion and dehydration from staying in suit too long, or performing strenuous activity. While it's fun being in public, enjoying people's reactions and compliments about your costume, after a while it's a blessed relief to get out of sight and take off your costume head. Conventions have "headless lounges," well-stocked with water, Gatorade and industrial-strength air-movers, where fursuiters can cool off and relax.

One webmaster of a sadomasochism e-zine ([www.domsubnation.com](http://www.domsubnation.com)) attempts to bring coherence to the proliferation of furry fandom terms in a furry fandom FAQ sheet glossary. The glossary begins with a definition of a furry as:

A person who identifies very strongly with animals or animal characters... Some people would rather be an animal than have a human body. They identify with being a raccoon, or a tiger, or a wolf. They aren't happy with the human body as it is, and they go so far as to dress up as the animal of their preference. Some people want to appear stronger than a human or more dangerous and so they might add fangs or claws. It makes them feel powerful. Others want to be cute. Lovable. Cuddly. Much like the costumed characters we're accustomed to seeing at Disney world. People are attracted in a very non-threatening physical way. Suddenly it's ok to go up and scratch their big furry head. It's not a stranger; it's a big teddy bear! Most Furrries like to keep their fantasies sex-free. Most - not all.

S/he then goes on to elaborate on the varieties of furrries, analytical distinctions that I found useful, ending the FAQ page with a series of relevant definitions that point to the variegated nature of furry fandom culture.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most extreme furry

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<sup>8</sup> everyfur n. A term for all those interested in animals or animal characters furrotica n. A form of pornography featuring animals, animal characters, or human animal hybrids.(Jessica Rabbit for eg)

cases involve those who surgically alter their bodies to assume more animal-like shapes.

One highly organized and relatively mainstream group representing furies is the Anthropomorphic Arts and Education, Inc. or AAE, a non-profit organization begun in 1998 that, “supports educational and charitable activities of interest to fans of anthropomorphic art and animals in general” ([www.anthroarts.org](http://www.anthroarts.org)). Whereas in 1998, they had 682 members and a budget just under \$16,000, in 2003 they had 1181 members and a budget of just over \$71,000, the membership and budget increasing in 2005 to 1390 and more than \$127,000, respectively ([www.anthroarts.org/fc2005budgetfinal.htm](http://www.anthroarts.org/fc2005budgetfinal.htm), accessed July 14, 2006). While these numbers may seem insignificant, membership growth has been substantial, and the events they hold are inexpensive ones, allowing many non-members to participate. AAE’s biggest event, for example, is the annual Further Confusion convention that raises monies for animal-related charities. It also sponsors a charitable ball (Furdance) for pet therapists. The lowest monetary amount listed on the donation form is \$2600. In January 2006, 1,911 participants attended the Further Confusion convention (this year’s theme: RenFur: A Knight’s Tale), a convention that takes place every year at the Doubletree Hotel in San Jose, California (<http://www.furtherconfusion.org/fc2006/history.php>). The AAE recently started an archival library project--the Anthropomorphic Fandom Repository--dedicated to “preserving the history of and educating scholars about anthropomorphic fandom.”

Whether furies are egg-heads or zoophiles, FF’s growing popularity cannot be seen outside the context of a burgeoning of pet-animal DAL since the 1990s. In the case of “furies,” animal figures are doted upon and dominated through a series

furvert n. A person with strong sexual feelings for animal characters or people who dress up as animal characters

plushophile n. 1 A person who is fond of stuffed animals. 2 A person who is sexually intimate with stuffed animals.

species dysphoria n. A term denoting unhappiness with the human form and a longing for transformation, possibly through bioengineering, into animals or human animal hybrids.

theriomorph n. a person who shifts from human to animal form, either mentally, or through wearing animal costume.

toonophile n. A person unusually fond of cartoon characters. totem n. An animal or animal character a person identifies with or wants to become. yiff n. 1 Sexual activity between people with an interest in animals or animal characters. 2 the noise made by a fox. v. to engage in furry sex.

yiffy adj. 1 Sexually aroused or horny caused by thought of or proximity to animal characters. 2 sexy, erotic.

of activities that render the “wild” rather harmless or at least subject to an animating will. In a very real sense, then, furry fandom activities make all animals into pets. Their activities also shed light into how the “realness” of pets is in some contexts incidental to the psychological investments that pets as objects or screens are made to hold. In the case of FF, humans can *become* pets, this transmutation apparently being needed in order to facilitate human contact, sociality, and love.

