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Death and Dying in Human and Companion Canine Relations

by

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Abstract

Since before the Neolithic Revolution, when human civilisation first emerged, humans and canines have lived, and died, together. This Scottish study is conducted in the field of animal-human interaction and, using qualitative methods, applies established insights from the sociology of health (born of human-to-human interaction) to a human-animal relationship. Specifically, this thesis explores death and dying in relations between the companion canines, and the human members, of ten families.

Nonhuman illness narratives are found in profusion in this study, and it was also found to be possible to apply biographical disruption to nonhumans, when conceptualised as biographical disruption-by-proxy. Unexpectedly, there emerged from the data support for a four-fold model of canine selfhood, as forged within the family. This is, as far as I am aware, the first modelling of a specific nonhuman consciousness, within the discipline.

Suffering was found to exist in both physical and non-physical forms for the companions, and a mutual vulnerability to loneliness, and desire for companionship, appears to be a powerful point of connection between the humans and the canines. Being together emerged as both a practice, and as an ideal, that moulded the human-canine relations, and it was regarded as unfitting for a canine to die alone.

Companion canine dying comes forth as a negotiated process, shaped by a divide between gradual and sudden death. This work encountered developed narratives of departure, that seem to structure the experience of losing a companion. In particular the role of the expert is a privileged voice in the negotiations of dying, and the biomedical view is treated as being definitive. The role of the expert is not simply submitted to however, but a range of stances to veterinary authority are displayed, being; acquiescence, resistance and invalidation of the veterinary voice. Ultimately, whilst interplays of wellbeing are present, they are less biophysically grounded, than they are rooted in the everyday routines of life, in the rituals of eating, sleeping, walking, and playing together, that compose the shared world of the human and companion canine.

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Chapter 1 ~ Introduction

1.1 On the Question of Dogs

The first question that leaps to mind is why dogs? What can a study of dogs possibly tell us about society and social processes? Is the study of canines not incidental to a science which explores and seeks to understand society? The short answer to these questions is that the study of human canine relations is not incidental to a science of society, and companion canines are profoundly implicated in social processes. One of the deepest tenets of Sociology is that the powerful, the significant things, can be hidden in the everyday (Scott, 2009). What could be more everyday than watching someone walking their dog, *canis lupus familiaris*, along the streets of Scotland. Yet this taken for granted, everyday sight, speaks to a depth and breadth of relations across the social web.

In the 10,000 years since the Neolithic Revolution, that turning point of our species when humans first transformed from hunter gathers into settled agrarian societies, human beings have lived in the company of wolves and their descendents (Gopher, Abbo and Lev-Yadun, 2001). Indeed, archaeological evidence supports the domestication and training of the first wolf pups by Stone Age Peoples beginning at least 12,000 years ago (Gusepi, 2009). Moreover, the human-canine relation constitutes the first human-nonhuman alliance. Canines were domesticated a full two to three thousand years before humans domesticated sheep or goats (Davis, 1987). Sheep being the first animals that we know were domesticated for food, at around 9,000 BC in the Middle East (Davis, 1987). In terms of funerary rites, there are early canine burials found in Sweden dating from around 5250-3700 BC, with joint human-canine burials found in Germany from even earlier (Hirst, 2009).

For the entire history of our society we have lived, worked and died with canines. Indeed that bond between human and nonhuman appears to pre-date civilisation itself, and embrace the deep Paleolithic pre-history (dating from 35,000 to 10,000 BC) when wolves, who were thought to be scavenging the camps of our most remote hunter gather ancestors, began to ally with humans

(Gopher, Abbo and Lev-Yadun, 2001). It is a primal, possibly even a proto-social relation, for a human and canine to live and die as companions.

1.2 *Research Questions*

This study applies insights from human-human relations surrounding death and dying, to human-animal relations. The original intention was to do this by extending the established wisdom of sociological thought outward, and connecting these theories across the human/animal divide at four key areas:

- I. *Serious Illness* - To explore the experience of serious illness in companion canines, for their owners¹ and those in the animal's immediate society. This will be carried out with particular attention to the work of Charmaz (1983) on identifying subtle forms of suffering, and Michael Bury's (1982; 2001) work on biographical disruption.
- II. *Practices surrounding Death and Dying* - To highlight the everyday activities, rituals and practices associated with the death and dying of companion animals. This will be conducted with attention to the seminal work of Glaser and Strauss (1965). This aspect of the study will explore the rituals in place and seek out any patterning of everyday activities, regular visiting of graves and keeping of jars for disposal etc.
- III. *Dying and Meaning* - To reveal the meanings surrounding the death and dying of a companion canine to their owner, and those in the animal's immediate society. Taking previous work, particularly Fulton's on death and identity (1976), and exploring to what extent an understanding born of studying human death is reflected in the meaning(s) given to canine death.
- IV. *Wellbeing* - To consider any disruptions to wellbeing and the impacts upon the welfare of the owner, and those in the companion canine's immediate society, of their illness and death. To explore possible influences upon

¹ The term owner has recently been challenged as potentially reinforcing an exploitative relation towards animals, however, I agree with Sanders (1999) that it remains a useful term, describing the social situation of certain animals.

wellbeing by building upon the work of Mort et al. (2007) regarding the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak; particularly their findings that interplays of human/animal wellbeing are embedded deep in the social web, beyond the access of the bio-medical frame alone.

Once data collection was underway, in the second year of the thesis, it became clear that objective 2, which focused on everyday practices connected with death, such as the visiting of graves and regular remembrances, was not emerging as a concern within the raw data. This question had been developed following my study '*On Meaning and Companion Animals*' (Desougi, 2008), which explored the lives of three families with multi-species companion animals. One of these families had regular, and developed, practices connected with the death of the companions, and coming from this I had considered that it may be a fruitful area for future enquiry. However, it now appears that this case may have been a stand-alone instance, of a particular focus on ritualistic remembrance, and practice, of that family, and this emphasis is not reflected in the data of the subsequent two studies conducted and the experience of the other 16 families I have encountered. Also, within this study there emerged a rich stream of data focused around the phenomena of various everyday practices, concerned, not with death rituals, but with the rituals of everyday living, in essence wellbeing. Therefore in the second year of the PhD, the decision was taken to amend the original objectives of the thesis to respond to this new emphasis. There are now three core questions in the study, which are;

- I. *Serious Illness, Self and Suffering* – Can established sociological insight based on the study of humans, be applied to nonhuman illness and suffering, and are there possibilities for a nonhuman selfhood? (The original research question was expanded, to include the experience of a self, which is implicated in the understanding of suffering.)
- II. *Dying and Meaning* – To reveal the meanings surrounding the death and dying of a companion canine to their owner, and those in the animal's immediate society.

III. *Everyday Practices and Wellbeing* – original questions 2 and 4, being practices surrounding death and welfare respectively, have been conflated into a single objective. The focus of this third objective is: to explore the everyday practices of living with a companion canine, with particular attention to times of illness and loss, and to consider any interplays of wellbeing between human and nonhuman that may be present.

1.3 Symbolic Interaction and the Possibility of Animal Agency

This research is conducted within the discipline of Sociology, specifically the fields of animal-human interaction and the Sociology of Health and Illness. The field of animal-human interaction was recognised by the British Sociological Association in 2006, when the minimum 12 people were gathered, myself being one of them, to form the Animal-Human Studies Group (AHSG). Even in this short space of time the field in Britain is flourishing, and an increasing number of studies are being researched and reported (AHSG, 2013).

Animal-human interaction is part of the interpretivist stream of the discipline and in particular is influenced by the symbolic interactionist and the ethnographic traditions. Until recently it was not possible to embrace nonhumans within symbolic interactionism. This was because interactionism is founded upon concerns with meaning and mindfulness, and in orthodox symbolic interactionism animals could not be embraced in this understanding, due to their perceived lack of capacity to endow their own behaviour with meaning and a presumed absence of consciousness.

The animal has no mind, no thought, and hence there is no meaning here in the significant or self-conscious sense.

(Mead 1964:168, cited in Sanders 1999)

At the birth of symbolic interactionism society itself was conceived of by Mead as a web of meaningful interactions (O'Donnell, 2001). However, "Mead drew a very hard line between humans and animals by asserting that the latter were not capable of symbolic interaction" (Alger, 1997:65), rendering the world of nonhumans outwith the reach of our discipline.

The rigidity of this understanding has consequences for the way in which the social web is conceived and understood. It also has far reaching consequences for how nonhuman life is regarded and related to. That which does not have a self, does not have to be regarded as a subject, and can more easily be identified and used, or even abused, as an object (Vertlesen, 2005). It was encouraging to see these issues raised in an issue of *Sociology*, by Kay Peggs. Though Peggs (2009) does not specifically address the thought of Mead, she does analyse and critique the ways in which organic differences, which exist between all creatures, are transformed into an 'us and them' divide between human and nonhuman. With this divide between human and nonhuman then being utilised as a source of human identity.

Human primacy discourses are fundamental to human primacy identity politics, since such discourses influence perception of the relationship between human and nonhuman animals and reflect and reinforce any notions we might have of our own superiority. (Peggs, 2009:86)

Peggs (2009) goes so far as to contend that human primacy discourses represent, correctly I would argue, a form of human worship, where animals are “anthropolatrically approved resources for actions that result in human gains, and such actions are based in power relations between human and nonhuman animals” (Peggs, 2009:88). By declaring humans superior to animals, other forms of life and sentience then become secondary, even servile, beings, which can justifiably be exploited or destroyed (Peggs, 2009); in human primacy discourse animals are deemed to exist as part of the 'natural' world, as resources for human use, rather than as beings in their own right. By living outwith the realm of society, and the subject, nonhumans have less status, and do not receive the basic protections, as a part of society.

In interactionist terms, being without meaning and consciousness, animals cannot be regarded as part of the social world, as they cannot manifest agency (Mead, 1964). The work of Goffman, particularly *Frame Analysis* (1974), constitutes one point at which this restriction is breached, at the theoretical level. Goffman presents a way of conceiving the invisible structures that

underlie experience and action. Particularly pertinent to this study is Goffman's identification of a "cosmological divide" (1974:30) separating human and animal. A cosmological divide is the most fundamental divide in the framing of experience, and as such it is difficult to question, given its deep social embedding and taken for granted nature, but it remains a social construction born of social processes nonetheless (Goffman, 1974), and is therefore open to sociological inquiry. In this case a divide is socially constructed that separates human and animal, in a distinctly 'us and them' sense, with that which is human being seen as peculiar, indeed frequently superior to, as Peggs (2009) alludes, that which is animal.

In light of this understanding Goffman proposes that it is possible for animals to be social agents, particularly with regard to their capacity to frame play as a non-threatening act and to communicate this meaning of their actions to another, his example being the play of otters (1974). Being able to frame action and respond to social cues is indicative of both meaningful action and mindfulness. Goffman thus opens the way for a new wave of ethnographic and interactionist research, which embraces nonhumans and takes our understanding of social process across "the great divide" (Nimmo, 2012:177).

However, though I would argue that nonhumans, particularly canines as they are the interest here, may possess and demonstrate agency, I am not convinced that it is the substantial agency which a free adult citizen, without disability and living in contemporary Scotland, would possess. The agency of companion canines is limited. They do not choose when or what they eat, where they go for walks, with whom and in what conditions they live, they are generally not free to leave their human companions, apart from the extreme action of running away, which risks starvation, disease and death. There are powerful controls on the expression of both bodily processes and emotional displays. Even their urination and defecation has been disciplined, and is subject to human control regarding time and place. Whilst the canine companions in this study may be regarded as possessed of agency, it is best understood, to borrow a term from Klocker's work on child domestic workers, as

'thin' agency (Klocker, 2007). The agency of the canines is 'thin' as it is embodied in "everyday actions that are carried out within highly restrictive contexts, characterized by few viable alternatives" (Klocker, 2007:1). The world of possibilities and opportunities of the companion canine is circumscribed by the world and will of their human keepers.

1.4 *Multi-species Society*

Whilst a particular animal, within a species, may be positioned as an object or as a subject, and this distinction is explored in the following chapter on the self, the cosmological divide renders all members of a species, indeed all who are not human, Other, as less than a full human subject.

The work of Sanders, particularly *Understanding Dogs: Living and Working with Canine Companions* (1999), directly addresses the subjectification, of at least some members, of a species of animal. Using an ethnographically informed approach Sanders (1999) explored animal-human interaction, researching the areas of guide dog training, veterinary care and everyday dog ownership. He found that in these areas the humans regarded the animals as subjects, endowed with personality, feelings and individuality (Sanders, 1999). Sanders argues passionately for an understanding of dogs as minded social actors, that are not only attributed with personhood, but also actively involved in the routines and rituals of the family (Sanders, 1999).

Alongside this the Algers, using an ethnographic method, explored not only animal-human interaction, but also applied sociological method and theory to begin to chart animal-animal interaction, in this case by exploring the nonhuman society of cats (Alger and Alger, 1999). They found a subtle and complex social organisation, with normative structures framing ways of welcoming strangers, arranging sleeping places and companions, and a hierarchical order affecting access to privileged places within the cat colony (Alger and Alger, 1999). Sociological method can, as in this case, open up an understanding far removed from the biological reductionism of the veterinary and zoological fields. That is not to suggest that insight into phenomenon such as mating practices and influences of hormones on behaviour is not fascinating and useful, but

rather than to conceive of animals only in this narrow reductive view, closes down vast avenues of thought and exploration. Above all it overlooks, if not outright contradicts a crucial principle, that of 'social primacy' (Goffman, 1974). Human society is not played out against a backdrop of the natural world, as if a curtain of nature frames a stage upon which only people act and have significance. Animals, in their understanding and being, are moulded by society, even as we are.

Alger and Alger (1997) advocate a move away from language as the backbone of interactionism, to a greater embrace of interaction rituals as the basis for understanding inter-species relations, which, though to my knowledge they do not cite him, is a move firmly in the direction of Goffman (1974). Goffman was born in the ethnographic tradition and based his earlier work, particularly his PhD, upon ethnographic methods. Alger and Alger's *Cat Culture, Human Culture: An Ethnographic Study of a Cat Shelter* (1999) is an innovative piece of work. Alger and Alger apply the ethnographic method to focus on both animal-human interaction and animal-animal interaction to explore the nonhuman society of cats. Far removed from an understanding born of a biologically inspired view of aggression and territorial behaviour, they chart the "highly complex social structure" shaping a small artificially created colony of cats (Alger and Alger, 1999: unlisted pages). There is a sense upon reading this work of standing at the edges of the tiny shore of our understanding as the Algers begin to chart the norms of a whole new society. In the spirit of Sociology it appears that the deepest mysteries may have been sleeping quietly beside us, beneath a blanket of our taken for granted assumptions, all along.

This raises the question, do nonhumans have to manifest their own society in order for them to be appropriate subjects of sociological study? Whilst work has been done to substantiate the existence of communities amongst cats (Alger and Alger 1999) and estuary crabs (Lee 1997), which is valid in its own right, such justification is unnecessary. We do not require nonhumans to form societies to prove themselves worthy of sociological analysis, the focus of societal construction need not be moved out with the realm of humanity for them to be embraced in our understanding.

In a constructivist approach human agents are the constructors of social reality (Gergen, 1999) and nonhumans can be understood as entities which carry the weight of human originated meaning. It is through their contact with humanity, rather than any society that they may or may not have of themselves, that nonhumans are constituted; they are the bearers of our meaning. From the beauty perceived in the curve of a swan's neck to the courage in the eyes of the lion; these are projections of meaning. The swan and the lion need be neither beautiful nor courageous in themselves, they simply are; it is through their interaction with us that they become the carriers of our meaning, the very mirror of our society.

At the point of contact between human and nonhuman society, nonhumans cease to be pure entities of undifferentiated existence and become 'sentient commodities'. The term sentient commodities is drawn from Wilkie's exploration of the paradoxical relationship between domesticated livestock and their keepers (2005): however, this term could be extended to encompass not only nonhumans being kept and killed for food, but any nonhuman constituted by virtue of its contact with humanity. From the moment of our first awareness and interaction with them nonhumans cease to be beings unto themselves and become objects of veneration or utilisation for consumption or pleasure in human society; they become commodified. Moreover, the rules which govern the form and extent of an animal's commodification do not necessarily originate from an animal's innate attributes, the presumed loveability of the Chihuahua or repulsion of the rat are meaningful constructions that originate within human society.

A feature of Wilkie's (2005) work is the attention given to ambiguity in our interactions with sentient commodities; the tensions of conflicting discourses becoming apparent. In short where a sentient is utilised for food (which can be interpreted as a functionalist approach to their commodification) emotive distance is maintained least an affectional connection be formed with the sentient commodity. Affectional connections being born of the discourse which perceives humans as carers, rather than utilisers of nonhumans, creating irresolvable tensions expressed as ambiguity (Wilkie, 2005). This can be seen

in the disparity between the required indifference to nonhuman death of the slaughter house employee and the abject grief of the hobby farmer on the death of a pig. These tensions are frequently embodied in the same human being. In an act reminiscent of Goffman's² observation regarding staff in his *Asylums*, who "fall prey to the danger that an inmate may appear to be human" (1968a:79), a livestock worker may develop an attachment to an animal, which is problematic for their professional persona.

Any animal, however, that deviates from the routine process of production can stand out from the herd, become individually recognised, have more meaning to the worker, and thus become more than 'just an animal'.
(Wilkie, 2005:213)

Understanding nonhumans as sentient commodities, whilst useful, does have limitations, it seems unsatisfactory as an explanation for the deep mythological and symbolic framing of animals which can be seen in diverse areas from art and religion to the toys of childhood (Kalof, 2007) and there is another very serious limitation. In that whilst this concept is helpful in providing a way to examine and consider our relationship to nonhumans, it lacks an appreciation for the potential agency of the nonhuman in our relationship with them. By limiting the awareness of their agency, we risk becoming blinded to evidence of it. This is also a limitation with regard to my own contention that we do not need to prove nonhumans have they own society, in order for them to be worthy of sociological analysis. Again, this focus, so strongly weighted towards the human perception, risks creating a conceptual view which will have difficulty recognising possible agency in the Other.

Recent archaeological debate has challenged the established idea that early humans domesticated canines in a single event at a single site (Lobell and Powell, 2010). It is being suggested that it may not be so clear cut, humans may not have simply gone forth and domesticated canines, the canines may have approached us. It is now suspected that domestication occurred at

² It is also interesting to note that Goffman included nonhumans, in this case dogs, in his all embracing dynamics of impression management in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959)

multiple sites around the globe, at multiple times, and that, “dogs descend from wolves that gathered near the camps of semi-sedentary hunter-gatherers, as well as around the first true settlements, to eat scraps. The process was probably driven by the animals themselves” (Lobell and Powell, 2010:pages unlisted). It may be that the first impulse, the original agency, that birthed the very first human-nonhuman alliance, was not initiated by our species at all, but came from the Other.

As Midgley points out, in the last few years the previously taken-for-granted behaviouristic scepticism towards animal agency has been steadily losing ground, in multiple fields, because simply “it is barren” (Midgley, 1998:136), and does not provide good explanations for animal motivation, intention or communication. Though not a social scientific conference, I attended the 2013 Scottish Conference on Animal Behaviour at Glasgow University, out of curiosity to see what some natural scientists were thinking. I was intrigued to hear of multiple studies, at the cutting edge of animal behaviour, that were now operating with an understanding of nonhumans as being capable of agency and of some form of sentience. It seems as if a flood gate has been breached and a new understanding of animal agency is being searched for, across diverse areas of study, which includes human and animal study itself emerging and becoming a new and growing field (Shapiro, 2008). With regard to my discipline, though the numbers are still modest, several sociologists have turned their attention to human and animal relations, including: Alger and Alger (1997), Arluke and Sanders (1996), Arluke and Solot (1997), Arluke (2006), Bryant (1979), Charles and Davies (2008), Convery et al. (2008), Flynn (2000), Franklin (1999), Irvine (2004), Peggs (2012), Sanders (1999), and Wilkie (2010). In the words of Wilkie, “contemporary sociology has clearly responded to the 'animal turn’” (Wilkie, 2013:pages unlisted).

To be human is not to be a discrete entity, dwelling in isolation, a being that only thinks itself into existence in a lonely Cartesian sense. Even our bodies are not discrete, but are covered and filled with microscopic life. The human genome, that grail of our science, is powerless to save us from our profound interweaving with other living things. Human genomes can only be found in around 10% of

the cells of a human body, the rest belongs to the genomes of the bacteria and fungi (Haraway, 2008). If to be human is to be set apart from other forms of life, and crowned as the only beings possessing sentience, then, in the words of Haraway, “we have never been human” (2008:1). To regard ourselves as separate, is to indulge in “the primary narcissism of the self-centred human subject, who tries to hold panic at bay by the fantasy of human exceptionalism” (Haraway, 2008:11).

Chapter 2 ~ Serious Illness, Self and Suffering

If to be human is to be a living and sentient being and part of multi-species society, what are the implications of this for an orientation towards nonhumans, are they to be understood as objects of human action or subjects within the social web? This question stands at the frontier of Sociology. In order to progress towards answering it, the first research question of this thesis will ask whether sociological insights concerning serious illness and suffering, which are experiences of a self, can be applied to nonhumans. To begin, one of the significant sociological insights regarding human illness, is that it can be conceived of as form of biographical disruption.

2.1. Biographical Disruption

The term biographical disruption is born of the interpretivist tradition of Sociology. Specifically, it emerges in the field of medical sociology and appears to have first been utilised as a conceptual tool by Michael Bury (1982), who credits its origins as being from both the Parsonian and interactionist traditions. However, I would argue that the focus on the agent and the lack of assumed legitimacy of the wider pre-existent power structures found in the Parsonian view, weights the concept as being more profoundly influenced by interactionist thought, even though Bury (1982) himself lists this influence second. The concept of biographical disruption is situated in an ontology that is opposed to the objectivism of the bio-medical model, born as it is of the reductionism of the clinical gaze (Foucault, 1973), expressing a constructivist, possibly even a subjectivist, understanding of the nature of reality and an interpretivist epistemology. It conceives that illness “especially chronic illness, is precisely that kind of experience where the structures of everyday life and the forms of knowledge which underpin them are disrupted” (Bury, 1982:169).

This re-conceptualisation of illness has immediate and profound implications, not least in enabling a “welcome shift from the outsider perspective epitomised in the Parsonian concept ...to an understanding of lay experiences” (Lawton, 2003:23). Biographical disruption also provides a conceptual basis for an extended appreciation of the suffering involved in chronic illness, in at least two ways. First

understanding illness as biographical disruption enables an appreciation of suffering in terms of that experienced in the inner world of the agent, as the “organisation of attributes that has become consistent over time” (Charmaz, 1983:170) is threatened with negative identification and isolation, in essence subjection to stigma in its overt form (Goffman, 1968b). Second by locating illness as a disruption in the social fabric, suffering by others in the immediate social network is embraced in this concept, such the difficulties experienced by parents caring for mentally ill young people (Harden, 2005), who found that the “invisibility of the condition was a double-edged sword” (Harden, 2005:363), in essence the problem of the covert management of stigma (Goffman, 1968b), particularly that of association (Harden, 2005). The world of the chronically ill is peppered with suffering, experienced both by the agent and, if the illness is declared, by those around them, as all must adapt to this new and limited existence, hostile to many of the previously taken for granted assumptions (Bury, 1982; Charmaz, 1983; Harden, 2005). I would argue that this evidences a deeply humane conceptualisation of the experience, far removed from the mechanistic reasoning that reduces the experience of the vital agents in their vast and intricate webs of meaningful interactions, to dysfunctioning of pieces of flesh.

In biographical disruption, rather than chronic illness being understood as the malfunctioning of bodily organs, it is appropriately situated as a disturbance in the social frame, calling into question the underpinning narratives on which the agent is constructed. This makes chronic illness a rich site for sociological enquiry, as it is at the point of contestation that underpinning structural forces, otherwise so taken for granted, may be more readily evident. As Goffman (1974) highlights, the point at which frames break, is a place where the normative expectations that shape meaning can be seen. Goffman also specifically pays attention to the body, in his words, “now it is apparent that the *human* body is one of those things that can disrupt the organisation of activity and break the frame, as when an individual appears in clothes that are unbuttoned or unsuitable” (Goffman, 1974:347, emphasis added). The body itself is a potential disrupter, perhaps particularly the leaking body, on the borders of human and animal (Haraway, 1991), or the malfunctioning body, where medicine and other disciplines carve out their power (Foucault, 1973).

Yet this potential to break the frame is not necessarily limited to the human body alone. The canine body, with its moulting, urinating, vomiting, flatulence and sexual mounting, can also disrupt normative expectations in a social encounter, particularly those norms associated with acceptable levels of cleanliness and propriety. If this should occur whilst the dog is in the charge of a human caretaker, and whilst in the presence of other humans, in the home or public space, the disruption is likely to result in remedial action being taken by the caretaking human:

Since the dog's misbehaviour disrupts the normal flow of public interaction and potentially diminishes the identity of the owner, people with dogs commonly take certain steps to get public interaction back 'on track.'
(Sanders, 1999:3)

However, whilst established sociological thought supports the idea that the experience of serious illness is a wider phenomenon than a physical wound, and that disruptions to the social framework, relations with others, and normative expectations of the self and lifecourse are implicated, there is a critical difficulty in applying this understanding beyond the human to the nonhuman. In that to experience such suffering, beyond the raw physicality of wounded flesh, to know the suffering of loneliness or loss of hope requires a self. Without a self, who is there to suffer? But whether canines have a self, and if they do what form it may take, is a highly contested question, to which this thesis must now address itself directly.

2.2. Animals as Objects

The interpretive tradition of which symbolic interactionism is born, can trace its genesis to Dilthey's observation that the social sciences require a different methodology to the natural sciences, and through Simmel's epistemology of Sociology (which is opposed to Durkheimian thought). It also flows through Weber's emphasis on the meaningful constructions of value-orientation, and touches the influence of Freud (Delanty and Strydom, 2003), which Elias "fused" so elegantly "with comprehensive historical research", to illuminate how the expression of self arises from the ambiguities of societal pressures (Bauman,

1990:24). Ultimately this interpretative tradition birthed symbolic interactionism in the work of George Herbert Mead.

For Mead, who we are, our 'selves', is not an attribute that we are born with, but one acquired over time through interaction with others.

(Bauman, 1990:24)

Like Vygotsky's children (1986) this prismatic self colours to the light of the world around it, in a prism of the idiographic 'I', the socialised 'Me' and the generalised 'Other'. Here can be seen the strength of symbolic interactionism in its observation that ourselves; even to the deepest, darkest most hidden private recess of our inner being, that platform from which we observe and interact with the world; is formed and moulded by social forces. However, Mead denied the possibility of selfhood, and subjectivity, to nonhumans, a position which both Irvine (2004a and 2004b) and Sanders (1999) have observed and challenged.

Whether animals are in essence subjects with emotions and personality, or objects, is a contentious issue. Not least because the category to which animals are assigned affects how they may legitimately be treated by humans, whether that is as valued companions or as objects of consumption. Biologist Mike Bekoff, gives a good example of the difficulties inherent in this debate in his essay *Animal Emotions and Animal Sentience and Why They Matter: Blending 'Science Sense' with Common Sense, Compassion and Heart* (2006). Bekoff (2006) argues passionately for a consideration of animal emotion to be brought into his discipline, which tends to view animals as objects. Arguably due to a need to understand them this way, given their use as experimental matter within that discipline. However, the debate appears to have a flaw in its foundation, on both the side of those who attribute innate subjectivity to animals and those who do not. With regard to the stance of viewing animals as objects, Arluke and Solot (1997) observed, in their study of novice practitioners in biological and physical science communities, that how to be with and understand animals for dissection is a role. It is a role that is learnt in a social context, with its own expectations, rewards for appropriate behaviour, penalties for deviance, and rites of passage (Arluke and Solot, 1997).

To return to Goffman (1968b), if it is recalled that subjectivity is a social accomplishment, born of social processes, the argument as to whether animals do, or do not, inherently possess subjectivity is null and void. No being does, for all beings, indeed in an animist society even the rocks and stones, are either subjects or objects dependent, not upon inherent nature, but the values that the specific society ascribes to them. Even in the extreme objectification of animals as experimental 'subjects', or rather experimental matter, things are not as clear cut, and objective, as they may appear to be (Arluke and Sanders, 1996).

Wilkie's (2005) work provides a particularly helpful analysis of the nature of animal-human relations in the productive process. In her words "for millennia domesticated animals have been, and continue to be, an unparalleled human resource. They have been the foundation upon which personal, national and global institutional livelihoods have been built" (Wilkie, 2005:213). She points out, that how people relate to animals "cannot be isolated from the cultural and socio-economic contexts in which they encounter them" (Wilkie, 2005:213). So, for example, to the Nuer, the cattle on whose lives their society depends, are noble spiritual beings born of ancestral cattle spirits, to whom they sing songs and write poetry (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). Whereas in the capitalistic society of contemporary Britain, livestock can be conceptualised quite differently.

Livestock in the capitalist production process are understood as creatures without subjectivity, Wilkie proposes that the animal in this productive process can be understood as a "sentient commodity" (2005:213). Further, Wilkie (2005) highlights that the subjectification of the sentient commodity, that is the animal, is resisted in this form of productive process, it being problematic for the keepers and abattoir workers to relate to the commodified animal as a subject. In the extreme of objectification we can see the use of live animals in certain forms of scientific experimentation, where they are regarded as full blown objects.

In this case the animal is understood, not as a sentient commodity, but as experimental matter, without subjectivity, lacking personality, emotion and sentience (Arluke, 2006). The crucial issue here is that animals are designed in their very being, not according to any innate nature, but rather according to the

specific set of social relations between humans and animals in the culture and the sub-cultures in which they are embedded. This objectification may be particularly acute in areas where science can now design high numbers of identical creatures, such as zebra fish, specifically for experimentation. If a creature is engineered in its biology to be genetically identical to a thousand of its fellows, where are the “cracks” that Goffman (1968a:280) talks about, those small areas of differentiation and ambiguity wherein identity dwells?

2.3. *Animals as Subjects*

The subjectivity of animals, or lack thereof, is not dependent upon their innate nature, but rather relies upon the set of social relations in which they are embedded. Humans are endowed with thought, and are defined as thinking beings, whilst animals are regulated to the other side of the cosmological divide, and are assumed to lack the highly valued traits of consciousness and self-concept.

It is only in human society – only within the peculiarly complex context of social relations and interactions which the human central nervous system makes physiologically possible – that minds arise or can arise, and thus also human beings are evidently the only biological organisms which are or can be self-conscious or possessed of selves (Mead, 1934:235)

In short, according to Mead (1934), only humans possess agency, and therefore animals cannot in this understanding, be regarded as actors within the social web. With regard to dogs specifically, Mead (1934) is explicit that they have no personality, and that humans falsely attribute it to them. There seems to be a tension in Mead’s thought here, given his insistence that human selfhood is not pre-existent, but rather arises from interaction, “the self is not something that exists first and then enters into relationship with others, but it is, so to speak, an eddy in the social current and so is still part of the current” (Mead, 1934:182). If a human selfhood can arise from interaction, is it so unthinkable that a nonhuman self could?

The agent is a nexus of meaning, a locus of transformation even, of the potent structuring forces abroad in the world. The identity of the agent is the result of a form of categorisation of persons, rather than the expression of any attribute that may or may not be essential to the person. In Goffman's words;

Society establishes the means of categorising persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories. (Goffman, 1968b:11)

Our identity is bestowed upon us by the society around us and by the person's with whom we interact. Selfhood and sentience, rather than being innate, can be understood as something that is 'done', as Sanders suggests:

I would propose an expanded view of mind that, like personhood, we can best understand as arising out of social interaction. In essence, I maintain that people 'do mind' as a cooperative interpretive process that does not depend on the ability of all parties to express their thoughts linguistically. (Sanders, 2003:407)

If selfhood is an emergent phenomenon, and an activity, that occurs within a social context, then this leaves the question that if selfhood can emerge for a nonhuman what form might it take, and what would be the possibilities for a nonhuman self?

2.4. Possibilities for a Nonhuman Self

Currently there appears to be only one working model of the prerequisites for animal selfhood within the discipline. This model is theoretical and, according to correspondence with its designer Irvine (Autumn, 2009), its first application to an empirical study subsequent to its development, was during the course of my Masters *Ageing in Companion Animal Ownership*. To develop this model, Irvine (2004a) had to overcome Mead's (1934) insistence on language as a condition of selfhood. "For Mead, having a self requires the ability to talk about having one" (Irvine 2003:46). Building on the work of Sanders (1999), and on the work of the Algiers (1997 and 1999), Irvine's (2004a) empirical study of an animal shelter takes things a stage further, by outlining a model of the aspects required for animal selfhood, without reliance on language.

Once we understand, as Mead (1934) identifies, that the self emerges from interaction, and, going beyond Mead, that the self is only partly dependent on language (Alger and Alger, 1997; Goffman 1959), it is possible to theorise an emergent nonhuman self. Subjectivity is a prerequisite for selfhood, in that to relate to the Other, there needs to be an assumption of subjectivity, for there to be another 'I' to relate to. There needs to be a reflection in the Other against which we can mirror our feelings and beliefs, as in Lacan's (1989) imaginary order and Kristeva's (1989) semiotic. In Irvine's (2004a:8) words "interaction must seem to have a source, and we must see the Other as having a mind, beliefs, and desires, just as we do". Irvine (2004a; 2004b) has adapted William James' (1890) model of selfhood and proposes that, theoretically, a self consists of four features: agency, coherence, affectivity and self-history. Crucially Irvine locates emergent selfhood, as Kristeva (1989) does, at a preverbal stage. Therefore whilst Mead (1934) requires language for there to be a self, Irvine's (2004a; 2004b) selfhood is emergent before language, with the acquisition of language then being a way through which a self is elaborated and presented. Animal and human thus share the machinery of selfhood, which is then developed and expressed in different ways. The four features of a possible nonhuman selfhood are:

1. Agency – "meaning that you are the author of your actions and movements and not the author of the actions and movements of others" (Irvine, 2004a:9). This is more than instinct, it is not just having a desire, but also being aware that the desire is your own, and then expressing this awareness of subjectivity in action, or the lack of action. Behaviour intended to impact the action of others, such as the pet cat manipulating or tricking their owner into getting a treat (Desougi, 2008), would be an everyday example of agency.
2. Coherence – "provides the boundaries of the self" (Irvine, 2004a:11). To function in the world effectively it is necessary to be a coherent self, which is a discrete limited self, rather than a diffuse one. Coherence gives the

self “a place to live” (Irvine, 2004b:133). A companion animal responding to their name is a simple, but effective, display of coherence.

3. Affectivity – the capacity for emotion. In an evolutionary framework the ability to signal and interpret emotional cues enhances an animal’s survival, by helping them avoid anger or hunt out pain (Irvine, 2004a; 2004b). In an everyday context this can be seen in a dog’s guilty slinking off the forbidden couch, to avoid the wrath of their owner (Desougi, 2009). Irvine would also include more complex emotion and emotional states, such as grief, and “ways of feeling” (2004a:13). Examples of ways of feeling would be the mellow dog or the hyper cat, and describes more complex emotional patterning, which relates to character traits.
4. Self-history – the continuity that “makes interactions into relationships” (Irvine, 2004a:14). In self-history events, objects and others are given meaning and related to on the basis of those meanings. To have self-history it is necessary for there to be recall, a dog needs to remember the painful injection at the vet, for them to dislike going there next time, without the memory and meaning there would be no resistance. This “memory required for self-history is preverbal, and several aspects of it appear in animals” (Irvine, 2004a:14).

This is a useful theoretical model, and it gives purchase when wrestling with the thorny issue of the possibilities for nonhuman personhood. However, there is a taken for granted premise operating in Irvine’s (2004) work, and for that matter in the work of Sanders (1999), that is they both assume that to be accorded selfhood is a good thing. This is an assumption that seems to be widespread in their work, and it is one that needs to be questioned.

2.5. Consequences of Having a Self: Accountability and Anguish

On 2 December 2013 a lawsuit was filed in the New York State courts asking them to grant personhood to a 26 year old chimpanzee (Gorman, 2013). A section of animal advocacy voices are increasingly calling for personhood status to be granted to nonhumans. The Nonhumans Rights Project, which brought the

American action, claim that they are “the only organization working toward actual LEGAL rights for members of species other than our own” (Nonhuman Rights Project, 2014;unlisted pages, emphasis in the original). This is not actually the case, there are several animal advocacy and animal welfare organizations working to improve the rights of nonhumans under the laws of their country, which are not seeking the legal status of personhood for nonhumans. For example the *Dutch Party for The Animals*, that has had two ministers elected to their House of Representatives, and which petition for improved animal welfare under Dutch Law. Also the *Animal Justice Party* in Australia, which advocates that nonhumans should be granted improved rights, and not seen as just property under the law, but have their sentience acknowledged by way of a new form of legal status, that is yet to be established.

In the voices calling for nonhumans to be recognized as persons, the ascription, or recognition, of selfhood, appears to be unquestionably regarded as a good thing. This appears a naive position, nonhumans have their own being and needs according to their specific form of life and living; what is good for us, may not necessarily be good for them, and to operate on the assumption that their needs are the same as ours, could itself lead to forms of harm. As Peggs points out, “the attribution of sentience depends on human definitions and conceptualizations, which makes the dependence on sentience human-centered and problematic” (Peggs, 2012:137).

Moreover, to be regarded as a self is not a purely positive condition, there are problematic implications to being a person, whose consideration seems to be absent from the advocates’ view. It appears to have been overlooked that, at least in Britain and areas of Europe, animals have previously been understood, and accorded, as having a rudimentary personhood. A recent documentary on BBC2, ‘Inside the Animal Mind’, claims that animals are only now, for the first time, being understood as minded (Inside the Animal Mind, 2014). This is simply not the case, as attested by the detailed works of Victorians such as William Lauder Lindsay, who proposed that animals were not only minded, by subject to the same mental illnesses as humans (Lauder Lindsay, 1880).

Animals have previously been understood as persons, and with personhood can come accountability for your conduct, and the potential for social and moral deviance. As Lauder Lindsay observes, “certain animals commit crimes or criminal acts, offences against man’s [sic] laws or their own, and these *crimes* are of the same nature as those committed by man [sic] and occur under the same kind of circumstances, as the result of the same sort of motives” (Lauder Lindsay, 1880:149, emphasis in the original). To have a self is to be accountable for your actions and potentially the consequences of them.

In medieval Europe animals were placed on trial for crimes, with the same legal procedures as humans, including defence, and the same range of punishments, from execution to excommunication (Kalof, 2007). As in the case of the pig who was burned in 1266 for eating a child (Mason, 1988), or the grasshoppers who were banned from southern Tyrol, after trial by jury (Dinzelbacher, 2002). From the thirteenth to the twentieth century, animal trials were held across Europe, and as Dinzelbacher points out, “these were serious proceedings, carried out by professional lawyers – not by archaic-minded and superstitious peasants – sanctioned by bishops, and often discussed by university professors” (Dinzelbacher, 2002:406). In cases of bestiality, the animal, having its own being, may be regarded as consenting, and may be put to death with the human sexual partner, as in 1546 in Paris, when a man and a cow were hanged, and then burned by order of Parliament. Alternatively the nonhuman may be regarded as not consenting, as in the case of the female donkey in 1750, who, whilst the human sexual partner was convicted of bestiality and put to death, was acquitted on the grounds of having been raped (Mason, 1988). To be possessed of selfhood is a double edged sword. If you have a self and sentience you may be held accountable for your actions or even responsible under the law.

There is another consequence of having a self, that is that if you have selfhood, not only can you be held as accountable for your actions, but you may also understand anguish and pain, beyond that that an object or a machine can know. The legacy of Descartes has haunted our understanding of animals, as “bounded by creationist dogma and entranced by the recent development of reliable clock

mechanisms, he regarded animals as mindless machines” (Sanders, 1999:114), encouraging his own students to kick dogs, in order to hear the workings of the machine (Sanders, 1999). Yet the world is not filled with clockwork cats and dogs, over which humans are exalted as the sole subjects capable of suffering. Rather, as Darwin’s evolutionary continuity reminds us, we dwell with other forms of life and sentience, each straining towards life, and away from death and pain. The shadow of Descartes also fell over the thought of Mead (1934), who explicitly broke with Darwin, arguing against the continuity of both emotion and consciousness between humanity and other forms of animal life. Mead challenged Darwin’s assumption that the gestures of animals are expressive of inner emotional states, to Mead “this is a false approach, it is quite impossible to assume that animals do undertake to express their emotions” (1934:16).

The Algers, in sympathy with Sanders (1999), concluded that in this regard Mead “is labouring under the Cartesian model that has been largely discredited by more recent research into animal behaviour” (Alger and Alger 1997:66). They highlight that the undermining of the Cartesian model has come on two fronts, that of the “tradition of sentimental anthropomorphism” (Jasper and Nelkin, 1992, as cited by Alger and Alger 1997:66) and shifts in animal behaviourist research, I would suggest particularly the debates around animal emotion and sentience. To the biologist Bekoff (2006) the existence of animal pain, be it different or similar to human pain, challenges the assumptions of anthropocentric science, which can construct animals as objects, “data or supplies” (Arluke and Solot, 1997:29) to be used, Bekoff (2006:31) challenges science to:

Dare to look into the sunken eyes of animals who are afraid or feeling other sorts of pain, and then try to deny to yourself and to others that these individuals aren’t feeling anything.

I would suggest that part of the difficulty with animal pain is that, as the Scottish medical doctor and pain researcher, Dr Alexander Mennie¹ observed:

... pain is an entirely subjective experience which has never been satisfactorily defined. It is what the patient says 'hurts' or is 'sore'. One thing is certain however, our perception of pain depends on the intactness of our nervous system. (1974:49, emphasis in the original)

In this observation Mennie (1974) identifies three key aspects of pain: its subjectivity, a communicative imperative associated with pain, and its embodied nature. Two of these three aspects of pain are problematised in the case of companion canines. First, being a subjective experience, to know pain requires that a being has a subjectivity in order to appreciate it, this is contested in the case of canines, whose selfhood is open to question. Second, there is an important signalling, or communicative imperative entangled with pain. "Both in order to understand the pain and to do something about it, it becomes necessary intentionally to communicate pain" (Hydén and Peolsson, 2002:326). This communicative imperative is particularly pertinent today, given the widespread influence of the biomedical model, which regards pain as a negative phenomenon, and seeks to understand a pain, in order to diagnose and treat it. Whereas alternative models, such as a religious one, may regard pain differently (Bendelow and Williams, 1995), in a religious framework pain can be either a private misfortune to be endured or a beneficial gift bestowed for the training of character (Lewis, 1940). This communicative imperative to pain is also problematised in the case of canines, who, whilst they may yelp, moan or growl, cannot describe their pain to the veterinarian or owner in human language.

Pain has a complex relationship to language, in terms of human pain, the "pain experience both shatters and resists ordinary language: the words we use in everyday circumstances do not allow for the communication of the pain experience" (Hydén and Peolsson, 2002:326). Hydén and Peolsson (2002) argue, therefore, that bodily gestures and non-linguistic forms of communication take on a special significance in the context of pain, and they analyse the pointing, iconic and symbolic functions of gesture in pain communication. It may be worth considering whether a companion canine's inability to express pain in human language could, rather than estrange us further from an understanding of canine pain, be a context in which human and canine may share a language of gestures, as we both point to the area of discomfort and shelter the sore hand or

paw. Beyond this, given that Irvine (2004) and Kristeva (1989) theorise that consciousness has its roots before language develops, could it be possible that “the pain experience, which in a certain sense is a pre-linguistic cry or shriek” (Scarry, 1985 cited in, Hydén and Peolsson, 2002:326), is evidence of a pre-linguistic phenomenon that humans and canines share.

Research by Bendelow (1993) found that physical pain tends to be the first form of pain considered when the issue is initially queried. As Bendelow points out, the narrowing of the understanding of pain, this time not just to a single species, but also to a singular form, that is the physical, is also a legacy of Descartes and:

There is a need to broaden out the definition of pain from the Cartesian proposition which inevitably acts to divorce mental from physical states and tends to attribute single symptoms to single causes. The notion of pain having a substantial emotional component, literally the obverse of pleasure, is in fact a much older conceptualisation than that of pain being a physiological sensation. (Bendelow, 1993:275)

Bendelow (1993), as well as Wolpert (1999), found that non-physical forms of pain tend to be the ones given the status of a person’s greatest anguish, when the issue of suffering is further explored. There are forms of suffering beyond the physical, and they are not necessarily the less painful for being so. Loneliness can represent a profound form of suffering (Elias, 1985), particularly for a social species, and loss of self, and isolation can also be painful to those who are ill or dying (Charmz, 1983).

Loss of self and a disruption of biography during chronic illness are understood within Sociology to be forms of human suffering (Charmaz, 1983; Bury 1982). These forms of suffering are problematised in the case of nonhumans, whose selfhood is questioned. There are possibilities for theorising a nonhuman selfhood within Sociology, but they are in their infancy and lack empirical support. Combined with this to have selfhood is not a purely positive position, there are potentially difficult consequences to promoting the selfhood of nonhumans. The second research question of this thesis takes the concern with self and suffering a stage further, by investigating the meanings surrounding death and dying.

Chapter 3 ~ Dying and Meaning

3.1. *Death*

The second research question seeks to reveal some of the meanings surrounding death and dying. At its heart death is a mystery. In a world where “the most elementary and obvious form of success is to remain alive” (Bauman, 1992:33), all are destined for failure. Being a mysterious phenomenon death is shrouded with many myths, of particular interest here is the illusion that we know death and the myth that it is the great equaliser.

A powerful aspect of sociological wisdom is its insistence that ‘all is not as it seems’, and this is particularly the case with regard to the knowledge of death. It can be a taken for granted assumption in everyday life in Scotland that we know what death is, that death is an obvious cessation of biological life. But matters are not so straightforward. In the current knowledge hegemony, science, and in particular medical knowledge, occupies a dominant position (Foucault, 1973). Medical experts are in a position of authority to declare a state of death, and determine its authenticity. Yet the definitions of death, upon which this medical expertise is founded, “are shifting and mutable definitions”, that are not purely clinical (Haddow, 2005: 95). The category of brain stem death for example, a diagnosis of which will permit a human’s organs to be harvested for the use of others, is a socially constructed definition that “did not produce a more ‘accurate’ description of death so much as mark new delineations between the living and the dead” (Giacomini, 1997:1478). The ‘living’ appearance of the dead, in brain stem death, can be particularly problematic for the families of the bereaved (Haddow, 2005). Their loved one breathes, is warm to the touch and has the appearance of merely sleeping. Brain stem death appears to constitute a state of death, a cessation of thought and personhood, whilst the living processes of embodiment, such as heartbeat, breathing, consuming and excreting, remain.

