

**A BIOGRAPHY OF THE AMERICAN SNOW GLOBE: FROM MEMORY TO  
MASS PRODUCTION, FROM SOUVENIR TO SIGN**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I. A MATERIAL HISTORY OF THE SNOW GLOBE.....	6
CHAPTER II. THE SNOW GLOBE AS OBJECT OF MEMORY.....	27
CHAPTER III. THE COMMODIFICATION OF THE SNOW GLOBE: COMMODIFYING, COLLECTING, SUBVERTING.....	57
CONCLUSION.....	79
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	ii
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	92
ILLUSTRATIONS.....	111

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Eiffel Tower snow globe, 1889. Image from blog, *My Favorite Things!*, entry dated Dec. 15, 2011, crediting the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum, <http://myfavoritethings-conniemotz.blogspot.com/2011/12/1889-paris-exhibition-snow-globe.html>, last visited April 19, 2014.
2. Bernard Koziol's view out the back of his Volkswagen "Beetle," circa 1950. "The Story of the Dream Globes," posting on Company Koziol website, undated, [http://www.snow-globe.com/history\\_snow\\_globe.htm](http://www.snow-globe.com/history_snow_globe.htm), last accessed October 3, 2013.
3. Florida day/date snow globe, entry on Flickr.com, June 29, 2009, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/thriftedsisters/3673223886/>, last accessed April 19, 2014, picturing globe of structure similar to that appearing in Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 48.
- 4A, B. Baccarat Silhouette Squirrel Cane Paperweight, side and top views, *iGavel auctions*, posted June 14, 2012, <http://www.igavelauctions.com/category/sale-highlights/page/2/>, last accessed April 19, 2014.
5. "Rodney," pictured in Celeste Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom*, color plate 1 following p. 84, photograph © James Worrell, 1997.
6. Jacques de Gheyn the Elder, *Vanitas Still Life*, 1603, Netherlandish, Antwerp. New York City, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, oil on wood, 32 ½ in. x 21 ¼ in. (82.6 cm. x 54 cm.).
7. "Magnifying glass ball on stand," circa 1800, France, 23 in. x 8 in. (58.5 cm. x 20.3 cm.). Los Angeles, the Getty Research Institute. Pictured in Stafford and Terpak, Fig. 6, p. 22.
8. "Berlin Tut Gut" [Berlin is Good for You] snow globe, *Schneekugel mit Wahlwerbung der Grünen "Berlin tut gut,"* Museum der Dinge, *Ding des Monat Oktober 2013* [Snow globe promoting Green Party, Object of the Month, October 2013], pictured in McMichael, *Snowdomes*, 9.
9. Gump's Buddha Water Globe," offered on Gump's department store San Francisco website, 4 ½ in. diameter, 5 1/2 in. h., undated but currently available, <http://www.gumps.com/p/gump-s-buddha-water-globe>, last accessed April 19, 2014.
10. Screen shot from Orson Welles, director, *Citizen Kane* (1941), RKO Pictures.
11. Joseph Cornell, Untitled (*Bébé Marie*), early 1940s, pictured in Hartigan et al., Joseph Cornell: *Shadowplay/Eterniday*, No. 8, p. 66.

12. Joseph Cornell, Untitled (*Pink Palace*), 1948. Sculpture: wooden box containing photostat with ink wash, wood, mirror, plant material, and artificial snow, 8 5/8 in. x 14 1/4 in. x 4 3/8 in. (21.91 cm. x 36.2 cm. x 11.11 cm.). San Francisco, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [SFMOMA].

13. Man Ray, "Snowball," 1927, pictured at the Man Ray Trust website, <http://www.manraytrust.com>, "Objects," last accessed September 30, 2013.

14. Screen shot from Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, *Hitler: A Film from Germany* (1978), Part I, posted Dec. 27, 2012, by CelticAngloPress on *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3M8aMvT35ys> [no longer posted due to copyright violations], last accessed April 19, 2014.

15. "Marie Antoinette Snow Globe," shown at time of purchase and following drainage of liquid, Celeste Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom*, p. 64, both images courtesy of the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum, Neenah, Wisconsin.

16. New York Police Department World Trade Center snow globe, currently available, *NYFirePolice.com*, [http://www.nyfirepolice.com/nypd\\_snow\\_globe.asp](http://www.nyfirepolice.com/nypd_snow_globe.asp), last accessed April 19, 2014.

17. Liliana Porter, still from digital video film, *Fox in the Mirror* (2007), at *lilianaporter.com*, [http://lilianaporter.com/individual.php?sectionId=6&section=video&pieceId=309&title=Fox%20in%20the%20Mirror&currentImage=3\\_Fox\\_in\\_the\\_Mirror\\_07.jpg&pageNo=1&orderBy=date](http://lilianaporter.com/individual.php?sectionId=6&section=video&pieceId=309&title=Fox%20in%20the%20Mirror&currentImage=3_Fox_in_the_Mirror_07.jpg&pageNo=1&orderBy=date), last accessed April 19, 2014.

18. Takashi Murakami, *DOB in a Strange Forest*, one of set of three, multimedia sculpture, fiber-reinforced plastic, resin, fiberglass, acrylic and iron work, 60 in. x 120 in. x 60 in. (1999), information provided from Christie's auction house, Nov. 12, 2008, <http://www.thecityreview.com/f08ccon1.html>, last accessed April 19, 2014, image at <http://home.hiwaay.net/~tfharris/pulpculture/columns/031127.shtml>, last accessed April 19, 2014.