### **Loving, sociality, family, and companionship in the twenty-first century**

Whether one is buying pet animal boutique clothing or doggie dental braces, taking a pet on vacation, dancing with a costumed dog, engaging in volunteer no-kill activities, or paying large sums of money to dress up like a “pet-i-fied” animal or invest in furry desires, films, and literatures, considerable resources are being invested in practices of pet DAL.

Pet animal identifications and investments in the geographical contexts I have mentioned are inherently contradictory. On the one hand, they register a human need to love and engage in post-industrial worlds where traditional social fabrics (e.g., the family) and places (e.g., neighbourhoods) are giving way. On the other hand, rising connectivities between pet animals (animate and inanimate) and humans are happening in the context of eroding human-human connectivities, as evidenced in the dissolution of social welfare programs, affordable housing, and living wages, all of which are producing a widening gap between the rich and poor and are induced largely by neoliberal imperatives. Given the many diverse circuits of pet animal productivities—from breeders to corporate sponsorships and investments to widespread ‘organic’ community organizing to egghead interests—it is unsurprising that pet-animal DAL is today so popular, salient, and intense. Yet it is the commodified intensity of this pet-human bond and the alienations that it serve to ameliorate or dull that seductively and pleasurably distracts. In this sense, might it be that commodified pet-animal DAL is a powerful means for taking human resources of time and money away from organizing activities geared toward confronting escalating inequalities and human violences locally and world-wide. Have pets become a new kind of potent libidinal currency through which hegemonic forms of twenty-first century loving and socialization take place in post-industrial contexts, a love that both affirms *and* negates human life?

What is striking about the intensification and mainstreaming of pet-animal DAL is its organic-ness and recency, its embeddedness in worlds and processes of post-industrial productions and exchange, and its coincidence with increasing global violence and disparities that characterize neoliberalism. The escalating of pet-animal investments is also linked to post-industrial emphases on consumption generally and to a plethora of related post-industrial alienations that characterize this century, making pet-animals increasingly central to notions of sociality,

family, companionship, and love. An instance of this work is evident in Leah Eskin's March 2002 article in *The Chicago Magazine* ("Their pride and joy") about how shortly after she "got married, my parents replaced me with a dog," and how much easier it has been for them to love and care for their black Lab:

Claude is what pediatric manuals refer to as an easy child. He never frets over homework...has not once requested recorder, creative-movement or copper-enamel jewelry making lessons. He has yet to suggest summer camp or swimming instruction...Claude is low maintenance.... My daughterly duties have been reduced to attending events from which Claude is, unreasonably, excluded. Which is to say, the opera.

Within this pet-animal world of reworked sociality, family, companionship, and love, geographical mobility and rapidity-itself have become salient and aestheticized, in keeping with the rapid cycling and footlooseness of internationalized circuits of paid employment and consumption. To wit, the proliferation of pet-animal travel wear and gear. Changes in the offerings of the standard U.S. airline retail magazine, Skymall ([www.skymall.com](http://www.skymall.com)), is particularly telling. Whereas five years ago very few pet-oriented items were available for purchase, a 2004 catalogue contains more than 10 pages featuring pet commodities, most of them related to dog and, less so, cat travel. Items include the "Pet Wheel-Away" (a kind of wheelbarrow for your pet that converts into a backpack or secure car seat), a six-day automatic pet feeder (for when humans travel), various car seat covers, a PetBrella™ for keeping your dog in the shade, a telescoping dog ramp for cars and boats, a pet stroller, a wire-covered wicker bicycle basket, a pet tent, and a pet booster car seat. This emphasis on mobility brings us to another reason why pets are increasingly occupying important emotional and social niches in post-industrial places. Namely, they are easier than children or other family members to re-locate or dispose of, allowing humans to maintain meaningful (if alternative) DAL relationships under particularly difficult relational circumstances.

Those occupying the highest racialized echelons of elite service-oriented labor forces fuel higher end pet-commodity culture, while the mainstreaming of commodified pet-culture through such venues as PetCo, PetSmart, and Skymall means that persons across a broad economic spectrum can also invest in the pet-animal commodity world. As Harriet Rosenfeld Choice asserted in a July 16, 2000 *Chicago Tribune Magazine* article, "In the Company of Dogs":

[i]n the last decade, Americans have evermore integrated dogs into their lives. More hotels across the country accept dogs. Some businesses allow employees to bring their dogs to work. And a dog completes the perfect picture of hearth and home.