More extremely, and controversially, serious illness in which a human personhood is considered to be annihilated, can also be regarded as a form of death, the loss of identity being treated as a kind of death in life. Those whose

thinking is impaired, as in the case of dementia, have been suggested to be 'socially dead', that it categorised and related to "as good as dead" (Sweeting and Gilhooly, 1997:93). Sweeting and Gilhooly (1997) conducted a study whose aim was to determine, according to percentage how socially dead or alive dementia sufferers were. Sweeting and Gilhooly's application of the concept of 'social death' is evocative, however, I have a disquiet. The idea of 'social death' was originally proposed by Goffman (1968a), when investigating people in an institutional setting whose subjectivity is denied, but Goffman (1968a) maintained an emphasis on the presence and effect of agency, though under pressure and limited. Sweeting and Gilhooly are very quick to deny the possibility of personhood in nonhumans:

It is personhood which makes human life more valuable than that of animals, fish or plants (Harris, 1985) ..., self and other awareness is bound up with language: there are certain human significances (e.g. shame, indignation) which can only be held by an animal with language.
(Sweeting and Gilhooly, 1997:97).

It is arguable that just as they have been so quick to limit nonhuman personhood, Sweeting and Gilhooly are also too quick to assume that sufferers of dementia are socially dead to the extent that they claim. Sweeting and Gilhooly's (1997) expansion of the idea of being socially dead, runs contrary to the spirit of Goffman's original argument, and it seems unbecoming to base an understanding which radically limits agency, upon the insights of a theorist who championed it.

As Bauman and May (1990) so powerfully point out, even in cases of the most extreme limitations of agency, such as the numb, zombie like existence of slaves in a concentration camp, agency, however minimal, remains. This is potent gem of sociological wisdom, and it seems that in emphasising their idea of social death, Sweeting and Gilhooly (1997) may have strayed too far from a perspective which gives a place to agency. In being too quick to deny agency, they are at risk of being unable to perceive the subtle, perhaps non-linguistic, forms of agency expressed in the lives of dementia sufferers. It is perhaps interesting to note that the psychiatrist, Scott Peck, speaks of this very danger in his popular work, *The Road Less Travelled and Beyond* (1997). In that he found himself,

when working in a home for older people, at first too quick to assume a lack of agency and awareness, due to what he refers to, on his part, as simplistic thinking. Later he began, slowly, to become aware of pervasive and subtle forms of interaction among his patients, but this only became evident with time, attention, and a mediation of his approach (Peck, 1997).

This is reminiscent of the transformation of our understanding of agency in the African grey parrot. Until the late 1970s, early 1980s, it was largely assumed that African Grey parrots had limited agency and could only mimic. However, when Dr Pepperberg spent two decades studying a particular individual, Alex, a wealth of subtle, and meaningful, agency gradually became clear (Pepperberg, 1998). This included the acquisition, and apparent understanding, of aspects of human language, and the ability to count (Pepperberg, 1998). Rapid assumptions concerning, and especially the dismissal of, agency are intellectually dangerous, as they can render the observer blind to subtle, or perhaps unexpected, expressions of agency. It is far safer, as Collins (1992) suggests, to hold that agency is likely to be present, even if it is under adverse conditions, and with little or limited expression. Finally, in a matter of taste, it seems crude to categorise, or assume that you can, a living being as 60% socially dead, as Sweeting and Gilhooy (1997) attempt to do. What about the reclusive and despondent, are they 40% socially dead? If someone has a headache and does not want to interact with their colleagues are they then 10% socially dead? In this misapplication the helpful concept of social death rapidly becomes farcical, and is diluted to the point of uselessness.

3.2. *The 'Good Death'*

In terms of a medicalised understanding, and increasingly a related lay view, an understanding of death is shaped by the concept of the 'good death', particularly Kubler-Ross's (1989) five stage model of dying. Indeed these concepts are becoming so dominant that when Borgstrom, Barclay and Cohn, investigated how contemporary medical students framed their experience of dying patients, they found that the students "*invariably* draw on the notion of the 'good death'" (Borgstrom, Barclay and Cohn, 2013:391, emphasis given). The 'good death' is the aware and openly acknowledged death. Bhatnagar and Joshi

(2012), in the *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine*, give a telling record of a 'good death', in an effort to persuade their fellow medics to adopt their approach to patient care. In this case a female patient, who had previously suffered three months of anguish, becomes peaceful, and her family are calmed, by the "honest, compassionate information sharing" (Bhatnagar and Joshi, 2012:626), of the doctors with the family. The open approach apparently leads the patient to a state in which she never cried, and where her family were prepared for death and "extremely grateful and peaceful" (Bhatnagar and Joshi, 2012:627). The doctors are the heroes of this 'good death', in the words of the dying woman "Doctors, I have not seen angels but you are my angels, ...by your honest information, I understand that I have few days remaining but I am not afraid" (Bhatnagar and Joshi, 2012:626). It is worth noting the doctors' comment that the acceptance by, perhaps even docility of, the patient and family meant that the "relatives were prepared for death, so this bereavement visit was not difficult for us" (Bhatnagar and Joshi, 2012:627). This seems reminiscent of the 'good patient', who does not inconvenience the medical staff.

To reach this state of aware acceptance that Kubler-Ross advocates (1970), it is considered necessary for a person to go through, and experience, various psychological stages, or responses, to the knowledge that they are dying. According to Kubler-Ross's model of the five stages of dying, these stages are: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and finally acceptance (Kubler-Ross, 1970). There is a psychological, rather than a sociological, emphasis with this model, and it seems to be influenced by a powerful cultural trend extolling the virtues of the psych disciplines and the therapeutic model of counselling, which exalts openness and vulnerability, over stoicism and dealing with matters within a private personal space (Furedi, 2004). I have a disquiet with Kubler-Ross' model for four reasons, being:

- i. a privileging of awareness,
- ii. the pathologising of deviant experience,
- iii. an overshadowing of other, possibly more useful, models,
- iv. and a bizarre and intellectually alienating element in her writings. With regard to her mystical experiences of meeting deceased people, having

conversations with them and being instructed by them to continue her work (Kubler-Ross, 1991).

There is process emphasis in Kubler-Ross's classic work, *On Death and Dying* (1970); one that it is considered that a dying person must go through, "a natural progress, a process indeed" (Kubler-Ross, 1970;103), in order for them to arrive at the optimal state for experiencing death, that is acceptance (Kubler-Ross, 1970). This is the acceptance that death "is not such a frightening, horrible thing" (Kubler-Ross, 1970;101), in short not something to be resisted. Those who resist the process of dying according to the model are problematised, "there are a few patients who fight to the end, who struggle and keep a hope that makes it almost impossible to reach this stage of acceptance" (Kubler-Ross, 1970:101). Acceptance and openness, rather than resistance or keeping the experience private, is held up as the noble and courageous condition.

There is an assumption that dialogue and open awareness between the dying, their loved ones, and medical carers is the ideal, and this can lead to a 'moral imperative' to manifest a heroically aware death (Seale, 1995b:606). This imperative to be aware, expose and debate the feelings, vulnerabilities, and experience, may be linked to a wider cultural trend of extolling the therapeutic virtues of confession, the necessity of cleaning the emotions, which are increasing being regarded as damaging, especially if strong and held in (Furedi, 2004). A form of "emotional determinism" (Furedi, 2002:25) seems to be at work, feeding into the culture from the discourse of the psych disciplines, which promote a diminished human self, dependent on professional support to negotiate everyday life, or in this case death.

Further, there is a prescriptive element to Kubler-Ross's model, as "despite its inherent ambiguity, the concept swiftly provides normative expectations by which patient's behaviour could be understood" (Borgstrom, Barclay and Cohn, 2013:395). There is a danger with Kubler-Ross's five-stage model, that there may be a pathologisation of alternative experience. Those who do not wish to enter death with awareness, and are unable, or refuse, to progress through the stages as set out, can be rendered failed, deviant. Borgstrom, Barclay and Cohn

(2013) found that those patients who did not embrace the process and reach acceptance, were regarded by medical students as being in denial, and that “in this context denial is referred to as a disease-like object that the students feel they can, and should, diagnose and treat.” (Borgstrom, Barclay and Cohn, 2013:391).

Kubler-Ross does stress the importance of not assuming an absence of agency on the part of the dying, in particular she presents an instance where the family and nursing staff assumed a lack of agency in a dying patient, only to be amazed when Kubler-Ross stimulated responses (1989). While she can, quite justifiably, be criticised as casting herself and her students as the heroes in this, and other, narratives, the point remains that it is perilous to deny agency, and that to do so may blind one to its subtle manifestations. As “there is no clear-cut biological/social and death/existence division” (Haddow, 2005:109), it is better to err on the side of the indomitable nature of social action and reaction, and keep looking for agency, even within the most limited and restrictive of circumstances.

Death and dying are profoundly ambiguous phenomena. On the one hand a state of death can be declared, and personhood denied, whilst the body remains biologically alive. Yet at the other extreme the destruction, or total absence of a body, does not necessarily lead to a cessation of interactions or the end of personhood, “death does not mean the termination of the relationship with the previous embodied self” (Haddow, 2005:109). People maintain relationships with the dead, pray for them, leave offerings and encounter and interact with their ghosts (Hepworth, 2000). Death is not a purely biological event, but also a culturally constructed phenomenon (Timmermans, 2005), co-existing with physical changes to the body, a phenomenon whose boundaries shift and mutate with the tides of social process.

Paradoxically the socially constructed nature of death seems to be particularly evident in the case of ‘natural death’ within intensive care units. A natural death is one regarded as not being executed at the hands of medical staff, but rather resulting from natural biological decline, rather than the abrupt removal of technological life support. Yet this death is anything but ‘natural’, intensive care

staff actively use drugs and technologies to mimic the gradual decline of a 'natural' death (Harvey, 1997), in order to "obliterate the impression that that staff 'killed' the patient" (Timmermans, 2005:998). Natural death is intensively socially constructed and constitutes a managed performance. Yet it remains a performance enacted by way of a physical body localised in space, a body through which life and liveliness is expressed in the world.

3.3. *Creatureliness*

Humans share with their canine companions a common creatureliness. Humans and canines have, at least in part, a shared experience of embodiment, of physicality, and of living and being in a world of air, water and mud (Haraway, 2008). We are, both of us, animals; formed of fur and flesh which moves, breathes, eats, excretes, pulses with life and then perishes, on earth. Becker describes humans as "a hyper-anxious animal", anxious, indeed terrified, because "reality and fear go together naturally" (1973:17). The reality of which he speaks is the imposing and terrible power of the natural order, and our nakedness before it. Becker (1973) emphasises that there is an irreconcilable tension between the terrifying nature of the natural world and our helplessness as a creature within it, which leads to fear. To be aware of this reality is to fear, and it is this awareness, leading to terror, which is closed off by the development of character and ameliorated by the structures of culture (Becker, 1973).

The world needs to be made manageable and by the time childhood is left we have "repressed our vision of the primary miraculousness of creation", and have closed off "raw experience" (Becker, 1973:50). Without this closing off of raw experience, and filtering by character and culture, we would be unable to function.

The great boon of repression is that it makes it possible to live decisively in an overwhelmingly miraculous and incomprehensible world, a world so full of beauty, majesty, and terror that if animals perceived it all they would be paralysed to act. (Becker, 1973:50).

In this sense some mental illness is a failure to sufficiently repress reality, causing levels of anxiety that inhibit normal functioning. For the human to perceive the world, or lack sufficient character filters against it, is to be insane, naked before reality, to be schizophrenic. Where all the world falls into you. "In the face of the terror of the world, the miracle of creation, the crushing power of reality, not even the tiger has secure and limitless power, much less the child" (Becker, 1973:54). Becker argues that animals do not feel this fear:

the knowledge of death is reflective and conceptual, and animals are spared it. They live and they disappear with the same thoughtlessness: a few minutes of fear, a few seconds of anguish, and it is over.
(Becker, 1973:27).

This is a deeply anthropocentric comment, and I do not find it persuasive. On 11 March 2011 I saw an interpretive dance entitled Humanimalia, choreographed, by Janis Claxton, of Edinburgh College of Art. It was a remarkable piece of work, she had studied the movement of primates and choreographed a dance in which the humans mimicked the way of moving of the nonhumans. One of the impressions that repeatedly struck me, was the fear, the hesitation, the checking of the environment and profound wariness expressed in the motion (Janis Claxton, 2011). This anxious guardedness I have witnessed myself when I have encountered wild foxes, deer, or other creatures. If, as Becker suggests (1973), wild animals do not fear except in the most superficial biological sense, why this profound wariness of the wild creature, especially the adults? They do not move fearlessly, with the confidence of a slumbering awareness, rather they tend to be acutely aware and alert for danger.

There is a risk with this idea of Becker's (1973), and for that matter Elias' (1985) and Mead's (1934), that only humans fear death, that it may feed into an egotistic understanding of humanity. It risks feeding into a form of human exceptionalism, or worship (Peggs, 2009), where humans are seen as automatically superior to other forms of life and sentience, rather than different in sense and way of being. Moreover, if animals do not understand death, how can they mourn? Barbara King, in her article in *Scientific American*, suggests that, "mounting evidence from

species as diverse as cats and dolphins indicates that humans are not the only species that grieves over the loss of loved ones” (King, 2013).

3.4. *Embodiment*

Death is a socially constructed event, or more accurately series of events, but it is a socially constructed event, which emerges in relation to profound physiological changes occurring to an embodied organism. There is an interplay between the meanings held by the actors (including the one who is dying), and changes occurring to the flesh of the dying actor. Becker, drawing on Norman Brown (1968), argued that "death is a complex symbol" (1973:19). That is the case, but it is a complex symbol that is lived out, performed, and experienced, by an embodied organism steeped in physicality. There is no death, where the body is not implicated, even in the case of 'brain death' where the body is presumed largely intact, and the ethereal, allegedly mental self, presumed gone (Haddow, 2005). It is the body's capacity to express and make vivid the intentions and responses of the agent that are compromised. On the other hand there is no death without meaningful agency, a rotting carrot cannot die, it simply succumbs to processes of decay. You cannot lose agency if you have never had it. Death is neither the cessation of the bodily processes of life, nor the loss of meaningful agency, but both, together. As Shilling argues, the body is a "multi-dimensional medium for the constitution of society" (Shilling, 2012:250), but is one given to us by evolution and is a living vehicle through, upon and within which societal phenomena are mediated.

In a naturalistic understanding the body is part of the natural world apart from the social, and those beings, such as women and animals, who are regarded as closer to the body, are seen as being moulded more by emotional and instinctual drives, than by reason and the civilising impulse, "women are often positioned as unable to transcend corporeality" (Harrington, 2005:235). From a patriarchal view "woman incarnates nature" (Beauvoir, 1949:265). Under a patriarchal gaze, there is a tendency to sentimentalise women and animals as both base and closer to the earth and earthiness (Peggs, 2012), and to see women as being more instinctual than reasoning, and as being shaped by the maternal urges and menstrual cycles of their bodies. The naturalistic body itself, is pure, untainted by

social forces and pre-social. Yet, there is no purely naturalistic body which exists, “as a pre-social, biological basis on which rest the superstructures of self-identity and society” (Shilling, 2013:45). Bodies do not live and breathe in isolation, separate and apart, in some hermetically sealed realm of organic, plant and animalian, existence removed from society. All life, at least as far as humans are capable of knowing it, exists within an overarching, and pervasive, social matrix (Gergen, 1999). While it may be tempting to think of a ‘natural’ order as being separate from a ‘social’ order, this clear division does not exist. There is no savannah where antelopes roam free and untainted by the vagaries of the social. Even the landmass is not beyond the influence of human society, whether directly by hunting and herding, or remotely, in terms of the effects of mass human occupation and resources management on weather patterns, pollution levels, and the varying degrees of human transit and disturbance.

Combined with this, from the vantage point of being human, the profound implications and effects on understanding of our own species being cannot be avoided. Since no human is capable of existing apart from the social, there is no human view untainted by it. Even the singular shipwrecked island dweller, was conceived, born and grew up within human society, and the long range sailor, if they go too far, and spend too long, outside the company of others, will face “soul-destroying loneliness”, psychological failure and death (Associated Global Transport Services, 2013:unlisted pages). We simply cannot survive as an organism without both a physical body and the body of society, and prolonged solitude or solitary confinement is incompatible with maintaining a sane, and coherent connection to reality (Guenther, 2011).

As a social creature it is possible for us to bond with other social animals, and relations with companion animals in particular can be emotionally intense (Walker, 1999), and profound intersubjective bonding may be involved. In light of this, the decision to terminate the life of a companion can be deeply disturbing, as usually a loving bond requires that we care for and preserve the life of the loved. Therefore it may be acutely difficult to maintain an image of being a good and loving person, both inter and intra psychically, whilst arranging the death of the loved. Painful contradictions may be involved in the decision to euthanize an

elderly or ailing canine companion, and complex justifications may come into play, in a telling phrase Sanders refers to this as 'killing with kindness' (1999:73). Of course painful contradictions are not necessarily felt by all companion animal owners, sometimes decisions to euthanize a companion are less complex, even arbitrary. For example, the decision to dispose of the family dog as he or she does not match the new furniture, or euthanizing the dog before a holiday, and then acquiring a new one on return, as this is more economical than paying for boarding fees (Sanders, 1999). In such cases the dilemmas and paradoxes may be felt more acutely by the veterinary staff, than the owners themselves (Sanders, 1999). All deaths, and the justification thereof, are not necessarily equal.

As Haddow points out, "the real scandal of being embodied, one which arguably is a governing feature of all our lives, is that our embodiment comes to an end" (Haddow, 2005:92); and in a common sense view death may be regarded as the great leveller. Yet, all deaths are not equal, and neither is the speed, or the manner, in which different embodied beings approach, or are taken to them. Though overall human mortality rates for all social groups in Britain have declined since the 1950s, the difference in mortality rates between geographical areas has increased (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1997). Those living in areas with the deepest poverty have the highest mortality rates, with more people living in areas of high relative mortality rates than at any time since the 1950s (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1997). One in twelve citizens live in an area where deaths occur at 15% above the expected level (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1997).

While macro structural forces of poverty and exclusion make dying an unequal experience, the myth of equality in death does not endure at the micro sociological level either. David Sudnow's chilling work *Dead on Arrival*, powerfully demonstrated a rationing of medical care for bodies assumed to be dead on arrival at hospital, based upon the perceived social usefulness of the person. In his words "there seems to be a rather strong relationship between the age, social background, and the perceived moral character of patients and the amount of effort that is made to attempt revival" (Sudnow, 1976:15). In light of changes in the law and medical process, which attempted to address such

inequalities by having compulsory procedures for medical staff to follow, Timmermans revisited Sudnow's findings and conducted a fresh study. His results were also unequivocal, the inequality had only not vanished, but had increased under the new measures, as "under the guise of lifesaving attempts, the staff perpetuated an insidious kind of social inequality" (Timmermans, 1998:454). Where young people or those known to the staff are given extensive and aggressive resuscitation, whilst those perceived as less worthy, with very old bodies or ones perceived as tainted by drug addiction, receive token ministrations, in a sinister form of moral stratification (Timmermans, 1998).

Death is a mysterious phenomenon, one that we are only beginning to know and understand. It is not a clear and fixed biological state, but a mutable category of being, whose boundaries shift and change with the tide of social action and reaction. Though it comes to all living things, death does not do so equally, with the wealthy being able to evade its clutches for longer, and the despised being ushered more speedily into its embrace. Death is not an event removed or immune from social processes, rather it is the place of their final and unequivocal inscription upon a living embodied being. Having explored death and dying, attention now turns to the issues of life and wellbeing, which form the third and final question of this thesis.

Chapter 4 ~ Wellbeing

4.1 *A Biomedical View*

In a biomedical understanding, which informs both the veterinary and, to a considerable extent, the psychological frameworks for understanding the loss and serious illness of a companion canine, the disruption and suffering associated with illness and loss have their foundation in the biochemical domain. In a biomedical understanding, anxiety and grief are associated with stress, which is understood to have a chemical foundation, and is considered to be amenable to measurement and quantification, by various methods, such as by the measurement of the levels of the hormone cortisol in the blood or saliva (Handlin, et al., 2012), or by the quantification of intrapsychic states, along a numerical scale (Wesley et al., 2009). In short in this view the impact on wellbeing is localised as an intrapsychic event, related to biochemical and physiological changes. In a biomedically informed framework, companion canine illness and death is seen as a psychological stressor which leads to physiological symptoms. It is the individual's internal response to the external event which is pivotal in this understanding. This response is subject to powerful discourses which shape the culturally acceptable level, duration and manifestation of human grief, and these discourses are highly medicalised. Deviation from these 'appropriate' levels and durations of grief, can be regarded as evidence of psychological abnormality and the failure of a normative grief process (Borgstrom, Barclay, and Cohn, 2013). I would suggest that the most influential of these normative maps of grief is Kubler-Ross' model (1970).

In 1989 Garrity et al. conducted one of the early quantitative statistical investigations into the relationship between companion animal ownership and human wellbeing from a biomedical perspective. They researched companion animal ownership and attachment as supportive factors in the health of 1,232 elderly Americans (Garrity et al., 1989). They concluded that:

In terms of the current knowledge regarding pet ownership and health, it appears that the elderly who are attached to their pets are likely to experience better morale than do those pet owners who are not attached. There is some evidence that ownership, regardless of attachment, is linked to enhanced emotional status. Evidence of beneficial effects on physical health for owners or attached owners is limited in the literature and not apparent in this study. Based on these data, we believe that pet factors may have only a physical health-protective role under special circumstances, such as in the absence of human confidants. (Garrity et al., 1989:41)

Garrity et al. (1989) are reserved in the claims they make regarding an association between biophysical factors and human and companion animal relations. Garrity et al. (1989) emphasise that the relationship between companion animals and human wellbeing is complicated, which, as Miltiades and Shearer (2011) point out, is far from an understatement, and was as much the case decades later, as it was in 1989.

In terms of the body, biomedically informed research suggests that people living with companion animals are less likely to develop heart disease (Anderson, Reid and Jennings, 1992), and in terms of psychosocial development, children who grow up in homes with animals tend to be more confident and sociable (Guttman et al., 1985). Yet this does not mean that having a companion animal is always beneficial, or that all kinds of companion animal affect human wellbeing in the same way. If a person is recovering from a heart attack they may get better, and get better faster, if they have a companion animal, but it makes a difference what kind of animal it is. Friedmann and Thomas' (1995) research suggests that owners may be nearly nine times more likely to be alive the first year after a heart attack if they have a companion canine, but not if they have a companion feline. Holding and stroking a companion animal may reduce heart rate (Baun et al., 1984), and it may lower the levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, in the blood (Beetz et al., 2012). In some studies companion canine ownership has also been associated with lower blood pressure, which is regarded as beneficial for cardiovascular health (Anderson, Reid and Jennings, 1992; Friedmann, Locker and Lockwood, 1993; Jennings et al., 1998). However, living with a companion animal may also aggravate an asthma attack or provoke allergies (Huang et al., 2013).

In a biomedical view companion animals may be regarded as contributing to human wellbeing by reducing heart rate and blood pressure, and buffering the physiological systems against the negative effects of environmental stress, as Friedmann, Locker and Lockwood observe, “the presence of animals has been associated with decreased physiological responses to stressors” (Friedmann, Locker and Lockwood, 1993:115). Such an understanding presents an important contribution to how we understand the human animal nexus. However, there is a risk that the subtle and complex web of interactions that form human and companion canine relations may be reduced to a limited and narrow understanding based predominately upon the biochemical domain. In short there is a risk that complex social processes may be falsely attributed to, rather than being seen as co-existent with, biochemical reactions.

An example of biological reductionism in seeking to understanding the human and companion canine bond, can be found in Handlin et al.’s (2012) recent research exploring correlations between the relationship of companion canines to their owners, and oxytocin and cortisol levels, measured in both the canines and the humans. Handlin et al. (2012) measured the oxytocin and cortisol levels in the humans and canines at a testing facility, by inserting a cannula into both participants and then permitting them three minutes of interaction. They also had the owner complete a Monash Dog Owner Relationship Scale survey, which numerically rates the owner and canine across 28 items scaled 1 to 5. All the owners were female aged 35-70 and all the canines were Labrador Retrievers. Handlin et al. (2012) concluded that interacting with the dog was related to oxytocin release in humans, the more hugging and kissing of the dog the more oxytocin in the canines and the humans, also there was less cortisol (which is lowered by oxytocin in any case). They found some correlation between human and canine in oxytocin levels, but could not find a significant correlation for cortisol (Handlin et al., 2012). Findings such as these are interesting, particularly from a physiological stance, but it is far too simplistic to assume that the complexities of a human and nonhuman relationship can be understood from so narrow a physiological view. Handlin et al. begin their discussion of their statistical findings with the statement that:

Given that oxytocin levels have been demonstrated to correlate with some maternal physiological and behavioural variables, including the level of maternal interaction and sensitivity to the infant's cues, this study explored whether the scores obtained on the MDORS correlated with oxytocin and cortisol levels in dogs and their owners.

(Handlin et al., 2012:224)

The implication being that the quality of the human and canine relationship may be assessed by these means. The humans and canines in this study were in a highly artificial situation, there was very limited opportunity for the researchers to observe the participants together and beyond this; it is unlikely that an understanding of human and canine relations, that is coherent and realistic, can be built up from such a foundation. A microscopic biochemical basis for understanding human and canine behaviour is far too crude a mechanism to be able to build a clear picture of such a complex phenomenon, manifest at a macro level. The biomedical institution is a principal force in meaning construction, and it privileges a positivistic paradigm (Chapela, 2013), this leads to a tendency to go "looking for biological answers and 'hard' evidence to embodied social problems" (Chapela, 2013:504), and multifaceted embodied social phenomena, such as interplays of animal and human wellbeing.

Whilst the biomedically informed view of the psychological and veterinary studies can be informative, it represents, what may be the dominant, but still remains only a particular view of companion canine and human interaction. The biomedical view, and those studies informed by this paradigm, function on the basis of a series of assumptions which give pre-eminence to the internal psychological and physiological functions of the human organism. They map the world according to a medicalised model which affects both what they see and how they see it (Foucault, 1973). Sociology sees the world with different eyes than the medical model, and can move beyond the limitations of psychological and biomedical conceptualisations of life and wellbeing, enabling the perception of suffering, and the perception of effects of trauma, which lie outwith the vision of the medical model (Charmaz, 1983; Mort et al., 2007).

4.2 *Beyond a Biomedical Understanding*

Whilst the majority of studies addressing animals and wellbeing appear to be based in the medical and veterinary disciplines, (and to a lesser extent psychology), and attempt to understand the dynamics involved from the perspective of a bio-medical model, overall the results of these multiple studies are contradictory (McNicholas et al., 2005). McNicholas et al. undertook a review of the biomedical evidence regarding whether companion animal ownership is beneficial for human health that was reported in the *British Medical Journal*. With attention to multiple voices from within the biomedical domain, the review was conducted by a psychologist, a general practitioner, a veterinary surgeon and a professor of palliative medicine, they concluded that, whilst:

Research dating from the 1980s popularised the view that pet ownership could have positive benefits on human health ... Although the research did much to raise awareness of the importance that people attach to their pets, recent studies have failed to replicate the benefits ... recent research has failed to support earlier findings that pet ownership is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, a reduced use of general practitioner services, or any psychological or physical benefits on health for community dwelling older people. Research has, however, pointed to significantly less absenteeism from school through sickness among children who live with pets. (McNicholas, 2005:1252)

Studies claiming to find a positive correlation between companion animal ownership and human health cannot be easily replicated, and results are conflicting. To take just the issue of the perceived positive effect of companion animal ownership on cardiovascular health, Friedmann, Locker and Lockwood (1993), found that companion animal ownership was beneficial for human health and that it resulted in lower blood pressure in the humans. Yet when Parslow and Jorm conducted their study *Pet Ownership and Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease: Another Look* ten years later, they found that not only did companion animal ownership not convey positive benefits on cardiovascular health, but that it was associated with higher blood pressure (Parslow and Jorm, 2003).

The picture emerging from the biomedical field is unclear and filled with contradictions, as McNicholas et al., (2005) point out there is no direct causal relationship between companion animal ownership and human health, rather:

The main issue may not be whether pet ownership per se confers measurable physical benefits but the role that pets have in individual people's lives—namely, the contributions of the pet to quality of life or the costs to wellbeing through a pet's death. This issue embraces a broader definition of health that encompasses the dimensions of wellbeing (physical and mental) and a sense of social integration.

(McNicholas, 2005:1252)

There is a need to search beyond a biomedical view. I would suggest that part of the reason for the confusing and contradictory picture that is emerging from the biomedical field, is that the studies are coming from a limited frame and are seeking to address interplays of wellbeing in purely bio-physical (and discrete psychological), rather than sociological, terms. One exception to this trend are the related works of Mort et al. (2007) and Convery et al. (2008). As they vividly illustrate in their studies of the 2001 UK foot and mouth disease outbreak, it is necessary to extend our understanding of wellbeing beyond the confines of the bio-medical model; for interplays of wellbeing run far deeper than becoming ill and going to hospital. Mort et al. (2007) identified profound suffering that was not predominantly physical and was not necessarily limited to those humans in immediate contact with the culled livestock. Shop owners in villages near the farms experienced negative effects on their businesses and emotional and psychological dissonance during the culls (Convery et al., 2008). Adults and children driving past the piles of burning animals found the experience disturbing (Mort et al., 2007). There was deep suffering and loss for the human farming community, not only loss of economic resources, but also emotional, professional and the loss generational investment (herds may be build up over generations, with animals from relatives farms passing to newlywed families (Convery et al., 2008), such legacies of livestock were irretrievable lost during the culls.

These forms of suffering transcend the biomedical, they are embedded in the lived experience of the community, and are not necessarily picked up by the NHS helplines: Mort et al. (2007) argue that interplays of animal and human wellbeing are so deeply socially embedded that awareness of them is difficult to access.

Dasgupta suggests a wider interpretation of wellbeing than a biomedical one, in which human wellbeing is based on the need “for food and care and shelter, for friendship and love and a communal life, and for freedom to develop” (Dasgupta, 1993: 8). Animal and human interplays can intersect at every point of this definition. Human and animal interplays of wellbeing are multifaceted phenomena, that can encompass sociological, physiological, emotional, spiritual and psychological aspects. Place can also form part of the human and animal interactional landscape. The physical environment in which human and animal interact is also implicated in the interplays of wellbeing. Places can have meaning and purpose, and if these meanings are disrupted, there can be negative effects on the social actors (Convery et al., 2008). The empty fields and silent barns, lead to deep melancholia for some of the farmers and livestock workers caught up in the Cumbrian foot and mouth disease outbreak of 2001, as they were forced to inhabit, what Convery et al. termed, “emotional geographies of changed landscapes” (2008:56), in the aftermath of the cull of approximately 10 million of their animals.

Wellbeing is a complex issue, in his ethnographic study of the Nuer in Sudan, Evans-Pritchard found a profound interplay between human and animal wellbeing (1940). In particular he highlights the complex relationship of the Nuer with their cattle, which embraces a understanding of wellbeing as composed of multiple factors. There is physiological interdependence, in terms of foodstuff, physicality and care of the bodies, in his words “they probably could not live without them, any more than the cattle could live without the care and protection of their owners” (Evans-Pritchard, 1940:248). Yet there is also a depth of interweaving of the mental, emotional and the spiritual life of the people with the animals on which they depend (Evans-Pritchard, 1940; 1956).

This would be compatible with Dasgupta's understanding of wellbeing as representing, not a fixed quality, but one that is cyclic in nature (1993). Wellbeing is more helpfully understood in terms of an interplay of factors, rather than as an isolated quality inherent to an individual. Moreover in the emotionally intense (Walker, 1999), and involved relationship between human owner and companion canine, with its "centrality of emotional connectedness" (Sanders, 1999:22) the subject of the animal can become linked to the subject of the human, and interplays of wellbeing beyond the physiological, implicating the social and emotional life of human and animal, are possible.

4.3 Bereavement

Gerwolls and Labott's study of 49 adult companion animal owners concluded that "as pets provide many important benefits of a psychological, social, and physiological nature, loss of a companion animal can be a devastating event." (Gerwolls and Labott, 1994:172). While this may be the case in some instances, there can be substantial qualitative differences in the relationship between human owners and their nonhuman companions. Owners may relinquish, or have their companion animal euthanized, for a wide range of reason, from serious illness and suffering, or because the current companion animal sheds fur on the new couch or an owner has simply tired of them (Arluke and Sanders, 1999). As Irvine concluded, whilst studying the relinquishment of companion animals to a shelter, "when a dog or cat does not behave correctly, guardians assume there must be something wrong with the animal and they become emotionally disconnected from the animal as time goes on" (Irvine, 2003:559). Expectations of companion animal behaviour can be idealised and unrealistic (Arluke and Sanders, 1994; Irvine 2003) and when the companion animal fails to meet these unrealistic expectations an emotional disconnection can occur, and the companion animal may be disposed of; either by relinquishment to a shelter, simply being allowed to stray or by being euthanized, either by a veterinarian or by home euthanasia. In a situation of emotional and intersubjective disengagement grief may not be experienced, or not experienced as deeply.

The experience of grief is understood as being related to both the existence of a social bond and a degree of intertwining of self and other;

Grief as it is conventionally understood in survivor theories, is a reaction to extreme damage to the social bond. If we recall Freud's views, to love someone is to place in that person a part of one's self, so that when that person dies so does that part of the self. (Seale, 1998:193).

An animal shelter worker may euthanize multiple canines without the experience of grief, though not perhaps without tensions being felt in their identity as someone who works for the welfare of, and cares for, animals (Arluke, 2006). However, in the case of companion canines who are interwoven into the life of a human owner, grief and the experience of bereavement at the loss of the companion become possible. Lee and Surething in their study of neuroticism and the severity of bereavement among pet owners, state that "the death of a loved one is arguable the most emotionally painful experience a person will ever endure in his or her lifetime" (Lee and Surething, 2013:62). Further, "to the extent that the human-pet bond constitutes an attachment bond, a similar response to separation and loss of a pet should be found following loss of a human attachment bond" (Field et al., 2009:335). Whilst these works offer a strong justification for the existence of human bereavement in response to the death of a companion animal, and therefore serve to highlight what may be a less understood aspect of the human grief experience, the loss of a companion animal is not necessarily the same as the loss of a human companion. There are qualitative differences between human and companion animal relations and human-to-human relations (Irvine, 2004b). It seems unwise to assume that the experience of bereavement will be similar, given the difference in social status and dimensions of relationship, in human-to-human and human-to-nonhuman relations.

Nonetheless, the difference in qualities between human and companion animal relations and human-to-human relations does not mean that bereavement at the loss of a companion animal cannot be profound, as Davis et al. highlight:

It is now well established that the death of a companion animal is a serious loss, provoking a grief response comparable to that for a human being in at least some pet owners under at least some circumstances. (Davis et al., 2003:57).

If bereavement is a response to the rupture of a social bond and intertwining of subjectivity, the question does arise whether grief is only experienced by humans, or whether the companion canines themselves may experience bereavement and grief? In November 2011 a companion canine in China, just outside the village of Panjiatun, refused to leave the graveside of their deceased owner and kept a vigil there without food or water for seven days. When found, the dog was offered steamed buns and encouraged to leave the grave, but took the food and ran back, to remain by his owner's grave, whilst being occasionally fed by local villagers (BBC, 21 November 2011). The Victorian natural historian William Lauder Lindsay regarded animals as capable not only of having an inner emotional and psychological life, but also of possessing a moral and even religious sense (Lauder Lindsay, 1880), though his work did meet with some hostile responses from reviewers (Finnegan, 2008). Still, in Victorian Britain there are examples of animals which were understood to have experienced profound melancholia at the loss of a loved one, and to have taken their own lives in an act of self-destructive grief. Such as the horse that after prolonged mistreatment, leapt to its death in a canal, the cat that hanged herself on a tree branch following the death of her kittens, and the many stories of companion canines who kept vigil, sometimes starving to death, upon the graves of their deceased owners (Ramsden and Wilson, 2010), including of course the famous Greyfriars Bobby of Edinburgh, Scotland.

Wellbeing is a multifaceted phenomenon and is influenced by factors beyond the biomedical realm. Loss and bereavement can impact human wellbeing, but the meaning and dynamics of how companion animal loss relates to wellbeing are not clearly understood. It is the object of this thesis to shed light on these little understood areas, and to that end attention now turns to the methods underpinning this research.

Chapter 5 ~ The Study

5.1 Methodology

In terms of general orientation, to quote Sanders, “I will admit at the beginning that I really love dogs” (1999:intro vii). I come from a family of dog owners, whose canine ownership goes back as many generations as can be recalled. Dogs are woven into the fabric of our family in multiple ways. From my great grandparents’ guard dogs and gun dogs, to the working sheep dogs on the farm on which I grew up, with innumerable pet dogs living in the various family homes. Though being half Scottish and half Sudanese, there is a distinct divide, in that it is the Scottish side of the family who live in proximity with dogs. My Muslim family living in Sudan do not keep companion canines, and would not have dogs in the home, this being considered inappropriate for a canine in that culture. To the family in northern Sudan, dogs are more likely to be encountered as packs of feral scavengers, and regarded as troublesome, and possibly dangerous, to be avoided and chased away. This familiarity with companion canines has been both an asset and a challenge, though overall, particularly in terms of building rapport, it seems to have been an asset.

With regard to formal methodology, this is a qualitative study, which understands reality as being socially constructed, and regards knowledge in interpretivist terms (Gergen, 1999). This ontological and epistemological basis of the work is concordant with the majority of recent research in the field of animal-human interaction within the discipline of Sociology (AHSG, 2009). However, this is not to suggest that this methodological stance was specifically chosen as appropriate to the field, rather it is an expression of the world view of the writer, which is itself influenced by her training and context. Having a foundation in interpretivism affects both the research process and how the researcher understands themselves in that process (Ezzy, 2002). In this study the research process is particularly concerned with meanings, their interpretation and utilisation, and the researcher is understood as active in that process.

In terms of its applied conceptual framework this study is situated within the symbolic interactionist tradition, it is also influenced by the thought of Goffman, George Herbert Mead, and to a lesser extent some of the European Psychoanalytic social theorists. With regard to the utilisation of a symbolic interactionist framework, this course is taken because “with its meticulous attention to aspects of meaning-making, in particular the local production of meanings, emergent from and negotiated within situated everyday interaction” (Allen-Collison, 2009;53), symbolic interactionism can enable insight into a little understood area, where meaning is born and shaped in the embodied lives of social actors (Allen-Collison, 2009). A symbolic interactionist framework is also sympathetic with most of the work in the young field of animal human interaction that this thesis builds upon. Further, whilst an alternative framework, such as actor network theory, may have been a possible choice for the applied conceptual framework, and would likely have led to its own flavour of insights, it would not be the best fit of researcher to project. Symbolic interactionism is concordant with how I comprehend the world, which means that not only is the framework a smooth fit for researcher and project, but also, I suspect, enables a researcher to travel further into the territory before them, if they are travelling in a fashion suited to their mode of understanding.

5.2 Site of Investigation

Family is the site of investigation. The first, and foremost, reason for this is that it is within the family structure that canine companions are situated. They live out their lives within the homes of their human owners, except in cases, such as *Ted*, a working dog who was born on a farm, or *Fritz* who was believed to be puppy farmed, companion canines live their entire lives within the family context. They eat, sleep, and play, within the private sphere of the human home. In an increasingly public world, they share in our private lives. Family is not only a household, which is the site of investigation, family is also understood to be an activity, which takes on a particular meaning (Morgan, 1996; Finch 2007).

5.3 Sourcing, Sampling and Inclusion Criteria

Purposive convenience sampling was used to select the families, they were “sought out”, in terms of both the individuals and the settings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:370), and specifically chosen as part of a critical and evaluative process (Silverman, 2005). The families were sourced by way of inquiries among informal social networks, contacts from previous research (both through academic networks and from those participating), or through general awareness of the study. There were also contacts from some limited exposure following a press release (17 December 2009), which resulted in a substantial amount of potential families, who were unfortunately unsuitable, given the selection criteria. Finally, families became involved through word of mouth recommendation from the participating humans. The families contacted as a result of this snowballing were particularly suitable, though this form of “differential access” (Brown-Saracino, 2014:unlisted pages) brought its own issues. As my involvement with one family would affect how I was perceived by another, and where I may, or may not be, welcome. It also resulted in having families who were friends of each other (two sites), or who represented different parts of a single large family (one site). Particularly challenging in these circumstances was maintaining confidentiality and neutrality, in the sense of not taking sides in ongoing family disputes, for example with regard to choice of veterinarian or training practices for the canines. Though, on the plus side, this social proximity between three sites also enabled me to encounter, and observe, the wider social web of those particular canine participants.

This is a small scale study, whose intention is not to be representative, but rather to explore human and companion canine relations in depth. There are ten families in this study, the families are comprised of a total of 24 nonhumans and 18 humans. Of these there are 16 principal canine participants, and 14 principal human participants (this number is greater than ten as some families present more than one canine, or human, as their main actor). In the case of the dogs the principal canine participant(s) were self-selected by the human owners. Abbreviated demographic details of the participants are listed in Table 1 below. Full demographic details, including associated family members of participants, can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 1 – Abbreviated Demographic Details of Participants

Principal Canine Participants			Principal Human Participants		
name	gender	age	name	gender	age
<i>Bashan*</i>	M	nk**	Nathaniel	M	nk
<i>Brandy</i>	F	dec***	Matthew	M	nk
<i>Braxton</i>	M	12	Irma	F	40
<i>Zayne</i>	M	4			
<i>Fritz</i>	M	8	Rowan	F	67
<i>Glen</i>	M	5	Gregor	M	70
<i>Mason</i>	M	3	Amanda	F	51
<i>Diesel</i>	M	2	Samir	M	40
<i>Mitch</i>	M	20	Margaret	F	48
<i>Sally</i>	F	16			
<i>Pandora</i>	F	8	Olga	F	65
<i>Rose</i>	F	dec	Winston	M	nk
<i>Rusty</i>	M	5 mth	Rebekah	F	42
			Ross	M	56
<i>Sierra</i>	F	13½	Susan	F	46
<i>Ted</i>	M	14	Frank	M	50
<i>Kari</i>	F	7			

*the names of nonhumans are italicised in this report

**not known

***deceased

The inclusion criteria of this project required that the human participants are all resident in Scotland, and are fluent in spoken English. Both of these criteria largely reflect pragmatic and economic concerns, being the desire to limit the travel involved in visiting participants on the one hand, and to avoid the need of working with an interpreter on the other. The inclusion criteria also required that the principal human participant(s) had significant involvement with companion canines, either those currently alive and living in the home, or dogs they had involvement with in the past.

All the principal nonhuman participants in this study are the associated companion animals of the principal human participants, or other members of the family. The use of spoken English as a principal means of accessing experience exerts a significant limit on the project, in that, as none of the companion animals use spoken English, the experience of the dogs was not accessed directly. Rather the weight of the focus is on how their owners understood and interpreted the illness and loss of their companions. To have given greater place to the companion animals' experience may have been possible, to do that I would have relied much more heavily on participation with, and observation of, the dogs. It would have been necessary to have a depth of involvement with the dogs over extended periods of time, months or even years, similar to the approach of Pepperberg (1998) with Alex, the African Grey Parrot, or Patterson (1981) and Koko. Though it is worth noting that both Alex the parrot and Koko the ape could communicate directly with the researcher through a shared meaning system, as both nonhumans had considerable vocabularies of spoken English, which would not have been possible with the companion canines.

Taking a greater emphasis on nonhuman experience was considered at the outset of the study, this approach was rejected as not fitting closely enough with the project aims. The aims of the project target the meanings being created and sustained during interaction within the family context. The focus of attention is on the principal human actor, the owner, who is the actor largely responsible for displaying the family and offering the narratives of their lives. Whilst I would argue that nonhumans are capable of participating in a meaningful framework, and are capable of both responding to, and deploying, meaningful action. I would also argue that their capacity to do so is limited, in comparison to the human actors with whom they share their lives. Further, in the wider social sphere, the actions of the dogs are mediated by the owner, this process of mediating (and giving form and meaning) to the actions of the canines is also of interest, and to investigate this it was considered best to focus on the principal human, who is also the principal mediator of the behaviour of other family members.

It needs to be acknowledged that the approach to sampling in this research is likely to have affected the overall picture emerging from the data. Sampling was not random, or even entirely by convenience, though general availability of the participants was a factor. The sampling procedure was targeted to focus on those families where there was a reasonable possibility of encountering a significant degree of involvement of the human family members with the companion canines. This criterion reflects the desire to maximise the possibility of exploring an interweaving of human and nonhuman relations, by focusing on owners having considerable experience with canine companions. Families acquiring their first dog with no, or limited, history of canine ownership were screened out at the initial contact stage.

Furthermore canines who fulfilled roles in their relations with humans other than that of companion, such as canines working with humans as security personnel, in agriculture, or as personal assistance dogs, were omitted from the study. At one site there were both companion canines, who lived in the home, and also working dogs, who lived outside in kennels. In this instance only the companion canines, *Mitch* and *Sally*, were treated as principal canine participants. *Mitch* and *Sally's* owner, Margaret, explicitly discussed the differences in her feelings towards *Mitch* and *Sally* and her kennelled working canines, and how she experienced her relations with the different canines, including her response to issues of illness and death. Unfortunately it is beyond the confines of this study to explore the dynamics of how canines occupying different social roles are understood and related to by their human associates; though it would be intriguing for a future study to explore the function of role, in shaping human and canine relations in different contexts.

The sample focuses on companion canines in Scotland, and though its results could be considered to highlight dynamics that may be apparent in human and canine relations in some other parts of the minority world, their relevance to human and canine relations in areas of the majority world, may be limited. As Irvine stresses, “animals are not experienced in the same way by all person or groups” (Irvine, 2012), and different cultural and physical environments, may encourage different patterns of relating. In Ruiz-Izagirre and Eilers’ (2012)

study of the perception of dogs in farming and tourist villages in Mexico, they found that in the village that was focused on tourism, the practice of keeping canines as companions was more prevalent than in the farming community. Also the European tourists, compared to the Mexican tourists, had different perceptions of both canine welfare and whether the canines were pests (Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers, 2012). In Scotland at this time there do not tend to be packs of free roaming canines, termed “village dogs” (Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers, 2012:75) which I encountered in Sudan, though historically there have been issues in Scotland with packs of stray and feral dogs, and it is good to remember that rabies is also not prevalent in this country.

5.4 Methods

The aim of this research is to explore the experience of serious illness, to reveal the meanings surrounding death and dying, and to investigate any interplays of wellbeing between human and canine, that may be present. It is in light of this that the decisions around method were made. As the search is one for meaning, depth, as far as this is possible within a small study, is the principal concern shaping the choice of specific research methods. This includes a considerable amount of time and effort being spent in building rapport. Hours spent being with, walking with, the humans and canines; feeding the dogs, cleaning up after the dogs, including extended periods, up to 45 minutes stroking and petting the canines.

The data was gathered by way of in-depth interviews “intended to combine structure with flexibility” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:141), which were conducted over multiple sessions. These interviews aimed “to explore the complexity and in-process nature of meanings and interpretations” (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005:56). In this study social entities are understood as being socially constructed (Gergen, 1999), with data being both gathered and created during an interview process in which the researcher is an active agent, encouraging the participants to talk and explore their understanding (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

The interviews were composed of non-audio recorded discussion with observational, and participatory, elements. Each family also had audio recorded interviews. The interviews ranged in time from sittings of 30 minutes to 6 hours 40 minutes, full details of the interviews are listed in Appendix 2. Fieldnotes were taken for each interview. There was also ongoing contact by email, text and telephone.

The interviews themselves are not neutral in this study, but rather the narratives forged during the participant and researcher interaction “perform a complex reconstructive task” (Owens et. al., 2008:237). This task is understood as part of the ongoing meaning making (Chen, 2012), and the work of giving meaning to the life and place of the ill or lost companion within the family.

Initial contact interviews were largely unstructured and had two main purposes. First they gave the families a chance to meet me, and for us to talk about what their participation may involve, the nature of the project, and issues around consent and confidentiality (copies of the project information sheet, consent and de-briefing forms used, are included in Appendix 3). Initial interviews also provide the principal human participant with a chance to make a more informed choice regarding their possible involvement in the study, and indeed two potential families did decline at this stage. The researcher wanting access to the home, rather than the study involving filling in a questionnaire, seemed to be a factor in their decision to withdraw. Spending time discussing involvement also gave the families a chance to let me know what limitations they felt were necessary to their involvement, which was particularly helpful to know at the outset.

Second, initial contact interviews also enabled me to get a, albeit cursory, sense of the family and the principal human participant(s), and to be alert for a potentially unsuitable or unsafe context. In one instance lack of sufficient previous relationships with companion canines, the family having just got their very first dog, rendered them unsuitable. In another instance a disquiet with a very keen potential human participant, led me to make enquiries and I subsequently discovered that they had recently been convicted of a violent assault against their canine companions, having stabbed them with a knife in a

moment of extreme emotional distress. Though it would have been very interesting to investigate this context, and a part of me still wishes I had, having discussed this with my supervisor we considered it unsafe to enter this situation. During the course of the study intra-family violence involving canine companions was encountered, however that was as part of an unfolding exploration at a site where I was already involved, and I was easily able to avoid the presence of the perpetrator. Though there is still an element of risk here, as my supervisor, McIntosh, pointed out, it is one matter to become aware of risk whilst you are in a situation and manage it, and quite another to enter an environment you know from the outset to be unsafe.

The first audio-recorded interview was loosely structured around the interview schedule (see Appendix 4). This schedule was used as a guide and memory aid, rather than as a rigid structure that ordered questioning (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Subsequent interviews, including additional audio-recorded interviews, were less structured, and commenced with an opportunity for both my human participants and myself to explore any issues arising from earlier sessions.

I was particularly satisfied with the effect of using this repeat interview technique, which helped to facilitate trust (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). I also incorporated neutral questions into the early stages of each interview for the same reason (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). Asking my human participants about their early experience with animals for example, gave them time to relax and, in the case of audio-recording, some time for them to overcome, at least in part, an inhibitory effect of the presence of the recorder (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). I consider that using these techniques helped to build rapport and facilitated the acquisition of richer data.

The observational and participatory elements involved witnessing the human family members interacting with their companion animals, interacting with the animals myself, and exploring the homes, with particular attention to the sleeping, feeding and play areas of the dogs. The observational and participatory elements give this work a flavour of the ethnographic approach, and enabled me to get a sense of the context of the interaction between the humans and their canines. I

accompanied family members on visits to the shops or to the vets, and on walks with their dogs. In the case of deceased companions, such as *Rose*, I walked with the owner the routes that they and their companion used to share. This could be a poignant, even emotional, experience.

I took multiple photographs of the sleeping, feeding and play areas of the home, its local environment, and the dogs, both alone and with their associated humans. I also viewed existing photographs and video of the humans and their canine companions, past and present, and sought to develop a visual imagination of the data, to help balance what Mason calls the “extraordinary dominance of talk and text in our research imaginations” (2002:104). The observational element of this study was included to help me to gain an understanding of the animal-human interplays in context, and to reveal the data in a multi-dimensional way (Mason, 2002). It also gave me some direct access to the animal-human interplays, which gave me the opportunity to weigh the self-reports of the human participants against my observations, and to be alert for discrepancies or taken-for-granted interplays that may be significant. Data was kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked university office, and also on a password protected laptop.

This study relied upon considerations of authenticity with regard to its evaluative frame (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Concerning authenticity, I have endeavoured to make this study’s exploration and representation of the life worlds of my human participants as authentic as possible. However, that is not to suggest that the views of my human participants are accepted at face value, whilst I have sought to honour their voices, the understandings they present are questioned. Further, as “there are no unbiased circumstances” (Alasuutari 1998:135), I make no claim to the detached stance of an objectivist ontological view, rather endeavouring to be aware of possible influences (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), such as my being a companion canine owner.

5.5 Analysis

The data were qualitatively analysed utilising an interpretive inductive approach. Though I would question the degree to which the analytic stage should be viewed as a discrete part of a study, being in agreement with Ezzy (2002) that analysis is embedded across a project's time line, there were specific analytic practices. First, there was continuous recording and memoing of impressions throughout the study. Second, a brief report on the initial data was prepared. Third, the audio recorded component of the interviews was transcribed verbatim, by a professional transcriber, and the transcripts were input into Qualrus.

Qualrus is a computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) programme developed by Idea Works, a small computer company in Missouri. It is designed to deal with unstructured data, in textual, audio, or visual form, providing a range of data coding and analysis tools. These include visual networking of codes, checking for co-occurrences of themes and code redundancy. Qualrus is not an adaptation of a framework originally designed to store and process quantitative data. Rather, the programme has its genesis in Howard Becker's (1961) study of 'Boys in White', and was designed by qualitative researchers to work with qualitative data. It is also the first of a new generation of QDA programmes which employ artificial intelligence, which adapts to the peculiarities of the particular researcher/project, and evolves with progressive use of the programme.

At first the idea of a programme that evolves with the researcher sounded a little like marketing hype, however, I found it a different experience to work with Qualrus, than say NVivo or Framework. The adaptive nature of the programme, evokes a sense of working with, rather than one of working on. For example, whilst coding a segment of data, Qualrus will suggest codes that may apply, and even as these suggestions are accepted or rejected, Qualrus adapts and may suggest something else. This is a qualitatively different experience from working on the passive interface of NVivo, which evokes a sense of the subjective researcher relating to the object of the data and the object that is the analysis programme. Instead, working with Qualrus creates a sense of researcher interacting with the programme upon the object of the data.

Whilst this difference may seem subtle, it has implications. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argued that computer software is only analytic support, and does not contribute to the intellectual work of analysis. Taking an even stronger stance, Kelle (1997 cited in Ritchie and Lewis 2003), reject the idea that a computer can be involved in analysis at all, stating that QDA is a misnomer and these programmes should only be called data administration tools. While these views may have some merit with regard to NVivo and similar programmes, they appear dated and out of step with regard to Qualrus, which is experienced more as an ally in the analytic process.

Fourth, to return to the specific techniques of analysis, the data was read within Qualrus, line by line, and coded, whilst also memoing on the text. Ultimately a total of 61 codes were applied, and unassigned data was also coded. The main difficulty with coding was that upon the development of a new code, the earlier transcripts had to be returned to and re-read, to check for instances of the new code, which was somewhat laborious.

Fifth, an All Codes Report was output and printed from Qualrus, and 61 Specific by Code Segment Reports were output and printed. Sixth, each Specific By Code Segment Report was read through, and series of summary reports on looking at the coded data were written. Finally, developed from these written reports, and alongside reading the fieldnotes data and viewing the photographic data, the raw and summarised data was transformed into a thematic interpretation (Ezzy, 2002; Mason, 2002). This was done with particular attention to the original objectives of the study, which were used at this stage to help focus in on the pertinent features of the data (Ezzy, 2002); and with attention to theory (Silverman, 2005). It was at this transformational stage that the participants were anonymised.

5.6 *Researching with Canine Participants*

There is a plethora of sociological writing on researching with humans, either focusing on different methodological orientations or particular areas, such as sensitive research topics or vulnerable groups. However, a search of the Web of Knowledge database for key words, including *research, canines, dogs, methods and methodology*, found no methodological works within the discipline which look at researching with canines. Having conducted eight research projects, all but one of which involved nonhumans, I would suggest that there are some differences of method which are particular to researching with canines, and in some aspects particular to researching with nonhumans more generally. Some of these have become a little taken-for-granted in my research practice, and I am indebted to my supervisor, Punch, for pointing out that these 'tricks of the trade', as Becker (1928) would call them, should be addressed explicitly.

Researching with companion canines can be an enriching, and sometimes challenging, experience. The main consideration is that it is of equal importance to build a relationship with the nonhumans, as it is with the humans. There is a 'knowing' that has the status of accepted folk wisdom among companion canine owners. This 'knowing', or informal lore, is that canines have a superior awareness and insight into human personality than humans, and that they are able to sense the moral worth of a person, and will react accordingly.

For example, it is considered that if an apparently friendly person comes into the home, but the dogs will not go to, or hide from this person, then that person will probably be found to have a hidden sadistic or unkind streak. The consequence of this is that if the companion canines do not appear to like someone, then their human owners are likely to be suspicious of them as well; and as a researcher you are unlikely to get as much, or such good quality data, if you can persuade the humans to continue to engage with you at all. An exception to this may be the occasional case of a companion canine that is very reserved and avoids all strangers, in which case their lack of desire to interact with a researcher is unlikely to be given negative significance.

On the other hand, if you can endear yourself to the canines, then the humans are likely to be more open and relaxed. I have found it good practice to spend at least as much time, indeed frequently more, building rapport with the dogs, by speaking, petting and playing with them. It is especially fortuitous to be in the position of the canines showing an interest and willingness to be near, or on you, when they do not usually show that level of interest in strangers. This effort to appear as an approachable and safe person is made, because, in Becker's words, "I wanted to maximise their freedom to tell me things, especially things I hadn't thought of" (1928:60), or beyond this, to maximise their freedom to speak of things that may be potentially discrediting (Goffman, 1968). To achieve this a researcher wants to be as interesting to the canines as possible, that is as interesting as possible without becoming an object of erotic attention.

Goffman encouraged researchers going into the field to be conscious of the things they did and the impression that they were making on their participants (1989). In terms of practicalities, an effective way of being interesting to canines is by not being overly clean, as scent is a more developed sense in canines than in humans. It is good to have a slight scent on your body, perhaps from another canine or general smells from your own skin; it would not be recommended to bathe before, or wear freshly laundered clothes to a visit, particularly to an initial visit. In terms of presentation of the self, an upbeat and friendly approach, without making too many fast and jerky movements, or being shrill (which are prey signals), is a sensible way to come into the companion canines' presence. Staying still in one place so that the canines can come to you of their own volition, especially on an initial meeting, is a good approach.

Canines are practiced face observers, so a smile and brief (not staring) glance assists. As a stranger coming into the home it is unwise to go into the dog bed, or approach the canines in their special places, (special places being areas of the home that the canine uses for rest and/or withdrawal – such as a warm place by radiator, or partly hidden space behind a chair). It is better to meet the canines in the open. On meeting a new canine, I would not approach or interact with the canine without first asking permission of the human, unless the canine approached themselves. If the canine does approach, interact with strokes and

pats, and engage verbally, in a playful voice, with a variable tone, for example, “and who are you, aren’t you gorgeous, etc.” It does no harm to compliment the companion (and their owner) on the canine’s beauty and good behaviour if appropriate, as the researcher is an incomer and wants to be accepted by the pack.

Having had initial interaction with the canines the researcher can then let the canine investigate them and their possessions, though it is also important to know and maintain personal limits. There is a lot of variation with regard to the norms governing interpersonal behaviour, depending on the specific home. Some canines are permitted to lick and kiss their owners’ faces, feet and mouths, some are allowed on furniture and in bedrooms, and some are not. Personally whilst I do not mind canines sitting on me and around me, I do not like to have my mouth licked, or noses down clothing or in sensitive places.

A good approach is to be aware of personal limits and gently maintain them, but to be tolerant if possible. If whilst on site the researcher does encounter canine behaviour towards them that is problematic, it is better to try to deal with it, without highlighting the matter to the owner, as owners are subject to considerable disciplining gaze and judgement by society at large, and can be sensitive. So, for example, *Rusty* made several attempts to mate with my legs, and *Mason* and *Diesel*, liked to drink the tea from my cup, which I did not want to share with them. In both instances I moved the dog away and discouraged them from interacting with me at that time, without asking the owner to assist and discipline them. Indeed if the owner noticed I minimised the incidents to avoid awkwardness for the humans. As a researcher it is preferable to come across as one of ‘us’ not one of ‘them’, that is non-dog lovers.

On a practical note it is wise to give some consideration to clothing, it is best not to be too well dressed or have an expensive handbag. It is likely that clothing and accessories may be chewed or torn, especially if there is a puppy in the home. With regard to clothing it is best to keep in mind that you will probably be urinated upon at some stage. Fabrics that attract and hold fur are best avoided, and trousers are much more suitable than skirts, given the level of investigation

that the canines may make of your person, and no clothing should be easily removed or untied. With regard to foodstuffs, again a tolerant approach whilst being aware of personal limits is helpful. I would hold a sausage roll so the dog could not reach it, and would not leave my biscuit unattended; overall its best to eat the food given to you as soon as possible, rather than to leave it lying around.

There are also some health considerations when researching with companion canines. It is important to be up to date on vaccinations, and it is also important that the researcher's own canines are also up to date. I attended my veterinarian, doctor and a specialist immunization clinic prior to commencing on site research. The risk is not only to the researcher, but also to those companions to whom an illness or parasite may be transferred. In case of fleas, I keep a supply of lavender oil in the home to apply to myself and also keep a supply of anti-flea treatment for my own canine. It is worth remembering that clothing and accessories, as well as the body, can carry unwanted intruders, and sometimes it is a good idea to change clothes and wash them on returning from a visit.

Utilising elements of an ethnographic approach enabled me to get a sense of the interactions in context, and participant observation helped facilitate rapport. A lot of time was spent building rapport between myself, the canine participants and their human owners, substantially more time was spend on building rapport, by being with, walking, talking, cleaning up after and helping, than on overtly gathering data. I am convinced that depth of penetration of the life worlds of the families, and the richness of the data, including revelations of mental illness, domestic violence, complex and contradictory feelings towards socially required obligations and criminal activity, was made possible by the time and attention given to building trust and ease. In terms of facilitating data gathering, this approach of "passing in the field" (Goffman, 1989:126) and endeavouring to become an accepted presence, was apparently successful, but it also stimulated feelings of ambiguity and guilt. Was the presentation of a friendly persona 'sincere'?

There was a tension between the interpersonal approach required by a research persona, and the cultural values of authenticity in interpersonal relations, because “being oneself is a requirement of contemporary social relationships of governance oriented around norms of compulsory individuality” (Allen and Mendick, 2014:460). Whilst working with them, some of the humans and canines became more meaningful to me and this intensified the sense of guilt. Combined with this, “striving to interact positively with all research participants all of the time” (Punch, 2012:87) could be tiring, and felt inauthentic, as if I was behaving as “just an actor, not sincere” (Hochschild, 1983:187). This consideration connects with the next issue that this work faced, that is the ethical complexities and challenges that were encountered.

5.7 Ethical Considerations and Challenges

In terms of ethics this is a sensitive study, particularly in the sense that it, “might uncover painful experiences and lead people to disclose information which they have rarely or never previously shared” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:68). This happened in every case, even though written information sheets and consent forms were used, and time was spent stressing the voluntary nature of the study and what a participant could expect. Despite my best efforts to prepare my human participants, there were things that could not be planned for, such as the death of a canine participant, or a canine being run over and having to be taken to the vet. In the end the unexpected could not be removed from the research process, no matter how much thought had gone into the design (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

5.7.1 Informed Consent of Human and Nonhuman Participants

Written consent was obtained from all human participants for their involvement. The consent is for voluntary participation in interviews, and the recording and use of audio, textual and visual data. Human participants were “made aware of their right to refuse participation whenever and for whatever reason they wish” (BSA Statement of Ethical Practice, 2002: Item 17). The right to withdraw at any time and confidentiality are features of the informed consent. In order for consent to be informed the human participants needed to be acquainted with the nature of the study, informed of its funders, research team, what to expect from

participation, how long it will take, and how the data will be used (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). These project details were communicated, in person, at the initial orientation interviews, and are also part of the written project information sheet (Appendix 4), that was given to the human participants.

As Mason points out, “it is impossible to receive a consent that is fully informed, and the responsible researcher should be prepared to recognise this” (Mason, 2002:82). She goes on to stress that the limitations of informed consent should encourage us to take informed consent more, rather than less, seriously (Mason, 2002). These limits are particularly aggravated in a situation where many of the principal participants cannot read, write or use spoken English, as in this study. In this instance the human participants are regarded as being able to give consent on behalf of their companion animals in their capacity as owners/carers. Consent for the nonhuman participants is a component of the consent form (see Appendix 4).

5.7.2 Confidentiality and its Limits

As the BSA highlight “because sociologists study the relatively powerless as well as those more powerful than themselves, research relationships are frequently characterised by disparities of power and status. Despite this, research relationships should be characterised, whenever possible, by trust and integrity” (BSA Statement of Ethical Practice, 2002: Item 114). Trying to reconcile trust and integrity is particularly complex in this study, with regard to confidentiality.

There was the possibility of personal and sensitive information being shared during the course of this study, as indeed was the case. Confidentiality was held as high as possible, without distortion of the data and voice of the participant. In practical terms this involved changing place names and names of both human and nonhuman participants. The names of associated humans, animals and sites of interaction, such as the names of veterinary practices, have also been changed. The planned approach to confidentiality was one of blanket anonymising, determined from the outset. However, I did have a concern with adopting this approach.

One of the reasons for undertaking this work was to draw attention to a neglected area of experience, and provide the opportunity to highlight marginalised voices, and call attention to possibly deeply felt suffering. My earlier studies, which inspired this work and touched on these issues, suggest that the narratives that surround the serious illness and passing of canine companions are neglected narratives. In this study and others, owners have expressed to me deep grief, in a context where, as in 'special deaths', "both the grief and the bereavement experience are poorly understood and the wider social response one that may exacerbate rather than ameliorate the pain of those closely affected" (Guy and Holloway, 2007: 84). Frequently human participants do not want to be anonymous, and feel strongly that their voice should be heard and their experience seen as authentic and profound. As if to make them anonymous is, in some measure, to deny their experience and increase the pain caused by the existing marginalisation of their suffering. I was unable to find a suitable compromise, or solution to this dilemma, which would satisfy both myself, and my University Ethics Committee, prior to commencement of data gathering, therefore blanket confidentiality was applied.

5.7.3 Wellbeing of Human Participants

Though there is nothing in this study that was expected to be deleterious of itself, participation did involve the humans talking about the experience of the illness or loss of a companion canine. Whilst some found this a neutral, or even a cathartic experience, others found that at times it stirred up some uncomfortable emotions. An appropriate agency to refer owners to on request, The Blue Cross, who offer various services, including counselling, had been sourced prior to commencement of fieldwork, for anyone experiencing difficulties due to the loss of a companion animal. If an owner found sharing a recollection or concern emotional during the course of a recorded conversation, the tape was stopped and, in the first instance, I offered consolation as a fellow human being, either simply by listening or perhaps by offering to make a cup of tea. The interview process was conducted as gently as possible, with multiple opportunities to take a break or withdraw if necessary, and all the human participants were informed, in advance, that this is how it would be conducted.

When encountering unrecognised issues affecting the physical health of human participants, I shared my concern with the owners, and suggested that they speak to their general practitioner. Had there been encountered a serious or imminent danger to the body and life of a human participant, such as immediate threat of physical assault or serious sexual abuse, I would have considered breaching confidentiality and informing the police and/or social services, and the human participants were aware that this was the case. When hearing of the physical abuse of an able bodied adult, by the victim, I encouraged them to seek appropriate support.

5.7.4 Wellbeing of Nonhuman Participants

There is nothing in the methods or approach of this study that should reasonably be regarded as constituting a risk to the wellbeing of the nonhuman participants. They were not subject to any experiment, or interference. The level at which the canine companions were encountered was at the level of a visitor to their home. On observing unrecognised issues affecting the physical health of one of the companions, I mentioned this to the human owner and suggested that they may wish to contact their veterinary practitioner. In the event that serious or imminent danger to the body and life of a nonhuman participant, such as severe neglect, or injury had been encountered, I would have considered breaching confidentiality and notifying the Scottish Society for the Protection of Animals, and the human participants were aware of this limitation to the confidentiality offered.

It did come to light that two of the nonhuman participants were stolen. This was something of a dilemma, however, given that the companions had been stolen some years before, it was decided to leave the matter, without action or comment. This was not an easy decision as it did come to mind how I would have felt as a companion animal owner, had it been my canine that had been taken.

5.7.4 Wellbeing of Researcher

It is not only the participants, “researchers who conduct fieldwork also place themselves at risk” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:70), and efforts were made to minimise potential risk. Prior to beginning fieldwork I visited my doctor and had all necessary vaccinations. Furthermore, as risk to the researcher can arise unexpectedly (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000), a mobile phone was kept with me at all times. Though risk cannot be omitted entirely, that the human participants were already known, through informal networks and prior contact, does serve to lessen the risk. Specifically helpful in this regard were the initial contact interviews.

A particular issue with this study is that not only humans, but also nonhumans, are being encountered. As companion canines, these should not, in principle, be dangerous animals. However, what happens when working with animals cannot be entirely predicted. My own background involves extensive experience of living and working with animals. This experience is comprised of both growing up on a farm in central Scotland, and 30 years of companion canine ownership. As Letherby points out, “research is not better or worse because we are closely connected to it by experience, but the connection does make a difference and we need to acknowledge this in our analysis” (Letherby, 2009:257). This background gives me a framework of experience from which to relate to the nonhumans.

There were some minor physical injuries as a result of interacting with the nonhumans, including bites, scratches and also some destroyed and damaged clothing and accessories. This was not considered of any great consequence, what was more challenging was the impact of the death of some of the canine participants, particularly *Ted*, *Mitch* and *Sally*. I had been involved with these canine companions for several years and had grown quite attached to them. Hubbard, Backett-Milburn and Kemmer, consider that “the emotionality of the research process is a vital part of the investigation”, this may be right, but it does, as they also point out, “constitutes a risk to the wellbeing of the researcher” (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn and Kemmer, 2000:120-121). It was particularly painful when my own canine companion, *Zak*, passed away, and during one

interview with Margaret, when she expressed her distress at the recent death of *Sally*, I found it hard to contain my own grief at the loss of *Zak*, in the face of her emotional reaction.

Not only the fieldwork, the analysis could also be emotionally intense, and on occasion it was necessary simply to walk away, at least for a time, from reading an account of owner's loss, as it could be difficult to contain the feelings stirred. What was not anticipated, but perhaps should have been, was the emotional impact of transcribing the audio recorded data upon the transcriber. She was a university approved, professional transcriber, and reported to me several times, that she had found herself distressed, sometimes in tears, whilst working on the transcripts. It is easy to overlook that it is not only the researcher, but also those who assist with the data, who may have to deal with some of the emotional complexities of the research. I began the practice of letting her know, in advance, if I suspected that a particular recording may be difficult to listen to, and of enquiring how she was, and making sure she was aware that support could be arranged should she so wish.

The intent was that this work be conducted sensitively, and relating sensitivity also requires attention to how one withdraws from involvement. Ending involvement is not a sudden event for the participants, unless they have chosen, as Matthew did due to illness, to withdraw abruptly. Ending the study itself is a gradual process. Thank you gifts, of parcels containing multiple dog treats and toys, were sent to the families in gratitude for their participation, and, for those human participants who wish it, occasional contact is kept, with an email or text, advising about events in the study. Keeping light contact can also be helpful if further consent is needed, for instance for the inclusion of specific photographs in a presentation. It tends to become apparent who wishes to keep in contact, as some reply to emails and others do not. In the case of non-reply no chasing messages would be sent. The owners also sometimes get in touch if they acquire a new canine companion, or to advise if one of the canine participants has passed away, or become unwell. It is to the analysis of what happens when a companion canine becomes unwell that this thesis now turns.

Chapter 6 ~ Interpretations of Serious Illness and the Self

The first research question informing this study asks if established sociological insight, based on the study of humans, can be applied to nonhuman illness, and whether there are possibilities for an understanding of nonhuman selfhood? To take the first aspect of this question, serious illness emerged as constituting a challenge to the anticipated lifecourse of the companion canine, and as causing a disruption to the underpinning structures of meaning. That serious illness could constitute a challenge to the expected course of the canine's life at all, indicates that there is an assumption that it is normative for the dog to be well. Wellness was not only an ideal that is reached for, but it was also treated as a basic expectation of living and living with. Yet, given the prevalence of injury and disease in the canine, and for that matter the human, population, combined with a decline in wellbeing associated with canine ageing, this expectation does not fit with the lived experience of the humans and the companion canines.

In the sense of frequency it would be unusual for a human and companion canine, who have been together since puppyhood, to not encounter periods of illness or instances of injury. Yet this expectation of wellness remains as the orientating expectation, and illness and injury are seen as deviations from what should be. The sense is that there may be more going on with the expectations of wellness, than a straight forward response to the probability of illness, which the high expectation of wellness simply does not fit. If asked outright owners will acknowledge that their dog may be expected to be unwell at times, especially as they become older. Yet it remains that it is not from this position that owners orientate their illness narratives, but from the stance that the dog 'ought' to be well. In this sense illness is a failure.

6.1. Nonhumans and Illness Narratives

Sociological attention to the narratives of illness for humans emerged as an area of interest in the 1980s, influenced by the challenges being presented to meta discourses from the increasing fragmentation of social life (Hyden, 1997), and from questions arising within medical studies, from which it specifically emerged, about the capacity of medicine to heal everything (Hyden, 1997). Within

contemporary British Sociology it is established wisdom that attention to narratives is a valid way of researching the lifeworlds and experiences of humans (Mason, 2002; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Silverman, 2005).

Though as Czarniawska points out “MacIntyre and many other advocates of a narrative approach to social phenomena limit the concept of action to human beings” (2004:3), arguing, in sympathy with Mead (1934), that animals cannot be authors of their own actions. It is likely that this theoretical split has limited the application, and therefore investigation of, nonhuman illness narratives. To my knowledge, this study may be the first in British Sociology to address whether illness narratives, their possible existence and possible interrogation as useful tools of research, is also applicable in relation to the lives of nonhumans. In short the answer to the question of whether illness narratives are applicable in the case of nonhumans is yes. Developed, lively and complex canine illness narratives were found in profusion in the data for this study. The difficulty is how these are to be understood, and the question of the self, or more precisely from where self originates, becomes unavoidable. If the self is, as in a Cartesian understanding, an inner unreachable abstract that expresses itself outward into the world, then the applicability of the concept of illness narratives to canines is, quite possibly critically, problematized. However, if, as Mead himself argues (1934), the self is actually born in the interaction between agents, then the applicability of the concept of selfhood is entirely possible. These issues are explored more fully in Section 6.5, which specifically addresses the canine self, suffice to say for now, it is the interactionist understanding of selfhood that is relied upon here, and upon that basis nonhuman illness narratives are not only possible, but found.

This is very sudden, oh uh huh, yeah, there's been nothing wrong with her until literally a week ago, in fact, it was a week past Wednesday. I came back, now I must have been out somewhere, and I came back and Dominic was I think through the back or upstairs in the study, I'm not sure, and I came in and I thought to myself. You know how you just know when you look at a dog or look at anything and you think, 'no there's something not quite right about that' and I thought 'mmm?'. And initially I just thought 'oh she's just sitting with her head to the side', you know, as in she's just cocking her head to the side. Cause I'd come in and I thought 'well no cause she's actually not moved from that position since I've

come in the door', and I'm thinking 'that's a bit strange?'. And I said to Dominic 'was everything alright with Sally?' thinking, you know, maybe she'd knocked herself or whatever. And he said 'yeah she was fine, she was asleep in the bed when I went out' and I thought 'oh right fine'.

So anyway I tried to coax her out the bed and she did come out the bed, but the minute she stood up on all fours it was like 'mmm' and I thought 'no'. And the lip was quite loose hanging, and I thought 'no there's something not right here', and I thought to myself 'this is just exactly the same as Mitch, he had the same thing, just suddenly just the head just went. It was almost like the neck just sort of went limp, and I thought 'mmm?'. So she seemed to be alright apart from this head thing and then she started twitching in her front shoulder.

(Margaret, re: Sally and Mitch)

The dogs, like the humans, are physically embodied creatures, whose bodies are a locus of intent and action. Their physical, and emotional state, can be communicated by gesture and sound. In this case the tilted head is suggestive of physical ailment, and the reluctance to leave the security of the bed is suggestive, not only of physical difficulty, but also of emotional, and or psychological, hesitation. Companion canines are the authors of their own actions, and in their capacity to act expressively and with intent, they contribute to the meaningful creation of the social world. Their actions, sounds and gestures, are intentional material from which the creation of everyday interactions is forged. It is not only the humans who act with meaning and intent, and in this capacity to act meaningfully, however limited by their lack of human spoken language, the companions are co-actors in the social web. The companion canines are contributors to the illness narrative, by virtue of their actions and expressions. The intersubjective dance, from which the illness narrative is forged, is born in the space between the human and the canine actors.

The joint human-canine illness narratives found in this study were not straightforward descriptions, simply relating what was seen or felt. Similar to the findings of Convery et al. (2008), in their research investigating the 2001 and 2007 foot and mouth disease outbreaks, the narratives of disease and suffering are dynamic and purposeful constructions. "From our experience and the work of others, we know that narratives rarely simply 'reveal' what someone thinks or feels, any 'truth' is a construction" (2008:39). In this instance a meaningful

explanation is being constructed that links the current experience of *Sally's* illness, with the history and continuity of life and experience within the family, her illness is being embraced into the family story, its members and its history.

The creation of this explanation, and the detailed description, seem to echo Seale's (1995:384) findings regarding those being "found" deceased, rather than others "learning" of their death, in that there is a happening upon the scene, and a "detective-like search for clues". In this case there is analysis of how *Sally* is sitting, and speculation regarding what her strange posture may mean. Seale suggests that these "vivid descriptions of the scene were responses to the sense of dislocation and shock felt by onlookers" (1995:384). If this is so, it is suggestive of a significant start and disruption, that also impacts upon those who suddenly find their companion canine, rather than a human, unwell. I would suggest, that as with Seale's (1995:384) research, these narratives can be understood as "speculative resurrections" or perhaps more particularly with this data as speculative reconstructions, of the events that may have taken place. In these reconstructions divergent and disordered events are re-forged, and assimilated, into the order of anticipated family life. With the onset of illness there is a disruption to "the sense of the proper order of things" (Seale, 1995:383) which these narratives, in part, appear to be attempting to repair.

The illness narratives are not straightforward communications of what happened, they are dynamic, constructing and reconstructing tellings. This was the case in both the narratives of human illness and in those focusing on canine illness. In both of these forms of narrative, the worlds and stories of the human and canine are interwoven, albeit with varying degrees of emphasis on the human or nonhuman, depending upon who was unwell. The canines were regarded as being subject to similar illness as the humans, as experiencing the same symptomology and discomfort, and their illnesses were expected to follow a similar course to the commensurate human illness.

She was just weeing a lot and probably gone thinner as well, I mean, like humans, the same sort of symptoms, and that's obviously one of the things they test. Just happens, its like in humans.
(Olga, re: Sasha)

In terms of Hydén's topology of illness narratives, that is; "illness as narrative, narrative *about* illness and narrative as illness" (Hydén , 1997:54, emphasis in the original), the joint human and companion canine illness narratives found here would be representative of illness as narrative. They are not simply relating symptoms, as in narratives about illness, such as when doctors convey clinical knowledge to other care staff (Hydén, 1997). These human and companion canine illness narratives are playing, as Hydén (1997) found, a central role. They are part of the meaningful creation of the illness experience, "the narrative is thus a way of integrating or solving the problems that confront us" (Hydén, 1997:54). The problem being the disruption to the underpinning structures of life and modes of living caused by the illness. In short, the problem is one of biographical disruption.

6.2. *Biographical Disruption*

The emergence of serious illness in the companion was interpreted by the owners against the backdrop of knowing the biography of the companion canine in the family. Each companion had its own history, with developed acquisition narratives, telling how it came to be a part of the family, and stories illustrating personality and highlighting significant events.

Well they were used to Kari because we had known her since she was a pup. Em, so they were, she was introduced to them as soon as she had her injections and whatever and Sierra just saw her as a game, somebody to play with. Ted thought yeah whatever somebody just to annoy me (laughs) but actually it was great when we did get Kari, because shortly after that's when Ted lost his sight and he was a bit depressed. (Susan, re: Kari, Sierra and Ted)

Susan is recounting how the established canine companions in the family, reacted, and incorporated, the incoming puppy. Family here is not a static identity, rather it is something dynamic and enacted:

The fluidity of family life is not defined by shifting membership so much as by the continually evolving character of the relationship – how individuals talk to each other, act towards each other and the assumptions on which their relationship are conducted. (Finch, 2007:69)

The companion is embraced in the story and the structure of the family (Tipper, 2011), and its existing members, human and nonhuman, and the thought and feelings of the other companion canines are spoken for. In this sense each canine had imputed to it a self-history within the family, against which its infirmity, not being able to walk as far, loss of interest in play, or changes in relating to other family members, is understood. This self-history demonstrates the fourth, and final, of Irvine's requirements of selfhood (2004).

These canine biographies are not absolute, but dynamic and evolving, in relation to other family members and in relation to the structures of family life, "biographical stories are always positioned, never complete" (Convery et al. 2008:39). Yet they remain coherent, offering an explanation and ordering of life. Into this anticipated order of life serious illness appears like an intrusion, a tear in the fabric of life and experience, which then needs to be fixed. An intrusion which brings with it "profound disruptions in explanatory systems" (Bury, 1982:169), creating anxiety.

Serious illness, of both human and canine, emerges and unfolds (Bury, 1982). In the case of *Sierra* she was regarded as having developed a chronic and uncomfortable spinal condition, precipitated by her jerking violently on the lead in the park. In the illness narrative there is attention to restrictions in her bodily movement and changes in her appearance.

She looks stiff and sore just now but she looks much, much worse. Its like the back end's not working at all. Although it's supposed to be all coming from the top half, from her shoulder blades.

(Susan, re: *Sierra*)

As well as the focal incident with the neck jerk, there is a gradual element to the chronic illness with *Sierra*, though Bury (1982) tends to perceive biographical disruption as a critical and more isolated event, Larsson and Grassman (2012) identify that recurring disruptions also threaten the biography. In the words of one of their participants, previously active and now disabled "Now I am nothing", he said, "that has been somewhat of a crisis" (Larsson and Grassman 2012:1165). Restrictions in bodily movement, and limitations in the capacity to express the self through action, are also implicated in biographical disruption,

indeed perhaps with regard to the canines, limited physical ability to express the self through action is even more pertinent, given their lack of capacity to express the self in words. The unexpected limitations on action, and changed appearance, are read against the family knowing of the canine and its ways. The emergent changes of serious illness are understood against both the established the ways of being of the canine, and against expected the ways of relating.

I don't think she's nearly as active as she used to be, she's definitely not as active as she used to be. She plods around a lot more and she leans against, it's funny, she actually walks up to Frank and nudges him to tell him that she wants a massage [laugh]. Because she never used to bother with Frank at all, but now she reckons he's quite good at massage. Either with the machine or him giving her a good rub. She used to hate it but actually since she's done her back in Frank's used it a couple of times on her, she actually, she asks for it now. (Susan, re: Sierra)

The biography of the dog is imputed to it, by the human family members, and the dog, by its actions, is seen to be reinforcing the new understanding of their life and identity. In the case of *Sierra* the new identity is that of an ailing dog, adjusting to the new conditions of limited physical expression, and seeking comfort.



Figure 1 – *Sierra* became an ailing dog, 12 February 2011

As Bury identifies (1982:169), “chronic illness, is precisely that kind of experience where the structures of everyday life and the forms of knowledge which underpin them are disrupted”. Though he was referring specifically to humans, in the case of the companion canines found here, serious illness also appears to be understood as a disruption to the life of the being. A disruption where the accustomed mode of life and living of the creature is compromised, and a new, and alien, understanding and way of behaving in the world is forced upon them. One of the formative questions behind this thesis was whether biographical disruption as a concept would be applicable to nonhuman agents. The answer appears to be in the affirmative, albeit one of biographical disruption-by-proxy, in that “the disruptions of the taken-for-granted assumptions and behaviours” (Bury, 1982:169) are also found in the case of companion canines. In biographical disruption-by-proxy, illness leads to a disruption to the everyday framework of meaning which underpins family life, and this disruption is imputed to the canine companion, by the human family members. Also, as Bury found (1982), chronic serious illness is an emergent understanding. There is an ongoing process of interpretation, and reinterpretation, of affect and action.

The impact of the illness is not only physical, in the sense of *Sierra* having difficulty in getting on and off the couch, and being reluctant to move (Fieldnotes, 26 January 2011), but also touches on an emotional aspect, as the response, even need, of *Sierra*, to seek out comforting massage to sooth herself, is assumed. Combined with this are changes in the ways that other family members, human as in the case of Frank, and nonhuman, as in the case of *Kari*, relate to the companion as *Sierra* becomes seriously ill.

She's growling quite a lot, yeah, she's having a growl at Sierra quite a lot actually. Whenever Sierra's coming up to her, she's constantly growling. And Sierra at the moment's not able to change position very quickly as well which isn't helping, she's having to take the long way round to change direction and Kari isn't enjoying that either. Because she's too close to me and she's moaning at her and she's grumping at her. So yes, I think there's definitely a wee bit of a power shift going on, Kari is wanting to be the top dog. Which is quite funny because she's clearly forgotten that Sierra is capable of pinning her to the wall [laugh], but I think Sierra's the case of 'd'you know actually I'm too sore and I can't be bothered at the moment'.

(Susan, re: *Kari* and *Sierra*)

Relationships are strained as *Sierra* becomes increasingly unwell, and they need to adjust, the “illness thus meant not only a disruption of structures of explanation and meaning, but also of relationships and material and practical affairs” (Bury, 1982:175). *Sierra* had changed patterns of walking and activity, eating and social standing within the family (Fieldnotes, 12 February 2011 and 17 September 2011). Whilst some relationships with the ill companion became more distant, as in the case of tensions between *Sierra* and *Kari*, other relationships become closer. *Sierra* developed an increasing attachment to Susan. When I witnessed them as a family, invariably *Sierra* was beside Susan, and demonstrated extreme face gazing, she would stand and stare at Susan for several minutes (Fieldnotes, 2 April 2011). Often she was up on the human couch (where *Kari* and *Ted* did not go) leaning upon Susan, or lying against her feet. There was extensive physical contact between Susan and *Sierra*, which contrasted with the very limited physical contact of the other family members with *Ted*, who spent the time largely alone in his basket. In a three hour interview session there could be no physical contact with *Ted* at all from the humans, and very limited and occasional contact with him from the other canines (Fieldnotes, 17 September 2011). The extensive contact with *Sierra* also contrasted with the lesser degree of contact, and interaction, with *Kari*, who spent most of her time on the floor going between family members, human and nonhuman, and frequently attempting to initiate play (Fieldnotes, 12 February 2011 and 17 September 2011).

You know, Kari at the moment goes to Connor but. Since she [Sierra] has hurt her back she had been attached to me. I cannot get off the couch without her going where ever I am going. I think it is because when she was a pup and she was really unwell, you know, I was the one who was dealing with her all the time and I think. It's just she knows that's where the comfort is.

(Susan, re: *Sierra*)

This change in relating, and intensity of interaction, is explained as being meaningful from within the context of the family, and with reference to *Sierra*'s biography within the family. Part of the power of the concept of biographical disruption is that it enables a re-conceptualisation of illness as a disruption in the social frame, which these shifts in the ways of relating to different family members calls attention to.

The changes, and the new limitations, brought about by chronic serious illness evoked a questioning of the taken-for-granted assumptions and a mobilisation of resources in the face of the new order (Bury, 1982). There were special diets and changes in walks, sometimes to the extent of carrying the canine outside or preparing special routes and pathways. There were also changes in sleeping arrangements and feeding routines, these aspects are explored more fully in Chapter 9. Suffice to say for now that these everyday structures were disrupted. Serious illness was regarded as disrupting the physical aspects and expectations of being, and interwoven with this, was an understanding of serious illness as affecting the emotional and mental being of the companion canine negatively.

He became quite depressed you know he was just lying there and obviously not a happy bunny, but although he seems to have lost it in one eye. At first he still had a bit of sight so he just wasn't quite right.
(Susan, re: Ted)

The canines were regarded as being possessed of a subjective inner world, and of understanding when things were not as they 'ought' to be. That is when they were not healthy and living in happy circumstance, as it was anticipated that they should. The canines were assumed to respond to disruptions to the proper order of things, with awareness, sadness, and regret.



Figure 2, *Ted* became depressed and withdrew from interacting with others, *Ted* and *Kari*, 12 February 2011

This is not detached intellectual knowledge, but more a type of 'ken', reminiscent of a shepherd's or stockperson's pervasive and subtle knowledge of their livestock, born of a depth and duration of interaction (Convery et al., 2008). This 'ken' seems to be a deep knowing based on intimate knowledge and experience of the animal, and its ways of moving and being, over time. Perceived changes in the canine are read against this knowing.

Yeah, yea, he's not, put it this way, I think, You know, when you live with them, you know yourself, when you look at them you know. People say when you see them every day you don't notice things, but I have to say I do notice with those two, you know, but for me a lot of it is because they've slowed down and that for them is not normal. Whereas with the dogs outside, they're just, you know, hyper all the time, whereas with these guys I tend to notice the slowness.
(Margaret, re: Mitch and Sally)

Because *Mitch's* cancer, and *Sally's* heart condition, has rendered them slow, Margaret believes that she now notices lots of small changes, but the fact remains that she notices them because she is looking. Vigilant and aware, she is alert for changes which may be related to their chronic illnesses, she is looking for indicators, clues, as to their wellbeing.



Figure 3, *Mitch's* cancer and *Sally's* heart condition has rendered them slow, and their owner begins to notice lots of small changes in them, *Mitch* and *Sally*, 29 March 2011

This searching for clues to the canine's wellbeing is exasperated by the canine's inability to communicate in human spoken language. In the words of Irma;

You do worry about them though, don't you Maria?

(Irma, re: *Braxton and Zayne*)

In the face of serious illness the voicelessness of the companion is a source of tension, for the owners. Because the canines could not communicate in spoken English, the attempt to know what is going on with the companion, was problematised. The canine companion could not communicate in words how they were feeling, whether or not they were in pain or experiencing an increase in symptoms, this canine voicelessness fuelled the human watchfulness.

Yeah. We were watching everything because we thought we can't tell, he can't tell us so the only thing, you're trying to read the signs. You know, you're trying to think, 'is he just tired now', you know, 'is he going down'.

(Rebekah, re: *Rusty*)

Just because the animal cannot communicate in words did not mean that the companion canine was regarded as having no thoughts, or feelings, about their illness to communicate to the owner. They were not regarded as soulless Cartesian machines, who merely mechanically twitched, but rather as creatures with a mental and subjective life, who were able to offer signs of their discomfort (Rollin, 1989; Sanders, 1999). It was assumed that they had insight into what was happening to them, and an awareness of their new, and more limited, existence.

So far as exercise and everything else, she's pretty much back to normal but you can see her recognising that when she does too much, she just slows down, whereas before she would just have kept going. So whatever it is, is definitely working and she definitely knows that there's something not quite the same. But the thing for me is, that I've noticed is, that now she's become a lot more clingy, you know. You know, wherever I am she's got to be, she doesn't even like it at night now when I go through there, she'll sit at the door – she doesn't whine because she knows that I won't come back and open the door for her, because they don't get through there, but that's very unusual.

(Margaret, re: *Sally*)

The canine companions are not regarded as, creatures without consciousness, but are assumed to have both an awareness of their condition and a will to communicate it. Winston actively enquired of his companion when she fell during their walk, and expected a response, whilst simultaneously being aware that this was incongruous.

She was off the lead and she was running around and then she came back to me and then suddenly she fell, she just suddenly went down in a wee heap, and she struggled to her feet and started going round in circles. And I found myself saying 'Rose what on earth...?' you know, actually speaking to her 'what is wrong with you?' you know. And she was looking at me, but she was still walking round in circles and looking at me. And then she kind of collapsed again. So I had knelt down with her and I'd held her head and stroked her head and said 'you'll be alright, you're going to be fine' and I thought. Her eyes were very glazed, very glazed.

(Winston, re: Rose)

This level of insight, being aware of an incongruity in his, as a human, asking Rose, as a canine, what was wrong, was unusual. It was more typical for the human family members to interpret directly for the thoughts and feelings of the canine companion. Usually the humans would speak for the canine, which Sanders (1999) suggests is a similar phenomenon to human caretakers speaking for the thoughts, and feelings, of severely disabled children, that cannot use human language.

He then decided he wasn't going to eat that food. I think he felt himself he was sicker and he was blaming the food. So he just refused to eat it at all. He was still hungry because he would go straight into the girl's dishes after they were finished. So, I mean, he was still looking for food, but he had got it pretty much in his head that this, whatever it was that was in this food, was making him sicker than he was, so that was him.

(Susan, re: Ted)

Susan speaks, not only for Ted's actions, also for the thought process and meaning that are invested in them. In essence here the canine companion becomes a voiceless other in the subject to subject exchange. Bekoff (2006) suggests that companion animals are voiced, but that their voice is disregarded

or denied. This is an intriguing suggestion, yet I would point out that either way, be it lacking voice or denied voice, the companion animal is effectively a voiceless other in the intersubjective exchange, though still part of the exchange.

It is a particular feature of animal-human interaction, “that the interactants are members of different species and the animal partner lacks the ability to use human language” (Sanders, 2003:417). However, infant humans also lack the ability to use human language and their mindfulness, thoughts and feelings, are inferred from bodily action and facial expression. I would suggest that being a voiceless other may facilitate the animal being regarded as an infant, since it cannot contradict the interpretation given to its actions by the adult human family members. Also the voicelessness of the canine, like the absent voices of the deceased children in Owens et al.’s study, means that the narratives of its life and experience are not told in the first person of the canine, and this is a feature that will “distinguish these accounts from straightforward illness narratives and mark them out as extraordinarily complex reconstructions” (Owens et al., 2008:239).

Voicelessness seems to be a particular issue under conditions of possible suffering at the threshold of life. Under these conditions the owner may watch particularly intently, trying to discern what is going on and speaking for the apparent, implied, intent of the companion.