Today her commentary reads almost prosaically.

Unlike fifty years ago it is now not considered bizarre for advice columnists who once dealt with the sociality of humans and family dynamics, to deal also with questions about naughty pets or pet loss; or for major newspapers to host columnists who speak exclusively to pet issues; or for *Elle* magazine to feature a doggie who *is* an advice columnist. Nor is it unusual for institutions to arrange for joint pet and child activities. In 2003, two women with certified trained dogs co-founded the Chicago YMCA's "Sit Stay Read" program in which children are taught literacy skills by having them read to dogs. The program was initiated in part after it was found that those with learning disabilities were often too embarrassed to read aloud to peers or adults, and that children generally love reading to dogs. It was also found that middle class persons' children experienced between 1,000 and 1,700 contact hours of one-on-one picture book reading, whereas children in low-income families experience twenty-five, making the YMCA's literacy outreach program especially important ([www.sitstayread.org](http://www.sitstayread.org), accessed July 18, 2006). Dogs have also been increasingly integrated into critical care, elder care, disability care, and hospice care programs. Even prisons are inventing ways of incorporating dogs into daily life. In 2003 the Ohio Humane Society paired up with the Ohio prison system, sending stray dogs, many with behavioral problems, to be trained by convicts free of charge. The inmates keep and train the dogs with them for two to three months before they are adopted out. Iams, a major pet company, donates most of the dog food, with outside donations and adoption fees (\$100 per animal) covering the rest of the dogs' expenses; no funds go to the inmates. In 2003, almost 200 dogs were adopted in this way. The program, called Tender Loving Care, has been heralded as rehabilitative for both the men and the dogs, the program said to have an overall quieting affect on the inmate population.<sup>9</sup>

## **Pet distractions**

How pet animals (especially dogs) are imagined and considered in elite and mostly post-industrial places around the world has shifted greatly since the 1980s. Rather than serving as working animals in agricultural or rural contexts, or as a family pet in industrial places where minimal monies were/are invested in pet lives, pet-animals in post-industrial places today are entrained in the highly inequitable

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<sup>9</sup> Traditionally, dogs in U.S. prisons have been used violently to control or intimidate prisoners. See, for example, Daniel Swerling's NPR report "Jailed Immigrants Allege Abuse: Immigrant Detainees Tell of Attack Dogs and Abuse" (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4170152>). Mark Derr (2004) refers to dogs that have been used in malevolent ways by those desiring to maintain power as, "hounds of hell".

and commodified world of neoliberalism. Many owners (in places in the U.S., fetishized legally as “guardians”) would consider pet-animal investments to be innocent, necessary, and even progressive. Yet, while pet-animal (especially dogs) offer up numerous opportunities for meaningful engagement in an alienating, face-paced, hypercommodified world (Katz 2003, Garber 1996), they are also being used in politically, economically, and culturally distracting ways. In particular, the massive DAL investments documented partially here, beg questions about how concerns for pet-animal lives displaces concerns for humans. Considerable resources are being directed towards creating the first pet airlines, for example, at the same time that United Airlines no longer has to pay employee pensions. And 50 million U.S. citizens lack health care, while the pet insurance industry is booming. Meanwhile, the U.S. prison system holds an inordinate percentage of the black male population, some of these men quieted by programs of “Tender Loving Care”.

Within the gamut of most economically powerful nations, the U.S. alone has the greatest percentage of its population in prison (most prisoners being poor and persons of color), the highest crime rates, the most gun-related deaths, the lowest literacy rate, the highest levels of racial segregation, and the highest levels of infant mortality among the poor. At the same time, it is in the vanguard of pet-care and commodity-pet-love. It has commodified pet-love into all walks of U.S. life such that humans who live without pets or who treat their pets as a species apart are seen as anomalous and somehow emotionally, psychologically, or morally stunted.