Oh I just was... I couldn't sleep, you know, I thought I can't wait to phone the vet tomorrow, because I would look at her and she was looking at me as if... I know she wasn't pleading with me, but she was telling me, you know, her eyes were showing me that she was... she wasn't the dog that I knew, she had been damaged by whatever and I just thought 'this has been a stroke or something like that'.
(Winston, re: Rose)

There is frustration with the companion’s inability to say what is going on in human language, but the conviction that communication, indeed rapport, is there remains. Even in the face of apparent brain damage, Winston is convinced that *Rose* is still in communion with him. That she is expressing to him what has happened to her and that there is a mutual understanding between them. In lay

terms it could be said that the relationship is deeper than words, which itself is interesting terminology, as there is an implication that communication, in its less superficial aspects, is non-verbal.

Human language is not the only mediator of consciousness, but in the absence of human language there is a risk that speaking for a voiceless other may lead to an assumption of their wishes, or even the projection of the human's thoughts and feelings onto the companion. The companion cannot verbally resist a human projected intent by saying, 'that is not what I mean'. Indeed Mead (1934) contended that consciousness on the part of the canine companion was a projection of the human. With this greater ambiguity in the intersubjective exchange caused by canine voicelessness, there may be increased potential for misinterpretation, and also, perhaps, increased opportunity to project that which is desired. Whilst being unable to communicate in human language may distance the companion from their owner on the one hand, in that they cannot express thoughts and feelings in a direct linguistic way, it may close a perceived distance on the other. By not verbally resisting thoughts and feelings imputed to them, it is possible that the canine may be regarded as more closely reflecting the ideal characteristics of a companion, and represent a more perfect love. Freud, who placed animals outside culture (1948), also considered his own canines to embody the highest form of friendship (Marcus, 2007). Canine voicelessness may reduce distance with the human, even if this increased presumed closeness is based on an unproven affinity of thought and emotion.

Whilst arguing that the companion canine can be understood as a voiceless other in the intersubjective exchange, this does not mean that they make no sound, the canine participants had a range of vocalisations. Yet being unable to use human spoken language does close down one of the principal modes of displaying selfhood, one of the ways of showing that you possess an inner subjective life. But it does not close down the possibility of being a subject entirely, subjectivity is born in interaction (Mead, 1934), and as Goffman observes, "face-to-face interaction has its own regulations; it has its own processes and its own structure, and these don't seem to be intrinsically linguistic" (1964:136).

6.4. *Subjectivity*

Currently, to my knowledge, there is only one theoretical model within contemporary Sociology of the pre-requisites for a nonhuman self, being Professor Leslie Irvine's four part model, based on William James' (1890) explorations of the subjective self. Irvine (2004a; 2004b) proposes that selfhood is an emergent, rather than innate, phenomenon, and, in agreement with Kristeva (1989), though without obvious reference to her, Irvine also situates selfhood as a pre-linguistic capacity. Once the self becomes a pre-linguistic capacity, it is theoretically possible for both humans and nonhumans to share the machinery of consciousness, which can then, like the branches of a tree, be developed in different directions. By situating the self as a pre-linguistic capacity, it is possible to avoid an, arguably over reliance, on language (Irvine, 2004a; 2004b).

Avoiding the reliance on language also softens Mead's (1934) arguments against animal consciousness, which for Mead requires a self-referential awareness, which he understood to be a prerequisite for language. Animals, by Mead's (1934) reckoning, have no self-referential awareness, and therefore can only have a more simplistic stimulus response style of interaction. This stimulus response style of interaction he calls a conversation of gestures, which "does not carry with it the reference of the individual, the animal, the organism to itself" (Mead, 1934:145). This conversation of gestures then, is of the same ilk as the shrinking of a single cell organism from a toxin or hot coal, as without a self there is no complex consciousness, only action and reaction, without consideration. Irvine (2004a; 2004b) directly contradicts this aspect of Mead and proposes that nonhumans may indeed have a form of self-referential consciousness, which Irvine (2004a; 2004b) refers to as coherence, "meaning that you understand yourself as a physical whole that is the locus of agency" (Irvine, 2004:9). Coherence is involved in defining the boundaries of the self, and, crucially in terms of self-reference, Irvine (2004) explicitly relates coherence to naming and identity.

All the canine companions in this study had their own individual names, and were understood as subjects rather than objects. All the human participants, without exception, regarded the canine companions as being possessed of a self; having thoughts, feelings and intentions of their own, and as experiencing a rich inner life, with desires and preferences. The companions were understood as being capable of experiencing both joy and sadness at their circumstances, and as having a degree of insight into their experience. The companions were universally regarded as having a rich subjective aspect to their being, and understanding themselves as agents, and as the author of their own actions.

When she was with Andrew she was a shoe dog. [Doggy crying sound] and she was told that [to dog: you're not allowed to go for shoes!] [laugh] But it's funny, when she's had enough at my dad's house [Doggy crying sound still] she starts this whinging and then she starts throwing my feet up and going for my shoes. As if to say 'come on, it's time to go' [laugh]. So it's like 'right I'm going to be a pest until you make me go home' [laugh]. (Susan, re: Kari)

Not only is *Kari* expressing her intention to leave, she is making efforts with her action, to communicate her intention to Susan. *Kari* appears to understand that her person and Susan's person are distinct and separate, and that each of them is the author of their own action. If she did not understand Susan as a separate person, why would there be the attempt to spur Susan on to activity. *Kari* is attempting to influence her. More than this, going for the shoes is a meaningful action. Shoes are a tool of walking, and walking is a way of leaving. Agitating the shoes is suggestive of a desire to walk away. In this instance both Susan and *Kari* are occupying a shared frame of interaction (Goffman, 1974).

The canine is understood as exhibiting agency, having preferences and owning their own acts. Of the four features of selfhood that Irvine (2004a; 2004b) proposes the first is agency, that is displaying this kind of understanding that you are the author of your own actions, and appreciating that others are the authors of their own actions. The suggestion is that this going for the shoes, is not stimulus response reaction, as Mead proposed (1934), but an awareness, however nascent, of having your own subjectivity, and the impact of your actions upon the subjectivity of another.

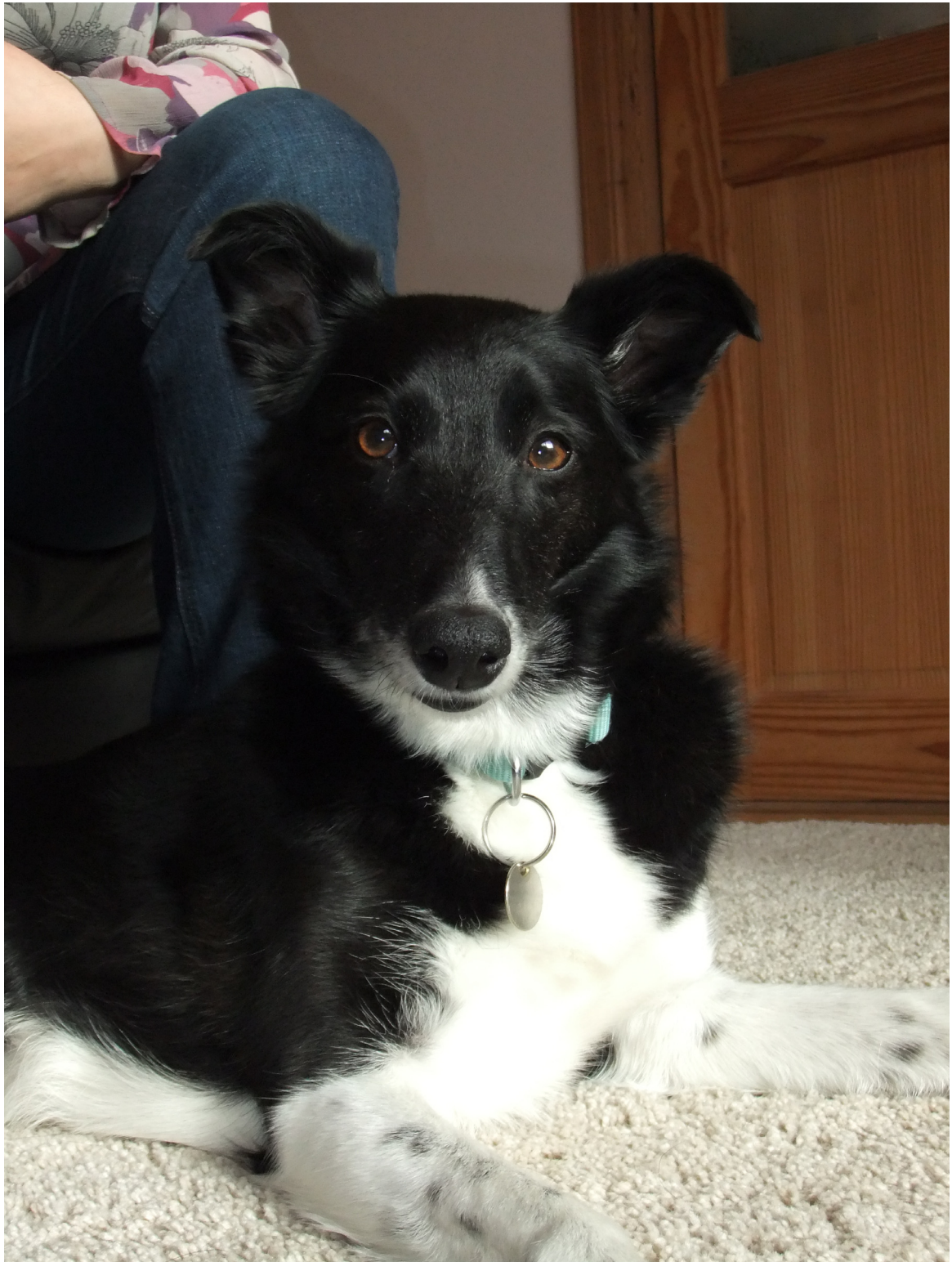


Figure 4, *Kari* was understood as being possessed of agency and being the author of her own actions, 12 February 2011

To be the author of your own actions, you need to own your personal intentions, responses, and feelings, with regard to what is going on around you. The data is replete with examples of individual canine preferences and selective responses.

Susan Oh to be fair when Sierra was younger she would run around quite a bit in the house. She wasn't overly bothered with toys. Sierra has never really been overly bothered with toys but she likes to run around and come back and forward between people...

MD I mean you have quite a large collection of toys.

Susan Yes.

MD Have you always had a large collection?

Susan Em not really no but it seemed to grow with Kari (laughs). She likes her toys. Kari loves her toys.
(Susan, re: Sierra and Kari)

Whilst both of the companions enjoy play, there is personal preference in the kind of play that each canine participates in. These differences are regarded as being internalised parts of the persona, part of the identity, of each particular companion. *Sierra* is more people orientated and *Kari* enjoys toys. These described characteristics are not simply assumptions, not mere projections of personality by the human owners, as Mead considered them to be (1934). The field data supports qualitatively, and quantitatively, different modes of interaction being displayed by each companion.



Figure 5 – *Kari* displayed a preference for toys, *Kari*, *Sierra* and *Ted*, 12 February 2011

At no time did *Sierra* initiate or engage in play with myself, she was indeed more people focused, or more precisely focused particularly on the person of Susan, who she was almost constantly beside (Fieldnotes, 26 January 2011).



Figure 6 – *Sierra* was almost constantly beside Susan, 12 February 2011

With the exception of coming to greet me when I arrived at the home, and a very occasional brief interaction with another family member, *Sierra* preferred to interact with Susan. In contrast *Kari* sought interaction with me, and others, on every occasion I was there. *Kari* would also play with me, offering and sharing toys, extensively during a visit, sometimes for in excess of an hour on a single occasion (Fieldnotes, 26 January 2011, 12 February 2011, 2 April, 2011, 17 September 2011 and 3 December 2011). These preferences form part of the identity of the companions, and this “identity is both the basis for and the consequence of interaction” (Sanders, 2003:409).

Not only the preference for toys, but play itself is indicative of subjectivity. To be able to play, a social actor must first be able to recognise the difference between, for example, play fighting and actual fighting, and be mindful of the norms surrounding each activity (Goffman, 1974). The actor must be able to recognise

and respond appropriately to activities with different meanings, to be able to distinguish between play chase from real chase. As for example in *Kari's* play games with me of competing for the toy, had the game been real there would have been more aggression between us, and there would have been no willing relinquishing of the toy at the end, in order to begin the game anew.

To initiate play the companion first has to signal to another actor the meaning of their actions and frame the interaction as a non-threatening act, in order to provoke playful interaction with another being. All this requires sensitivity to meaning and mindfulness. As Goffman (1974) observed, with regard to the play chasing and attacking of otters, animal play demonstrates agency. Not in the primary sense that play makes meaningless activity meaningful, rather “play activity is closely patterned after something that already has meaning in its own terms – in this case fighting” (Goffman, 1974:40). As he further observes, “another point about play is that all those involved in it seem to have a clear appreciation that it is play that is going on .. and furthermore, that it is play in a sense similar to what one thinks of as play among humans” (Goffman, 1974:40-41). The otters are able to understand, and to signal to each other, that it is play, and not real fighting that is going on, and they share this framework of meaning during play.

The preferences of the companion canines ranged from the bodily, such as preferred places for sleeping, and preferred foods, to the more intellectual, relating to modes of interaction and play.

Cause often now she sleeps in here at night, I mean, but that's up to her, or she sleeps in her bed, she often chews on her, I'll show you her pillow, that she often sucks on. (Olga, re: Pandora)

She wasn't all that interested in television to be honest, she preferred music and a discussion or something. (Winston, re: Rose)

These aspects of the companion are displayed, by the choices they make regarding playing, with or without toys, and where, and beside whom, they rest, sleep and walk. These are attributes particular to the individual, the physically

localised person of the companion, and they are expressed by the innumerable interactions between the canine self, and other family members. Overall these innumerable pebbles of micro-interactions, and the consistency of the companion's actions and reactions within the patterns of these micro-interactions form a cohesive pattern, suggestive of a subjectivity and a self-concept. In this I would echo Mamo's (1983:170) words that "when I speak of self-concept, I mean the organization of attributes that have become consistent over time. Organisation is the key to understanding the self."

This organisation is explored more deeply in the coming section. First there is an issue with terminology that needs to be addressed, an issue with which phrase to use, self, persona, identity, or personality. Each term comes with its own assumptions. Personality seems to speak to a psychologically informed phenomenon, a pre-existent individuated construct. Part of the problem with this term is that it speaks of a something that is largely assumed to exist for every human. Whether that human is raised in a family, an institution or on a remote island with little interaction with others, they are still considered to be possessed of, to have, like an object, their own personality, in a largely fixed sense. The matter is simply not so certain in the case of companion canines, therefore that term will be little used here. Self, persona, and occasionally identity, will be used to describe this something, this constellation of attributes, that is particular to each canine.

Within the family contexts found here the canines were understood as enselved, even ensouled. In this respect the findings of this study echo Sanders results, from his exploration of human and companion canine relations, that "owners attribute individuality to their dogs" (1999:26). The companions were regarded as fully subjective beings, and related to, and valued, as such. For the canine to be regarded as less than a full subjective being, as replaceable, more like an object, was strongly resisted.

I said 'I don't want another dog' because I was quite upset of them even offering me. I says 'how can you do that, we're still mourning for Brandy?'. Because, d'you know, it's something that might be interesting, I used to laugh at people that spoke to their dogs as if

the dogs were sort of human, part of the family. I used to laugh at them. So see when we got Brandy and that, I spoke the same way. I started to speak to her as if she was one of the family and oh. 'Hi Brandy, had a nice day?'. But she became part of the family.

(Matthew, re: *Brandy*)

Matthew came to see *Brandy* as a family member gradually, and this transformation in his understanding of the canine emerged from their relationship. As Irvine (2004:7) points out, canine subjectivity flowers over time, as if it is being built up by the ongoing interactions, “with repeated or sustained interaction, people began to explore more facets of the animal’s character and capabilities” (Irvine, 2004:7). However, despite the strength of this emergent subjectivity, I would suggest that the place of the companion canine within the family, notwithstanding the insistence of many of the humans that the canines are full members, is more precarious than that of the humans. Building upon a passing comment made by Sanders, that “caretakers come to regard their dogs as virtual persons” (1999:38). I would propose that the idea of a *virtual person*, can be drawn forth and used as a way of understanding the nature of a companion animal’s position, and personhood, within the family context. That is *virtual*, in the sense of lacking formal status, but having personhood in practice, rather than *virtual* as being related to computer simulations of reality.

Animal identity is heavily context dependent. The keepers of livestock and abattoir workers in Wilkie’s study (2005), regarded the animals as objects, and this objectification was seen as normal. In contrast the owners of companion animals in Sanders’ study regarded their companions as subjects, with their own identity and person (1999). In light of this I would suggest that the companion canines in this study can be helpfully understood as *virtual persons*. Their personhood, whether or not they have their own inner creative psychological life, is instrumentally dependent upon the quality and context of the human-animal relations in which they find themselves. The *virtual person* of the animal does not have personhood in the same taken-for-granted, and more robust way, that the human family members do. The animal may more readily be rejected, abandoned, or even destroyed, without these practices being associated with as high a degree of criminality, and other forms of social censure, that would be

applied to rejecting a vulnerable human person. In short, with regard to disposal, the virtual personhood of the animal is a precarious personhood, more vulnerable to the whim of the human owner. If the animal is not good it may be justifiably destroyed by a vet (Sanders, 1999).

Animal personhood can be conceived as a liminal state (Sanders, 1999), and as a fragile identity. Sanders (1999) would understand this liminal identity as being global, with the attendant fragility covering the entire expression of canine life. Though prior to this study I would have agreed with Sanders on this point, I would now, for reasons that will be explored more fully in Chapter 9, take a more conservative stance. I now understand the virtual personhood of a companion animal as liminal, but only in a particular aspect, specifically their identity is fragile with regard to euthanasia and disposal. Animals are more easily replaced and disposed of than humans. Unlike people, replacement animals can be readily bought, and the euthanasia of unwanted companion animals is legal in Scotland. Whilst the euthanasia of companion animals is legal, the euthanasia of unwanted humans, excepting those under 24 weeks old and still in utero, is not. Nonetheless, regardless of how, and in what aspects, the companion canine's personhood may be liminal, they are most certainly regarded by the human family members as being possessed of a self.

6.5. *The Companion Canine Self*

With the companions being regarded, and related to, as having a self, the question then arises, what form and shape is given to this canine self? The data does not suggest a random and unstable construct that shifts and changes with every interaction, but something enduring, though mutable, and with particular aspects. In short the data suggests something patterned. As with the seriously ill humans whom Charmaz's studied, "the self is organised into a structure" (1983:170), but what structure? What are the features, functions and dynamics of this nonhuman selfhood? This is an exploratory work and as such its results can only be regarded an initial sketch of an uncharted land. That said, in an unanticipated finding, I found that the data supports an emergent model that can be considered as a tentative map of the companion canine self, as this self is born in relation to the human owners and to society.

Irvine (2004b) proposed a theoretical model, the only one in the discipline, of the pre-requisites required for a nonhuman consciousness to be possible. As she refers to it these are “features of subjectivity”, which “make a good departure point for the study of selfhood among animals” (Irvine, 2004b:127). Irvine (2004b) argues that for a nonhuman consciousness to exist there would need to be; affectivity, coherence, agency and self-history. Whilst I find Irvine’s (2004a) model helpful, it is general and theoretical, and only address the ingredients that may be needed for a generic nonhuman consciousness to exist. It does not layout the shape or form a particular consciousness may take. It was Irvine (2004b) who inspired me with the idea that it may be possible to model a nonhuman consciousness (my reasoning being that if the pre-requisites can be modelled why not an actual consciousness?). However, my own model is not adapted from hers, but rather I have developed it on the basis of data-grounded theory. The model which follows here is an empirically founded one, and is, to my knowledge, the first modelling of a specific nonhuman consciousness within the discipline of Sociology. The emergent model of the companion canine self is a four-fold construct, being formulations of selfhood and kinhood, each with their enacted or latent aspects, which is summarised in Table 2 overleaf:

Table 2 - Aspects of the Companion Canine Self

Feature	Dynamic	Aspects
Enacted Self	displayed personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character, with wants, preferences, likes and hates. • Stable nature over time, individuated persona. • Outward and expressive action. Shared with family.
Latent Self	hidden personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private inner world, manifest only obliquely through dreams, phobias and mental illness. • Mysterious site of wild ancestral heritage. • Inward focus, not shared with family.
Enacted Kin	displayed public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the family dog, greeting visitors, walking in park, stories told of dog to others. • Not individuated, culture wide, pre-existent expectations and functions. • Outward expressive focus, relating to wider society.
Latent Kin	hidden public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The companion self, context specific role. • Emerges from rooting in particular family, adapts to and learns from context, sensitive and responsive to emotions, wellbeing and needs of other family members. • Intra-family focus, concerned with inward cohesion. Not connected to wider society.

6.5.1. Enacted Self

The first feature of the companion canine self is an Enacted Self. The Enacted Self is a cohesive matrix of behaviours and attributes, that is localised to the body of the companion from which they are expressed. This aspect of selfhood includes the preferences, likes and dislikes, already touched upon in the preceding section on subjectivity. This constellation of preferences, desires and wants, is stable over time. That is not to suggest that it does not develop or change, but rather that it is coherent. The persona of the companion, as expressed by their actions, sounds and expressions, is not chaotic or random. There are patterns. If companion canines are devoid of self-concept, how could

their agency have coherence? The very existence of patterns, which lead to consistency in action, and therefore predictability, is suggestive of a construct, a structure that organises the agency of the being.

The dislike of going for walks, as in the case of *Pandora* (Fieldnotes, 9 March 2012), or delight in walking for many miles with their human owner, as with *Rose* (Fieldnotes, 5 May 2011), are enduring preferences, attributed to the character of the companion. Liking or disliking toys, certain foods, sleeping places, all these desires and dislikes form a cohesive and coherent construct that can be understood as the Enacted Self, and this “self is organized into a structure” (Mamo, 1983:170). This aspect of selfhood is organised and stable over time and could be regarded as an individuated persona. The Enacted Self is shared with the family by way of outward and expressive action, and the companion canines are known to others as possessing a coherent and stable self.

Winston *Was Fred the footballer?*
Nathaniel *No that was Ryley.*
Winston *That was Ryley, Ryley right.*
MD *Ah.*
Nathaniel *They've all had very different characters.*
MD *What kind of characters?*
Nathaniel *Well, Ryley was very keen on playing football with his snout.*

Winston *Mm hmm and very good.*
Nathaniel *Very good, yes, could've made XXX (village name)*
Winston *Great ball control.*
Nathaniel *Yes, could've made XXX's football line up easily.*
Winston *Oh easily, he easily would've been the star player!*
MD *Oh gosh, oh well!*
Nathaniel *And speed too [laugh]!*
Winston *And the speed, uh huh. So that was one of the things. Fred was different in that he tried to, wasn't quite sure how to play with the ball [laugh], he was interested but never got the hang of nosing it around. Charlie wasn't the slightest bit interested but he was interested in squeaky toys. And if the squeak went he lost interest. And I had to buy them!*

Nathaniel *[Laugh]*
Winston *So he was the more toughy really. And he isn't the slightest bit interested in balls at all or in squeaky toys.*
 (Nathaniel and Winston, re: Charlie, Fred and Ryley)

This sense of a cohesive stable self with preferences and wants of its own, would relate to the second feature of selfhood that Irvine identifies (2004a; 2004b) that is coherence. Irvine's (2004a; 2004b) concept of coherence includes an understanding that you have a self that has boundaries, and this would embrace a self-referential awareness, that you know what you like and act accordingly, as in *Kari's* repeated efforts to initiate play. Implied in this self-referential awareness is the idea that others have a self too. The Enacted Self is expressed in relation to others, it is not an isolate. The football and toys of *Ryley* and *Fred*, are activities that they engaged in with other family members, who must be drawn in to share the game, persuaded to play.

This attribution of consciousness would also contradict Mead's understanding of animals being without self-concept (Mead, 1934), in that to make a plea to the consciousness of another it is necessary to have a frame of consciousness oneself. Indeed as Mead himself proposed, to appreciate another, a reference of 'I' is a necessary aspect, though it is not conceived of as an isolate of consciousness, but as one vitally embedded in society, for "one has to be a member of a community to be a self" (Mead, 1934: 39). This is consciousness as born in the social, not the individual. "For Mead, who we are, our 'selves', is not an attribute that we are born with, but one acquired over time through interaction with others" (Bauman and May, 1990: 22).

This attribution of agency to the canines was not only in the sense of their ability to respond appropriately to human initiated stimuli, such as the call for dinner time, but also in their capacity to initiate interaction themselves. For example, by going to stand in front of the kitchen cupboard where the dog food is kept at dinner time, or getting onto the chair beside the owner when they were eating, or by prolonged staring at their humans, in order to prompt the humans to give them food (Fieldnotes, 17 September 2011).

The Enacted Self of the companion was attributed with both a consciousness of their own, an awareness of others as separate beings, and sufficient agency to manipulate their owners for their own ends. This agency can even be to the consternation of their owner. As in the case when *Fred*, whom Frank used to

walk in the evenings, gave away the real destination of their walks, when, due a back injury, Frank's wife had to take out *Fred*, and he made a bee line for the pub, went straight in and picked up a beer mat to get his beer (Fieldnotes, 17 September 2011). Frank could no longer deny that he went to the pub of an evening.

In a final point on the Enacted Self, it is worth noting that the canines have a name. This naming also serves a cohesive function, it seems to call forth, and consolidate, the attributes and persona. As Sanders (2003:411) observes, "a major means, therefore, by which the caretaker solidifies the unique identity of the animal companion is by assigning the animal a name". In a press release researchers at St Andrews University announced their findings that wild bottlenose dolphins call each other by name, and that they consider that these names also serve a cohesive function between individual and group (BBC News Science and Environment, 23/7/2013). With regard to the companion canines studied here, the names sometimes echoed the identity of the animal, a boisterous name for a strong and boisterous male puppy, a delicate name for a small delicate manicured lapdog.

There is a slight curiosity with the names, though I have no explanation at this time, almost all of the canines in this study had original, pre-anonymised, names that were 'human' names, rather than those peculiar to canines, such as Patch or Snowie. I suspect that there may be a shift afoot culturally in Scotland, whereby companion canines are increasingly being assigned 'human' names. The only nonhuman names that were encountered, were those of historic canine companions, from the past, perhaps the companions are being increasingly humanised. But they are not human, no matter how much they may enact a self reminiscent of our own, they remain canine, it is not a human on four legs, but something other that lurks beneath the fur.

6.5.2. Latent Self

What are we touching when we touch the physical body of a canine companion? Our hand pushes against fur and flesh, meeting resistance in space, but what is within the boundary of form, and can it be known? As has been explored in the

preceding section on subjectivity, Mead (1934) declared that animals, particularly canines, were not subjects, therefore, by default, they must be objects. It is easy to assume that this is somehow a lessening of their mystery, but Mead's (1938) understanding of the form and function of an object is intriguing. Mead (1938), in talking about physical objects, argues that they are not merely seen, but are also hidden. In the words of Randal Collins (1989), as he explores this lesser known aspect of Mead's thought; "objects have insides; and these insides are forever beyond our visual, or even tactile access. That is, if we cut an object open, we still see only a further surface, which has yet a further inside" (Collins, 1989:11). We understand objects, Mead (1938) argues, by projecting ourselves into their role of resistance to the outside world, by projecting ourselves into them, and attempting to understand their mystery through our own.

Identification of the individual with the object is the condition of the individual appearing in his [sic] experience as an object and has the importance which this indicates. It follows also, that this content of the things is one which is never found in the analysis of the object but is always projected into the interior of the part reached by the analysis and with which again we identify ourselves. Analysis of things never gives us anything more than new surfaces and contours. The surfaces are there, while the inner resistance is something that is supplied from the individual. In supplying it, the individual himself [sic] becomes an object.

(Mead, 1938:428)

This is a remarkable aspect of Mead's (1938) theory of mind, and one which, I would argue, has implications for an understanding of canine mind. There is a quality of unknowability that is also encountered in the canine companion, in those moments when the owner looks at them, touches them, sits still and listens to their breathing and wonders. They do not encounter the Enacted Self at these moments, but they seem to be searching, and to sense a hidden being that lurks beneath the fur.

Rowan *So they're unpredictable dogs aren't they really. They're animals at the end of the day, we try to make them into wee humans, we try to make them like wee children.*

Gregor *And they're not.*

Rowan *But they're animals.*

(Rowan and Gregor)

In their animality companion canines are other, different and strange. To Haraway (2003; 2008) it is this very quality of creatureliness that is the common ground between human and nonhuman, in an intermingling of fur, flesh and dirt. But to Midgley (1998) this otherness can also be the divide between us, their nonhumanness rendering animals beyond our ken, into a mysterious mass of fur and sinew. What are we looking at when we look at an animal, and moreover what is looking back at us (Derrida, 2008)? The Latent Self is this domain of otherness, that which cannot be subsumed into human knowing, what Lacan (1973) would call *the Real* and “this real brings with it the subject, almost by force” (Lacan, 1973:54). It is the private inner world of the companion, which manifests itself only obliquely through dreams, phobias and mental aberrations. This is the mysterious site of wild ancestral heritage, and within it there is a canine intelligence, an inward focus, that is not shared with the human family members.

We're not as clever as them, they can understand what we're saying but we can't always understand what they're saying.
(Nathaniel)

The Latent Self is the realm wherein dwells the Other, and the companion canine, as the psychoanalyst Paul Marcus points out “is more other than any human Other” (2008:652). There can be an assumption that that which is other is, by its very nature, alienating. But that is not necessarily so, as Midgley says, with regard to children, it is in part the otherness of the animals that draws us to them:

No animal is just a simplified human being, nor do children take them to be so. However friendly they may be, their life is radically foreign, and it is just that foreignness which attracts a child. (1998:118).

This attraction to the radically foreign can be seen in the fascination of the human owners with the content of their canine companions' dreams. As the humans wonder what form these canine dreams may take, “oh I'd love to know, I'd just love to know what they're dreaming about” (Irma, 11 February 2012). The owners wonder whether the canines dream of chasing rabbits, or of seeing off intruders, and this human wondering seems to be a response to their awareness

that there is a hidden aspect to the canine that they cannot simply know. The owners seem to recognise the otherness of this aspect of self, and respond with curiosity, to a realm of consciousness and experience that the human cannot readily enter or imagine (Fieldnotes, 17 September 2011, 12 February 2011, 11 February 2012). As Midgley, echoing Humphrey (1978) points out, there are things which make little sense unless animals can be possessed of some form of consciousness, and unless there is a striving in them to develop inner imaginative powers, of these aspects, “the most striking are dreams, play and the apparently unnecessary social interactions which constantly go on” (Midgley, 1998:141). Dreams suggest the active imagination of a subject, practicing the arts of life, anticipating and exploring experiences and how they may respond to them. Though dreams may be the most striking example of an inner imaginative life, there are also other tell-tale signs of strange mental processes.

He can be quite unpredictable, emm, he has some strange ideas which is kind of odd since we've had him since he was a puppy. He does not like furry things. Furry things worry him. You can't stand on furry things.
(Amanda, re: Fraser)

This peculiarity of person is seen as being immune to the moulding of socialisation, and alien to the family in which *Fraser* lives. These mental quirks are treated as evidence of a deep primitive self, the ‘The Wolf in Your Living Room’ (BBC, 1988), as popularised by the zoologist Desmond Morris.

It is as if there is a desire to maintain an aspect of the animal’s mystery, a desire to link the owner to the realm of the natural and organic, to perceive the spaniel in the living room as an echo of the primordial wolf who emerged from mist of the ancient past, a joint ancient past, where wolf, nature and human were one. As Fromm would say this desire to dwell with, and connect with, the past, is “essentially sentimental” (1964:36). At times this sense of the primordial otherness of the companion reaches even beyond the mysteries of the natural, into the prater-natural. The Latent Self contains abilities which transcend the civilised human, such as knowing when the owner is heading home from work, (Irma, 12 November 2011), or a superior awareness of passing time.

And in the morning its, I don't know, its like before the alarm goes off he knows the alarm's about to go off. And the two paws are up on the bed as if to say, and you know, trying to waken me up 'mum, come on, its time to get up'. Even on a Saturday! (Irma, re: Zayne)

There is a predictive quality here, a superior knowing. This capacity to know, by deep instinct (Amanda, 1 February 2011), and the profound sensitivity to time, is also seen around the dying of companions. Fellow companion animals in the home may behave strangely as a companion canine becomes unwell or begins to die, they may gather around them (Amanda, 13 September 2011), or offer them toys and comfort (Susan, 12 February 2011). The dying companion may also, by virtue of this deep primal self, themselves sense the approach of death and remove themselves from their families, as if they were a wild creature, withdrawing into the mist.

And the vet had said to me, she said 'Margaret, there's lots of animals do that' she said. 'I don't hear as many dogs, but cats certainly it's very common, when it's time for them to die they just disappear'. And she said, 'they literally just disappear'. She said 'it's a very strange phenomenon but there's lots of.' I mean, she's been a vet for all her life, and she said to me 'you know, people just say one minute they were there and the next minute they were gone'. And I said 'well that's exactly what Ray said', he said 'you know, he was there and I turned round and he was nowhere to be seen'. And he walked straight away, you know, I mean, Mitch wouldn't have run anywhere cause he wasn't able, so to me, you know, where did he go? (Margaret, re: Mitch)



Figure 7, one day *Mitch* just disappeared, *Mitch*, *Sally* their owner and her working dogs, *Rob* and *Zara*, 29 March 2011

6.5.3. *Enacted Kin*

The Enacted Self and the Latent Self are both aspects of canine consciousness concerned with the dramatization of the particular personhood of the canine psyche. They are concerned with the currents of singular individuality, either in its public outflowing, as in the case of the Enacted Self, or in its private pooling, in the case of the Latent Self. The critical point is that “the self is not something that exists first and then enters into relationship with others, but it is, so to speak, an eddy in the social current and so still a part of the current” (Mead, 1934:182). Neither the Enacted Self, nor the Latent Self exist as independent pre-existent artefacts, they are echoes, impressions in the sands of substance, born of the social, and carried, and contoured, by the physical being. The social genesis of aspects of canine consciousness becomes even more apparent in the final two categories of the model. Both Enacted Kin and Latent Kin are facets of the canine self, concerned with a public, pluralistic, personhood.

Enacted Kin can be understood as the aspects of canine identity pertaining to the role of the family dog. I would propose that to be a family dog is to enter a role, similar to that of the patient or student, with its attendant expectations and dynamics, in Goffman's words "the normative demands upon someone in [his] position" (1969:39). It is similar, not in its particular requirements, but rather in the sense that the expectations exist before the position is occupied by a specific individual, and that the presence and activity of the individual is carried and coloured by their occupancy of the role.

A family dog is expected to do certain things, but they are also expected to be a certain way, both in their actions and in the quality of their actions. In short the role frames both action and consciousness, and this framing of consciousness is referred to here as Enacted Kin. There is quite a sophisticated balance between behaving and being that is required. This is an outwardly expressive function of the canine companion, which relates it to the wider society, particularly in its capacity as a representative of the kinship group. For example the canine is expected to offer a friendly (but not too friendly) greeting to visitors entering the home.

*It's a warm welcome, its not one that we try to encourage but yeah,
you do get jumped on severely.* (Amanda and Samir)

Amanda and Samir distance themselves from responsibility for the potentially discrediting over exuberance of the greeting, as in the case of *Diesel* and *Mason's* energetic welcome of barking, licking and leaping upon me (Fieldnotes, 25 January 2011). This is despite the fact that I made no negative comment, and as far as I am aware no negative action, in response to the warm welcome, which I rather enjoyed. The mitigation was pre-emptive on the part of Amanda and Samir, heading off any potential discredit (Goffman, 1968). I would propose that this is because the role expectations require a warm welcome, but one without noise or leaping upon the visitor. This normative welcome can be seen in the ideal model of welcome, upheld by the behavioural adjustment case studies in popular psychologically/behaviourally based television programmes, such as *Its Me or the Dog* (2005) and *The Dog Whisperer* (2004).

In a more extreme case of normative transgression, *Rusty*, who was prone to attempt to mate with visitors, including myself, had his behaviour excused, with an explanation (Fieldnotes, 4 June 2011). In essence this excusing of discreditable behaviour is a face saving manoeuvre, to prevent moral blemish attaching to the family (Goffman, 1969), by them appearing to have an undisciplined dog who engages in socially unacceptable behaviour.

In the capacity of Enacted Kin the canine companion represents the group, the family. They are the focus of stories told to outsiders, which present a certain image of the family to others, and they are the contact point for conversation and interaction in parks, and on the street, with neighbours and strangers. In these interactions the companion serves as “a social conduit” (Higgins et al., 2013:237), facilitating interaction. Yet they are not only passive objects of conversation, the companion is expected to be a certain way, to have certain features to their nature. These required traits are focused on the values of pleasantness, approachability and friendliness. The companion is expected not to be messy, aggressive or antisocial, but rather to be playful and ‘good’, meaning non-aggressive, especially with children.



Figure 8 – *Rusty* presents an image of his family to others, 11 June 2011

In a very real sense the required mode of being for the companion is one which serves social interaction, and does not disrupt the flow of social action (Goffman, 1969) or bring discredit to the kinship group. In short the companion is expected to embody a personality which facilitates social interaction between the family and the wider society, and presents the family, in a favourable light, both in person and in stories and representations in social media.

Right, well that takes me back gosh to Blantyre when I was about seven or eight, and my next door neighbour had a dog, a big hairy dog, fluffy, hairy dog called Shari. She looked like a sort of Pyrenean Mountain Dog. A lovely dog, a very friendly dog, a very happy dog and we used to go walks with Shari, my friend and I, nearby, you know, cause it was safe back in the 1950s, early fifties [laugh] we took the dog for walks. So that was really my first introduction to dogs. I never had a dog of my own. (Winston, re: Shari)

However 2010 came and went and that was the February and Holly continued to wear her lampshade until the hair was all grown in and the wound had healed, and that was fine and then I could remove this. I was delighted because now I felt it was like a normal dog going for a walk with [laugh] but I don't think she was too happy, she got more attention from other people when she had the lampshade on! Yes, and 'how are you Rose?' and she would lap this up. (Winston, re: Shari and Rose)

The canines are social facilitators (Well, 2004), but also representatives of families, and are expected to make a good impression on behalf of families, by behaving in a non-aggressive and entertaining way. The expectations are not individuated, but rather culture wide, pre-existent expectations and functions. One wonders if part of the extreme social censure of publically boisterous or aggressive dogs in Britain, is in part motivated by their transgression of these norms of behaviour, and by their not being disciplined, in the Foucaultian sense. The censure is extreme and breed specific (Cohen and Richardson, 2003), at the time of writing life prison sentences for the owners of dogs causing human fatalities are being considered by government (BBC, 6 August 2013), whilst fatality caused by cows meets a low key response (BBC, 15 May 2013). Attacks on humans in Britain by horses and cattle (which are more likely than canine assaults to lead to severe injury or death), do not draw the same social censure, or volume and tone of media attention, and do not have the same qualities of a

moral panic (Cohen and Richardson, 2003) that canine assaults do. These themes are explored more fully in Chapter 9.

6.5.4. *Latent Kin*

While in Enacted Kin there is an outward and expressive inter-group dynamic, in the aspect of consciousness referred to as Latent Kin there is an intra-group dynamic, concerned with internal group cohesion and pack consciousness. This aspect, like Enacted Kin, is also rooted in the public in that it is a gestalt phenomenon, built up of different role expectations and concerned with the group. However, it is not outwardly expressive in its dynamic, but rather a hidden latent force, that serves coalescence and intra-group unity.

When Rose came to me the second time Hassan said 'you'll find her a bit of a handful' you know, 'she's a very self-willed dog'. So when she came the next time, I was aware she was very active and lively and so on but, because I'm here on my own, I am, I'm a fairly peaceful kind of calm kind of person. Holly became a very calm dog and Hassan remarked on that. He would say 'I can't understand, she does everything you ask her to do, she does everything so calmly', and the times that she would get excited would be when she was going in the car or arriving at their house, you know, and always when I would take her to the kennels. The lady at the kennels would always say 'she's the liveliest dog I know' you know, even when she was nearly 14, but she said 'I wish I knew where she gets all this energy from?' So she was a lively dog but a calm dog at the same time, you know what I mean? She took this calmness and it was part of her life, and I think that's maybe a sharing of the animal for the owner becoming more like the owner, that's, I always maintain that. (Winston, re: Rose)

Rose had adapted to her new environment, not only in terms of adopting the required patterns of where to roam and where to sleep in the home, how to deport herself in public and the acceptable ways to await food (Fieldnotes, 5 May 2011). Even more than this Rose had assumed a way of being, calm and contained in her energy, that reflects the tone of the home, in its sober and tasteful décor, and the mode of being of her owner, an intelligent, orderly and composed man.

These are not behaviours that are explicitly taught, rather it is a way of moving, of holding oneself and of being, that is absorbed. In a sense the aspect of

consciousness that is *Latent Kin* could be understood as being reminiscent of Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus, that embodied way of being that makes the creature fit with their environment, it appears effortless and unassumed, but is actually absorbed from the many subtle social cues in the milieu. As Goffman (1974) points out these deep structurings of being can be hard to identify because they are so rooted, and it is helpful to look to the boundaries, the places of tension and flux, where they are likely to be more visible. One such boundary was the leaving of Irma's husband.

But this year, when my brother was down just before Christmas he said how calm he thought Zayne was, but he's quietened down an awful lot. [Doggy groaning] And he says 'he seems like a different dog', I said 'oh no, it's still the same Zayne!' but I've noticed in the last year he has really calmed down. Since my ex left I've noticed he has really calmed down, especially with me. I think because it's a calmer environment he's calm.

So normally I wouldn't allow him out where the kids were running around, but I was so proud of him Maria, honestly I was so proud because he was out, he was well behaved and he came up to my niece – my niece was eating something and I thought 'oh no' and I was sitting here and my niece was there, and he comes up and I thought 'oh no, do I grab him and put him in his cage?'. No he just sat beside her, and she put her hand out to pet him, he let her pet him. Then he sort of cuddled into her and she's thingmying his belly and everything, and my sister in law who was sitting there turned round and said. 'Can you imagine me doing that a year ago?'. She says 'no way, I would never have thought that possible a year ago.'

And I kept saying to him, when they all left, I says 'oh your mummy's so proud of you!' I was so proud of him. I've been a lot calmer, yeah. I've been a lot more relaxed yeah, not on edge, so yeah. And I definitely think that the two are connected, definitely think. And I think because Jack Russells do tend to have one master, and when he was here I think he was his master, he would only take a telling from him. (Irma, re: Zayne)

When her husband left the emotional tone of the home changed, and Zayne, and also *Braxton*, adapted, and made subtle changes in their way of moving and relating, which both was a response to, and itself helped alter, the overall atmosphere of the home, an atmosphere in the home which I had noticed on my first visit there (Fieldnotes, 12 November 2011). The aspect of canine

consciousness that is *Latent Kin* is context specific. It emerges from rooting in a particular family, and perhaps place, as the companion adapts and learns from the context, and is sensitive and responsive to the ways of being, and ways of relating, of other family members.

The virtual person of the companion animal was considered to possess an empathic awareness and to be able to respond to the human emotional state in a supportive way.

They come to you when you call, they do know what you are saying, they do know what you're thinking. My animals definitely know what I'm thinking, I know that, but then again they've been with you a long time, they get used to your habits just like you get used to their habits.
(Margaret)

Mead illuminated that mind is an eddy in the social current (1934), in the aspect of *Latent Kin*, the current of mind has an intra-family focus, and the dynamic is concerned with inward cohesion, the accommodation to habits and ways of your family, rather than the display of the group and connection to the wider society, as with *Enacted Kin*. Margaret also touches on another consideration, that the construction of canine consciousness is not a one way street, both human and canine are affected each by the other. As both are borne along in the currents of connection that forge their consciousness, for “beings do not pre-exist their relatings” (Haraway, 2003:6), whether they are a human whose self is birthed by the civilising forces of sapien society, or a companion canine whose self is born in a human-canine family.

The model of companion canine selfhood presents an understanding of the structure of a companion canine self as it emerges within, and is shaped by, the context of living in a human family and the wider society. The *Enacted Self*, is the stable nature with wants and likes, the *Latent Self*, is the hidden interior aspect, the *Enacted Kin*, represents the canine in the public role of the family dog, whilst the *Latent Kin*, speaks to canine consciousness as shaped by the immediate society and dynamics between family members.

6.6. *Canine Selfhood and Collective Breed Nature*

Within the family the companions were understood as having individual identity, regarding them as interchangeable creatures, was resisted.

You can't you see, you can't compare one pet to another. They all have different characters, all very different, the French Bulldogs. The baseline being that they're very affectionate, intelligent and, you know one just has nothing but joy. (Nathaniel)

However there is a tension here, though each companion is regarded as having their own personality, there are also considerations of breed, and the owners did speak to breed, which would represent collective, rather than individual, natures. For example, spaniels were regarded as being stoical and not showing pain (Margaret, 19 March 2012). This understanding, that there are characteristics of personality belonging collectively to the breed, exists in tension with the idea of each canine possessing a particular subjective self. Breed natures appeared to be used as a reference point, in relation to which the individual canine can be understood as accurately exhibiting the breed nature, or as deviating from it in particular ways. This relationship between individual personality and collective breed nature, varies not only in inter-subjective terms, with some canines being regarded as more closely shaped by the breed nature than others, but the relationship also varies in its intra-subjective features.

The same canine, as in the case of *Rusty*, can be thought of as embodying the stereotypical nature of the breed in some aspects of their personality, but not in others. *Rusty* was considered by his owners to be an exception to the collective breed nature with regard to the stereotypical Lhasa Apsos' dislike of men, which he did not display.

We decided we wanted a Lhasa Apso and there was one there [at the rehoming centre] and the woman said 'no he'll hate your husband, they can't stand men about, you know, they're jealous'. So I just said to Rebekah, 'look, if you want a dog get a puppy and we'll start from scratch' and that was it. The decision was made within a few days. I think taking you to the Dogs Trust made up my mind. Rekbekah says she wants a dog, we're not going to get one this way, we'll start with a puppy. (Ross)

By getting and training *Rusty* from a puppy, Ross believed he could overcome the breed tendency to be misandrous. The assumption being that the individual socialisation of the pup could counter his breed specific nature. But whilst *Rusty* was regarded as not being misandrous, like his fellow Lhasa Apsos, he was firmly considered to possess the sensitivity of feeling, and tendency to become despondent in the face of discipline, which is also seen as a personality characteristic of the breed.

Rebekah *He's just a baby, but at the same time he needs his discipline, and if we didn't do it then, you know, you could create a lot of problems for the future.*

Ross *But we don't shout at him.*

Rebekah *No we don't shout, they don't like it.*

Ross *They don't like it apparently, Lhasa Apsos, they get quite moody and depressed.*

Rebekah *They do, yeah.*

Ross *So we try and get him to turn round his behaviour and when he does the right thing you immediately give him a treat and thank him and plaudit him for what he's done rather than shout.*

(Rebekah and Ross, re: *Rusty*)

This sensitivity to raised voices and firm discipline is understood as being a breed specific attribute, and when, during initial training, Rebekah did have an episode of shouting at *Rusty*, his behavioural, mental and emotional response, was interpreted in light of the assumed breed specific psychological and emotional make up.

Rebekah *Well, he was upstairs and I couldn't get ready and he was just chew, chew, chew, chew and biting at my feet, biting at my bare feet and he was hurting me, and I shouted at him, I smacked his bottom and I shouted at the same time that he was a bad dog and he looked at me and then he flew out the bedroom into the spare room and it was back and forward, back and forward, but he was like. It was as if you had stung him, you know, just the way he flew out there and he was not at all happy.*

Ross *Didn't know what to do with himself.*

Rebekah *He didn't know what to do, it was like 'I canny handle this, she shouted at me' and they really do not like. They do get quite withdrawn when I shout at him.*

Ross *So we don't shout at him.*

Rebekah They don't like raised voices in general, but particularly to be shouted at. But I think, I don't know if you remember I was saying that that breed has a strong sense of justice. And if they think your shouting at them isn't merited, then they get resentful about that and they get depressed about that as well, you know, so we couldn't be a household of shouters, you know. There's no point in shouting at him, he doesn't understand why he's being shouted at. But he would just get quite withdrawn and think that was unfair.

(Rebekah and Ross, re: *Rusty*)

Canine selfhood is both enacted and imputed, *Rusty's* response to Rebekah's displeasure, is running away, becoming frantic then despondent. Whilst Ross speaks directly for the thoughts and feelings of *Rusty*, imputing to him an inner dialogue, in which the boundaries of self and other, as well as one's own emotional and relational limits, are understood. Whilst the idea of breed natures and collective identities is present, it exists in tension with the understanding of the companion as an individual being with their own unique subjectivity. This subjectification is by far the most potent force shaping the understanding of the companion and their place within the family.

Summary

Understanding companion canines as expressive authors of their own actions, who exist within the meaningful context of the families, makes it possible to conceptualise the existence of nonhuman illness narratives. The companions contribute to these illness narratives, which are recounted by the human family members, by virtue of their actions and expressions, which are born of the canines being embodied selves. Nonhuman illness narratives were found in profusion in this study. Moreover, the imputation of an anticipated lifecourse to the canine, by their human family members, in combination with the canine's own cycle of being, both sociological, in how they related to others and changes in their expression of agency, as well as their biological cycle, makes it possible to apply the concept of biographical disruption to the canine companions.

This can be conceptualised as biographical disruption-by-proxy, where there is a disturbance in the established modes of being, and anticipated lifecourse of the companion, with a particular emphasis on physical limitations, as physical actions are a primary mode of expression of the self in the case of a family member who cannot use human language. This disturbance to the taken-for-granted assumptions provokes an anxiety in the human owners, which leads to a hyper vigilance of their companion, looking and listening for the least change in behaviour or appearance, which may be suggestive of illness or dying. The state of watchfulness is exacerbated by the apparent voicelessness of the canine. The canine's inability to convey their feelings and thoughts in human language, does not mean that they were regarded by the owners as having no thoughts or emotions of their own. Universally the owners considered the companion to be possessed of a rich subjectivity, with feelings, thoughts and needs. Companion canine subjectivity is not as robust as human subjectivity, and can be helpfully conceptualised as a *virtual personhood*, that is dependent upon the canine's embedding in the family context.

The discovery of nonhuman illness narratives, co-authored by humans and nonhumans, and disrupted companion canine biographies, raises questions about the boundaries of subjectivity and the nature of the self. Subjectivity is understood as emergent, dependent upon the context, and coherent. Within the data there is support for a four-fold model of canine selfhood, as forged within a family. This model comprises the *Enacted Self*, the realm of character, with its outward focus and display of wants preferences and needs; the *Latent Self*, a private inner world, hidden and personal, only hinted at through dreams; the *Enacted Kin*, which is consciousness as forged by the identity of the family dog, an outward expressive focus relating to the wider society; and finally *Latent Kin*, where canine consciousness is moulded by intra-family dynamics. By being a *virtual person* within the family, possessed of a self, the companion is woven deeply into their context, and valued within it, and therefore their illness, or loss to the family through their death, is apt to provoke disruption, which is likely to have associated with it, and is itself another name for, suffering. It is towards this suffering, born of illness or loss, that the attention of this thesis now turns.

Chapter 7 ~ Interpretations of Suffering

Having explored the possibilities for a canine self in the preceding chapter, this thesis now addresses one of, perhaps even the most, compelling implications of the assumption of selfhood. That is that if you have a self it can be diminished, it can be strained, and it can be wounded, in short to possess a self is to, unavoidably, become subject to suffering. Even the human narcissist with their apparently iron clad immunity to the vicissitudes of being a person and a social creature, suffers secretly in their hidden selves (Masterson, 1990). To be an embodied being with selfhood and sentience is to potentiate pain. Only in an extreme Cartesian view, where animals are regarded as machines, without the capacity to feel or comprehend, would canines be regarded as unable to feel pain or experience suffering.

7.1 *Companion Canine Pain*

Inhabiting a social context far removed from the rituals of science that transform animals into objects (Arluke and Solot, 1997), the canine companions in this study were assumed to be capable of experiencing a wide range of suffering, including physical pain. Further, this suffering was understood as something to be avoided, indeed something that it was in the duty of a 'good owner', as a moral person, to eliminate or alleviate from their canines' experience. The human owners did not want their animals to be in pain, physiological or otherwise, and an everyday event, such as a trip to the vet for a routine sterilization, could elicit concerns regarding canine suffering, and with it the associated discomfort that these concerns called forth in the human owner.

- Ross *We were more concerned about how he was feeling.*
Rebekah *We didn't want him to be in pain or anything.*
Ross *And he's going about 'I'm alright now' [laugh]!*
Rebekah *Yeah, and he sometimes kind of has a wee lick as if to say 'I thought there used to be something there'!*
 [Laughter]
Ross *So after we saw her (the veterinarian) and she said he was healing well, I think we started feeling much more relaxed.*
Rebekah *We did feel better.*
Ross *Yeah, much better. (Ross and Rebekah, re: Rusty)*

Here companion canine pain stimulates discomfort in the human owners. The worlds of the human and the nonhuman are not entirely separate (Haraway, 2008), and the disquiet of one, disturbs the tranquillity of the other. In this case whilst *Rusty's* pain is, at least in part, physical, there is also the suggestion that he senses something missing from his body, and perhaps from his being. As Bendelow points out (1993), when suffering is initially considered it is the aspect of physical pain, as a consequence of either injury or illness, that tends to be highlighted first, and this form of suffering is also privileged, as the most compelling form of suffering and the most 'real' form of pain. Without exception the human owners in this study regarded their canine companions as being capable of experiencing physical pain, as a result of injury or illness.

Margaret She had an emergency hysterectomy about three years before.

MD Why emergency?

Margaret She was, I basically came home to find her on the sofa writhing in agony, so I just put her in the back of the car and took her in and that's what they said was the matter with her, so she just went in and had the operation straight away. (Margaret, re: Sally)

Manifestations of physical pain are regarded as indicative that something is wrong, and, in this instance, immediate action was taken to identify, and resolve, the underlying cause. *Sally's* pain here is definitive, regarded as undeniable, and constituting an emergency. But the companion canine pain encountered in this study, was not usually as definitive as in the case of *Sally*. Canine suffering was usually more ambiguous, it was harder for the owners to tell what was going on, the pain was not always clear.

Wee soul, and I think it's hard because they can't tell you how they feel, it's a guessing game all the time. (Ross, re: Rusty)

The human owners' ability to discern their companion's suffering is compromised by canine voicelessness, whilst a canine companion may moan or yelp in discomfort, they cannot describe their pain in human language. Pain is felt within the body, and needs to be expressed in order for it to be perceived by others (Hydén and Peolsson, 2002). As was found in the exploration of the

canine self, and discussed in the previous chapter, this voicelessness of the canine creates a tension for the human owners. In the case of possible pain, the human urge to mitigate canine suffering is given the status of an imperative. It is a requirement of the role of being a 'good owner' to minimise canine suffering, yet canine voicelessness frustrates the human owner's capacity to identify, and so to take action to alleviate, companion canine pain.

Spaniels are notoriously very stoical [laugh] so they have to really, really be in pain before they'll show you. So that is maybe slightly worrying because he may well be in pain and I might not know it, but equally I can't go inside his head to know that. But at the moment I wouldn't say that he's suffering in any way so that's all that matters.
(Margaret, re: Mitch)

Margaret touches here on the concept of pain as an internal, private experience (Hydén and Peolsson, 2002), which requires expression to be observed. Canine voicelessness is particularly problematic in the context of pain, given pain's importance interactionally and its significance to owner identity. Combined with this pain was regarded as being a critical deciding factor in the decision of whether or not to choose euthanasia.

My view is when they're in pain that's the time to, you know, call it a day.
(Margaret)

This laying of significance upon companion canine pain, its entanglement with owner moral standing, as well as it being a potentiating factor in canine euthanasia, makes the difficulties of discerning and evaluating companion canine pain even more fraught. A further complicating factor emerges, not from the owners' attempt to understand, and take appropriate action, with regard to canine suffering, but rather from the agency of the canine, potentially exploiting the interactional significance given to expressions of pain.

Generally the companions were viewed as being authentic in their expressions of pain, they were usually regarded as accurately and genuinely representing their subjective experience of physical pain, through their vocalisations and actions. But this was not always the case. The companions were understood

as being sophisticated in their appreciation of pain, and of the prominent place that pain was given within the interactional context. The canines were not viewed as merely exhibiting a crude stimulus-reaction aversion response to a noxious stimuli, as Mead (1934) suggested, but rather as engaging, creatively and expressively, in the display of pain, and manipulating the performance of their suffering for their own ends. In short, it was considered that sometimes the canines would deceive. *Pandora* would give demonstrations of psychological distress, freezing and sitting down, and refusing to move, to shorten an unwanted walk (Transcript, 9 March 2012), and *Sierra* would give prolonged displays of discomfort and moaning at home. These performances of pretend suffering could range in intensity from exaggerating a small physical discomfort, like an ache, to the outright faking of pain, with accompanying vocalisations, a refusal to move and facial and bodily displays of distress.

Susan *She was moaning and groaning quite a lot and she was, looking as if she was in an awful lot of pain and she was just not.*

MD *When was she moaning?*

Susan *Most of the day.*

MD *Really.*

Susan *Yes. She was just miserable.* (Susan: re *Sierra*)

Sierra's prolonged performances of pain were regarded by Susan as way of avoiding taking unwanted medication. Physical pain holds a privileged place in the interaction between the owners and their companions, attempts by the canines to manipulate their owners by using displays of pain, is suggestive of the canines being aware of the power of this display, and would represent a sophisticated grasp of interactional dynamics on the part of the canines. It suggests that the canines appreciate the significance given to pain displays and can, knowingly, manufacture a display to provoke the response in the owner that they desire. This would require the canines to have, at least a basic understanding that the human is Other, that the human has their own mind, separate from them, as well as the canine having an understanding of gesture, and a rudimental grasp of the meaning associated with pain gestures, in order to manipulate the meanings. Such an understanding on the part of the canines would represent a manifestation of consciousness far removed from the crude

stimulus-response basis of nonhuman gestures Mead (1934) assumed. Indeed, such an understanding is approaching the territory of a language of gestures, which would involve the capacity to apprehend, display and manipulate meanings. Even as humans can manufacture displays of emotion in order to promote an impression or to manipulate other humans (Hochschild, 1983).

To state that the companion canines can manufacture displays of emotion with regard to pain, assumes that the owners were correct when they declared that the canine pain they witnessed was not 'real'. I did not witness any of these displays of manufactured pain directly, and even if I had, I am uncertain how effectively one might distinguish 'real' pain from manufactured pain. Particularly as pain is, on the one hand, a subjective experience (Mennie, 1974), and on the other hand, "pain is, moreover, a contextual phenomenon, i.e. pain is interwoven with specific types of situations, actions or movements" (Hydén and Peolsson, 2002), rather than being a fixed object. Perhaps 'real' and manufactured pain could be distinguished by the type and tone of the gestural display? However, without more direct data this can only be supposition. Nonetheless, given that this phenomenon arose, independently and unprobed by me, at two of the ten research sites, it is tempting to assume that there may be some fire behind the smoke, and that some form, or degree, of manipulation may be present in a proportion of the performances of companion canine pain.

7.2 Non-physical Suffering and Loneliness

Whilst a contemporary Western understanding of pain is "dominated by biomedicine and concentrates upon the neurophysiological aspects" (Bendelow and Williams, 1995:140), the majority of canine suffering that the owners spoke of was non-physical. It remains the case that physical pain held a privileged place in the human-canine interactions, but it also mingled with non-physical aspects of suffering, such as disruptions in sociability, emotion or mind.

Rebekah He was always downstairs sleeping, but we felt because of what he'd been through and he had the cone on his head and everything, we would take him upstairs so we could keep an eye on him. He cried the whole night.

glance it appears as if a rule has been broken and the interactional structure between human and canine has been weakened, the high degree of intergration between canine companion and their owner, can make possible acceptable lapses, which do not then threaten the established interactional frame. In Goffman's (1974) terms these minor, informally approved lapses, actually reinforce normal functioning within an interactional frame, rather than being frame breakers. They support established practices of intersubjectivity rather than undermining them.

The third issue which leaps to mind, is whether permitting *Rusty* upstairs at night also served to alleviate the discomfort his owners were experiencing at having had him castrated. The sterilisation of a companion animal can cause stress, sadness and guilt for the owner (Cocia and Rusu, 2010). Rebekah and Ross had not particularly wanted to do this, and they were concerned that he was aware of what had been done to him and was missing that part of him which was now lost (Transcript, 15 October 2011). *Rusty's* subjectivity was regarded as compromised, he was now incomplete. Moreover, the discomfort of the canine companion impacted upon the owners, who were conflicted and concerned, the procedure and its effects had been disturbing to them (Transcript, 15 October 2011). In short, something which impacted the canine companion's subjectivity also impacted the human owners', this intertwining of human and canine, and its implications for wellbeing, are explored more fully in Chapter 9.

To return to the observation at the beginning of this chapter that to be a subject, rather than an object, is to open the door to suffering, there is a related consequence of possessing personhood that emerged from the data. To be regarded as having an inner creative subjective life, also means that your subjectivity may be perceived as being injured or malfunctioning, and aberrations of subjectivity may be interpreted from deviant behaviour and difficulties in intersubjective life. In short to be accorded the status of having a mental life, means that you may also be accorded the status of having mental distress.

In Midgley's words, "sentience is important because of the very dramatic difference it makes in the kind of needs which creatures have, and the kind of harm which can be done to them" (1998:90). To be sentient is to be subject to forms of pain without physical injury or bodily disease. Injuries to the sense of self and personal security, social and emotional distress, and trauma resulting from intense experiences, all become possible.

Amanda *Mason had to go, well he didn't have to, we decided that for his health reasons that he should be on tranquilisers for bonfire night. So he went on them about two weeks beforehand and he still barked at everything, he looked like a womble. He just looked stoned for a whole two weeks! But, in saying that, he didn't foam at the mouth, he did piddle in the kitchen a couple of times, that's fine, don't worry about it. In response to the fireworks, but he didn't howl, he wasn't hiding under things, he was quite happy just to sit beside you and have` a cuddle.*

MD *I didn't know he was like that with fireworks?*

Amanda *Oh he's dreadful, I thought he'd had a heart attack last year, he just collapsed and started foaming at the mouth and I thought I can't put him through that again.*

MD *What d'you think it was?*

Amanda *Shock, he's terrified, he just doesn't like, and of course, that had affected the little dog as well, wee Diesel. Nothing bothers him, but because Mason was frightened he was frightened, so he was hiding under the bed - his response isn't quite as bad. But certainly calmed him down a bit, not completely.*

(Amanda, re: Mason)

Mason's suffering is non-physical, he is understood as having an intense emotional reaction to the unusual sound of the fireworks, which is then translated into somatic symptoms of distress, with collapsing and foaming at the mouth. This experience is regarded as having caused such trauma to his inner mental world, that it led *Mason* to develop a phobia. For this to happen *Mason* would have to recognise the sound of the fireworks as unusual, and then ascribe to them a threatening meaning, to which he then had a violent emotional reaction.



Figure 10 – *Mason* was understood as having an inner emotional life and as experiencing emotional distress, 8 March 2011

To have an emotional life and affectivity, is one of Irvine's (2004a and 2004b) four prerequisites of personhood, and all the companion canines in this study were regarded as being possessed of their own inner emotional life. Having emotions makes possible new forms of suffering transcending the physical, "feeling and emotion cannot be reduced to the body" (Burkitt, 2002:152). In the case of *Mason*, having an inner emotional life made possible terror and trauma, of an order beyond physical distress. As with the humans in Chandler's study, there seemed to be operating, in the way that *Mason's* suffering was understood, "a clearly dualistic model of the body and of pain, with physical pain framed as different from and preferable to emotional pain" (Chandler, 2013:718).

Whilst, for both human and canine, being a subjective creature with an inner emotional life makes possible non-physical forms of suffering, it also makes possible forms of intersubjective relationship that are experienced, at least by the human, as valuable, beneficial and enjoyable. Further, in the sense that the

companion canines seek out the presence of, and seek to interact with, the humans, it is not unreasonable to assume that the canines may also enjoy relations with their human owners. Though given the gross power imbalance between human and companion canine (Arluke, 2006), such an assumption needs to be handled with care. Nonetheless, it emerges strongly from the data that a major aspect of companion canine ownership for the humans, is the condition of being together.

I did find them good company, it was nice coming home. I wouldn't have liked coming home to an empty house, you don't realise how much you appreciate them until you actually come into no human person, you know, not a human being here and you've got two dogs sitting waiting on you who are really pleased to see you, so it gives you something to focus on. But they were my only company which was nice. Someone to cuddle!
(Amanda)

Being together is both physical, in the sense of someone who is responsive to touch and can be held, and being together is also non-physical, in the presence and welcome of another being, preventing the home from being empty.

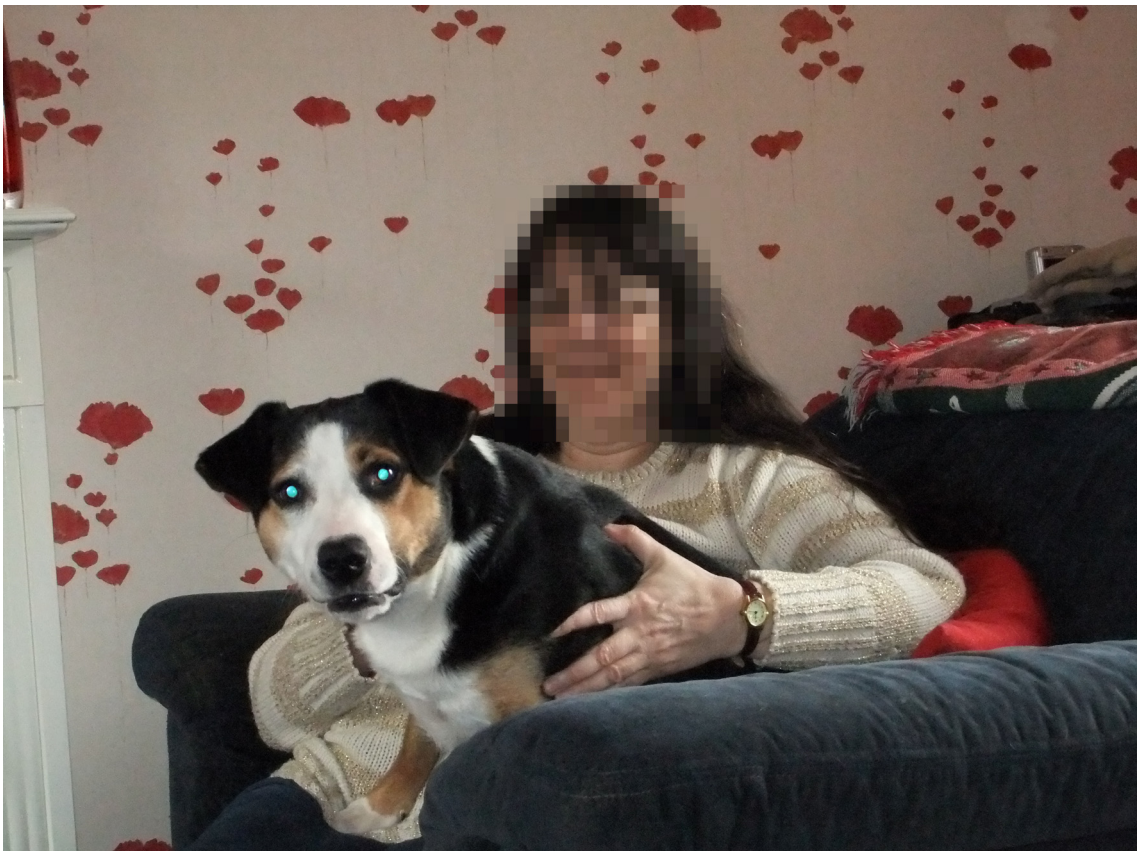


Figure 11 – Amanda found the companions presence stopped the home from feeling empty, Amanda and *Diesel*, 8 March 2011

The being together of the human and companion canine appears to be potent to assuage, defend even, against the existential loneliness of being for the human, to prevent them from being “absolutely alone and trembling on the brink of oblivion” (Becker, 1973:91). The human owners do not consider themselves to be alone when they have their canine companions, even if the companions are not physically present. In the words of Margaret:

You're not maybe chatting to them all the time, or you're conscious they're there. The fact is they are there, you know, so even although I'm through there and they're through here, I know that.

(Margaret, re: Mitch and Sally)

Being together, like Finch's definition of family (2007), or Morgan's emphasis on family practices (1996), is also an activity, more than it is a passive state. Being together involves both sharing physical space and a mutual participation in the routines of everyday life, these aspects of being together are explored more fully in Chapter 9. Being together also involves the shared involvement in activities within the home. The canines in Rowan and Gregor's household took part in both the social and spiritual aspects of family life.

But they used to sit through prayer meetings and bible studies, the pair of them, they would just lie and sleep, and they must have been touched by it, I think some of it my of, but she was just brilliant.

(Rowan and Gregor)

The companions are not regarded as passive objects, even when sleeping, but as subjects, who are part of, and moved by, the religious atmosphere in the home. Being together embraced not only social activities undertaken with others, but the canines were also embraced in more solitary activities, such as studying at home.

Yes, but she was a wonderful dog, she was a great companion, a great companion. I could share all of these studies with her, you know, I'd never told her anything that would cause her concern if I was worried about anything, I never shared that sort of thing with her, but my studies certainly from when I started doing English language, then the Spanish, then the Greek and the Latin, the Latin and the Greek, she just lapped it up, it was wonderful; and all the walks that we did were just great, great.

(Winston, re: Rose)

Being together is an activity more than it is a state, as in Finch's (2007) observation that "contemporary families are defined more by 'doing' family things than by 'being' a family" (2007:66). Not being human, however, and having less social status than a human, creates ambiguities around the power, and appropriate place given to the significance of being with a companion canine. When Olga's mother's consultant physician telephoned her, in Scotland from London, he first asked Olga if she was alone, before proceeding to tell Olga that her mother was in the process of dying (Fieldnotes, 9 March 2012). Olga's reply to her mother's consultant, and her thoughts on the matter, touch on both the power of being with a canine companion, and some of the ambiguities inherent in this human and nonhuman togetherness.

You know there's something. I think then you know there's somebody there, you know what I mean, it's a sense of presence. Yes, I mean, it's. I know I didn't count Pandora, but, and I think he was really, you know, 'is there any other human being there that you can talk to?' No that's what he means, no I mean, the dog wouldn't, somebody you could talk to or somebody who could put, yes. I think when you normally say you're on your own, you're alone or you're on your own or whatever you say, it really means is there anybody else in the house who can make you a cup of tea sort of thing, you know what I mean [laugh] she hasn't learnt that yet [laugh]! But you know what I mean, that can do things with you. But I mean, it is good that she is here, it would've been (pause) it's bad enough, I tend to walk around a lot when I'm upset, and she would just lie there, but it's good that you can just, you're not just talking out loud to nobody cause. It's quite nice that you can cry in her fur, you know what I mean, it's nice, it is something that's very consoling, with a dog that will let you. (Olga, re: Pandora)

Olga pinpoints the sense of the presence of the companion, and the co-existence of human and canine, as part of the substance of togetherness, whilst also touching on the limits of this condition of being together. Once again the issue is voicelessness, the companion cannot speak in human words or perform a ritual of human consolation, such as the making of a cup of tea. Nevertheless the companion canine can still comfort, though not with words, but they can comfort with their body, physical presence and fur. The physicality of the canine seems able to assuage the loneliness of the human, both in its actual and existential aspects.



Figure 12 – *Pandora* comforted Olga when her mother died, 15 June 2011

The companions appear to connect with the owners at the point of a powerful aspect of being human, the human need for mutual society, for humans are a fundamentally social species (Goffman, 1974). As Becker says of the child "if he [sic] were abandoned to himself his world would drop away, and his organism [sic] must sense this at some level; we call this the anxiety of object-loss" (Becker, 1973:13). This aversion to aloneness is within a human being from their earliest stages in the world, we simply cannot survive alone. Aloneness for the infant human is death, as Sorokin learnt, from the orphaned babies in the Russian orphanages during the Communist revolution, even if all the physical needs of security and sustenance are met, without sociable interaction with other living beings, the human child will slowly wither and die (Sorokin, 1942). It seems to be at this point of connection that the canines acquire a presence in human society, within the human family and home; *They've got a habit of, they worm their way in* (Rowan). In the words of Nathaniel, the canines are able to insinuate themselves within the homes and lives of their human owners:

Because everyone needs a companion. And a doggy is actually brilliant because, as I say, they're always pleased to see you and it doesn't matter they haven't seen you for five minutes. And generally their behaviour is much superior to humans. You can't say to me that they're all, you know, that humans are always pleased to see each other. (Nathaniel)

Indeed not only are the canines considered good companions, they can be considered to offer better companionship to the owners, than other human beings. The canines connect with the human need for companionship in several different ways. First the companion canines offer a tangible presence of another living being, with the sounds and feel of their physical bodies: *Another body, a breathing body that's, you know, it is I mean, she's good company in that respect* (Olga, re: Pandora).

Second, there is, as earlier mentioned, the shared activities of life, such as studying or socialising together. Third, the sense that the home is not empty, but is peopled by another living being; and fourth, the apparently empathic presence of the listening canine, who senses the human emotional state, and offers comfort to their owner.

Yes I definitely think they know. I definitely think they know. Braxton, he knows, I mean, I lost my dad last year as well. And he knows when I'm down, I mean, I don't even have to cry, he just knows, he's just fabulous. He knows. Because he comes up, he puts his two paws on my lap and the head goes to my shoulder and it's just as if he's cuddling me. (Irma, re: Braxton).

In the Chapter 6 it was explored how canine voicelessness is, in reference to the illness or pain of the canine, experienced as frustrating by the human owners. However, in the case of a nonhuman offering comfort to a suffering human, it may be that canine voicelessness can, at least seem, to enable the canine to offer superior consolation and a deeper understanding. The canines have no words to give in comfort, but they also have no words to minimise the hurt or critique the human's expression of pain.

Without the possible contradiction from words a greater empathy between the social actors can be assumed, and we are after all, as humans, also mammals, and also part of the wider body of living things. That comfort and consolation in our time of pain and loneliness may come, wordlessly, from the wider body of life, has in itself a certain mystique that denies the cruel fantasy of human isolationism.

7.3 *Suffering Together*

Whilst the intertwining of togetherness between human and canine companion can offer strengthening, and empathic consolation, to the human who is suffering, this intertwining of subjectivities also means that human and canine may face stressors and trauma together. During the course of this study a situation was encountered in which a female owner was experiencing domestic violence by her husband, who was both verbally and physical violent towards her. The female owner was in the process of separating from her husband during the data gathering stage of this project. The two canine companions were not immune from the volatile situation in which the owner found herself. As Flynn observes:

... the unequal relationships between men and women in families makes power and control issues in understanding domestic violence. Given the dependent status of companion animals, their smaller physical stature, their lack of legal standing resulting from being considered property, their inability to protest against abusive treatment, the difficulty (and thus, frustration) in attempting to control them, and their emotional ties to other family members, it should come as no surprise that companion animals are often victimised by family members, especially by violent men.

(Flynn, 2000:107)

I was able to elicit from the owner that the dogs had been present during, and were affected by, violent altercations. On first entering, the home seemed pervaded by “a feel of dark and depression” (Fieldnotes, 12 November 2011). This itself gave me what I can only describe as an interactional instinct, and, off tape, on the car journey whilst being taken back to the station (human participants will sometimes say things as you are leaving, that they may not mention in the main body of an interview), I gently enquired, and heard, the story of what had been happening to the owner and to her companions.

The companion canines and their female owner had suffered the aggression together, with both being distressed by it. However, the two canines were understood to have quite different personalities and to take quite different orientations towards the atmosphere of violence.

Zayne was regarded as “more of a man’s dog” (Transcript, 12 November 2011), he was seen as being fearless, not frightened, but bold, and aggressive. *Zayne* was regarded as being able to manipulate his owner, getting his own way and competing with her for territories in the home, such as who got the furry cushion (Fieldnotes, 12 November 2010). *Zayne* could be aggressive towards his owner, refused to be disciplined by her, growled at her and would bite if she tried to pick him up. He bit the other companion canine, particularly on the legs, and he bit other human family members who, including the men, were afraid of *Zayne* (Transcript, 11 February 2012). *Zayne* bit me when I first met him (Fieldnotes, 12 November 2011), being bitten by a companion canine is actually quite rare for me, as I am careful how I react around them. I concealed the bleeding from the owner by keeping my hand in my jean pocket (I did not want to upset her or undermine the rapport), and *Zayne* tried repeatedly to get at the hand again. In short it appeared that the owner was being bullied by *Zayne*, whose aggression, entitlement and dominance echoed the descriptions of her violent partner, whose persona he seemed to manifest. Though having acquired him as a puppy, Irma spoke of *Zayne* as her husband’s dog (Fieldnotes, 12 November 2011).

In marked contrast to the persona and presentation of *Zayne*, *Braxton* was regarded as non-aggressive, loving and sensitive. In observational terms the canines behaved differently in my presence, both towards their owner and towards me. *Braxton* tended to stay physically beside his owner, with his attention focused on her. In Irma’s words he positions himself;

Basically by my side and it’s the same when anybody comes in, you know, he’s basically by my side. [Doggy playing noises] If the gas man was to come in. I mean, I’ve had quite a lot of engineers in because my heating’s been playing funny and when they came in he’s by my side, if I move he moves with me.

(Irma, re: *Zayne* and *Braxton*)



Figure 13 – Irma experienced *Braxton* as protective and caring for her, *Zayne*, *Braxton*, and *Irma*, 11 February 2012

Irma regarded *Braxton* as being protective, empathic, and caring, and I experienced him as having a calm presence.

He's very protective of me. Basically, you know, when I go up to my bed at night it used to be he used to lie outside the door, that's when my husband was still here, but now because I'm by myself he comes in. He opens the door and comes in and brings his bed in and he'll actually lie at the side of the bed.

And when my husband used to go and kiss me the dog would growl and bark at him. To let you understand, my husband wasn't that good to me, so it was like the dog was warning him that just, you know. You know, so yeah he's very, very protective. If anybody comes into the house that he doesn't know, you know, as in male, you know, maybe the gas man or some engineer or whatever was to come in, he sits by my side and will not leave me.

(Irma, re: *Zayne* and *Braxton*)

In his gentleness and shyness, *Braxton* echoed Irma's own persona, Irma attributed to him empathy and insight into her emotions, and a capacity to sooth

her. Irma seemed to place *Braxton*, much as Flynn (2000) found in his study of battered women owners, in the role of comforter:

It was clear from the interviews that, because of their close relationship with their companion animals, the animals were very important emotionally to the women following a violent episode. Some indicated that their pets could sense that something was wrong, and that, as a result, they provided comfort and unconditional love. (Flynn, 2000;113)

The dynamic Flynn (2000) encounters of the canines being cast in the role of comforter, is also found in relationship of *Braxton* and Irma. However, whilst *Braxton*, was cast in the role of comforter and also protector, *Zayne* was regarded as aggressive and wilful. It seemed as if the two companions had undergone some form of psychosocial splitting, in which an intolerance for ambiguity leads to a distortion of reality, where good and bad are no longer co-mingled, but separated, remembered, and experienced, in the extreme (Siegel, 2006). As Siegel observes, “although splitting is an intrapsychic defence mechanism, it has a profound effect on intimate relationships” (2006:418). In this case it effected both the everyday interactions with, and the way that the two companions were understood by Irma.

Zayne she speaks of as her husband’s dog, is this also a reference to his aggressive nature and that he does not obey her as Braxton does? Braxton, the gentle one. As if Braxton is part of her and Zayne is part of him, extensions, reflections. Zayne is kept in a cage [in the hall under the stairs], Braxton sleeps in her room.
(Fieldnotes, 12 November 2011)

The canine companions were caught, inexorably, in the interactional dynamics of the family, and were coloured by, what Denzin would call the “negative symbolic interaction”, as the violence permeated their world and appeared to shape their very nature (Denzin, 1984:490), even as it shaped the nature of the human canine bonds themselves.

I mean, I’ll be the same with him, but I don’t have that same bond. I mean, I love him to bits but I don’t have the same bond with Zayne as I do with Braxton.
(Irma, re: Zayne and Braxton)

It would be hard to love the extra-psychic image of your abuser. Irma needed to be protected and wanted to be loved, and in the atmosphere of violence which both human and companion canines were suffering together, there was a strange blurring of the boundaries of self and of the other (Allen-Collinson, 2009), and a splitting of the good and bad pet, and the good and bad person.

Yeah, he is, he is, he is my big baby. I mean, I love them both to bits, but Braxton's just, just extra special I think. He's just, I just feel that with Braxton he's always there, he's always there for me. I keep saying to him, 'why can you not be a human?'. [Laughter]. Because he'd make a wonderful man [laugh].

(Irma, re: Zayne and Braxton)

The mutual suffering had shaped the everyday interactions, the persona of the canines, and the role to which each companion was assigned, and ultimately, it affected the nature of the bond, and the depth of human-canine connection itself.

7.4 *Dying Alone*

Being together, whether in conditions of flourishing or under condition of mutual suffering, was of profound importance to the human owners, and this emphasis on the significance of being together, held true even at the threshold of death.

Nathaniel And Harris and I had about, not much more than two years I don't think. And he developed, sort of, leaning over and falling over. The vets didn't know what was wrong at all. And he literally died on the hearth rug.

MD Oh gosh.

Nathaniel Well, erm, I was with him and that's a great thing. You must be with them and if you can, I always think that, well, anyone that has any dog that has to be put down for one reason or another should be, if possible, put down at home with his owner.

MD Why d'you think that?

Nathaniel I think it relaxes them a bit. They're in familiar surrounds, that's why. Because very often you hear that they don't like visiting vets for their annual MOT.

(Nathaniel, re: Harris)

Nathaniel's underscoring of the importance of being with the companion, echoes the "ideals of accompaniment" (Seale, 1995:385), of the dying found by Seale in his studying of dying alone. Combined with this Nathaniel's emphasis both on being with the companion, and on the companion remaining in their own home if possible, hints at the importance of maintaining continuity. This can be seen in the interaction between Olga and *Fleece*.

Olga *She just died, I mean, she'd not been well, she was 13, a bit arthritic but she always used to spend, you know, come down here a lot visiting but also to stay and sadly it happened when Chris was away which is awful. But she'd been going downhill and she died. I couldn't go to bed that night, well she was not well and she'd actually gone and hidden herself in a bush. And I carried her back into the house and we covered her over, Pandora was here by then, you know, and they got on fine. So we kept talking to her and, you know, just letting her.*

MD *Why couldn't you sleep that night?*

Olga *Well because she wasn't right obviously, so I didn't want to go to bed and leave her, d'you know what I mean? So I couldn't go to bed and leave her, I thought 'I can't do that', so I stayed with her and she died about one o'clock in the morning, and then I couldn't go to bed and leave her then either, and ironically Chris was coming home that night but late at night. (Olga, re: *Fleece*)*

Olga could not leave *Fleece*, even though she was not her dog. It seems to me that for Olga, as Seale found with one of his participants who lost a human companion, that the companions dying alone "disrupted her sense of the proper order of things" (Seale, 1995:383). It is not enough to simply die, it also matters that a being dies in the right place, and dies in the right way. This finding was also apparent in Convery et al.'s (2008), study of the foot and mouth disease outbreak. Part of the grief of the human farmers whose animals were culled, which was difficult for some non-farming community members to appreciate given that the animals were to die as livestock anyway, was grief stimulated because the animal died in the wrong place, and died at the wrong time (Convery et al., 2008). The sense of proper order of things was disturbed, by the possibility of dying alone, and with it there is "the threat to the moral reputation of the speaker in not 'being there'" (Seale, 1995:387) at the death of the companion.

It is interesting to theorise whether the importance attached by the owner to maintaining an image of goodness, either generally (which is addressed in Chapter 9), or particularly when choosing to euthanize a companion (as explored in Chapter 8 Section 5), may also relate to a phenomenon emerging from Clive Seale's (1995a) research on dying alone. Seale (1995a) found that the image of dying alone (which could range from meaning physical aloneness to having no one being aware of their passing), was resisted. Effort was made to emphasise, where possible, that the deceased did not die alone (Seale, 1995). A "discursive construction of membership in a caring community" (Seale, 1995b:607) was deployed, to refute the impression that the person had died alone. Where the actuality that someone had died alone could not be denied, Seale (1995) found that explanations were given to justify the absence of others, in order to preserve the moral reputation of the speaker.

Dying alone appears to imply an abandonment, a form of failure of society in its widest and most fundamental sense, that is to be a community. Seale highlights the importance given to what he terms the "emotional accompaniment" (Seale, 1995a:376) of the dying. This concept of emotional accompaniment would link with Kubler-Ross' (1970) emphasis on the ideal death as one of awareness and talking, which she assumes as leading to a dignified and accepted death, rather than leading to an emotionally and psychologically isolated death.

The good death of a companion canine, in the sense inspired by Kubler-Ross (1970), would be one that occurs within the family context, manifests little pain, is richly debated and discussed with the family, and has the full involvement of veterinary professionals. One such narrative was encountered, in the case of *Ted*, a 14 year old Border Collie, with multiple health issues.

I just looked at Frank and I says 'right, come on, we've got a decision to make here'. And [laugh] Frank was doing that 'could we do it tomorrow?' [laugh] I says 'no wait a minute Frank, look at the dog, just look at him' and he did, he looked miserable and we thought 'oh d'you know'. And Norman was lovely, he says to us 'I'll give you five minutes' and he went away out the room and just left us. So we had said our goodbyes to Ted and all the rest, and

we said 'no it's time, we've got to do it for him' that's what I says to Frank 'we would only be holding onto him for us and it wasn't fair on him, you could go tonight, you could put him on a drip, you could get all these bloods done tomorrow and nothing will come out of that and tomorrow we'll have to make the same decision you're putting off tonight' and he went 'aye you're right'. Then Norman came back in and he says 'no we're doing it, just get everything ready'. So he took him away, he was lovely. They took him away and they put a wee cannula in his paw.

And then one of the nurses came through with a lovely blanket and put that on the floor [laugh]. Which is lovely, of course, because he was starting to get a wee bit worried at this point, so the vet says 'right, I'm going to give him a wee sedative just to calm him down' because he was starting to pant a bit, and he was like 'we'll give him a wee sedative' and d'you know it was gorgeous because he just lay down and he fell asleep. And actually to the point you just thought he was sleeping. And it was really, really nice because the last time we lost Ted and he had wet himself and everything because I was primed or 'oh my God, he's going to be peeing everywhere!' but actually because he was so dehydrated there was nothing in the poor wee soul [laugh] to do that. But it just actually [pause]. It was like he was just lying on his bed, it was beautiful and I must admit [pause]. Tears coming down my face at the moment but it was a beautiful ending and that's all we can actually hope for, for him [Susan upset].

Ted's death is presented as one surrounded by kind and caring veterinary staff, with open discussion and debate between the family members, representing the ideal of an aware (at least for the owners), medically managed death (Kubler-Ross, 1970). The narrative of Ted's death shares these ideal features with the case of the human 'good death', described in Bhatnagar and Joshi (2012) and addressed in Chapter 3. Moreover, Ted's death is also, like the case of Bhatnagar and Joshi's patient (2012), a 'beautiful death'; where thanks to the care of the medical professionals and family members, a painful and unclean death has been transformed into a beautiful and uplifting experience. Ted was dehydrated, unable to eat without vomiting, had spent many of the preceding nights with urinary and faecal incontinence, he was withdrawn, and his sleep seemed to me to be full of dreams (Fieldnotes, 17 September 2011).

In the face of this it is possible that the narrative of the 'good death' serves as a form of defence against suffering, both the apparent suffering of Ted, and the

discomfort of his family who had to witness his deterioration. The 'good death' is a powerful narrative, however, it needs to be said that, to the degree that it is developed in this case, it was only found in a single instance of companion canine death encountered in this study. Whilst other cases had elements of a 'good death', *Rose* had caring veterinary staff, and *Harris* died in his own home, only the case of *Ted*, was the narrative so pronounced.

7.5 *Grief*

There is another aspect to the power of being together, a dark implication buried in this intertwining of self with other. The dark aspect of togetherness is the potential to experience loss of companionship, with possible acute and sudden aloneness, upon separation. Winston, a retired senior professional and bachelor, who, apart from his one canine companion, lived alone in a two-story house in a village in central Scotland, was very much a distinguished person about town, dignified and respected (Fieldnotes, 19 March 2011). This composed man was reduced to public tears following the death of *Rose*, when a fellow church member happened to ask him how his weekend had been (Transcript, 23 June 2011).



Figure 14 – Winston on the road he used to walk with *Rose*, 5 May 2011

His outward composure was broken and his inner distress laid bare, a distress which was not only present in public but also followed him home; *I really miss her and the house is silent without her* (Winston, re: Rose). If to be with a canine companion is to assuage some of the pain of existential, or actual, human loneliness, then what becomes of the human owner when that presence, to which they have become accustomed, is ripped away? Winston had spent years studying at his desk with his companion canine lying beside him, talking to her in Greek, Spanish and Latin, discussing art and philosophy for hours, until the day of her euthanasia.

So I no longer talk to the dog about Leonardo, I've just let that go just in case it becomes a total habit [laugh]! Thinking 'he's doo-lally, there's not even a dog there and he's still talking!' [laugh] (Winston, re: Rose)

The conversation between Winston and Rose had been curtailed abruptly, as had the long walks together. During a walk with Winston, he shared how the landscape of the countryside was rich with many memories of things Rose had done, animals and people they had encountered, and stories of dangers faced and storms seen together (Fieldnotes, 5 May 2011). He says the house is too quiet now, and he plays music to try to conceal the silence, and sometimes, when he is walking alone, he still speaks to her (Fieldnotes, 23 June 2011).

Time had a curious relationship to grief in the worlds of the human owners. I had expected that the pain of grief would strike at the moment of the death of the companion, as it did for Frank:

Frank was like a Greek widow when Fred died [doggy whine]. Oh my God, he was all over the body and everything, lying in the vet's. Oh, you know how they have him on the table from the injection. And Frank was in such a state, he was howling over the dog.
(Susan, re: Frank and Fred)

Grief struck suddenly in this case, at the moment of separation, and with great force for the family of Fred. As Wolpert observes, "separation, whether physical or psychological, is a basic cause of human sadness" and the origin of grief (Wolpert, 1999;77). It would be expected that grief would descend at the point of separation. But it also endured:

So unfortunately we had to get rid of Fred. Which was it is devastating. Frank I think it probably took the two years for Frank to actually get his head back round to having another dog to be honest. Because he was so upset at losing Fred.

(Susan, re; Fred and Frank)

Although the acute experience of grief passed, a missing, and a poignant remembrance continued for multiple owners, for many years. *You know, I thought I would never and will never forget her, good lord, I could never forget her* (Winston, re: Rose). The relationship to time is complex, and the pain of grief did not necessarily strike in all its fullness with the act of dying of the companion. As Davis et al. (2003) also found, grief may take time to settle in. Sometimes, as in the case of Rose and Winston, the acute pain of grief could ignite several days after the actual passing of the canine, in response to a chance event or enquiry. Grief was not straightforward, it did not emerge as a pure expression of inner anguish, though this was an element, it was responsive to the world around the owner. The seeing of a photograph, or the telling about the death, could itself evoke a powerful experience of bodily grief, and this included the telling of the stories of loss for this study. Moreover, the sympathy, or lack thereof, of those around the owner, seemed to function to enable, or restrain, the manifestation of human grief.

Grief could also descend, in a less acute, but more chronic form, before the companion had passed away, as in Margaret's experience with her two older canines. Margaret stresses that she tries not to dwell on the pain that the coming death of her companions will cause her, yet it remains in her thoughts (Transcripts and Fieldnotes, 6 October 2011), wrapped around her mind, almost as if this "anticipatory grief had the power to serve as a safeguard against the sudden experience of a death" (Fulton and Gottesman, 1980;45).

Grief could fall suddenly at the point of death, unexpectedly in the days or weeks after the loss of the companion, or settle like a cloud upon the mind before they died. It was even considered that grief could occur against the apparent will of the owner.

Rowan You know, you maybe think, 'I'm not going to get over attached to this dog because I was so heartbroken the last time, this dog's not going to, I'm not going to be like that this time'. And there's Fritz! You know, for all the problems we had with Fritz when he first came into our family. I gave him away and then I brought him back and look at him, you know. You think, I call him for everything at times and think, 'I won't miss you boy when you go'".

Gregor You will [laugh].

Rowan But yeah, I will. I love him, and I keep saying I don't know why I love you, you've wormed your way into my heart [laugh]. (Rowan and Gregor, re: Fritz)

Human grief at companion canine death is a problematised grief. The human owners justify the presence and degree of their grief at the loss of their companion canines: *because they are your family* (Susan). They are more than just animals, they are regarded as nonhuman family members who share a domestic space (Charles and Davies, 2008). Nonetheless, the depth and display of grief at the loss of a canine, lacks the social acceptance given to the death of a human family member. It is tempting to theorise whether the death of a companion animal may constitute a form of 'special death'. Guy and Holloway's study explored, by focusing on deaths related to illicit drug use, what they termed 'special death' (2007). This is death that may be stigmatising or existentially problematic. These deaths lack full social sanction and may relate to hidden relationships (Guy and Holloway, 2007). They observe that in special death:

The grief and the bereavement experience is poorly understood and the wider social response is one that may exacerbate, rather than ameliorate, the pain of those closely affected

(Guy and Holloway, 2007: 84).