Yet the U.S. is not alone in its distractions. The internationalized proliferation of pet-animal goods and services is growing, alongside new kinds of pet-animal/human practices. While Canada and England invented dog-dancing and Japan the Bowling collar, the No-Kill movement and furry fandom is expanding into most post-industrial places. And just as those in the U.S. are expected to invest \$36 billion dollars in pets goods and services in 2006 alone, similarly high expenditures characterize other post-industrial places. In the U.K., for instance, the Pet Food Manufacturer’s Association estimates that \$1 billion was spent on pets and pet products and services in 1965, whereas by 1990 investments had jumped to \$2.5 billion and to more than \$3.7 billion in 2002 (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2005/01/20495/49497>). The European Monitor International, a company with six offices worldwide that focuses on “international market intelligence on industries, countries, and consumers,” meanwhile, began producing reports on the viability of the pet industry in individual countries around the world in the early 1980s ([www.euromonitor.com/reportssummary.aspx](http://www.euromonitor.com/reportssummary.aspx)). Its 2005 country reports (fifty two in all) show that France experienced 17% value growth in pet food and pet care products from 2000-2005, to reach 3.2 billion euros; and that in 2004 alone, Germans spent more than 3.8 billion euros on pet foods and pet care products. Moreover, it offers advice on how to create niche markets for pets and how to increase market shares, particularly in poorer countries. In the case of



Columbia, for example, under a section titled, “Pets begin to be humanised as attitudes change,” the report relays that:

Leading manufacturers Nestlé Purina PetCare de Colombia SA and Effem Colombia Ltda invested significant resources in the review period [2000-2005] to create awareness of pets’ needs. In fact, Purina almost single-handedly changed consumers’ attitudes regarding dogs and cats, positioning these animals as loyal companions and members of the family. Attitudes continue to be shaped by these companies’ educational and awareness campaigns, and integrated marketing activities that include trade shows, creating clubs, co-sponsoring free vaccination campaigns with local health officials and launching publications such as Purina’s *Perriódico*, among others. By raising awareness, these companies increase their consumer base, promote product trial, and drive repurchase and eventually brand loyalty. Given the low development of pet food and pet care products in Colombia, these activities are necessary in order to remain profitable, particularly given the growing penetration of low value-added, economy brands and private label products.

And under a subsequent section, “Opportunities abound for risk takers,” the writer exhorts investors to see how the “humanisation” of pets will make the industry a favorable one: “As humanisation becomes more entrenched, improving the quality of life of pets will likely become a more dominant factor behind the purchase of products. Purina and Effem identified this trend in pet food and began exploiting it, however, other niches remain open.”

Of special interest is the growth of pet-animal DAL in elite contexts across Asia. Witness the recent creation of a swanky café for dogs and people in a trendy part of Seoul where nearby restaurants still serve dog meat (Advani 2005). Or the recent trend by Chinese urbanites to invest in pet-animals, especially dogs, as a sign of affluence, the pet-dog population now estimated at over 150 million (Taylor 2006). As the 2005 Euromonitor International report for China indicates, “the rising popularity of dogs has triggered off the market boom in recent years. Dogs have become more common urban pets, hence leading to the greater demand for dog food and dog care products. The mushrooming of specialist pet shops, superstores, pet clinics is virtually an indicator of the rocketing speed of pet dog-related consumption. Likewise, the growing population of other pets also gave great opportunity for their respective market.”

Given these growth trends in pet investment and the ways they are used to distract, it is not difficult to imagine a neoliberal future where pets are invested in as innocent repositories of DAL and pleasure, this creation and celebration of “innocence” diverting critical interest away from the non-innocent world of

pressing human concerns. Those most impoverished (growing in number), by contrast, will be cast as non-innocents fully culpable for their subordinate place.

## Conclusion

This essay contributes to geography's new subfield of critical animal geographies, a subfield that emerged coincidentally with the alienations and pet-animal DAL practices outlined here. In the introduction to Wolch and Emel's (1998) path-breaking collection, *Animal geographies*, the editors tell us that the works contribute collectively to wider debates about animal-human relations in four ways, the book divided accordingly into four parts: whereas the first chapters deal with how human-animal identities are mutually constituted and shaped (e.g., how post-colonial racialization of Muslim "others" proceeds today through the denigration of slaughtering practices); subsequent chapters deal with the inequitable dynamics of human-animal interactions in shared "borderland" areas (e.g., persons and mountain lions in California); how globalization is re-shaping human-animal relations (e.g., consumer desires for leaner pigs leading to genetic experimentation); and the necessity to re-think how geography might contribute to a new global ethic that would help restructure currently abusive animal-human relations. The pet-animal concerns raised here transect all of these areas: pet-animals have become variably positioned screens onto which all kinds of needs and desires are projected; they co-habit with humans; their production and investment is tied to globalized pet industries and genetic engineering; and the ethics of pet-human encounters is riven with complexities and specificities that few have explored. Pet scholarship offers geographers a unique twenty-first century window through which to explore future modalities of love and alienation, commodification and dominance, affection and power (Nast forthcoming).

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