The dismissal of grief at companion canine loss may intensify the suffering. As companion animals also have a marginal personhood (Arluke and Sanders,

1996), it is possible that grief at their loss is fraught with similar problems, such as a lack of, or limited, social approval. The marginalised status of canines in society, and the disputed nature of canine personhood, problematizes the expression of grief over the death of a canine companion. In a public display of grief the owner risks being regarded as over emotional, and as having an inappropriate level of concern for what others consider to be “just a dog” (Arluke, 2006:1). One owner, Amanda, did share experiences of having her loss disregarded, and had her suffering treated as the “disenfranchised grief” of those who “do not have a socially recognised right to grieve” (McCreight, 2004: 344). However, the more common account from the owners was to present the grief as justified, and to give reasons in defence of why it was appropriate. This included stressing that the companion had been with the owner for many years, or that they were valued as a member of the family, or as a friend.

*Because Brandy was my friend. Brandy was my best friend and to
lose her. I've really, I did suffer. (Matthew, re: Brandy)*

In essence this is a form of face work (Goffman, 1955), and information control, particularly ‘covering’, to minimise the impact of the potentially discrediting behaviour (Goffman, 1968b:125). Yet co-existing with this, there is a movement carried by the increasing use and availability of social media, in which the grief of companion animal loss is not only recognised, but facilities exist by which canine companions may be remembered, even immortalised. Pet cremation services and cemeteries, such as Elysian Fields in Scotland, taxidermy, having a pet’s ashes turned into a diamond and worn, In Memorial pages for pets on Facebook, or on specialist sites, these are just some of the options available for the grieving owner. For the more private mourning, the pet may be buried in the garden, as Amanda and family did, and photographs and memorabilia may be displayed in the homes, a practice that was occasionally found with the families in this study. Also, The Blue Cross, provide a helpline and counselling for those affected by companion animal bereavement. The existence of all of these practices and services, suggest an increasing place being given to the grief of companion animal owners, and that there may be an increasing social acceptance of human grief at the loss of nonhuman companionship.

Sometimes the pain, fear and loss would seem to be too much, and the death of the companion would be, permanently or for a time, denied.

D'you know when my dog died I took a week off work. I couldn't go and work. I couldn't concentrate. I cried and the night that I buried Brandy I must have been dreaming or I've heard a dog barking, I woke up and I said. 'Brandy's not dead, she's not dead'.

(Matthew, re: Brandy)

These sentiments begin to touch on interplays between companion canine loss and human wellbeing, aspects that are explored in Chapter 9. On a personal note, my own canine companion, Zak, passed away the week I was due to commence writing this chapter. It took over two months for me to acquire sufficient distance to begin to write up others experience of companion canine loss. I was particularly taken aback by how physical, how expressed by the body, the response to loss was.

Feel a strange tired inside, at times very cold, but warm heaters and socks don't help. Feel like I have flu, but no temperature. Very dark bags under my eyes. Lost 6 lbs in 2 days. Spots and eye ulcers.

(Fieldnotes, Friday 20 September 2013, a week after Zak's death)

With the benefit of hindsight I would have probed more for experiences of canine companion loss which had a somatic component, and enquired whether the owners considered that they may be connected to the loss.

Writing this chapter so close to a bereavement has been something of a double edged analytic sword. On the one hand, it has given me vivid, imminent, personal insight into the described experience of the humans in this study. On the other hand, my emotions are complex. At times it takes effort to contain them, particularly when provoked by working with the descriptions of the grief of other dog owners. Many of whose deceased canine companions were also dogs known to me, through the process of this research, and more than a couple of these canine participants I have been particularly fond of. One of these canines I felt fondness for was *Ted*, I also shared with *Ted's* owner a

curious experience, that of dreaming, vividly almost tangibly, about my deceased companion, shortly after their death.

I dreamt Ted yes, the other night. It was funny, it was because [pause] I dreamt that Ted was with us in the house. And he was actually here, he was looking great, he was actually looking. He wasn't as heavy as he was before, and his coat was really shiny and looking really, really good. And he had come back because Frank hadn't coped with him going. And until he thought that Frank had got it into his head that it was the right thing to do, he was going to be there. So he was there in my dream and then of course I woke up and I had gone to the toilet and came back, and then as soon as I got back to bed, I remembered what I was dreaming about and d'you know, there was an overwhelming sadness, it was like losing him [laugh] all over again. But actually it was, and it was really quite comforting because he was looking beautiful [laugh].

[To bird: yes he was]

Funny because Frank says, he says 'he probably [voice trails away]'. He actually thinks that was true, he says 'it probably [voice trails away]'. He says 'what makes you think he wasn't there?'. I says, 'well maybe you're right actually'. Because he was always a very intuitive dog. [Bird flying sound]

He was one of these dogs, if you were upset he would always come over to you [laugh]. Yeah we've spoke about that before, about dogs comforting people and things like that, they definitely do.

(Susan, re: Ted)

For Susan and Frank the relationship with *Ted*, goes on, and he continues to care for his human family members, from beyond the grave. To Hepworth's (2000) eyes, the relationship with the deceased can continue after death. This directly contradicts Mamo, who considers that "death embodies a permanent loss of personhood" (Mamo, 2000;14). The data supports, and I would agree with, Hepworth (2000). The sense of rewarding togetherness between owner and their canine companion found in this study, is reminiscent of his discussion of belonging and loneliness (Hepworth, 2000). He conceived of loneliness, drawing on Wood (1981), not as a lack of physical beings to relate to, but rather as "failed intersubjectivity" (Hepworth, 2000:65). Hepworth goes on to illustrate how successful intersubjectivity can be maintained with a disembodied personhood, upon the death of a human, and also with objects (Hepworth, 2000).

Although animals are not addressed, I do not consider it to be stretching his point, that if humans can have fulfilling intersubjective relations with a ghost or an object (Hepworth, 2000), that they can also have them with a living member of another species. In this way the companion animals could be understood as alleviating some of the existential loneliness of being human (Laing, 1959).

7.6 *Vanishing and the Afterlife*

Not all the canine companions were lost through death, four simply disappeared. In canine disappearance, not knowing emerged as a form of suffering, and was particularly acute. The owner is faced with a sense of having to let go, to release the hope that the companion may be alive, and to actively embrace the pain of grief.

We were looking everywhere, where we wouldn't thought. And I spoke to the bin men. 'Have you seen?'. 'No, we're asking where he was, where's Turner, we don't see him?'. And he must have went away somewhere and died, but as I said, we never found him.
(Matthew, re: Turner)

Matthew searched for *Turner*, and enlisted the help of others, and though ambiguity remained, he determined that his companion was dead, and would not return. However, this was not always the case, sometimes an owner, or other family members, would resist the disappearance. They would not believe that the dog was dead, and would remain convinced that it was still alive, or had been given away in some nefarious fashion.

Don't know whether he's wet the floor or whatever he's done, but I didn't believe that dog went into a rabbit's hole. But Fraser tried to convince us that he'd got the fire brigade out, the man with the sounding equipment. It just didn't sit right with me, and other people who heard the story said to me, 'well so what d'you think?'. I said, 'I'm keeping my piece.' I says, 'I know what I think'. And they says 'well, we'll tell you what we think, we think she's got rid of the dog'.
(Matthew, re: son's dog)

The 'good owner' cares for their dog, and is expected to keep them safe, to be responsible for them and to know their whereabouts, because to abandon a canine companion is to invite social censure (Irvine, 2000). The owners of vanished canines composed multiple possible explanations of what may have happened to their companions, as if to provide an explanation would somehow transform the nonsensical vanishing, back into a more manageable, meaningful event. There must be a story, and it must be coherent, "one of our most powerful forms for expressing suffering and experiences related to suffering is the narrative" (Seale:1997:49). The absence of definitive information in the case of canine vanishing problematises, possibly even critically, the narrative of human and companion canine togetherness.

Canine vanishing appears to be an acutely painful experience for the owners, one they did not wish to experience alone. Margaret was not alone when she went out to look for *Mitch*, the two workings dogs and her remaining canine companion, went with her.

Margaret believes that had she been searching alone, the pain would have been amplified. There is, what seems to be, an almost intolerable ambiguity in losing the companion through sudden disappearance, rather than through death. This professional and usually composed woman wept in my arms, I held her, and I also held her last remaining canine companion, who was soon to be put to sleep. As Wolpert observes, the:

Loss or disappearance of someone to whom one is attached, whether parent, lover or friend, provokes a powerful urge to find that person. The failure to do so results in distress and pining. In the case of death, ... there is still an urge to find that person. The fruitless search results in the pain of grief which, with depression, is probably the most powerful psychological pain in human experience. (Wolpert, 2001:93)



Figure 15 – *Mitch* vanished suddenly, *Mitch* 29 March 2011

Margaret searched for *Mitch*, day after day, ranging across the countryside, for weeks after his disappearance, to no avail.

So I don't, it's not, for me it's not an option now and the door is closed on it because I think if you don't, it would just, it would just destroy you. You'd be going out looking every single day and, you know, for the rest of [words trail off]. And how long d'you do that for? Especially when you've got other animals as well, you know, it's not, and that was the other thing, I was very fortunate cause I thought every time I went out I took them [the three other canines] with me cause I thought if there's something around they will get it.

(Margaret, re: *Mitch*)

Ultimately Margaret forced herself to let go of the hope that *Mitch* might be alive, either living wild or having been taken in by another person (Fieldnotes, 24 August 2012). There is a sense that she relinquished the object of her search in order to preserve her own intrapsychic wellbeing; also the requirement to be 'a good owner' is present yet again, and presses upon Margaret, even in a state of suffering, to let the hope of finding *Mitch* go, in

order to be able to be there, to be present and well, so that she can tend to her other animals.

But hey, you don't know, and I think for me that's the worst part, is the never knowing. Because you don't have anything feasible, not feasible, nothing tangible, as in a body for want of a better world. To be able to say, 'Well that's it'. And you can, you know, bury him or cremate him, or whatever if its that you want to do. I don't have that, so you've just got to hope that wherever he is he's in a better place.
(Margaret, re: *Mitch*)

Without a body, *Mitch's* death remains uncertain, the owner's suffering has no object to attach to, there is a lack of story and a lack of meaningful explanation. *Mitch* has died in the wrong place, and not at the right time, his vanishing is outwith the boundaries of appropriate death, this itself is a subtle form suffering. As Convey et al. (2008) found, in the grief of the farming families whose barns and fields fell unnaturally silent after the culls of the foot and mouth disease epidemic. Pain is compounded if the animal dies in the wrong place and in the wrong way, outwith the normative boundaries of the human and companion canine world.

The question, 'where are they now?' haunts the owners of the vanished companion canine. In conversation the owners offer multiple possible explanations, one after the other, as if they are being driven to attempt to salvage some sense from the senseless. Margaret wonders, as occasionally did some of the other owners of lost or deceased canines, whether her companion is in a better place. This study found, with Davis et al., (2003), that the religious background and experience of the human did not appear to be an indicator of the degree or duration of grief. There were owners who were deeply involved in the religious life of their community, and those with only a nominal connection to the religion of their family, who both experienced profound loss.

There were differing views of what becomes of the companion's personhood after death. Olga was unsure, and thought that afterlife was like prelife, a state so strange that it cannot be recalled (Transcript, 9 March 2012). Rowan relied

upon the teachings of her church and denied to the companions any continuity of personhood, such as a human would be expected to experience.

Well, they say a dog doesn't have a soul so if it doesn't have a soul I think a dog just dies and that's it. I think that's the end for a dog. Unless you believe in reincarnation, which I don't. (Rowan)

Most of the humans were much less definitive than Rowan, they were unsure what would become of their companion's being and soul, but generally the owners did believe in the continuity of companion canine personhood after death.

Yeah, but I think, you know. They definitely go somewhere else, you know. I'd like to hope that they go to a nicer place as humans do, and I'm sure that they do. It's not something that I dwell too much on, but that's a lot to do with my own personality, I like to live in the now and then, you know, because I don't think you can really legislate for what's going to happen in the future. (Margaret)

Margaret also understood her dying companion as continuing through the bloodline of her other living dogs, and considered that this eased the suffering of her grief (Transcript, 30 June 2011). To her, if their children remain, they are not completely gone. This idea of the continuance, of being with, albeit in another form, either in the blood and personality of the descendants, or as the souls in heaven, was the general assumption.

Mmm, I like to think that they go where we go. Because I really would like to think that Fred is with my mum, because those two were inseparable before [laugh]. And he would still be sitting there trying to get her toast [laugh] cuddled in. She was terrible, she used to sit, she would make toast for herself in the morning, a slice of toast for herself, but she would also put a second slice of toast on. (Susan)

Human and companion canine society is assumed to continue, the being with, may change form, but it does not end.

Schaefer (2012) points out, the bulk of studies considering animals and religious life, argue from the viewpoint of understanding animals against the backdrop of human ethical and religious life; rather than by looking at the religious experience of animals themselves. The companion canines in this

study were regarded as having an ethical sense, they were considered to be able to discern human natures and human motivations, *And dogs know whose good for them* (Winston). The companions were also regarded as not only understanding death, contrary to what Mead (1934) and Elias (1985) would claim, but they were, on occasion, attributed with a superior, almost supernatural, awareness of the suffering of others, and a presentience of death.

Copper lay right down beside her. The other dog that we still had at the time. Probably lay sort of in between her paws and Splodge, the little black and white cat, lay on top of her. So they were just totally were all round her. They would all lie together, but not like that. So Yeh, the animals seemed to realise that there was something terribly wrong, and it was as if they were saying goodbye to her.
(Amanda, re: Sheba)

To know pain, loneliness and grief, were regarded as not purely human experiences, but as forms of suffering that both human and canine may share. It does need to be said, however, that this research has intentionally focused on sites of investigation where there is likely to be a depth of bonding between the human and the canine. How far such an understanding of canine consciousness and ability to know pain is reflected in the wider human society cannot be answered by this research. Nonetheless it could be argued, given the depth of attention and involvement, of the human owners encountered here, in the lives, bodies and ways of their canine companions, that if canines do suffer, as humans do, then these owners would be in a position to perceive it.

Summary

The aim of the first research question was to explore illness and suffering in human and canine relations. This chapter has addressed suffering, with regard to physical pain, born of injury or illness, and nonphysical forms of pain, which are made possible by the companions in this context having a self. The companion canines are understood as being capable of experiencing physical pain, in a manner equivalent to that of their human owners. Indeed, minimising companion canine pain is held as a moral imperative, bound up with the identity of being a 'good owner'. However, the existence of companion canine pain, and therefore the owner's ability to alleviate it, is problematised by the voicelessness

of the companions, who cannot express their suffering in human words. Yet the canines can express pain through bodily actions and vocalisations, and they were regarded as being able to do this in a meaningful, and sometimes opportunistic, way.

Viewed as minded social actors, the companions were also regarded as subject to non-physical forms of suffering, such as phobia and loneliness. A mutual vulnerability to loneliness, and desire for companionship, appears to be a powerful point of connection between the humans and the canines. Being together emerged as both a practice and as an ideal, that moulded the human-canine relations. It offered comfort for the human owners in distress, possibly, once again due to canine voicelessness, even a superior solace to that found from purely human society. This being together of human and canine, was, in an unexpected finding of the study, found to take on a particular form, of merging and blurring of roles and identity, in an environment of domestic violence. Being together also emerged as a moral imperative of being a good owner, shaping the relationship with a dying canine. It was seen as unfitting for a companion canine to die alone, and a good owner would endeavour to be with their suffering canine, even in the face of their own distress. In a single case the ideal and narrative of a 'good death', was used to transform suffering and physical deterioration into a beautiful death.

Grief brought with it a silence, and an abrupt change to the experience of activities and pastimes that the human and canine had shared. What they had always done together, was suddenly done without the companion. Grief had a complex relationship to time, it could settle upon the human owner, in a slow and insidious way, before their companion had died. Grief could also strike abruptly, and with violence, at the moment of companion canine death. Alternatively it may take hours to seep into consciousness, or be triggered days after the loss of the companion, by a chance event, encounter, or seeing of a photograph.

In circumstances where the companion has vanished, the sustaining narrative of human and canine togetherness is seriously disrupted. It becomes very difficult for the human owners to maintain a meaningful coherence. This disruption to the underpinning framework of meaning upon which the human and canine lives are interwoven, is a source of profound suffering for the owners. Combined with this is the expectation, coming from the construct of the 'good owner', that the humans should know where and what has become of the companion for whom they are responsible. In most cases togetherness, in some form, was understood to transcend death, either in the ongoing companionship of the canines with deceased family members in heaven, the enduring watchfulness of the deceased canines over the living, or by the act of continuing the interaction with the passed companion, by still taking the walks and even, sometimes, by still having the conversations. These efforts to continue togetherness bring this work to its next chapter, and turn attention to the second research question. Which asks what are the meanings surrounding the death and dying of a companion canine to their owner, and those in the animal's immediate society?

Chapter 8 ~ Interpretations of Death and Dying

During the time spent with the families it became clear that there was a consciousness of “the stark inevitability of death” (Blaikie, 1999:196), and references to this awareness were peppered throughout the data gathering experience. This was a particularly sensitive area of questioning, it was confessed the way a person would confess a secret, and a painful secret at that. This awareness was pervasive and potent, in all the families, and it coloured the ongoing interactions between human and canine, even despite the best efforts of some of the humans to prevent it from doing so. In short, death was not a surprise to the owners, at least in the sense of death not being a consciously denied phenomenon. No one expected their companion canine to live with them forever, but this awareness of the inevitability of death did not mean that companion canine dying was without pain or complexity, quite the reverse. The passing of a companion was a complex and a subtle phenomenon, yet it was not a wholly unique happening to each family. While the suffering itself was subjective and experienced as particular, there were features of the phenomenon of companion canine dying that were consistent across the research sites, and it became evident that there were characteristics of a process that could be charted.

8.1 *Gradual and Sudden Death*

Companion canine dying emerged as a negotiated process, which could be gradual or sudden, depending on the nature of the precipitating event, whether dying was the result of gradual aging with increasing infirmity, or a sudden illness or injury. Gradual dying was the more prevalent, with 25 of the 38 canines who died during, or prior to, the study experiencing a gradual demise.

Fred, oh gosh, he was, his back end and everything was going, that's why we ended up. He had cancer and it had started. And he also had stomach problems, and things like that, and then of course when they talked about giving him chemotherapy, but the vet actually says 'We've got his stomach under control, that's going to upset his stomach' and plus he had arthritis. Which is why he was on Rennie's for his stomach [laugh] And we went 'no, this is just silly, that's just not fair on the dog at all'. (Susan, re: Fred)

There is a sense of there being a compound effect in the case of gradual dying, as if the difficulties are being stacked higher and higher against life, until the health of the canine, and perhaps the resolve of the human to continue efforts to support the failing life, collapse. Gradual decline can continue for days, weeks or even many months, five being the longest process of gradual decline encountered in this study. The exception is, *Sally*, who despite having been understood as in the process of dying for over 8 months, remains alive at the time of writing. Sometimes veterinary intervention can seem to stall the process of decline, at least temporarily. This 'active' process of increasing infirmity then being suspended, held at bay, whilst a time of apparent normalcy returns. The human awareness that the companion has touched the process of dying, even if to withdraw from it into a renewed, if temporary, state of normalcy, is never lost.

Matthew *And then she began to labour again, not feeling herself, not wanting to get up and out, so I said 'there's something wrong with her' so I took her down to the vet, and the vet says 'well, we need to take her in to investigate'. So they took her in and Stacie phoned me up at my work and says "Brandy's got cancer..."*

MD *Oh gosh.*

Matthew *'He's found five different tumours'.*

MD *Five?*

Matthew *Five tumours. He says 'but what's happened is they're all in a cluster, but what he's going to do is move them to different areas of her body and it'll extend her life.'*

MD *Where were they?*

Matthew *They were all round about the tummy area.*

MD *Right, all round the tummy.*

Matthew *So what he did. I don't know where he moved them all to, but he moved them. I don't know if at any point he took any out, we don't know that, but he says that'll extend her life a little bit. So two and a half year Brandy was lovely and happy, we watched her, we cared for her, we loved her. (Matthew, re: Brandy)*

In gradual death, a state of watchfulness ensues. There is ongoing observation by the humans, with marked attention to changes in wellbeing. These changes can be small, such as slight differences in gait, or frequency of drinking water, or quite subtle changes in behaviour.

We just put it down to old age; he was slower, he couldn't get up on the furniture like he did and what not, however, he wouldn't settle one night and we phoned the vet and took him down early in the morning and the results of the scan that they'd given him were that he had a massive tumour on his liver. (Amanda, re: Sam)

This is suggestive of considerable, and prolonged, attention by the humans which is focused on the minutiae of the companion's day to day activities, and state of being, a feature I shall return to later, in Chapter 9. There is also ongoing discussion and negotiation, with family, friends and professionals, throughout the process of gradual demise. I would suggest that it may be a very different experience, qualitatively, than that of sudden death. My sense was that the watching and waiting during the process of decline was a potent source of tension and distress to the owners, requiring more than a little courage to endure.

At station waiting for train. Margaret cried on tape, unexpected for such an independent and composed woman. Have agreed me to go back in a couple of weeks ... Saw Mitch's growth, it is the size of a small lime, did not seem red or leaky. I felt that Margaret's willingness to take things as they may come was quite courageous and wanted to say so. But didn't, especially as tape was on – an inhibiting effect, can you compliment a participant?

(Fieldnotes, Tuesday 10 May 1.55 pm)

Margaret's resolve had moved me, and in retrospect I wish I had said so, as she had impressed me deeply. Perhaps Ernest Becker is correct that "we admire most the courage to face death" (1973:11). This quality of courage was displayed by other human family members, but in the case of *Mitch*, given his advanced age and visible, terminal, cancer, it was particularly vivid.



Figure 16 – *Mitch*, 19 March 2012

The physical evidence, and therefore the awareness, of *Mitch's* dying was unavoidable in the day-to-day interaction. It could not be pressed to the back of consciousness. "The process of dying is therefore a time of particularly pressing anxieties as the customary 'forgetting' of the inevitability of death becomes increasingly difficult to maintain" (Seale, 1995b:598). The poignancy and depth of emotion that awareness of *Mitch's* dying evoked broke through Margaret's composure, and threatened mine as well. I would feel tired after being with them, and wonder if I had just been with him for the last time (Fieldnotes, 10 May 2011 and 30 June 2011). The tangible proof of his mortality that the tumour presented made it impossible to repress the awareness of his dying, which, as Becker (1973) emphasised, is so vital for day-to-day functioning in the world. To be stripped of our defences, our ability to repress the awareness of death, is to risk profound, and ultimately irreconcilable, tension (Becker, 1973). Because "the great boon of repression is that it makes it possible to live decisively in an overwhelmingly miraculous and incomprehensible world, a world so full of beauty, majesty, and terror" (Becker, 1973:50).

There was simply no way to pretend that *Mitch* was not going to die, indeed, that he was already dying. Nevertheless, Margaret maintained a focus on the everyday management of *Mitch's* sleeping, eating and drinking, in an almost ritualistic fashion. It was as if this attention to the everyday process and needs, of life and living, would by some act of "sympathetic magic" (Goffman, cited in Manning 1992:141), ward off his inevitable dying.

Witnessing the gradual death of a canine was disturbing, not only in the sense that the owner was faced with the inevitability of losing their companion, but also because they were forced to encounter a reminder of their own mortality, and their own fragility. We are creatures, both animal in our physicality and symbolic as members of culture, but there is a tension here, in our deepest being. "The essence of man [sic] is really his *paradoxical* nature, the fact that he is half animal and half symbolic" (Becker, 1973:26, italics in the original). Humans strive to transcend their animal existence, and society provides them with hero systems, ways to symbolically overcome their state, ways to deny death. But how complete can these systems of forgetting ever be? When our canine companion dies, what dark shadow of the Real, in a Lacanian sense of "the unknown that exists at the limit of this socio-symbolic universe" (Homer, 2005:81), passes over our consciousness? Because to be human is to be overwhelmed with the awesomeness and dangerousness of existence (Becker, 1973), so culture gives the human animal ways to deal with this terror of being. Ways to repress the rawness of creation, and human vulnerability within it, so we are not frozen in terror, paralysed in a schizoid state. Whilst the insane, with weak or limited powers of repression, are overwhelmed with the reality of their plight, with the flood of reality (Becker, 1973). In this sense insanity is a kind of truth, in that the insane lack the cultural inoculation against reality and the inevitability of death, therefore reminders of death can be deeply disturbing, to the walls we have built around our madness.

This gradual diffuse process over time is a very different picture from that of sudden death, which is focused temporally around a single event. In 13 cases the families experienced a sudden loss of their companion. This is not to

suggest that canine passed away very rapidly, though this was often the case, it is more that the human family members experienced, described and understood, the loss of the companion as sudden.

Sudden death, rather than emerging from an ongoing process of living and coping, appears like an intrusion, a break or rupture in the fabric of everyday life and experience of human and canine. There may be physical collapse, disappearance, or violent assault. The pattern of everyday expectations is torn, the dog is suddenly no longer there (Alison, re: *Mitch*), the garden where it should be is inexplicably empty (Helen, re: *Morgan*), or they fall, never to rise, on the hearth rug (Nathaniel, re: *Harris*).



Figure 17 - *Bashan* on the hearth rug where *Harris* died, 17 December 2011

This abrupt intrusion of the unexpected can be seen in the case of the German Shepherd Yara.

And I mean John Quinn our vet was absolutely gobsmacked because he had just checked her over. However, we think she had had an aneurism and of course he couldn't detect that and she bled to death very very quickly. One minute she was scrounging a crisp off of Kaitlin and next minute she was dead. That was very very sudden quite and shocking, I was devastated. So there was no dog in the house.
(Amanda, re: Yara)

While witnessing the gradual death a canine companion can be a disturbing reminder of others, and our own, mortality and creatureliness, the unexpected nature of sudden death also presents an additional difficulty. That is its assault on meaning. The dying body moves beyond that which can be subject to care or cure, that upon which we can *act*, because “in leaving the field circumscribed by the possibilities of treatment, it enters a region of meaninglessness” (de Certeau, 1988:190). The dying suddenly move out with the realm in which a subject can act, and can be acted upon. They unexpectedly cease to function within the interactional frame that gives form and meaning to our worlds. They are “removed from common experience and thus arriving at the limit of scientific power and beyond the familiar practices, death is an elsewhere” (de Certeau, 1988:192). The companion abruptly enters an elsewhere which, in a Lacanian sense, cannot be embraced in the symbolic and cannot be absorbed by the imaginary. They are “a subject that does not work” or “an object that no longer even makes itself available to be worked on by others” (de Certeau, 1988:192), causing us to stumble in our daily dance of life and living.

This fracturing of the anticipated, the expected, draws our attention to the underpinning framework of meaning upon which life is sustained, and it draws attention to its fragility. As Lacan himself attempted to get us to do, sudden death forces the human “to confront the limits of meaning and understanding and to acknowledge the profoundly disturbing prospect that behind all meaning lies non-meaning, and behind all sense lies nonsense” (Homer, 2005:12).

It is not only the explicit sense of the meaning, but also the pervasive, and constant, reliance on the underpinning framework of the meaningful order, that is suddenly illuminated by a cold light of awareness. The power of the underpinning framework of meaning to make the world solid, is strong because it is hidden in the shadows, the workings of the underpinning social framework are dim to us and we *do not* dwell on them consciously (Berger and Luckman, 1967). So we do not see, as we move through everyday life, the thin ice of taken-for-granted assumptions beneath our feet, upon which all social action and reaction relies. As Timmermans tells us, “sudden, unexpected deaths threaten the social order because they suggest unexplainable randomness” (2005:995). Our very existence as sane and social beings is dependent upon there being order and meaning. Randomness cannot be endured, “society itself is a codified hero system ... a defiant creation of meaning” (Becker, 1973:11); defiant because the social order is created to overcome the randomness of unassimilated reality, in the face of death, and terror (Becker, 1973).

In extremely sudden, instantaneous, death, the process of negotiation is truncated, but it continues in the narratives which are woven around the loss of the companion. These narratives embody “the nature of the sense-making task” (Owens et al., 2008:237), and meaning continues to be forged even in the face of sudden “biographical disintegration” (Owens et al., 2008:237).

Uh huh a wee bit, she was getting breathless and I suppose just the way we would get when we get old and our heart's starting to give in, but you don't think the dog's going to go and that's the thing, the vet didn't expect her to go, he thought she would last for a wee while, but she actually died. So we came home early and she died on the Sunday night.
(Rowan, re: Kyra)

The telling of the story itself appears as a process of meaning creation, an attempt to bring order and coherence to the threatening randomness of the sudden death. In this sense it could be argued that the narratives have not only the power to share and communicate experience, but that they also contain the possibility of transforming it.

Rowan *They both died at, she had a heart murmur and he had a heart murmur.*

Gregor *No it was her insides that come out.*

Rowan *Yes but she had had a heart murmur for a number of years but she wasn't on any medication, but then when I think about it myself and I think 'well that's how the dog felt because he was breathless'.*

MD *Cause you've got a murmur?*

Rowan *Yes, uh huh, so obviously, and he was on heart medication and he was on water tablets. The same as humans get, he was on Furosemide and Ramipril. So that's our little family of dogs that we've had over the years.* (Gregor and Rowan, re: Shelby)

This finding, that the narratives of dying are actively related to raw experience, in the sense of meaning creation, and sometimes transformation, supports Taylor's (2010) findings with regard to the dying narratives constructed by hospice nurses. Telling the story not only shares the experience, giving the listener a window into the speaker's world, more than this:

... stories allow people to be understood as subjective beings, whose objective and subjective experiences are meaningful in terms of the context in which they find themselves. Raised awareness that comes through storytelling can be communicated not only to the teller in the act of the telling, but also to other people as they listen to, or read these accounts. The stories take on meaning as they resonate within the teller and also with another person's experience. The meaning that is generated then becomes a source of possibilities for future action.

(Taylor, 2010:106)

Taylor is however discussing narrative in relation to human being, this thesis will now turn to addressing the question of narratives in relation to human and companion canine relations.

8.2 *Narratives of Arrival and Departure*

In every family there were highly developed acquisition narratives. These narratives tell the story of how the companion animal arrived, and came to be embraced, as part of the family. They tell the stories of their origins, and the experience of other family members, both human and nonhuman, with regard to the arrival of the companion. These narratives also seemed to help situate the companion in the family, clothe them with the beginnings of a personality, a history and biography within the family context. In this sense the acquisition narrative is an imputing of biography, through the gifting of a history. This fits with Irvine's (2004a; 2004b) theorisation on the structure of nonhuman selfhood, as having four requirements for a self, the final of which is self-history.

Even beyond this the narratives themselves seemed to form part of what it was to be family, in the sense of family as an activity, a doing (Finch, 2007), or a practice (Morgan, 1996). The acquisition narratives served to embed the nonhumans within that active construction of family. This phenomenon of situating narratives is echoed in the stories of the dying canine companions encountered in this study. There is a story of how the companion came to be within the family, and a corresponding story of how they left it. These narratives of the companions departure were also highly developed, and sometimes there was the explicit sense of listening to an oft told tale and "many of the stories seemed well-rehearsed" (Owens et al., 2008).

Yet despite being a practiced re-telling, the story was still being co-constructed and adjusted to the particularities of each audience during each telling (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997), and this includes the story being refined during the process of research questioning and interview (Owens et al., 2008; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Similar to the parents in Owens et al.'s, study, the owners seem to "use the interview to perform a complex reconstructive task, striving to piece together ... shattered biographies and repair damage to their moral identities" (Owens et al., 2008:237).

Winston So she said 'the kindest thing would be if'. And she explained everything to me, so I said 'right, we'll just need to do that then'. So she said 'do you want to stay?' I said 'oh I want to stay' and you know, Rose was there with her head on my lap and everything, and they just prepared her. The one came through and she held Rose, she didn't need to hold her because Rose couldn't move, but she held her and I was holding her and the vet went off and she got whatever she had and then she injected her, and she told me that, you know, she'd go into a deep sleep and very shortly that'll be her. And they left me with her and she said 'take as long as you like', so I think I stayed for about an hour [laugh] until I said to Rose 'I need to go, this is getting ridiculous [laugh] if I don't go now'.

MD Did you speak to her?

Winston I did oh yes, I did [laugh] I spoke to her quite a lot during that, I didn't just sit, we spoke [laugh] because Rose and I, well I talked to her often, I mean, she was a great. She never argued back! (Winston, re: Rose)

Winston spoke with *Rose* as he always did, suggesting her persona, her person, remained intact, even whilst she was dying. The authority of the vet reinforces the decision to have the companion put to sleep, and they are together, she is not alone, but with each other in a kindly and meaningful way. Kindness and care are focal issues in this telling.

As with the earlier encountered acquisition narratives there were features that were repeated across multiple death and departure narratives. Three features in particular stood out in the departure narratives, these being: a concern with suffering, an emphasis on 'putting the dog first', and the enactment of a moral project through the narrative, in order to construct, and defend, a positive moral identity for the owner and the family. These were not arbitrary tellings without thought or intent, quite the reverse, for the owner, like the deceased parents in Owens et al.'s study, "it is clear that their stories are highly sophisticated and selective reconstructions, designed to serve strategic purposes both within the research interview and beyond" (Owens et al., 2008:241).

In the departure narratives there is an acute concern with suffering, and an emphasis on the moral purity of the owner, particularly in the sense of apparently prioritising the dog's wellbeing over the wants and needs of the owner. All three of these features can be seen in the narrative for *Mitch*.

I don't want him to suffer, I'd rather put him down actually, not that that maybe the nicest thing but it'd be the kindest thing for him... I don't want him to suffer and he won't suffer em you know. I think I am very I am quite matter of fact about things like that. I would not see him suffer or keep him living any longer. I don't, I don't agree with that much as much as he is a part of my life, but I but I wouldn't keep him alive just for me. (Margaret, re: *Mitch*)

This 'putting the dog first', was implicated in the process of deciding to choose euthanasia, presented as a selfless choice, a hard and painful decision made at personal cost and in the best interests of the companion.

We said 'no it's time, we've got to do it for him', that's what I says to Frank. We would only be holding onto him for us and it wasn't fair on him'. (Susan, re: *Ted*)

Frank had been weeping over the dog, crying inconsolably; wanting to do anything to keep him alive.

He would have wanted to keep him as long as possible. And it was the dog is really in pain. He is not a happy dog. (Susan, re: *Ted*)

However, there is a tension here, in the sense that the dog's explicit wishes are not known, and can only be inferred. To Gergen (1999) all consciousness is inferred, and in a symbolic interactionist understanding the self, and its preferences, are born in the space, in the interaction, between agents (Mead, 1934).

Nonetheless in, at least some, intra-species communication, it is assumed that wants and preferences can be made known to another being. For humans there is shared language and gesture to communicate even subtle and complex wants. Zoologically it is also reasonable to consider that within a particular species there are ways for one individual to make its desires known to another; from the 'beware of me' rattle of the snake, to the 'feed me' chirps of the chick.

But to assume complex inter-species communication of a desire to no longer experience bodily discomfort and a preference for death, is a complex matter, fraught with difficulty. Even the question of whether a canine can understand the state of death is unclear. To owners such as Margaret, her dogs do understand. *I think he must have known he was dying* (Margaret, re: *Mitch*).

Yet in terms of a scientific understanding of canine awareness, this is highly controversial (Arluke and Sanders, 1996; Irvine, 2004). Being unable to appreciate the nature of death is considered a marker that sets humans apart, as distinct in the nature of their consciousness, from nonhuman animals (Mead, 1934; Elias, 1985). That aside, even if the canine is not perceived to be actively seeking death, they are considered to want to avoid suffering, and furthermore that a state of discomfort renders their life not fit for living.

Whilst euthanasia was advocated as being an option to use in the best interests of the dog alone, “it is when death (the termination of treatment) is being advocated ‘for the good’ of the victims themselves, that one recognises evidence of the ultimate oppression” (Bytheway, 1995:27), that is, that the gross imbalance of power in the animal-human relation can become evident when death is advocated. As Gunnarsson points out “actual lives reflect power relations and processes” (2009: 35-36). Despite how the humans stress that the dogs give their love freely, the dogs are in a relation of dependence upon their owners, who are the keepers of food, providers of warmth and have the power of life and death over their companions. Power is operating here at the micro-level of social relations, in both an oppressive and productive way (Foucault, 1991).

8.3 *Negotiated Order and Privileged Knowledge*

Companion canine dying in this study emerged as a negotiated process, that is that “the negotiations were patterned, not accidental”. As Strauss found, by accident during his 1950s research, this study also happened upon non-accidental patterning, which served to structure an area of the interactional world and constituted a “negotiated order” (Strauss, 1978:5). This “negotiated order had to be worked and ... continually reconstituted” (Strauss, 1978:5), with different voices assuming varying roles. Roles were not equal, and within this negotiated order the voice of the ‘expert’, the veterinarian, is privileged.

And I said ‘right okay, that’s fine, I thought that’ she said ‘and there’s nothing that we could’ve done Margaret’ you know. She said ‘its that same as Mitch, you need to decide what you’re going to do’, you know. The problem is she’s already got a heart murmur which doesn’t help matters but it’s under control cause she takes the medication, but Corinne said ‘you know, you need to have a wee think about, you know, cause there’s only so many injections I’ll give her before I would then say to you’ (Margaret, re: Sally)

The decision to put a dog down was not made alone, it tended to be the fruit of ongoing interactions and conversations with other family members and friends, and frequently involving the veterinarian. The opinion of the veterinarian was given particular weight in the narratives told of the decision making. The status of the expert and their opinion seemed to be utilised to reinforce and to justify the decision to choose euthanasia, rather than keep the dog alive.

... and we went ‘no, this is just silly, that’s just not fair on the dog at all’ [giving him chemotherapy to keep him alive, rather than euthanasia]. And the vet actually, when we had said that, he went ‘if it was my dog I wouldn’t have done it either’ [laugh] he said ‘but I had to offer you it’. I said ‘well that’s fine’. (Susan, re: Ted)

Sanders also encountered this negotiated process in his study of interactions at a veterinary practice in New England. He found that “veterinary interactions typically involve overt negotiation between the doctor and the client” (Sanders 1999:75), by which he means the human. The overt negotiations that Sanders found in “judging legitimacy and negotiating death” (1999:75), appear to have been more muted in this study. Though the example above is quite pointed, it

was the exception. The majority of negotiations with the veterinarians in this research were found to be more akin to a gradual and guarded process of information giving, shaped in such a way that there is a subtle guiding towards a particular treatment option, by the veterinarian. But this is less overt, and quite guarded. Even in a situation where the veterinarian appears to have been clear that the preferred treatment option is euthanasia, there seems to be considerable circling around the possibilities, rather than a direct statement of what course of action is considered to be best.

But she said 'what I'll do is, you need to have a think about what you want to do'. You know, and I more or less said 'well, it doesn't sound like there's anything you can do?'. And she said 'well no, not really cause normally I would take her in tonight and I'd operate, and the chances are we most probably would just flash it off and we'd take the toe off'. And I said 'Yes but that's under normal circumstances isn't it, as in young dog, not one that's got a history of heart problems?'. She said 'exactly Margaret. Those are the two biggest things, if she hadn't had a stroke last week I would've actually said to you maybe. Maybe, not we'll do it but maybe, cause she's really too old'. But she said 'not having had that stroke last week, the chances are she wouldn't come round'. And I thought 'you know, why put her through that? Why put her under sedation and try and do something with her and then you can't get her to come round again?'. To me that's almost going to the point of... not mutilation cause it's not, but I mean, there's no need. I don't think there's any need for that. There's no need to put her through anymore distress than potentially, you know, she may have anyway. So I said to Corinne. 'Well, what d'you think?', and she said 'look, I've put that on, you've not got to make the decision right now, but I know what you're like and the chances are you most probably will call me'. [Margaret becomes upset] (Margaret, re: Sally)

The veterinarian seems to be guiding the owner towards a decision, whilst not explicitly making that decision. Though less overt than in Sander's findings (1999), I do not consider that the more subtle process of negotiation encountered in this study to be less significant. It was simply necessary to look a little deeper for the patterning, than what was overtly said. Yet it is none-the-less potent for being lodged a little further into the background, into the taken-for-granted framing of the interaction. Indeed it could be argued that the ordering may be more powerful, by virtue of being more obscure, but "the crucial importance of negotiation to social order" remains (Strauss, 1978;

Strauss et al., 1963, 1964). This more indirect approach was evident both in the recollections of owner and veterinarian interactions offered by the owners, and in my observations of the single occasion in which I was able to observe the veterinary consultation in person.

There was a reliance on medical knowledge and an acceptance of the medical view, and prognosis, as representing 'reality'. Medicine is a powerful and autonomous profession (Freidson, 1970), whose claims to "pure" knowledge, that is knowledge of illness that is objective and systematic (Freidson, 1970:344), give it expertise in an area of gross uncertainty. As Collins (1982) argues, this capacity to perform as an expert in a field of uncertainty grants formidable power and status. Medicine is a privileged discourse, which makes powerful claims to be able to define and to chart reality (Foucault, 1973). A substantial amount of the meaning given to the canine's dying was founded in the medical view of biological and physiological process. In the way of understanding the body, as biomedicine does, as a biological machine.

I mean she had had another stroke I think it was the Monday night. Someone who she was very fond of came to visit. And she got very excited and she had another stroke so that following day she started to be sick and it was actually bits of her own intestines she was bringing up. Because the cancer had got so bad.

(Amanda, re: *Findlay*)

A biological explanation is intertwined with an emotional and relational one in *Findlay's* case, but it is the biological that is the main source of reference. This was the case with most of the departure narratives, excepting those where the companion died due to an act of violence, or disappeared and a cause for death was unclear. Yet even in cases where the biological explanation was not foremost, such as in the case of *Mitch* who went missing, illness and a reliance on aspects of a biological understanding are present. There was a single instance of death due to a broken heart, who was the Labrador cross *Samson*. However, overwhelmingly there is a leaning towards, and support of, the biological and medical discourse in the work of interpreting the companion's dying.

When a medical explanation was unclear, or veterinary opinion varied, this caused frustration, and was difficult for the human to deal with; they wanted a definitive medical view.



Figure 18 – as he became increasingly unwell lack of a definitive diagnosis was frustrating for Ted’s family, 12 February 2011

It was really frustrating not being able to find out what it was that was wrong with him, but I. Yeah, I was absolutely convinced it was another cancer. And the more we talk to different vets, I think they were pretty damn convinced about that as well, but the only way of knowing that was opening him up and there was no way we were going to be doing that. (Susan, re: Ted)

This desire for a definitive medical view, and the owner’s low tolerance of medical ambiguity, may relate to a need to ground their understanding of what was happening to their companion, and bringing order to the events. Diagnosis can be a category tool of medicine and an administrative tool (Jutel, 2008), but it also “provides structure to a narrative of dysfunction” (Jutel, 2008:279). It is in this capacity of diagnosis to provide “a picture of disarray” (Jutel, 2008:279), that it seems to be utilised in these narratives of departure.

My sense was that the medical/veterinary view was privileged, not only in the sense of it being used to justify potentially discreditable action for the human owner, but also it was used to represent the fundamental, foundational level of reality, concerning the life of the canine. The biomedical view was treated as the objective, the real, and the vet's word was the last word. However, privileged as the veterinary discourse may be, there is a tension here. Unlike medical services for humans provided by the National Health Service, veterinary services are bought, it is a consumer relationship with a service provider, and commercial concerns are involved¹. Sanders (1999) also identifies that ultimately it is the companion's owner, as purchaser of the veterinary service, who has the final word regarding treatment. This observation was made, quite succinctly, by Margaret.

I think the thing with Corine [veterinarian] is that, you know she tells you the way it is and the, you know, inevitably the ball is now in my court and I have to make that decision, which is the way it should be of course because its my animal. (Margaret, re: Mitch)

However, by being focused on the interaction at the point of the veterinary consultation, Sanders (1999) did not encounter the wider, and in temporal terms both the earlier and later, aspects of this negotiated process. Unlike Sander's research (1999), this study did witness these wider aspects; both by encountering the narratives of previously departed companions, and also observing the stages of decision making in the weeks before the owner chose euthanasia, and in the months afterwards, as the family, both its human and nonhuman members, adjusted.

The negotiated order does not stand alone in the veterinary consultation, but is formed by ongoing interactions between family members, as they decide for example the story to give to the vet (Fieldnotes, 1 February 2011). It is also constituted by family members as they interact with other non-family persons, such as the other animal owners in the veterinary practice waiting room, to whom the family, and their story for being at the vets, are presented (Fieldnotes, 1 February 2011). In this sense I would suggest that this work can be

¹ In private human healthcare in Scotland medical services are also bought, how this affects the relations between medic and patient I do not know, but it would be an interesting area of study.

considered to both affirm Sanders (1999), in the sense that the presence and significance of negotiation is also found in this research, and to build on his work. This research builds on Sanders (1999) work, in that the negotiated order surrounding companion dying is found to exist beyond the confines of the veterinary consultation itself.

8.4 The Veterinary Voice: Acquiescence, Resistance and Invalidation

While the voice of the veterinarian was privileged, it did not exist in isolation, nor did it have a purely top down effect. Rather it was a privileged voice, treated as a source of authority, particularly when speaking to the 'reality' of the companion's condition. As such it is a voice positioned *within* the narrative, it is part of the material used in the negotiated process. In essence the veterinary voice can be understood as a device, as a position within the inter-subjective dance. In relating to veterinary pronouncements as a positioned voice, the human owner did not always simply bow to veterinary wisdom, there were a range of stances that the human could take towards the veterinary voice. These positions included acquiescence, resistance and invalidation.

Usually the owner utilised the voice of the veterinarian to reinforce their position with regard to choice of treatment, or withdrawal of treatment, and positioned themselves as acquiescing to medical authority in a fashion akin to that of the Parsonian, 'good patient' (Parsons, 1975). In this case it would be a feature of the 'good owner', as explored in Chapter 9, to acquiesce to veterinary advice. This was particularly the case with regard to choosing euthanasia, when the veterinary pronouncements were used as the last word. It appears that relying on the authority of the veterinary voice may be being utilised to help deflect some role tension. A tension which is caused by the owner being in the ambiguous position of, as primary carer for the companion, also being the one arranging for their demise.

The device of the veterinary voice operates within the narrative to "perform the vital function of defending the moral reputations" (Owens et al., 2008:239), in this case defending the integrity of the owners.

I said, 'this is cruelty, we need to get the vet in'. So the vet came in and said 'I could give her an injection to boost her for a wee while, but it would be cruelty, the dog's dying, she is dying'. So she said, 'what I'll do is, if you leave her just now for a couple of days and see how she is after a couple of days'. So a couple of days later we phoned the vet and it was the husband that came out and he just looked at her, examined her and said, 'her heart's getting weaker and weaker, it would be nice if you put her to sleep.'

(Matthew, re: Brandy)

In this way, by both having a principal concern for the dog's wellbeing and desire to avoid cruelty, and also by complying to veterinary expertise, the owner is able to opt for euthanasia, whilst keeping the impression of being a 'good owner', who cares for their dog, and is a conscientious member of society, intact. Avoiding a potentially "debasing identity discrepancy, breaking up what would otherwise be a coherent overall picture, with a consequent reduction in our valuation of the individual" (Goffman, 1968b:59). Though it should be said that here Goffman was referring to visible stigma signs, whereas in this case, it is a matter of the management of potentially discrediting information.

Not only is the impression of the 'good owner' maintained intact, the choice of the owner, and it was a choice, to have their dog put down, is reframed as compliance with veterinary authority. In this way, after the fashion of the staff in Timmerman's two Midwestern American hospitals, it is possible to "obliterate the impression that the staff killed the patient" (Timmermans, 2010:23), or as in this case, that the owner killed their dog. There is an "*orchestration* (emphasis in the original) of the death as an inevitable transitory process with a measured balance of action and nonaction" (Timmermans, 2010:23). With the 'good owner', like the Parsonian (1975) 'good patient', being compliant and obedient to medical, or rather here to veterinary, wisdom, authority and control.

Even in acquiescence, regardless of how passively the veterinary voice may appear to be accepted, that does not mean that it is a unilateral decision, or that it reflects a singularity of agency. There was invariably a plurality of agency and negotiation. As Nettleton points out, having considered a range of doctor-patient studies:

... what becomes evident from these studies is that although professional-patient relationships are inherently unequal, both participants are able to influence the outcomes of the consultations. Patients are not simply passive recipients of care but they are also active participants in the process of health care work. (Nettleton, 1995:145).

I would suggest that this is particularly the case in the negotiation with human owners of companion canines, where the extreme of say a comatose human passively having decisions made regarding them by emergency room doctors, does not exist. It is not doctor-to-patient relations involved here, which at a minimum is a duality, but veterinarian-to-owner-regarding-canine relations, which at a minimum is tripartite. The medical expert does not deal with their patient in isolation, but alongside their proxy. In the case of stray dogs, it is of course possible that an emergency veterinarian may make a unilateral decision about a canine, without apparent or known ownership, but no such cases were encountered in this work. Even if they were, we cannot assume that canines, stray or otherwise, are devoid of agency simply because they are not human. A nip or a struggle to get away may be as poignant an expression of a desire not to be given an injection, as a human vocalisation of 'no'. It is an important principle that even under conditions of extreme coercion, agency remains present (Collins, 1982).

The human owners do not always take the stance of acquiescence to the veterinary voice, in the role of the good owner. It can be resisted, it may, for example, be seen as failing to speak accurately to the underpinning physical and physiological reality. In which case the veterinary voice, predicated as it is upon the assumption of having privileged access to the underpinning biophysical reality, becomes unstable, and its authority is then contested.

So I took her through and he studied her and, I mean, she really looked worn and done, she was just lying there with the glazed expression and he said 'now I think...' and he prodded her and poked her and all the rest of it and he said 'maybe she's got an inner ear infection?' And I thought 'he's clutching at straws' because I had an inner ear infection when I was young, 18, and I think they now call it Labyrinthitis - Freda's had Labyrinthitis - but I could tell this was not Labyrinthitis or any inner ear infection, this was a serious thing.
(Winston, re: Rose)



Winston resists the veterinarian's pronouncement, relying instead on his own understanding of the symptoms of ear infection. He is not invalidating the medicalised voice, but resisting it from within the same discursive framework. The owner could also orientate themselves in opposition to the voice of the veterinarian, by positioning themselves as the 'true' expert, by virtue of their intimate knowledge of their companion and longstanding day-to-day observation of their activities and wellbeing.

Figure 19 – Winston relied on his own understanding of *Rose's* illness, owner's image, 8 November 2005

Lay knowledge, which is not just one knowledge, can present a challenge to the authority of the expert (Brownlie and Howson, 2005). In the case of *Rose* the authority of the veterinary expert is challenged by the depth of understanding of the owner for their own canine, and their own human experience of illness.

In contrast some owners positioned themselves as accepting of the veterinary voice, and responding appropriately and compliantly to veterinary wisdom, as a sign of their positive moral status as a good owner. At the other extreme, some owners, going beyond resisting by balancing the veterinary voice with lay knowledge, outright rejected veterinary pre-eminence to define the situation of their dying dog. They invalidated veterinary authority, by attacking its supposed privileged access to knowledge, and right to speak to the conditions of that reality, and its function of social control. They challenged the assumption that veterinary pronouncements speak to the fundamental condition of their pet, and

position themselves in opposition to the veterinary voice, as the real expert on their animal, its circumstance and right to life. This can be seen in the case of Matthew's son. Fraser had come home to discover that there had been a violent assault by one, or both, of his larger dogs, upon his Jack Russell, *Rollin*, whose throat had been torn open. Fraser and the vet had different understandings of what they thought had taken place, as only one of the larger dogs had clearly been part of the incident.

So Fraser just got... he grabbed Rollin, wrapped him up in a towel, put him in the car and then he got the big dog shoved her in the back of the car and away to the vets. The only vet that was open was somewhere in city centre, went down and he said 'your wee dog's barely alive' so he jagged it, put him to sleep. Fraser said 'put that one to sleep and I'll be back in half an hour'. He went and got the black Labrador, it wasn't a Lab but a cross, took her in and the vet says 'you're not putting her down are you?' 'yeah, put her down' 'why?' he says 'because she's got blood', he says 'aye, but she might have not been part of the killing, this one looks as if it had...' because it had it in its mouth and everything, but anyway, he said 'no I want rid of it'. So that was all the dogs put down. (Matthew)

It is perhaps telling that whilst Fraser invalidates the veterinary voice, he still maintains positive moral status, as a good owner and conscientious member of society, even in the face of veterinary authority. This expertise, and superior access to knowledge about the condition of their canine, is based upon the intimate, long term knowledge and observation of their own companion, that is it is based upon "relationality and familiarity" (Brownlie and Howson, 2005:1125).

Whilst they invalidate the veterinary voice, this is not to suggest that owners taking this stance were rude or overtly hostile to their veterinarians. Indeed in the instance where I was able to observe interactions during the veterinary encounter directly, with the family of *Mason* and *Diesel*, whose owners had taken this stance of invalidation towards biomedical expertise, they were most polite and sociable (Fieldnotes, 1 February 2011). Yet they were not submissive to veterinary authority and were not automatically accepting of veterinary wisdom and perspective. Even when superficially they appeared accepting of the assurances offered by the expert, once outside the veterinarians in the car park, *Mason* and *Diesel's* family, laughed and made it

clear that they did not accept the veterinarian's view (Fieldnotes, 1 February 2011). In this family, as Brownlie and Howson also found, though a display of trust, as a lay person is expected to offer before a medical expert, is given, "doubt is not really being suspended", (Brownlie and Howson, 2005:1134), and veterinary authority is simply being disregarded. It was a stance of such profound resistance, that it was tantamount to invalidation of the assumed privileged biomedical access to reality of veterinary knowledge, and the social prestige, that it is based upon (Nettleton, 1995).

8.5 'Natural' Death and the Paradox of Euthanasia

The data indicates that there is a preference for 'natural death', that is death without human intervention, particularly the meaning seems to be death without euthanasia performed by a veterinarian; without the human owner having to decide to have their companion euthanized.

Margaret The day he doesn't want to go out for a walk will be the day I'll really have to sit down and thinking 'well, you know, it's maybe come to a point now where he's not, he's just not got it in him anymore'. But I think just due to their breed I don't think he'll go particularly easily. I would like him to just fall asleep. That would be, I would be better for me. And that's very selfish but (becoming upset).

MD D'you want me to stop?

Margaret No, no, no, you're fine. I think I don't want to have to put him down. (Margaret, re: Mitch)

Two issues leap to mind here. First there is the assumption that a natural death is possible, and that it is good, and second, hiding behind this issue, is a paradox. For if natural death is good, then veterinary assisted euthanasia, the opposite, which a good natural death is defined against, must in some manner be regarded as unnatural, as not good.

To take the first of these issues, the preference for 'natural' death in this study seems to be akin to the preference for the 'good' death for human beings. In an unusually definitive finding for qualitative research, Borgstrom, Barclay and Cohn (2013), in their study of Cambridge medical students encountering dying patients, found that they "invariably draw on the notion of 'good death'"

(Borgstrom, Barclay and Cohn, 2013:391). In my research the emphasis was not as clear cut. Though widely present the preference for a 'natural' death, was not inevitable for the canines. It seems to operate more as a particular grounding point of reference, to orientate the actors and their understanding, and telling, of the canine's passing, than as an invariable launching point for their actions and evaluations. However, this difference in degree of reliance upon the construct of 'natural' or 'good' for canine or human death, does not seem to suggest a difference in phenomena.

I would suggest that the two constructs are operating in a similar fashion within the interactional world. Both the 'good' death of the human, and the 'natural' death of the companion canine, seem to provide "a certain approved way of dying" (Borgstrom, Barclay and Cohn, 2013:395). That having been said, the concepts are not identical. The 'good' death of a human, which in relation to companion canines and pain, is explored more fully in Chapter 7, implies an awareness, absence, or control, of pain, and it also implies an adherence to a particular sequence of psychological states. These, allegedly normative, psychological states, are the five stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, described by Kubler-Ross (1969). Whilst the 'natural' death of the companion canine, perhaps because access to the psychological state of the canines is more difficult, is focused upon a lack of human/veterinary intervention, and, like the human 'good' death, an absence of pain.

I mean, as long as they don't suffer, that's the most important thing to me, they have to have a nice quality of life. The minute that stops then I don't think that's right, but then I think that's the same for humans as well. I think once you get to that point, you know, but you know, with animals a human makes that decision, humans don't get that [laugh] which is, you know, maybe not always the best way.
(Margaret, re: Sally and Mitch)

If avoiding pain and seeking the most 'natural' death, that is the one with the minimum of human intervention, is the ideal that an owner must act on when their companion is dying, this is not without complexity. Which leads to the second issue with the construct of 'natural' death. If death without human

intervention, but also without suffering, is the goal, what happens when the two principles conflict?

I think I don't want to have to put him down. But, you know, equally, if it gets that bad then I wouldn't hesitate to do it. But it's just, but it's like everything in life, there's a nicer way of going and there's not a nicer. And there's an intervention and I would far rather he died naturally, but hey that's for me, that's not for him. Well equally I actually would prefer that for him too, but I actually don't think that will happen. I have a feeling that won't happen. But you know.

(Margaret, re: *Mitch*)

Margaret makes it clear that in the event of conflict between the desire for a 'natural' death and suffering, she would have *Mitch* euthanized. This is a profoundly ambiguous position. The moral integrity of the 'good' owner, which is more fully explored in Chapter 9, rests upon the assumption that the owner will act in a caring way, and seek the wellbeing of the companion. This imperative of seeking the good of the companion is also present in the idea of desiring a 'natural' death, rather than the, therefore unnatural and not good, death at the hands of human intervention. I would suggest that this thread of meaning, if followed, leads to a paradox. The paradox is that the owner, whose moral identity is invested in them being the primary carer and guardian of the canine's wellbeing, is now being cast in the role of the one destroying, or arranging the destruction, of the companion. The person most responsible for their wellbeing, which implies a duty not to harm, is having them put to death, which could certainly be regarded as a form of, if not the ultimate, harm.

Arguments in support of human euthanasia tend to rest upon principles based on concerns regarding quality of life, and the privileging of choice (Pitcher; 2010, Warnock and MacDonald, 2008; Scott Peck, 1997). The first of these, suffering and the complexities, and contradictions, of evaluating and interpreting companion canine suffering, were explored in the previous interpretive Chapter 7. Suffice to say for now that suffering is a powerful consideration in the negotiated process of companion canine dying and in the decision to choose euthanasia. *I don't want him to suffer and he won't suffer you know* (Margaret).

The second aspect, of privileging choice, which echoes a Cartesian idealisation of mind and rationality, is particularly problematic in the case of companion canines. We have lost the concept of animal psyche, and the possibilities for animal mental illness and suicide, as considered by Victorian thinkers, such as the Scottish physician and botanist, Lauder Lindsay (1880). So if you cannot assist a suicide, because the creature has not the mind or will to seek it, how then is it not murder, if the living cannot choose to die?

A distinction can be made between passive euthanasia (this can be understood as assisted suicide, where the means are provided but not administered, (Gamliel, 2013; Warnock and MacDonald, 2008), and active euthanasia (where the means and final act is provided by another, but is still regarded as voluntary (Warnock and MacDonald, 2008). In the case of companion canines, who are not understood to be capable of administering a lethal agent with intent, putting to sleep could be categorised in these terms as active euthanasia, akin to the Groningen Protocol, which permits the euthanizing of severely ill neonatal humans. Yet this still leaves the thorny issue of volition.

A further distinction can also be made between voluntary euthanasia, where the dying ask for death, and non-voluntary euthanasia, when the dying either do not ask for death, or are regarded as being unable to make a meaningful choice (Jotkowitz, Glick, and Gesundheit, 2008; Cohen-Almagor, 2003). The choice may be regarded as not being meaningful either because of coma, very low intelligence or the dying being too young to understand. This category maybe of significance with regard to companion canines, who, being in the position of having virtual personhood, as in the case of children with severe mental disability, which Sanders (1999) original understanding of the term virtual personhood was based on, could be regarded as being unable to make a meaningful choice.

This is not to say that companion canines cannot choose, or that they lack any agency at all. It would also be quite possible to argue that the euthanasia of a companion canine may fall in the category of involuntary euthanasia. Where a being that makes no request to die (Cohen-Almagor, 2003), and may otherwise have chosen life (BBC Ethics Guide, 2013), is killed anyway. Perhaps in the case of companion canines the choosing of life could be seen as being expressed by continuing to eat, drink, and move around; seeking interaction and comfort from their fellows, or avoiding interaction, pulling their paw away, and resisting the threat of bodily injury, that the veterinarian's needle presents. With that resistance to the pain of the needle there is also a tacit, but nonetheless significant, action by the canine in the direction of life, in the direction of freedom of motion and freedom from injury, which is, by implication, action which seeks to avoid death.

There exists a tension, which I would suggest is tantamount to conflict between the roles (Goffman, 1959). This tension is between the paradox of the owner being the primary carer of the canine, the one primarily responsible for maintaining the companion's wellbeing and preserving its life, and the owner also being the agent organising the euthanasia, and quite probably involuntary death, of the companion. There appear to be three responses to this role conflict: recourse to the imperative to avoid suffering, an appeal to choice and rejection of role as primary carer. In the first of these, the tension seems to lead to suffering, and the moral imperative to alleviate it, assumes a preeminent status.

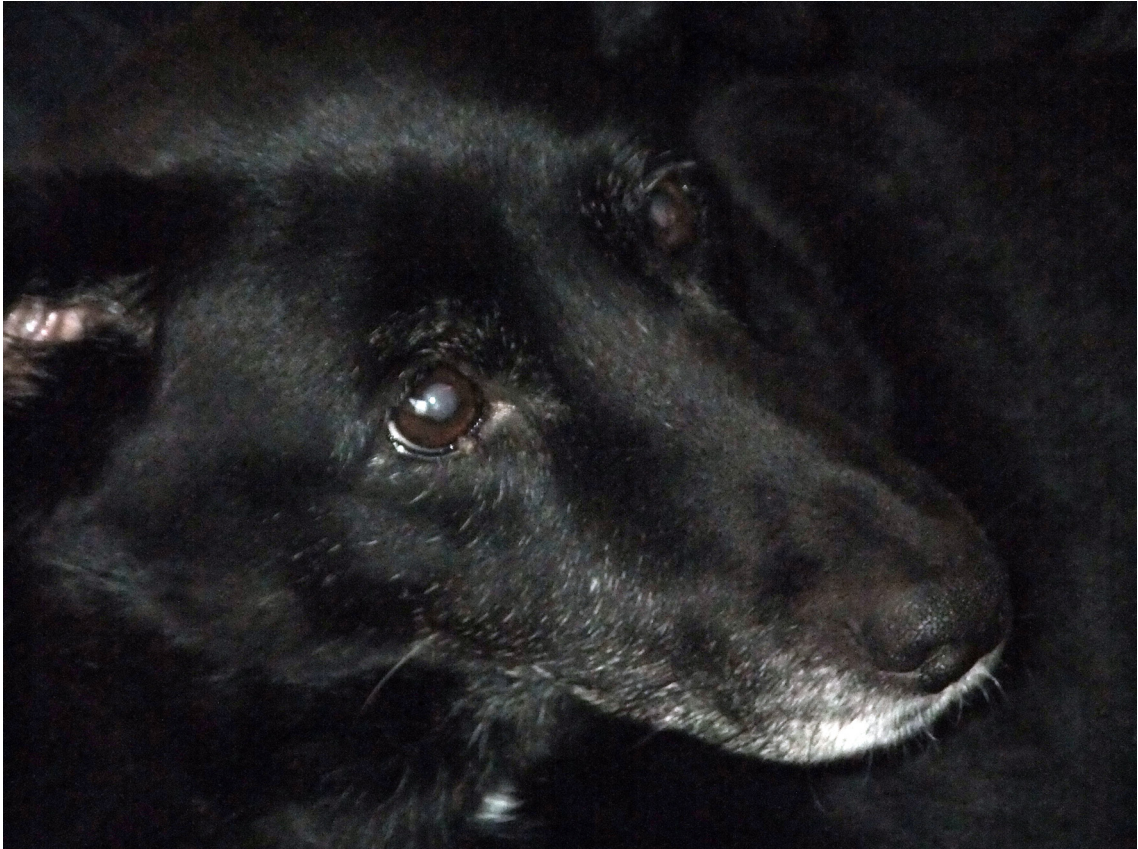


Figure 20 – the imperative to avoid suffering, such as *Sierra's* pain, and maintaining the life of the companion, caused role conflict for the owners, 12 February 2011

There is an emphasis on the mediating importance of alleviating suffering, which acts to override the primary role requirement of the owner to seek the wellbeing, continued life and liveliness, of the companion. So the owner can have their companion involuntarily euthanized, whilst still maintaining their status as a morally reputable person who seeks the best interest of their dog unselfishly.

He would have wanted to keep him as long as possible. And it was the dog is really in pain. He is not a happy dog. We took him to the vets and Norman the vet says to be fair if it was my dog I would do the same.
(Susan, re: Fred)

In the second case, the paradox can be responded to, though more rarely, by retaining the critical aspect of choice, as in the contemporary arguments for human euthanasia in Scotland. Here there are attempts to frame the euthanasia as a voluntary choice, not of the human, but one of the canine itself, for whom the owner acts as interpreter of their wishes.

I knew. I knew looking at her and the way she was looking at me that this was serious. I would look at her and she was looking at me as if. I know she wasn't pleading with me, but she was telling me, you know, her eyes were showing me ... So anyway, I phoned on the Saturday morning and said 'if anything she's much worse' and now who was. It was a young lady vet, not the one from before, a really charming one. And she said 'can you bring her in?' ... I remember thinking 'how can you be so distraught about, you know, it's a pet after all?' I was overwhelmed by emotion and, I mean, I was weeping ... I've never been like this ever in my life you know, even with close friends and family, never had I had an experience like this. (Winston, re: Rose)

Finally the owner may respond to the tension inherent in the paradox of euthanasia, by rejecting the role of primary carer of the canine completely. In this case the companion is presented as being a 'bad' dog, one morally unworthy of care, and any potential stigma associated with moral failing on behalf of the human for not fulfilling the requirements of their role, is made distant (Goffman, 1968b).

And he looked a lovely dog but we had to have Luther put down. Because he was just such a psycho. We just, well, I had gone away for the day, Gregor was working and the kids were all older, but he had got out the garden and he had gone to the garden across the back and, of course, they were trying to chase him away with a brush and everything, and I don't know if he had bitten somebody or nipped them or something like that, but they made such a hooah about this dog, and we knew he was a problem, so I had him put down. (Rowan, re: Luther)

In Britain today it would not be legally justifiable to destroy a 'bad' human in the way it is to destroy a bad pet. I would propose that this is a reflection of the higher status given to human than animal life in contemporary British society. Least it be tempting to assume that this is a natural and not a socially constructed value, it may be worth remembering that under the Nazi regime this situation was reversed, at least with regard to certain human groups within society. Nazi Germany having one of the highest, if not the highest, level of protection of an animal's right to life under the law. The lives of animals being protected in their own right, rather than in relation to humanity, whilst this social system simultaneously legitimated the destruction of segments of the human population (Arluke and Sanders, 1996).

These three ways of dealing with the paradox, manifest different reactions to the primary role of the owner as canine guardian (Irvine, 2004b) and carer. The first of these, an appeal to suffering reinforces the role of owner as primary carer of the companion, whilst an appeal to choice attempts to mediate the responsibilities, with reference to the wishes of the canine, and the final option, represents a rejection of the role and its incumbent responsibilities altogether.

8.6 *Causes of Death*

Part of the work of the narratives of departure, and a feature of their composition, was the identification of a cause of death. The dog's passing was placed within a context of meaning, where the biomedical model of life was privileged, and an intelligible explanation of the companion's passing was forged. In some instances a multifaceted cause was given, but in no case was there an absence of identified, at least probable, cause of death or loss. One wonders if an absence of cause was in some way intolerable, unendurable. Sources of possible explanation were drawn from medical models, past personal experience, family lore and rumour. These possible causes may at times have been remote, or even fanciful, but they were never absent. In short it appeared very important for there to be an identified cause of death, one that could be woven with the experience and biography of the companion and their family.

When Yara died she had an aneurism. She was about 11 years old. She had been a rescue dog who was found in a flat in Wester Hailes in a cupboard. (Amanda, re: Yara)

Though in the case of the German Shepherd *Yara*, a single identified medical cause is given, this was an exception. Usually, whilst a biomedical explanation tends to be focal, there would be a range of explanations, merging and mutually reinforcing.

[Laugh] but, you know, its just something I've noticed with him and I haven't ever had an ageing dog before, so, well not as old as him. The two we had to put down well one had a stroke so we didn't need to put Heather down, but Fonz we needed to put down cause she had cancer, but she wasn't as old as Mitch, I think she was 14 I think when she died, but she had to be put down cause she just was losing weight and not eating and everything else. So I've never

really had a dog that's been as old as him, so it's a bit of a learning process for me to but I just try to make it comfortable for him that's the main thing. He doesn't totally get the run of the house but he more or less does!
(Margaret, re: *Mitch*)

Here the biomedical reasons are meshed with aspects of everyday living and being, which, as critical considerations in the negotiation of dying, are explored more fully in Chapter 9. In this instance explanations are drawn from three areas: naturalistic ideas regarding lifecourse and degeneration are drawn from the realm of lay understanding of the natural and social world, explanations are drawn from the biomedical realm, and also from the everyday sphere of activity and being. Margaret's statement highlights, that there is a reason, there was no instance devoid of explanation, and this explanation tended to be multifaceted and complex, weaving differing sources of understanding together. Yet the question remains, why this urge to explain? Could it be a consequence of the need for narrative, of the embedding of the companion within the story that is the family?

It also should be mentioned that this study has targeted humans who are likely to have closer relations with their companions, so it is possible that in families where the dog is less of a 'person', and perhaps performs rather more as an interchangeable occupant of the role of the family dog, that there may be less urgency to explain their demise. A cause was always given, but that does not mean it was always put forward without issue, offering a cause of death could be problematic, if either an explanation was difficult to forge, due to lack of information, or if the given cause was in some way contested.

When there was a lack of information from which to build an explanation, as in cases where the companion suddenly disappeared (which is explored in terms of the suffering engendered by a disappearance in Chapter 7). There seemed to be a distinct sense of frustration at the lack of being able to construct a sufficiently valid cause, and also a sense of disorientation. This is perhaps suggestive of the purpose that a defined cause of death may serve. This frustration and disorientation can be seen in the case of *Mitch* who disappeared.

And the other thing too is yes he could've wandered off to somewhere and somebody might have picked him up and taken him home, and that would be great, he could be lying in front of somebody's fire and still having another two or three years left in him, and that's a nice way to think about it, but I don't really think that's the case, but hey you don't know, and I think for me that's the worst part is the never knowing because you don't have anything feasible, not feasible, nothing tangible.

(Margaret, re: *Mitch*)

The frustration was evident in her body, voice and tears. Perhaps this frustration is born of the need, the imperative even, to have a defined, and satisfactory, cause. The frustrated need to know is powerful, leaving a profound sense of intangibility, the world becomes less solid, more ethereal to Margaret. As if the sudden loss, with its fracturing randomness, cannot be assuaged. Could it be that the importance of the cause, is to knit together in some fashion, the edges of expectations of everyday life and experience, the underpinning framework of life, that is stretched and torn by the random inexplicableness of death? In short, if death must have a random element, then at least let it be explicable. Perhaps under these conditions the sense making task (Owens et al., 2008), becomes all the more urgent. It becomes more important to make sense in the face of non-(or no)-sense; and possibly the departure narratives, like the “tales of biographical disintegration” that Owens et al. (2008:237) heard from parents whose children were lost to suicide, become not just tellings, nor even only sense making task, but begin to become “survival tools” (Owens et al., 2008:251).

The frustration and disorientation of the owner, when a lack of information makes forging a plausible cause of death impossible, speaks to the significance of this particular practice of meaning making. Yet whilst having too little potential for defining a cause is a problem, having lots of information and experience from which to forge one is not without issues also. Whilst a lack of sufficient information to build a coherent cause may be problematic, and threaten the sense making task on the one hand, an offered cause may be contested if there are other voices and possibilities. This process of contestation was more difficult to see, perhaps because it tended to become evident when

more than one human family member was addressed. If a single view was taken at a time, or other human family members were more passive, I was less likely to encounter the divergent voices within the family, whose principal speaker tended to define the consensus. Sometimes it was evident, and the negotiation around defining a cause could be seen in action. The process of negotiation, and the contestation of meaning are visible in the case of Rowan and Gregor as, together, they forge an explanation for Shelby's death.

MD *What happened with Shelby?*
Rowan *Well.*
Gregor *Her insides started coming out.*
Rowan *I thought she had an abscess in her bottom.*
MD *Goodness me.*
Rowan *And I thought she'd an abscess in her bottom and I was bathing it and trying to keep it clean and she was crying, she wasn't happy and I thought 'oh I'll not do anymore.'*
Gregor *But she had cancer.*
Rowan *Yeah but we didn't, and then it kind of went in again. And then I was at my work and Bridget and her husband and Ethan was just a baby, they were home from Cyprus on holiday at Christmas, and Bridget phoned me at work 'mum, you better get Shelby to the vet tonight, she's got a big growth coming out of her back passage'. And so obviously it was cancer of the bowel and that was it coming out and I was bathing it, because Jake had had an abscess in his bottom and that's what I thought it was. It was an abscess, and then his abscess burst and he was okay I thought that's what it was with her, and we just had to have her put down straight away that night.*

(Gregor and Rowan, re: *Shelby*)

As the home was very clean, and scrupulously well presented, I find myself wondering if Rowan's discomfort with the explanation of Shelby's insides coming out is in part motivated by a wish not to give an explanation that is too 'dirty'. Where boundaries leak from the inside to the out, it is problematic and can be disturbing (Haraway, 2008). Perhaps Rowan is seeking to avoid this implication of a dirty death, because all explanations are not equal, and explanation for the cause of death also needed to serve the interested of impression management, to present to others that the dog died in an acceptable, humane, clean, and morally defensible way. These aspects are

explored more fully in the interpretation Chapter 9 on everyday practices and welfare.

In terms of frequency, the first three given causes of companion canine death in this study, in order of prevalence: are cancer, old age and stroke. These principal three causes are then followed by a varied selection of other causes, occurring with lesser frequency (see Table 3).

Table 3 - Causes of death (alphabetical)

Cause of Canine Death	Instance
Cancer *	10
Disappeared	4
Excitement	1
Grief	1
Haemorrhage	1
Heart disease / failure	4
Mental illness / aggression	4
No data	4
Old age	7
Parasite	1
Stroke	5
Unknown cause (falling over)	1
Victim of violence	2

* There is a co-morbidity of cancer with other illnesses, but it is identified as the killer in these cases

These declared causes of canine death have similarities with the contemporary causes of death in Scotland, which are ascribed to the human population, that is according to the General Register of Scotland (2010), specifically the vital events reference tables, 'Death by Frequency of Cause by Sex, Numbers and Percentages 1986 to 2010. The first three human causes of death, having the lion's share of the cases, are cancer, heart disease and stroke, with a varied selection of other causes then occurring at a lesser frequency. The main human causes of death, are also major causes for the companion canines, with

cancer being the principal cause of death for both human and canine. However, there is some variation in the pattern between human and canine. Though the companion canines share cancer, heart disease and stroke as significant causes of death, there is also disappearance, mental illness and old age, which are not represented in the same order or manner in the human data. But what is telling, is perhaps less the difference in the more infrequent causes of death, than the similarity in the main causes.

Why the given causes of death in this study should in part pattern the ascribed causes of death of the general human population can only be guessed at. Are we subject to, and also affected, by the same environmental pollutants, or physiological vulnerabilities? Perhaps it is not without significance that following the completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 (US Department of Energy, 2011), the National Human Genome Research Institute (2013, page unlisted) are now running the Canine Genome Project and “are working to develop resources necessary to map and clone canine genes in an effort to utilize dogs as a model system for genetics and cancer research”. Or perhaps this patterning of causes of death is less to do with a physiological similarity, than with a subtle weaving of human and canine society, in which the agents of our mortality is assumed to be theirs?

Summary

Companion canine dying emerged as a negotiated process, shaped by a divide between gradual and sudden death. Gradual death was the more prevalent, and was characterised by a compound effect of increasing disruptions to normative wellness. In Parson’s sense of illness as deviance (1951), it was a gradual descent into, what is ultimately regarded as untenable, dysfunction. In sudden death the process of negotiation is truncated, but not absent, and some particular challenges to the everyday creation of meaning are encountered. These challenges take the form a threatening randomness that risks exposing the fragile foundation of the everyday processes of living and coping.

This work has encountered developed narratives of departure, that seem to structure the experience of losing a companion, and provide a way of sharing this experience with the wider society beyond the family. These narratives of departure, also served as part of what it was to 'do' family (Finch, 2007), to maintain a moral identity in an emphasis on 'putting the dog first'. It is suggested that the negotiated process of companion canine dying constitutes a "negotiated order" (Strauss, 1978), a structure within the social field that both shapes, and is shaped by, the interactions between various actors.

In particular the role of the expert, the veterinarian, is a privileged voice in the negotiations, and the biomedical view is treated as being definitive. The role of the expert is not simply submitted to, but a range of stances to expert medical authority are displayed: acquiescence, resistance and invalidation to the veterinary voice. There is a pronounced preference in the data for a 'natural death', and deep ambiguities in relation to choosing euthanasia. In particular the ambiguities reflect a conflict between the requirements of being a 'good owner' and the maintenance of moral integrity, and choosing to have the creature in your care put down. The privileging of a biomedical view is also reflected in the given causes of death, which echo the human declared causes of death in contemporary Scotland, which may reflect an interweaving of the understanding of human and canine life. This interweaving is explored more deeply in the chapter to come, where how humans and companion canines live, and create everyday meaning together, is addressed directly.

Chapter 9 ~ Interpretations of Everyday Practices and Disruptions to Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a fluid notion, which incorporates “material wellbeing, subjective wellbeing and relational wellbeing” to produce an overall sense of wellness (Punch, 2014:16). The data suggests that the extra-individual disruption caused by companion canine illness or loss impacts human owner wellbeing. This is a factor that can be overlooked in veterinary and psychological studies that privilege the internal, individual, psychological and physiological states. In this work the external disruption to routines and taken-for-granted patterns of the lifeworld appear to be the nexus between human and companion canine wellbeing, rather than a physiological response to an event. The locus of suffering is external, related to the embedding of human and canine in a common lifescape, as Goffman emphasised (1968a), society is first. The disruption is initially between the agent and their immediate social structure, and this disruption then ripples within the being, to cause intra-psychic, or physiological, disturbance. As Mead (1934) found, the inner state and self, is born of, and reflected from, the external relations to the world and others. This is a direct reversal of the trajectory of disturbances to wellbeing assumed in a biomedical frame, which understands disruptions to wellbeing as predominately to do with inner biochemical or psychological reactions to the loss. Rather this study finds that it is the disrupted pattern of life, and impoverishment of the lifescape, that is the genesis of pain.

9.1. Routine and the Ritualisation of Living Together

As in Scott’s (2009) analysis of the daily lives of humans, the everyday life of human and canine together was habitual and domestic. Moreover, the canines seem to be embedded in the family in large part by way of being embraced in the routines and activities of their family. As Morgan suggests, routine activities such as eating may “define who belongs or does not belong to particular families or map out areas of social and interactional significance” (Morgan, 1996:158). There was an established order of routine, a cycle of everyday activities, involving: waking, toileting, walking, eating, possibly going to day

care, walking, eating again, relaxing together and sleeping. In this aspect all the families were concurrent, and extensive and detailed, though varied, practices were present in each case.



Figure 21 – eating patterns were part of everyday practices, *Rusty*, 28 January 2012

Having set times and places for meals was part of the everyday routine of human and canine coexistence. The canines were aware of the practices, and they were sensitive to changes in the established order of everyday events.

Yeah, so I've moved Kari's food, her dish, to actually right next to the water dish which is where Ted used to eat, and she's a bit funny. She'll have her breakfast there, she's quite happy to have her breakfast there, but teatime she's not too sure. She'll sit on her bed and look over at her food and you've really got to encourage her to come over and eat her dinner there. Its very unusual for Kari, because Kari would steal food at a drop of a hat. But she still has that in her head, that that's Ted's place to be eating, and her place is beside her bed. (Susan, re: *Kari*, after the death of *Ted*)

It is worth noting in this example that the canine both has her experience shaped by the family's routine, and yet also exerts a shaping influence upon it, in this case by *Kari's* reluctance to eat her food in the place that was *Ted's*. Indeed the companion canines were not only the recipients of the daily family routines, they would also seek to enforce the normal order, particularly if an owner was late in feeding them, or became absorbed in other activities and did not keep to the usual routine. In short, the companions were seen as active participants in the everyday practices of life and living together.

But she was told what day of the week it is and so she would chew that and think it was a great treat and, eh, I would then leave. Always bid her farewell, I'll be back and, you know, just be good and when I would come back and sometimes organise someone to come in at lunchtime to just take her a little walk. You know, just a little walk to get her out, and then when I got home, say, five o'clock she was ready, she would greet me and then we'd go for our walk which would be a good hour's walk at least.

Oh yes, and then back and she would have her meal, I've got my meal, I would then. We're talking about oh, half past six/quarter to seven. And then I would work for two hours until nine o'clock doing admin work for school or whatever. I would sit at this here, and she would be there or walking about and, you know, or sitting beside me. And then at nine o'clock. Oh yes, always, her basket would be here. And I would talk to her and I would turn the music on of course and I'd be writing and I'd say 'are you fine Rose?' she always was happy.

And then at nine o'clock she would get restless and she would. It was as if she knew the time, cause at nine o'clock I had to stop work. She dictated that I had, she would nudge me and walk round the table and nudge me. Not wanting out but wanting me to go next door, right, where we could relax and where she had another. She had one in here it was one of those big plastic burgundy coloured bed things with the soft stuff inside it. Next door there was always just a loose thing that was thrown down, and she would sit at my feet or she would come up and coorie in and she was fine, and we would watch some television. She wasn't all that interested in television to be honest, she preferred music and a discussion or something. And then at half past ten I'd put on my jacket or my coat and we'd go out and we'd walk through the village and up the XXX Road till we were out of lights. (Winston, re: Rose)

The routines of human and companion canine coexistence were so developed, that some of those I witnessed, or had described to me, seemed to assume an almost ritualistic nature.



Figure 22 – some practices, such as where and when canines slept, had a ritualistic quality, *Mitch and Sally*, 29 March 2011

Seale considered that “human social life is fundamentally ritualistic at every level” (1998:32). In this light it appears that the companion canines also form part of the ritualistic enactment of human social life, as both those who have the rituals enacted upon them, and as social agents who actively participate in the rituals. The canines seemed to be emeshed in what Morgan calls “the ritual life of families” (1996:158). It would be intriguing to explore to what extent the sharing of ritualised routine is implicated in the construction of mutuality and the experience of a shared world. Also intertwined with the routines were aspects of power and dependence. This was not unilateral, with only the canine companion being dependent on the human owner, but flowed in many directions (Foucault, 1991). Power in this study was manifest relationally, rather than being a thing (Foucault, 1991).

When a canine is absorbed into a family they are expected, as are the human members, to adhere to the norms concerning behaviour, with restraint and physical control of both emotions and bodily functions, such as excreting and sexual activities. The data supports that failure to adhere to these norms on the part of the canine can disrupt the anticipated ordering of everyday events. Though he was specifically referring to human conduct, I would suggest that these fractures in the framework of everyday experience are akin to the frame breakers that Goffman identified, in his words, “now it is apparent that the human [sic] body is one of those things that can disrupt the organisation of activity and break the frame” (Goffman, 1974:347). In this case the canine body is the disruptor, as in *Rusty* attempts to mate with my legs, or in the case of incontinence:

So he's, you know, obviously I think the age thing definitely is kicking in with him, he's just getting to that point. But this last month or so we've had difficulties with overnight – although I'd take him out for a tinkle before he goes to his bed. Often I'll get up and I'll find that, you know, he's had an accident and everything else, but you know, to me that's a minor detail. Yes, he doesn't do anything in his bed, from that point of view he's very good, not that it would matter, it's just a case of chucking it in, but that's just happened lately.
(Margaret, re: Mitch)

Such frame breakers disrupt the normal flow of events and justifications, such as *Mitch* being elderly, are brought into play to bring the deviant event back into line and smooth the normal flow of interaction or narrative. The “companion animals are closely intertwined with the lives of their human caretakers” (Jackson, 2012:254), and are enmeshed in the every practices of life and living.

Right, in the winter, oh we still went out the same number of walks but we dressed differently. Because it was dark I had to wear my long coat and then wear one of those yellow sort of. And she had her little coat thing, it wasn't to keep her dry but it was to keep her bright cause she always walked to my left, I was always told that was how you walked a dog, on the left. So if I was on the road and she was on the outside, she had her fluorescent thing round her neck, which I made for her, it's what cyclists would wear on their arms. She had a sort of extended one that she wore round her neck, very fetching! And off we would go. I would need to take a brolly with me sometimes but that was fine because she needs to

go, but I would make the walks slightly shorter in the morning. Maybe half an hour instead of 40 minutes, but if it was fine. She always got the full walk at five o'clock till about half past six, that would always, didn't matter what the time of year was, and even the last walk at night, well if I was tired I wouldn't go all the way up the XXX Road.
(Winston, re: Rose)

The human owners seemed to “invest their egos primarily in certain routines” (Goffman, 1959:43). The mutual routines served to link the canine and human, and this had implications for the human identity and wellbeing, in that; “the extent that the human-animal interactions proceeded more or less smoothly and rewardingly, the person incorporates certain positive elements (responsible, knowledgeable, etc.) into his or her self-definition” (Sanders, 2003:413). This interweaving of life together and sharing of the daily cycle of routines and practices, presents a picture of a stable and ordered co-existence, which contributes positively to human welfare, not only in the sense that walking is beneficial for human health from a physiological point of view, but also that “value and meaning and the vision of order are basically necessary for human wellbeing” (Grainger, 1998:92), and the everyday practices of living with a companion canine support this vision of order. The everyday practices of human and canine coexistence found in this research were stable and firmly rooted, a finding which challenges the assumption that the position of the companion canine is liminal.

9.2. *Everyday Practices as Challenging Liminality*

Charles Davies (2008) emphasises the ambivalence in human and companion animal relations, and the liminal state the companions occupy, yet it may not be quite as liminal as is being emphasised. The day-to-day routines and ordering of life of the companions is firmly rooted, and practices reflecting the canines place, and significance, within the family, are established.

But she became part of the family and people said, ‘Its only a dog’. I said, ‘no it’s not only a dog’. Yeah ‘it’s only a dog’, I says ‘no, she was part of my family, I loved her, she loved me, she loved Stacie and the kids and we loved her, she wasn’t just a dog, she was part of my family.’
(Matthew, re: Brandy)

The companion canines do not appear to receive the occasional care of a creature occupying a liminal state at the periphery of the group, such as the village dog, with its limited rights and expectations of fair treatment and care. Rather they receive high level care, indeed it is considered morally deficient for them to be treated without due consideration to their privileged position (Arluke and Sanders, 1996). In a sense it could be argued that the reverse dynamic is functioning, that companion canines are not liminal creatures receiving ambivalent and sporadic care. Rather they are established members of the group, receiving high level care, and that it is the justification for this favour, rather than the favour itself, that is problematized and limited. As Margaret found when her boss was unsympathetic at her losing her companion:

I find the concept of other humans who are not animal lovers to that very, I actually find it quite abhorrent actually. 'It's only an animal', you see, that phrase 'its only'. I don't like that. (Margaret).

It is not that the position of the companion canines that is weak and liminal; it is that the established, indeed elevated, position being given to the canine companion, has a weak justification and is problematic in a society that has a strong inter species divide, and that privileges human over nonhuman. The position of the animal is not liminal, in day-to-day functional terms the companions are fully embraced in what it is to be family, rather it is the moral and ideological justification for the companion's inclusion that is weak.

Whilst Wilkie (2005) also emphasises the ambiguous nature of human-animal relations there is a critical difference between the cattle in her study and the canines in this work, and that is the role expectations of the nonhuman in each case. The livestock heifer is not generally expected to have a self, therefore there is tension and significant levels of ambiguity, when the animal deviates from the routine process of production and begins to emerge from the herd as an individual. In contrast to this, the companion canine is expected by the owners to possess at least a rudimentary personhood, therefore the emergence of individuality does not necessarily create the contradictions and tensions that it does for the stockperson of the animal that is a "sentient commodity" (Wilkie, 2005:213).

This assumption that animal-human relations are profoundly ambiguous is echoed in the recent work by Charles and Davies (2008), who are looking at human and companion animal relations, rather than the human-to-livestock relationships Wilkie (2005) addresses. Whilst at the macro level of human and multispecies interactions, across the globe, and across the range of species and specific context, animal-human relations could be said to be ambiguous. At least animal-human relations could be called ambiguous in the sense that some animals are regarded as persons and cared for as companions, whilst others are commodities or objects of scientific research. Just because animal-human relations can be ambiguous on a large scale, does not necessarily mean that they are within a specific field.

Charles and Davies are explicit that “the ambivalence which characterises humans’ relationships with other animals, however, also characterises our relationships with pets (Charles and Davies, 2008:2.4). I would question this assumption, and even if ambiguity does exist at the micro level of companion animal and human relations, it is not necessarily driven by the same dynamics as the ambiguities that exist on a large scale across multiple species and situations. There are aspects to the human and companion canine relationship that do not apply to the relationship between humans and wildlife, or the relations between humans and livestock, or humans and experimental animals. Part of this difference is the role to which the nonhuman is assigned, there is a vast difference in the expectations and assumptions that surround a wild adder, or laboratory mouse, compared to those that shape the life of a pet Pekinese.

9.3. Everyday Practices and Quality of Life

The routines that shape everyday life were also implicated in issues regarding loss of wellbeing and suffering, suffering was not only a matter of physical pain. When these everyday routines were disrupted it was considered that the quality of life of the companion may be compromised. This concern with an ability to maintain normal routines formed part of the background, part of the negotiated process explored in Chapter 8, that may lead to euthanasia. Issues regarding routines and quality of life could deter an owner from having their companion put down, even if the canine was of advanced age and had serious illness. As

in the case of *Mitch*, the 20 year old cocker spaniel, who had a large anal tumour, part of which was external and visible to me, at about the size of a lime (Fieldnotes, 10 May 2011).

So I was quite happy to let him have a nice quality of life and if that was for two weeks or, you know, well its now been five months and he hasn't got any worse. (Margaret, re: *Mitch*).

Or, more usually, changes in quality of life could be the spur that prompted the owner to choose euthanasia.

So his quality of life in his last few years was going to be very compromised. Even at that they didn't know if it was survivable, they were fairly confident that it might be, so the decision was made that it was probably best to just let him go.

(Amanda, re: *Lloyd*)

Quality of life is also implicated in arguments in support of human euthanasia (Pitcher; 2010, Warnock and MacDonald, 2008; Peck, 1997). The particular aspects of quality of life identified as significant for the canine companions, seemed to be closely related to the companion and owner being able to maintain the usual standards home cleanliness and personal hygiene. Being able to continue, unaided, with the everyday practices of eating, drinking, going outside for walks and toileting, emerged as the four instrumental concerns, when owners were considering the euthanasia of their companion.

So he's getting more of these little things over him but she {the vet} said that's quite normal, because he doesn't have anything like that, you know, so, but you, know, the fact is as long as he continues to, you know, be the way he is then I don't have any concerns, but I mean, I do check him a lot more regularly now just to see, but you know, a lot of it is you can see what he's like by his demeanour, you know, he always wants to come out, he's drinking plenty and he still eats and, he does all the things that are important. The day he doesn't want to go out for a walk will be the day I'll really have to sit down and think ' well, you know, it's maybe come to a point now where he's not, he's just not got it in him anymore'.

(Margaret, re: *Mitch*).

As long as *Mitch* is eating, drinking, going for walks (however slow and brief) and toileting unassisted, Margaret will not have him euthanized. In this sense the everyday routines of life are not only part of the fabric of the everyday world in which *Mitch* lives, but they become the value system against which it is determined whether or not his life is worth living at all.

It is not only the quality of life of the companion that is the concern, “what applies to self applies to body” (Giddens, 1993:31). The companion canine body, like the civilised human body, is expected to be a disciplined body, which adheres in its everyday practices to the physical, and the moral standards, expected for the relationship between an individual and society (Foucault, 1963). An inability for the canine to conform to the normative standards of hygiene and cleanliness, of both the self and the home, can be a precipitating factor in the decision to have the companion euthanized. This was the case with *Ted*, an elderly male collie living in an upper working class residential estate in central Scotland. *Ted* had had a series of health issues, however, it seemed to be the day he lost bowel control and rendered the livingroom unhygienic, that was the deciding factor in his being put to sleep.

The watching and negotiation that are the hallmarks of the process of dying for the companion canines was ongoing, but the critical moment of decision appeared to focus on the loss of bodily control and, what is presented as an untenable, breach by *Ted* of the normative standards of hygiene of the home.

We came in on the Tuesday afternoon after work and oh my goodness. You opened that door and I have never smelt a smell like this in my life before. He had thrown up and had diarrhoea. But it didn't smell like normal diarrhoea, I couldn't imagine even describing what it smelt like, it was just putrid, absolutely putrid. To the point that we actually, we had two rugs through in the dining room. We just literally folded them up and threw them straight into the bin. It was everywhere and it was, put it this way, we were going to have a chicken korma that night, no it was a stew we were having that night, and we'd looked at the stew and we looked at the diarrhoea and 'well we'll not be eating that!' [laugh]. He was so miserable, we just went down to the vets and it was like, you know, this just isn't funny.
(Susan, re: *Ted*)

The 'good owner' can be understood as a role, with associated assumptions and expectations. Features of the role of the 'good owner' include: a concern for wellbeing of the canine, an ethical and compassionate consciousness, to be a responsible owner, mindful of the expectations of the wider society that a canine be well behaved, non-aggressive and not creating noise or disturbance, presenting the image of an upstanding and respectable person, with a particular emphasis on compassion and kindly care for another living being.

The 'good owner' is expected to be considerate of the needs of others in the wider society, to keep their canine disciplined and restrained, either with training or on the lead. They are to be the "pack leader" (Milan, 2008:223) who is in command and responsible for the behaviour of the companion.

You've always got to be one ahead of them and you've always got to be the pack leader, otherwise they just run riot. As my nephew found out to his cost.
(Susan)

The 'good owner' keeps their canines disciplined and their behaviour in accordance with norms of acceptable conduct for canines in public, that is quiet, friendly, clean, and obedient. The behaviour of the canine reflects on the identity of the owner and the family they both represent, the 'good owner' is not only a role, it is also a display, signalling the moral standing of a family. As Finch argued, "my central argument is that *families need to be 'displayed' as well as 'done'*" (Finch, 2007:66, emphasis in the original). Canine behaviour, and their care, is implicated in the display of family.

The 'good owner' is assumed to love and care for their companions, and to notice and attend to their needs, making canine wellbeing a priority. Care is both a concept and an activity, "which connotes some kind of engagement" (Tronto, 1993:102) and the giving of time and resources. To be loved is to be given time, attention and embraced in the activities of the lover (Fromm, 1995). Winston and Rose shared long walks together, he spoke with Rose as he studied in the kitchen whilst she lay beside him, and at the end of the day they sat in front of the fire in the livingroom together (Transcripts and Fieldnotes, 23 June 2011). Love moves us to interact, as Jackson emphasises "love cannot be

treated as if it has an existence independent of the social” (1993:202). The discourse of love includes themes of sacrifice, which are echoed in the sacrifices of time and money, which owners report giving to their companion animals. The discourse of love also contains a belief in the power of love to transform a being from badness to goodness. The position of the lover is a morally superior stance, understood as being indicative of a good person, even as owners may present the impression of the ‘good owner’ when they rush home from work to care for an ill canine (Transcripts, Rebekah and Ross, 11 June 2011), or take the decision to choose euthanasia to alleviate suffering (Transcripts, Susan and Frank, 17 September 2011).



Figure 23 – the companions are considered to show their love by their desire to be near their owner and each other, *Rusty* and *Glen*, 18 November 2011

The companion canines, who are understood as displaying their love by their desire for proximity and expression of pleasure in the company of their owner, are also the good pet, that is the loving pet; the greater the desire for proximity, the greater the rapport and perhaps also the greater the assumption of the companion’s love.

Since she [Sierra] has hurt her back she has been very attached to me. I cannot get off the couch without her going where ever I am going ... Kari is a wee bit of a slut. It doesn't matter who she will go from one person to another, it doesn't matter. Whoever is going to give attention she will [laughs]. (Susan, re: Sierra and Kari)

In a Durkheimian sense, the identity of the good owner can also be emphasised by drawing attention to 'bad owners', who are uncaring, or actively cruel towards their canines. In this sense the goodness and kindness of the owner is stated in opposition to the deviant practices of animal cruelty. The deviance in this case is serving to reinforce the positive values, and emphasise the moral integrity and standing, of the 'good owner'. This can be particularly vividly seen in the acquisition narratives where the companion canine has been taken from a situation of abuse, and acquired by their new owner.

She had been a rescue dog who was found in a flat in XXX in a cupboard. I think I have told you already. I had a friend who worked for the RSPCA and they found 2 dogs in a cupboard in an abandoned flat in XXX. Someone has reported that they had heard strange noises. And they had gone in and there was 2 dogs. A German Shepherd and Doberman Pincher... So she was picking up. She still looked like she was a sick old puppy, we do not know how old she was. Oh She was dreadfully emaciated. She had no muscle, she had actually got to the stage that she was so starved that her body had started to eat the muscle. (Amanda, re: Yara)

In this acquisition narrative Amanda and her family rescue Yara from isolation, torture and starvation. This act of rescue emphasises the moral goodness of the owner, indeed such is the moral goodness of rescuing a suffering animal, that it can override a normative expectation not to steal. Two of the canines in this study were taken by their new owners, without the previous owners knowledge or consent. The narratives here are being deployed to construct and maintain the family members' identity as morally upright persons (Owens et al., 2008; Pietilä, 2002 cited in Owens et al., 2008).

The 'good owner' has the status of a person who is beneficent, it is a positive social identity which may serve to enhance the standing of the human, in their own eyes and in the eyes of others, and may thus contribute to the human

owners wellbeing. This presentation of the 'good owner' was achieved by a variety of means, involving both the presentation of the self as caring and conscientious and involving the other of the animal, as loving and disciplined, that is the 'good pet'.

But she was very good because if she was off the lead and a car was coming, I would say 'Rose, car' and she would sit, stop rigid and I would just walk up and put the lead on her, but by that time the car was probably past her, I then let her off again. But she was very knowledgeable about road safety, self-preservation. She was good at that and if I wanted her to walk beside me I'd say 'beside me Rose, walk beside me'. She would come to my left side and walk and she would always look up at me 'when are you going to let me away?'
(Winston, re: Rose)

Rose is obedient to her owner and disciplined, also by implication, the needs of the wider society, in terms of road users, are being considered, and Rose is not causing any inconvenience or danger to other people. This presentation of self of the owner, reflected in the behaviour of the animal, and also the appearance, and cleanliness, of the home, could be understood in terms of impression management (Goffman, 1959), particularly those forms of impression management concerned with the avoidance of stigma (Goffman, 1968b). Of the three forms of potential stigmatisation that Goffman discusses, this would be related to those potential "blemishes of individual character", rather than those of the body or tribe (1968b:14). I would consider that what was encountered was not the management of full blow stigma, but was rather dealing with aspects that may be "discreditable" (Goffman, 1968b:14). The management of the persona of the animal as the 'good pet', all the human participants identified their current canines are predominately good (with the exception of *Fritz*), seems to be a form of identity management. Further, the owner's effort to manage the identity of the companion canine is suggestive of the animal's identity being linked to that of the owner. The physical being of the canine also reflects on the owner, in the case of an overweight dog:

Either owners are presumed to be deficient in their knowledge about diet, physical activity, and what constitutes a health body condition for a dog; or they are presumed to be deficient in the type of relationship that they have allowed to form with their dog. In both instances, the problem is construed as a moral failing.
(Degeling and Rock, 2012:41).

That is a moral failing in the human owner, as well as it possibly being seen as greediness on the part of the companion canine. Being a 'good pet', as explored in Chapter 6, also encompassed not being unwell, wellness was regarded as normative, and the 'good pet' is also the healthy, slim and active pet.

9.5. *Interplays of Wellbeing*

Humans are a social species (Haraway, 2003), this is not a mere adjunct or potential of humanity, but rather a primary and profound aspect of our being (Goffman, 1968a). To be with a canine companion is to be with another, also social, being. The canines would seek out the company of the humans, and the humans the company of the canines. This mutual sociability itself can be beneficial for humans.



Figure 24 – mutual sociability and eye contact was a feature of the human and companion canine relations, *Diesel* and *Mason*, 8 March 2011

As Rosenhan observed, “eye contact and verbal contact reflect concern and individuation; their absence, avoidance and depersonalisation” (1973:250), for a social species to be regarded with concern, as in the face gazing of the canines, can be a beneficial experience.

He's changed us, you know, very much he is our family, we feel like a family unit. And people say 'oh shouldn't be a substitute child, you know, this that and the next thing'. And I don't care about that, all that matters to us is he is a wee creature, he's a living being, we love him, he loves us and we just. We give and take so much from each other. He's just, he's a wonderful wee thing. He's just brought so much joy and fun into our lives and he's so easy to love and, you know, he gives us so much love back. He's affectionate, I always say 'mummy Rusty cuddles' and it's usually at bedtime he likes his cuddles, but I've got to stand up, I've done it since he was a puppy, and I hold him in my arms and straight away over my arm the head goes down and within seconds [snore sound] he's snoring away, but if you sit down it's like 'you've changed your position' and that's not the same... He loves to get his cuddles with mummy. And yet he goes to Ross sometimes, it's like he wants dad, we'll be sitting watching TV and he's not a lap dog, he never sort of comes up and sits on your lap, but he'll come up and he'll sit at the side of Ross and sort of nuzzle in and that's him, you know, quite happy, sit there for hours, you know, 'I want to be with my dad' and other times he comes up beside me, you know, and he'll sit on the arm of the chair and sort of cuddle in and it's like 'I want to be with my mum'.

(Rebekah, re: Rusty and Ross)

The mutual desire to be with each other is a joy to Rebekah and Ross, though they struggle to find a form in which their deep love and care for *Rusty* can be understood by those around them. Charles and Davies found that the owners they spoke with “tended to ‘test the water’ to see how the interviewer would react to any revelations about animals as family members” (2008:unlisted pages).

Whilst I did not encounter much testing of the water on this issue, possibly due to the much smaller sample size and greater time spent building rapport in my study, the owners did express a conflict between how they experienced their companion canines as family, and how they were expected to relate to their companions as “just a dog” (Arluke, 2006;1).

Although it can be regarded by wider society as transgressing the social boundaries between human and nonhuman to view a pet as your child (Charles and Davies 2008), some of the owners, including Susan and Irma, explicitly referred to their canine companions as being their children. Regardless of

whether or not the companions were viewed as children, they were all considered family members. As Charles and Davies found in their exploration of pets as kin;

What is abundantly clear from our finding is that the animals are regarded as important members of kinship networks and that they operate as social actors within these networks.

(Charles and Davies, 2008:unlisted pages)

Moreover it is at the level of the everyday interactions, the cycle of the daily routine of waking, walking, eating and relaxing together that family seems to be both enacted and experienced. In Morrow's study of British children's relationship with their companion animals she found that the animals were also understood as family members by the children, and that "their pets were mentioned as part of their daily routine" (1998:222). It is by way of this enmeshing of human and companion canine in everyday family life that interplays of wellbeing come into force. The canines contribute to the stability and coherence of everyday life, and therefore to wellbeing, by being an active part of the structures of routine and ritualised social interactions; the morning walks, meals together, evenings in front of the TV, and settling down for bed, that form the foundation of the lives of the human owners. As Jamieson, though she was referring to humans, observes "a sense of a solid unchanging world, a stable society and a stable self can only be achieved through intense, face-to-face, sustained interaction" (1988:3).

Interplays of human and canine wellbeing can also be seen in the detrimental effect on wellbeing of disruption to the everyday practices of being and living together. As Giddens noticed, "the individual is morally and psychologically vulnerable whenever established routines are broken" (1993:175). When Stuart was hospitalised, having been overcome with acute physical pain at home, and then diagnosed with Crohn's Disease, he experienced not only a dislocation from his home, but also a dislocation from the normal routine of everyday life with the companion canines:

It's nothing that I can say, 'yeah this is what they do/this is what I miss' eh. It's just all the little things, you know. Just having a cup of tea and a biscuit at three o'clock, when they came round with the cup of tea and a biscuit. Now normally if you have a cup of tea and a biscuit in this house – as you'll know very shortly when we let them out – you will have two dogs stuck to your leg. Yeah, well it's just little things like that, you know. Things like 'oh I didn't want the crust off that, I'll give it to the [pause] no I can't give it to the dog because he's not here' you know. It's little things that you think 'aw'. It's just wee things like that that you would miss. You know, even just feeding them in the morning, you think 'I'll be feeding the dog now' but there was, there's nothing specific. It's all just a small bits and pieces of detail that you would miss, things that you wouldn't think about that you've even done, but that's the biggest thing.
(Stuart)

Mead stressed that “all living organisms are bound up in a general social environment or situation” (1934:228). This general social environment, with its everyday routines of living together, is part of the foundation of human being in the world, and human wellbeing. When this foundation of the everyday taken-for-granted routines of living is disrupted, wellbeing and the sense of a secure self and society is disrupted along with it; because the sense of a stable self and society, the framework of meaning upon which humans live their lives, is born in the social matrix (Jamieson, 1988). In Becker's words, whilst "men [sic] are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality" (1973:31), and we rely upon this meaningful order for existence, "all our meanings are built into us from the outside, from our dealings with others" (Becker, 1973:48), and as Goffman (1973) would add, particularly by our predictable and taken-for-granted interactions with others.

The serious illness or death of a companion canine can rip a hole in this fabric of taken-for-granted routines, leaving the human animal exposed to the awareness of their fragility in the world (Becker, 1973), and the fragility of the social world itself, which the multifarious practices of everyday life conceal (Goffman, 1973). There is a sense of shock, and a sudden violation of the taken-for-granted meaning of objects and places:

So I went and dug a grave for her and I put her favourite blanket down with all her toys, put her in with her toys, covered her up and that was it. But Stacie had came out and said to me. 'Matthew are you alright', I said, 'I'm sad'. She says 'Your hair's turned chalk white, you've took a wee bit of a stroke I think'. (Matthew, re: Brandy)

The holes in the everyday fabric of their routine of being with the canine companions are a source of suffering for the human owner. It was as if they were travelling through their days on tracks that guided them around the landscape of everyday life, only to find, when the canine died, that the patterns of daily interactions through which they normally travelled were gone, irrevocably changed, and the world that was left, was a more lonely and hostile place.

Every time I thought of her I would look [pause]. And just see in the morning I would eat my toast, I always kept the [pause] it doesn't matter, she's not there. But that memory kept on coming flooding back because if you were eating a biscuit you gave her a bit of your biscuit. Yeah. It was if Brandy's here, I'll give her that. It was habit forming and the same thing when she died, we were still doing the same thing, we were putting down expecting Brandy to take it off of my finger. And I went like that 'geez, this is [pause]'. It took me a long time, maybe a year to get over that. A full year because you see every time I seen a Golden Labrador, Brandy, Brandy. I don't know, it hurt so much [pause] I think I became a wee bit withdrawn for a while, I didn't want to bother with people, just leave me alone, let me be myself. (Matthew, re: Brandy)

When the connection point to life, others and the world, that the companion represented was lost, Matthew found himself withdrawing, and colleagues at his work became concerned for his wellbeing (Transcript, 23 June 2012).

Companion canine relations can contribute towards human wellbeing because, "there is no living organism of any kind whose nature or constitution is such that it could exist or maintain itself in complete isolation from all other living organisms" (Mead, 1934:228). Human and companion canine bonds may, at least in part, satisfy the profound human desire for society and mutual sociability. The maintenance of the social bond "keeps us alive" (Seale, 1998:30), though Seale was referring to human-human bonds, human-canine bonds may also meet this human need for other living creatures to relate to.

In the extreme, Villalta-Gil et al. (2009) found that humans experiencing pronounced social withdrawal, having been institutionalised for chronic schizophrenia, benefited from engagement with a therapy canine, and recommend that “introducing dogs into some psychosocial interventions may facilitate the patients’ social abilities, thus improving their ability to function in the community” (Villalta-Gil, et al., 2009:157), a dog may ease social isolation. However, Villalta-Gil et al., (2009) are looking at transient involvement with a therapy canine, not the long term intertwining of lives that accompanies permanent canine companionship. Involvement with canines may be beneficial for human health, by providing interest and engagement to the life of someone institutionalised with schizophrenia, but my research finds that the relation of canine companionship to human wellbeing is more complex. Interplays of wellbeing in the relationship between human and companion canine can manifest in three different ways: first they may be in a form in which wellbeing is promoted, second a disturbance in welfare can be mutually experienced, even reinforced, by the interplays between human and canine, finally the relationship with the companion canine may be deleterious for human wellbeing.

To take the first of these scenarios, as companions the canines were able to support human wellbeing, providing the humans a sense of not being alone, and that there was someone who cared about them and would comfort them in times of trial.

And as I say, whenever you, you know, being upset, it is quite nice to know that there is something, as you say, a living being there... she is solid, she is a peaceful dog. I mean, she has her moments obviously, but you know what I mean, there is something peaceful about her... You know there’s something, I think then you know there’s somebody there...she likes a cuddle, you just sort of cuddle her cause she’s a very nice dog to cuddle. (Olga, re: Pandora)

Olga found *Pandora*’s companionship beneficial, finding her to be “a comfort, a confidant” (Adkins and Rajecki, 1999:33), during her grief at the death of her mother. But it was not only human wellbeing that could be supported by canine companionship. As in Lauder Lindsay’s early work (1880), in which he proposed that animals were capable to experiencing forms of mental illness similar to those found in humans, the canines were understood as being

subjects themselves and therefore also capable of experiencing suffering in its non-physical aspects. When the elderly collie *Ted* seemed to succumb to melancholia at losing his sight, it was the youngest collie *Kari*, who responded to him:

Yes, I mean he would just walk around the house not doing very much. Whereas before he would pick up a toy or whatever. But Kari seemed to notice that you know, that he wasn't quite the same. So she ended up taking the toys to him, because the two of them used to play with the rag or what we called the raggy, its like the pull toy and you know, and she would find that he was not going for it, he would walk past it he wouldn't pick-u-up and whatever. And he had become quite depressed you know, he was just lying there and obviously not a happy bunny ... But Kari used to actually bring the toys up ... maybe because he was not running for the toys and playing with them so she was actually taking the toys to him.

(Susan, re: *Kari* and *Ted*)

By encouraging *Ted* to play, come out of his bed and be part of the family, *Kari* supported his wellbeing.



Figure 25 – the canines also comforted each other, *Ted* and *Sierra*, 17 September 2011

In the second scenario, a disturbance in welfare can be mutually experienced by the human owner and their companion(s). Interplays of wellbeing could be found in a context where both human and canine were subject to the same adverse conditions; living in the atmosphere of violence engendered by Irma's abusive husband, both Irma and her two canine companions experienced distress.

Braxton was clingy and stayed very close to Irma, and *Zayne* became aggressive and violent (Fieldnotes, 12 November 2011), but when her husband left, Irma's sense of wellbeing, and also her relationship with her companions, and *Zayne's* way of relating to others, was transformed;

I was really proud of him, really, really proud, I've explained to you how proud I was, it's like, you know, a kid winning a gold medal or something like that, I was so proud of him, cause my family always think, you know, he's a wee yelp and my brother in law is scared of him because, you know, and my brother even thinks 'oh my God he's a little toe rag', but they all said how well behaved he was and aw he was just and even my sister in law says 'oh I just can't believe that, just'. Cause we were both watching being a bit wary, but then he just, aw it was just, he cuddled into her and she's you know, and the paw's up like that and she's just petting his stomach and I looked at my sister in law and I says 'you wouldn't have seen that a year ago!' she says 'I would never have thought that a year ago', just different dog ... I've been a lot calmer, yeah. I've been a lot more relaxed yeah, not on edge, so yeah, and I definitely think that the two are connected, definitely think and I think because Jack Russells do tend to have one master, and when he was here I think he was his master, he would only take a telling from him. But I think because the more he was scared of him [dog groaning] rather than. But, you know, just big difference in him, it is a different dog, he is a different dog, cause at one point I thought I was going to have to part with him because he kept going for me, and I thought 'I can't, I can't' and actually my ex turned round and says to me 'he's going, I'm not having him biting anybody, he's going' and I thought, I mean, he was adamant and I thought 'no, persevere with him' and you know, I'm glad I did. (Irma, re: *Zayne*)

As the home became a safer place to be, the wellbeing, and positive forms of interaction increased, for both the human owner and her companions (Fieldnotes, 11 February, 2012). They had together been subject to a detrimental influence upon their wellbeing, and when it was removed, they all

began to flourish. (As discussed in Chapter 7 perhaps the previous negative pattern of interacting between Irma and *Zayne* may in some way have served to reinforce the oppressiveness within the home, even as the new positive patterns of interacting seemed to reinforce the wellbeing of human and canine, but this is only conjecture).

Whilst canine companionship may be beneficial for human wellbeing, or human and canine may suffer under threats to their welfare together, the relationship with the canine could, at times, be deleterious to human wellbeing. It is problematic for an owner, who is under the obligation to be the 'good owner' who copes well with, and cares for their companion canine, to admit to hostile feelings towards them. Rowan had profound difficulties in her relationship with *Fritz*, particularly during their early years, and she considers that her strained relationship with him, contributed to her poor mental health;

Rowan *So we took Fritz home and we kept him for a year and I couldn't stand it, absolutely I was. I was on the edge of depression.*

Gregor *He was ripping everything up, skirting board and.*

Rowan *Ripped the house to shreds, he was.*

Gregor *Ripping up the flooring.*

Rowan *Biting us, he was us a psycho. He was very highly strung but he was like, he had so many psychological problems. You couldn't put your hand out to put a lead or anything on him. He would just start to bite me. And I wasn't very well, obviously my nerves were really bad at the time. I had a short fuse, the dog had an even shorter fuse and I could just have seen him far enough. I'd never felt like that before.*

(Gregor and Rowan, re: *Fritz*)

At one point *Fritz*, forced Rowan to the ground with his teeth around her head, Gregor and Rowan eventually returned *Fritz* to the woman who had sold him to them, yet after three days, during which time Rowan was inconsolable, they felt such commitment to him that they brought him back (Fieldnotes, 31 January 2012). In the words of Himsworth and Rock, from their study of pet ownership and life satisfaction among senior Canadians, "whether pet ownership correlates with satisfaction with life appears to depend on the presence and nature of other domestic relationships" (2013:295). The nature of the domestic relationship

matters, in this case, where the relationship is harmonious, the interplays of wellbeing between human and canine are beneficial, where the relationship is disharmonious it can be disruptive to human wellbeing.

Summary

Detailed everyday practices were found at each of the research sites, and these routines not only served to create a sense of family, but also enabled a linking of human and canine subjectivity. Profound interweaving of human and canine everyday life was apparent, and this itself seemed to be the point of connection between the interplays of human and canine wellbeing. The meshing of human and canine everyday practices challenges the assumption that companion canines occupy a liminal state, rather it is the justification for their established position within the families that seems to be weak. Disruptions to the everyday practices of life were involved in concerns regarding the quality of life of the companion, and this was a critical issue in owners' negotiated process of deciding whether or not to have a companion euthanized.

The canine companion body was expected to be a disciplined body, and the canine was required to be able to maintain normative levels of bodily and behavioural control. If normative standards of hygiene, of both self and home, could not be maintained, such a normative failure may prompt the owners to have their companion euthanized. A high level of care for the canines was apparent and this care for the companion was linked to identity of the owner as a 'good owner'. The 'good owner' appeared to be a role with expectations of behaviour and attitude, and whilst the owner is expected to be a good owner, the companion is also expected to be a good pet. The interweaving of everyday life seems to be a nexus for interplays of human and canine wellbeing. The human owners experienced being with their companions as beneficial and enriching, whilst being separated from them, through death or illness, dislocated the owners from the normal routines of being together, and was a cause of suffering and distress. The relationship between companion canine ownership and human wellbeing is a complex phenomenon. The companions' presence in the home may be beneficial, mutually reinforcing, or undermine human wellbeing, dependent upon the nature of the interaction and the context.

Chapter 10 ~ Conclusion

This thesis represents an in depth study of human and animal relations, and makes an original contribution to the discipline of Sociology, by shedding light on the little understood dynamics of human and companion canine relations. The research explores the understanding of death and dying in the relationships between companion canines and their human owners in ten families living in Scotland. Taking established sociological concepts, this work has extended the wisdom of sociological thought outward, and connected theories born of studying human-to-human interaction, across the human/animal divide at three key areas. This has been done with particular attention to the thought of Mead, Goffman, Irvine and Sanders. The three key areas in which this thesis has extended understanding are: serious illness, the self and suffering; dying and meaning; and everyday practices and wellbeing.

Overall, it has been found that sociological insight from human-human relations can be applied to human-animal relations, and that they enables us to see social functions, and dynamics of social interaction, buried in the social web. This research has found that the tools of Sociology have much to offer the wider body of science in the endeavour to understand human and nonhuman life. In particular, this research indicates that sociological insight can enrich and deepen an understanding of human and canine relations born of the veterinary and biomedical fields, by highlighting forces shaping human and canine relations beyond the biophysical and instinctual behavioural models. I consider that the fledgling field of human and animal relations within Sociology has an enormous amount to offer the more established fields of veterinary, medical and psychological science, in advancing our understanding of humans and nonhumans.

To conclude this thesis will now revisit the three research questions informing this work, and highlight the major findings in each area of study.

10.1 Major Findings

The first research question explored the experience of serious illness in companion canines, for the owners and those in the animal's immediate society. This was investigated in the light of sociological concepts that sensitise to subtle forms of suffering, such as the ideas of Charmaz (1983) on the impact of illness on selfhood, and Mort et al.'s (2007) work on emotional landscapes and disruptions to the social fabric. Particular attention was given to Michael Bury's (1982; 2001) work on biographical disruption. The first research question asks whether sociological insight based on the study of humans, could be applied to nonhuman illness and suffering, and related to this whether there were possibilities for a nonhuman selfhood; the experience of a self being implicated in the understanding of suffering.

Nonhuman illness narratives were found in abundance in the data, and it does seem possible to apply Bury's (1982;2001) concept of biographical disruption to the companion canines, which, to my knowledge, is the first time this concept has been applied to a nonhuman. The application of biographical disruption to the companion canines is made possible by the imputation of an anticipated lifecourse to the canine, by their human family members; in combination with the canine's own cycle of being; both sociological, in how they related to others and changes in their expression of agency, as well as their biological cycle. This is conceptualised as biographical disruption-by-proxy, where there is a disturbance in the established modes of being, and anticipated lifecourse of the companion.

The discovery of nonhuman illness narratives and disrupted companion canine biographies, also raises questions about the nature of the self. Whilst Mead (1934) claimed that nonhumans could not be actors in the social web, due to their lack of mindfulness, Mead for this research, also provides part of the theoretical foundation that makes a nonhuman personhood possible. Mead makes it possible by insisting that the self and consciousness is an emergent phenomenon with its genesis within the social web (Mead, 1934). Looked at in this light, I developed an original four-fold model of canine selfhood, as forged within a family, this is to thought to be the first model of a nonhuman

consciousness found in the discipline. This model comprises the *Enacted Self*, the realm of character, the *Latent Self*, a private inner world, hidden and personal, only hinted at through dreams, the *Enacted Kin*, which is consciousness as forged by the identity of the family dog, and finally *Latent Kin*, where canine consciousness is moulded by intra-family dynamics. Being understood by those in their immediate society as having a self, also made possible forms of suffering that went beyond the physical for the canines.

Based on my data, in terms of physical pain, the canines were understood as experiencing pain in a manner equivalent to that of the humans. For the owners there existed an imperative to minimise canine suffering, in the role of the 'good owner'. This role served to shape human and canine relations with regard to pain, though the imperative to minimise canine pain was problematised by the voicelessness of the companions, who could not express their feelings and thoughts in human language. Whilst unable to use human language the canines could express pain through their bodily actions and vocalisations, and they were regarded as being able to do this in a meaningful and minded way. Being minded and having a sense of self, the companions were understood to also be subject to the pain of loneliness and fear, even as the humans were. This commonality emerged as a point of connection between the canines and the humans, and there was a strong emphasis on the power, and practice, of being together. Being together emerged as both something that was done and as an ideal, and the ending of togetherness brought with it grief.

The second question this thesis addressed was to reveal the meanings surrounding the death and dying of a companion canine for their owner, and those in the animal's immediate society. This was done to further the understanding of death and dying coming from human focused studies, such as Timmerman's (2005;2010) work on constructing death, Becker's (1973) insights into the denial of death, and Seale's analysis of dying alone (1995a; 1995b; 1998). It was found possible in my research to both work with, and to extend, an existing sociological understanding of death, to include dynamics shaping nonhuman dying in the case of companion canines. Companion canine dying was found to be a negotiated process, shaped by a divide between gradual and

sudden death; and there was a privileging of the voice of the veterinarian in this process. Developed narratives of departure were encountered, that seem to structure the experience of losing a companion, and provide a way of sharing this experience with the wider society beyond the family. There was a pronounced preference by the participants for a 'natural death', and deep ambiguities in relation to choosing euthanasia. In particular the ambiguities reflect a conflict between the requirements of being a 'good owner', and choosing to have the creature in your care put down. There was a privileging of a biomedical view, which is also reflected in the given causes of death. The given causes of death have similarities with the human declared causes of death in contemporary Scotland, and may reflect an interweaving of the understanding of human and canine life.

The third, and final, objective of this thesis was to consider the everyday experience of living with a companion canine, and to examine any interplays of wellbeing between human and nonhuman that may be present. During my fieldwork detailed everyday practices were found at each of the research sites, and a profound interweaving of human and canine everyday life was apparent. There was extensive routinisation of life with the canines, and disruptions to the everyday practices of living were involved in concerns regarding the quality of life of the companion, which emerged as a critical issue in the owners' negotiated process of deciding whether or not to have a companion euthanized.

Moreover, the canine companion body was expected to be a disciplined body, and failure of the canine to adhere to normative standards of bodily control may prompt the owners to have their companion euthanized. A high level of care for the canines was apparent, and these acts of care were linked to identity of the owner as a 'good owner'. Mort et al. (2007) suggested that interplays of human/animal wellbeing are embedded deep in the social web, beyond the access of the bio-medical frame alone. My research supports this, and further suggests that the interweaving of human and canine in everyday life is a nexus for interplays of human and canine wellbeing. Overall, the human owners experienced being with their companions as beneficial, whilst being separated from them, through death or illness, dislocated the owners from the normal

routines of being together, and was a cause of suffering. Nonetheless, the relationship between companion canine ownership and human wellbeing is a complex phenomenon; and the companions' presence in the home may be beneficial, or it could mutually reinforce a disturbed pattern, or even actively undermine human wellbeing, dependent upon the nature of the interaction and the context.

10.2 Future Possibilities

In an under researched area the possibilities for future research are wide. This study represents one of, if not the first, attempts to apply sociological understanding to the phenomenon of canine companion dying in contemporary Scotland. As such it needs to be understood as limited, in that being an exploratory work it is not possible to be very definitive, and any connection made out with the study can only be tentative. I do consider that it would have benefited the work had I been able to observe the families for a longer period of time. Perhaps by beginning contact during puppyhood and revisiting across the years, rather than focusing on one aspect of the lifecourse. It would also have been beneficial to revisit the families after my experience of losing *Zak*, as the loss of my own companion during the final write up phase gave me particular insight, which I would have applied by exploring different avenues of questioning during data gathering.

Yet, despite these limitations, conducting this work has been an extraordinary experience, and it has been especially rewarding to stand at one of the expanding frontiers of our discipline and see our science in action. The human in companionship with their canine is such a taken-for-granted sight, yet it hides such mystery, and so many questions remain unanswered. How does this relationship begin, to what extent is the relationship moulded by wider social forces and what dynamics forge and sustain the patterns of interaction?

It was unanticipated that a model for companion canine consciousness would emerge from the data, and it is a strength of this thesis that it offers Sociology its first model of a nonhuman consciousness. It is my intention to take the opportunity to explore this discovery further. For future research I would like to

investigate whether this model can be applied in other settings, and what are the implications of this discovery for the potential modelling of other forms of nonhuman consciousness? Taking inspiration from Lauder Lindsay's work *Mind In the Lower Animals In Health and Disease* (1880), and his contention that nonhuman consciousness could be subject to pathology, it could also be valuable to explore, from a more modern view than his, deviant dimensions of nonhuman consciousness. Do canines exhibit psychic pathology, and if so of what kind, and what remedial measures may be possible?

This research has found that established sociological wisdom can be applied to a human-nonhuman interactional context. Moreover, in seeking to apply existent sociological concepts to human-canine relationship new applications and dimensions of experience have come to light. It is testament to the power of Sociology to illuminate the hidden aspects of life and living, that it is able to reach across the human and animal divide and show us some of the treasures buried there. It is my fervent hope that future work will take Sociology deeper into the animal-human nexus, and continue to explore the extraordinary that lies hidden in the everyday.

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Appendix 1 – Full Demographic Details of Participants

Principal Canine Participant			Principal Human Participant			Others Living in Household*			
name	gender	age	name	gender	age	name	species/role	gender	age
<i>Bashan</i> **	M	nk***	Nathaniel	M	nk	None			
<i>Brandy</i>	F	-	Matthew	M	nk	Stacie	partner	F	nk
<i>Turner</i>	M	-							
<i>Braxton</i>	M	12	Irma	F	40	None			
<i>Zayne</i>	M	4							
<i>Fritz</i>	M	8	Rowan	F	67	Gregor	partner	M	70
<i>Glen</i>	M	5							
<i>Mason</i>	M	3	Amanda	F	51	<i>Fred</i>	cat	M	15
<i>Diesel</i>	M	2				<i>Omar</i>	parrot	M	5
						Kaitlin	daughter	F	24
						Cormac	son	M	26
						Samir	partner	M	40
<i>Mitch</i>	M	20	Margaret	F	48	<i>Ochre</i>	springer spaniel (Ned's son)	M	10
<i>Sally</i>	F	16				<i>Damson</i>	springer spaniel (Ned's daughter)	F	7
						<i>Buttons</i>	Shetland pony	F	16
						<i>Summer Sun</i>	Thoroughbred horse	F	9
						<i>Autumn Rain</i>	Corona cross (Bella's foal)	F	2

<i>Pandora</i>	F	8	Olga	F	65	<i>Fleece</i>	Visiting canine companion of Olga's former partner	F	13
<i>Rose</i>	F	-	Winston	M	nk	None and Holly is deceased.			
<i>Rusty</i>	M	5 mth	Rebekah	F	42	Ross	partner	M	56
<i>Sierra</i>	F	13½	Susan	F	46	<i>Flip</i>	budgie	M	5+
<i>Ted</i>	M	14				Frank	partner	M	50
<i>Kari</i>	F	7				Connor	son	M	19

* this includes those who stay overnight regularly, but not family living away from home, deceased pets/people, or visiting dog walkers/groomers

** the names of non-humans are italicised

***not known

N.B. Names of both humans and nonhumans have been anonymised

Appendix 2

Interview Details

Participants Names and Visit No.	Date and Time	Duration	Audio Recorded Component
<i>Mason & Diesel</i> Initial Meeting/Visit 1	Tuesday 25 January 2011 10.30 am to 1.51 pm	3 hours 21 mins	-
<i>Mason & Diesel</i> Visit 2	Tuesday 1 February 2011 11.25 am to 3.00 pm	3 hours 35 mins	20 mins
<i>Mason & Diesel</i> Visit 3	Wednesday 9 February 2011 11.10 am to 1.54 pm	2 hours 44 mins	25 mins
<i>Mason & Diesel</i> Visit 4	Tuesday 8 March 2011 10.44 am to 2.54 pm	4 hours 10 mins	-
<i>Mason & Diesel</i> Visit 5	Thursday 24 March 2011 10.20 am to 1.25 pm	3 hours 5 mins	19 mins
<i>Mason & Diesel</i> Visit 6	Tuesday 13 September 2011 11.06 to 3.50 pm	4 hours 44 mins	28 mins
<i>Mason & Diesel</i> Visit 7	Wednesday 16 November 2011 10.50 am to 3.15 pm	4 hours 25 mins	13 mins
<i>Sierra, Ted & Kari</i> Initial Meeting/Visit 1	Wednesday 26 January 2011 1.40 pm to 3.20 pm	1 hour 40 mins	-
<i>Sierra, Ted & Kari</i> Visit 2	Saturday 12 February 2011 9.30 am to 12.17 pm	2 hours 47 mins	27 mins
<i>Sierra, Ted & Kari</i> Visit 3	Saturday 2 April 2011 10.17 am to 1.00 pm	2 hours 43 mins	30 mins
<i>Sierra, Ted & Kari</i> Visit 4	Saturday 17 September 2011 10.54 am to 1.50 pm	2 hours 56 mins	46 mins
<i>Sierra, Ted & Kari</i> Visit 5	Saturday 3 December 2011 11.07 am to 1.28 pm	2 hours 11 mins	37 mins

Participants Names and Visit No.	Date and Time	Duration	Audio Recorded Component
<i>Mitch & Sally</i> Initial Meeting/Visit 1	Wednesday 9 March 2011 12.00 noon to 1.45 pm	2 hours 45 mins	-
<i>Mitch & Sally</i> Visit 2	Tuesday 29 March 2011 10.26 am to 3.38	5 hours 12 mins	23 mins
<i>Mitch & Sally</i> Visit 3	Tuesday 10 May 2011 11.00 am 1.55 pm	2 hours 55 mins	43 mins
<i>Mitch & Sally</i> Visit 4	Thursday 30 June 2011 11.00 am to early afternoon	4 hours approx.	25 mins
<i>Mitch & Sally</i> Visit 5	Thursday 6 October 2011 9.57 am to 3.06 pm	5 hours 9 mins	28 mins
<i>Mitch & Sally</i> Visit 6	Monday 19 March 2012 9.45 am to 2.40 pm	4 hours 55 mins	25 mins
<i>Mitch & Sally</i> Visit 7	Friday 24 August 2012 9.44 am to 2.43 pm	4 hours 59 mins	30 mins
<i>Rose</i> Initial Visit/Visit 1	Saturday 19 March 2011 12.50 pm to 3.25 pm	2 hours 35 mins	-
<i>Rose</i> Visit 2	Thursday 5 May 2011 11.50 am to 6.30 pm	6 hours 40 mins	47 mins
<i>Rose</i> Visit 3	Thursday 23 June 2011 10.25 am to mid afternoon	5 hours 30 mins approx.	43 mins
<i>Pandora</i> Initial Meeting/Visit 1	Thursday 31 March 2011 11.00 am to late morning	1 hour approx..	-
<i>Pandora</i> Visit 2	Wednesday 15 June 2011 9.42 am to early afternoon	4 hours 30 mins approx..	32 mins
<i>Pandora</i> Visit 3	Friday 9 March 2012 11.20 am to mid afternoon	5 hours approx..	11 mins (Part 1) 41 mins (Part 2)

Participants Names and Visit No.	Date and Time	Duration	Audio Recorded Component
<i>Rusty</i> Initial Meeting/Visit 1 (+ Irma)	Thursday 19 May 2011 12.17 am to 1.16 pm	59 mins	-
<i>Rusty</i> Visit 2	Saturday 4 June 2011 9.48 am to 2.23 pm	4 hour 35 mins	-
<i>Rusty</i> Visit 3	Saturday 11 June 2011 9.39 am to 2.16 pm	4 hours 37 mins	39 mins
<i>Rusty</i> Visit 4	Saturday 15 October 2011 9.52 am to 2.23 pm	4 hours 31 mins	56 mins
<i>Rusty</i> Visit 5	Saturday 28 January 2012 9.40 am to 2.25 pm	4 hours 45 mins	-
<i>Braxton & Zayne</i> Initial Meeting/Visit 1 (+ Rekekah)	Thursday 19 May 2011 12.17 am to 1.16 pm (joint with Marion's initial visit)	59 mins	-
<i>Braxton & Zayne</i> Visit 2	Saturday 12 November 2011 11.15 am to 2.25 pm	3 hours 10 mins	10 mins (Part 1) 49 mins (Part 2)
<i>Braxton & Zayne</i> Visit 3	Saturday 11 February 2012 10.00 am to 3.32 pm	5 hours 32 mins	40 mins (Part 1) 15 mins (Part 2)
<i>Fritz & Glen</i> Initial Meeting/Visit 1	Friday 18 November 2011 11.13 am to 2.14 pm	3 hours 1 min	-
<i>Fritz & Glen</i> Visit 2	Tuesday 31 January 2012 9.42 am to 3.30 pm	5 hours 48 mins	44 mins
<i>Fritz & Glen</i> Visit 3	Tuesday 21 February 2012 9.44 am to 3.39 pm	5 hours 55 mins	37 mins
<i>Bashan</i> Initial Meeting/Visit 1	Wednesday 23 November 2011 10.20 am to 3.30 pm	5 hours 10 mins	-
<i>Bashan</i> Visit 2	Wednesday 7 December 2011 10.15 am to 3.25 pm	5 hours 10 mins	51 mins

Participants Names and Visit No.	Date and Time	Duration	Audio Recorded Component
<i>Brandy</i> Initial Meeting/Visit 1	Thursday 14 June 2012 Afternoon	30 mins	-
<i>Brandy</i> Initial Meeting/Visit 2	Friday 22 June 2012 11.00 am to 1.10 pm	2 hours 10 mins	29 mins

N.B. The interview duration time is accurate to within 5 minutes, though may include some travelling time, and the recorded component time is accurate to within 1 minute, unless otherwise indicated.

Appendix 3 - Information Sheet

Dear ?

Thank you for your interest in participating in my project. Further to our discussions I am writing this information sheet for you to give you a clear indication of the nature of the project that you and your companion animals will be involved in, and what to expect.

Contact Details

You can contact me by email on maria.desougi@blueyonder.co.uk or by telephone on 07804 292 033 with any questions that you may have about the project.

If you have a concern regarding the project, but for any reason do not wish to address it to me, you may contact the School of Applied Social Science on telephone 01786 467695, or email appliedsocialscience@stir.ac.uk.

Or you may contact the Head of School, Professor Bowes, on a.m.bowes@stir.ac.uk.

Area: Sociology

This project is in the discipline of Sociology, specifically the area of human and animal interaction, and is concerned with what it means to their owners when companion canines become unwell and how illness and loss may affect the animals and their owners

Purpose & Funding

This study is a PhD level project funded by the Economic & Social Research Council of Britain.

Supervision: Stirling University

This project will be run under the guidance of Stirling University, Department of Sociology. The specific supervisors are Dr S Punch and Dr I McIntosh of Stirling University.

What to Expect

I will come to your home at our pre-arranged times on multiple occasions. During these visits we will talk about your relationship with your companion animals and one or more of these conversations will be recorded by digital recorder. I would also appreciate the opportunity to meet your companion animals and to see you with them, and take part in some everyday activities with you, such as walking the dog/s. It would also be beneficial to see photographs or videos of any of your companion animals that you may wish to share with me. The information gathered will be analysed and written into my thesis, which will then be submitted to Stirling University and may lead to a publication.

Sensitivity

This project will be conducted sensitively to the best of my ability. Your contribution will be confidential and your anonymity protected. A different name will be substituted for your name, and those of your companion animals in the project. I will ask for your consent before sharing anything that may be identifiable (such as having a photograph of your dog as part of a presentation). The inclusion of any visual materials in the thesis will be at your discretion. You may withdraw from the project without explanation or penalty at any time. When we are recording you can of course ask for the tape to be stopped for a break at any time. You may also see a summary of the final results of the project if you want.

When Confidentiality Will Not Apply

In the unlikely event of the research uncovering issues of serious risk or harm to respondents or others, it may be appropriate for the researcher to pass this information on to the relevant authorities.

In the Event of After Effects

Though I do not anticipate it, should you experience any discomforting after effects which you consider may result from your involvement in this study you may contact me. If you consider that your participation has awoken any personal difficulties you may wish to speak with some one close whom you trust. If you have become aware of any issues concerning your health during the course of your participation, you may wish to consider contacting your general practitioner. If you have become aware of any issues concerning the health of your companion animals during the course of participation, you may wish to consult a veterinary service.

If you are experiencing distress on the illness or passing of a companion animal, you may wish to contact The Blue Cross, a national animal welfare organisation, who provide support both by telephone on 0800 096 6606 or by email on pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk, their website can be found at <http://www.bluecross.org.uk/web/site/home/home.asp> .

Thank you again for your interest and involvement in this study.

Maria Desougi
March 2010

Appendix 3 - Consent Form
for participation in PhD Project regarding
Human and Canine Companion Animal Relationships

Ihereby give my consent, and that of the companion animals in my care, to voluntary participation in the above named project being run by Maria Desougi under the guidance of Stirling University Department of Applied Social Science.

I have read the information sheet provided and am aware of what to expect during participation and that I and my companion animals will be observed and recorded and that this should not cause any harm to myself or my companion animals.

I am aware that I may choose not to answer any question and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or penalty.

I am aware that the written and audio recorded data gathered will form part of a PhD and that the inclusion of any visual materials concerning myself and my companion animals will be at my discretion.

I am aware of my confidentiality and that a different name will be substituted for my name and the names of my companion animals. So that I am not identifiable in written or oral records, presentations, publications or reports, based on the data gathered.

I am aware of the purpose of the study and of who to contact regarding any questions or difficulties that I may have regarding the project.

In light of these conditions

and
.....
(any additional conditions you require)

I give my consent to my participation and that of my companion animals in the above named project.

Signed

Date

Witnessed (Maria Desougi)

Appendix 3 - Debriefing Information
for participation in PhD study regarding
Human and Canine Companion Animal Relationships

Dear ?

My thanks to you and your companion animals for participating in this study.

The information you have shared with me will be treated with confidentiality and respect. The data gathered will be analysed and written into my PhD thesis, which will then be submitted to Stirling University and may lead to a publication.

Should you so wish you may see a summary of the finished work.

Contact Details

You can contact me by email on maria.desougi@blueyonder.co.uk or by telephone on 07804 292 033 with any questions that you may have about the project.

If you have a concern regarding the project, but for any reason do not wish to address it to me, you may contact the School of Applied Social Science on telephone 01786 467695, or email appliedsocialscience@stir.ac.uk.

Or you may contact the Head of School, Professor Bowes, on a.m.bowes@stir.ac.uk.

In the Event of After Effects

Should you experience any discomforting after effects which you consider may result from your involvement in this study you may contact me. If you consider that your participation has awoken any personal difficulties you may wish to speak with some one close whom you trust. If you have become aware of any issues concerning your health during the course of your participation, you may wish to consider contacting your general practitioner. If you have become aware of any issues concerning the health of your companion animals during the course of participation, you may wish to consult a veterinary service.

If you are experiencing distress on the illness or passing of a companion animal, you may wish to contact The Blue Cross, a national animal welfare organisation, who provide support both by telephone on 0800 096 6606 or by email on pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk, their website can be found at <http://www.bluecross.org.uk/web/site/home/home.asp> .

Thank you again for your interest and involvement in this study.

Maria Desougi
May 2010

Appendix 4 - Interview Schedule

- 1) Intro - Thank participant, explain purpose of interview and confirm consent. Check that they are comfortable with setting and aware of confidentiality and that they can withdraw at any time. Ask for demographic details such as age, location, who living in home, level of prosperity, lifestyle, to give them time to relax.
- 2) History – ask about early life and interaction with animals. Any animals in the family, grew up in rural/urban setting etc.?
- 3) Current – why current companions and questions regarding the specific companions (where from, how long)?
- 4) Have they experienced illness of a companion canine, if/how did this affect their relationship?
- 5) Have they experienced the loss of a canine companion, if/how did this affect them and other companion animals?
- 6) Routines – are there routines? Are there special times and how are these marked?
- 7) Context – how are the companions situated (family, security etc.). Who does which aspects of the care taking? Do they have special places/items?
- 8) Thank participant and end on a note of encouragement.

Remember your themes: meaning and interaction

KEEP QUESTIONS LIGHT AND NOT LEADING