19. Mark Soppeland, *Idiots*, snow globe, 1993, and caption. Image and caption courtesy of the artist, © 2013, Mark Soppeland. All rights reserved.

20. William Harroff, *The Black Hole*, snow globe, 1996. Image courtesy of the artist, © 2013, William Harroff. All rights reserved.

21. Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz, *The Well*, snow globe, 2004, 9 in. x 6 in. x 6 in., *martin-munoz.com*, <http://www.martin-munoz.com/recent/thewell.html>, last accessed April 19, 2014.

22. Thomas Doyle, *Subsidence, Distillation Series*, mixed media, 68 in. x 118 in. x 48 in., installation at Museum of Art and Design, New York City, 2011, *thomasdoyle.net*, <http://www.thomasdoyle.net/distillation/>, last accessed April 19, 2014.
23. Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz, Untitled (*Night Falls Series*), 2012, c-print, <http://www.martin-munoz.com/recent/indexNIGHTTIMES.html>, last accessed April 20, 2014.
24. Snow globes at Heathrow Airport, June 15, 2013 (photo by author).
25. Snow globes at Manchester, U.K. Airport, September 11, 2013 (photos by author).
26. Snow globes at Helsinki, Finland Airport, June 22, 2012 (photo by author).
27. Snow globe in Upper East Side gift shop, New York City, globe approximately 2 ½ in. diameter, April 9, 2014 (photo by author).
28. TSA warning disallowing snow globes in hand luggage on airplanes. Image from posting on Patrick Smith, *Ask the Pilot*, blog archive, "TERMINAL MADNESS: What Is Airport Security?", <http://www.askthepilot.com/essaysandstories/terminal-madness/>, last accessed April 19, 2014.
29. Camryn Forrest, *Point of View*, snow globe, 2012, image posted at "Point of View (snow globe)," *Camryn Forrest Designs*, June 12, 2012, <http://camrynforrest.com/2012/06/12/point-of-view-snowglobe/>, last accessed April 20, 2014.
30. Disney Snow White and the Seven Dwarves snow globe, c. 2012, image at eBay, <http://www.ebay.com/itm/DISNEY-VINTAGE-SNOW-GLOBE-SNOW-WHITE-AND-THE-7-DWARFS-SEE-DETAILS-/251503118833>, last accessed April 19, 2014.
31. "Present Time Wanted Red Heart Shaped Glitter Square Snow Globe Photo Frame," [http://www.amazon.com/Present-Time-Wanted-Shaped-Glitter/dp/B004FTQKM4/ref=pd\\_rhf\\_se\\_p\\_d\\_1](http://www.amazon.com/Present-Time-Wanted-Shaped-Glitter/dp/B004FTQKM4/ref=pd_rhf_se_p_d_1) [no longer available but still pictured], last accessed April 20, 2014.
32. LigoranoReese "History of Art" snow globes, 2011, examples from 20 different globes, black base and acrylic text, 7½ in. h. x 6 in. diameter, edition of 50 each, signed and dated by the artists, currently available at *ArtwareEditions.com*, [http://www.artwareeditions.com/product\\_p/ligo11.htm](http://www.artwareeditions.com/product_p/ligo11.htm), last accessed April 20, 2014.
33. Maison Martin Margiela snow globe, 2010, 6 ¾ in. h. x 9 in. w. (17 cm. x 23 cm.); pictured at <http://www.net-a-porter.com/us/en/product/388287> [no longer available], last accessed April 20, 2014.

34. Museum of Modern Art [MOMA], New York City, “Snow Globe Ring,” 2005, available at [http://www.momastore.org/museum/moma/ProductDisplay?storeId=10001&catalogId=10451&langId=-1&categoryId=26693&parent\\_category\\_rn=26690&productId=13733&keyWord=Snow%20Globe%20Ring&purpose=crawl](http://www.momastore.org/museum/moma/ProductDisplay?storeId=10001&catalogId=10451&langId=-1&categoryId=26693&parent_category_rn=26690&productId=13733&keyWord=Snow%20Globe%20Ring&purpose=crawl) (currently backordered), last accessed April 20, 2014.
35. Kotur snow globe clutch, resort season, 2013, pictured at <http://modaoperandi.com/kotur/resort-2013/accessories-726/item/gold-glitter-snow-globe-clutch-98920> [trunk show ended], last accessed April 20, 2014.
36. MAC cosmetics “Snow Globe” eye shadow line marketing, 2011 (image no longer available), partial image available at *The Black Market* online blog, posting dated October 18, 2011, <http://blackmarketmag.wordpress.com/2011/10/18/beauty-addictions-mac-ice-parade/>, last accessed April 20, 2014.
37. Screen shot from online game “Fallout: New Vegas,” picturing snow globe, “Fallout: New Vegas Snow Globe Guide,” posting by Daniel Acaba on *GamesRadar*, online blog, June 23, 2012, <http://www.gamesradar.com/fallout-new-vegas-snow-globe-guide/>, last accessed April 20, 2014.

*“What happened once upon a time happens all the time....”\**

## INTRODUCTION

Today’s snow globe: seen through plastic resin, bits of glitter drop through thickened water to rest on Sleeping Beauty’s injection-molded palace, its “real” counterpart situated in a Disney theme park. Some call it kitsch, or worse. Yet behind this construct lies the story of a unique combination of form and materials pervasive in American culture for more than one hundred years. The snow globe is timeless and ubiquitous, growing in popularity even as it shrinks to meet the restrictive rules of travel \*in a time of terrorism. The few who have given it attention range from enthused collectors to twentieth-century cultural critic Walter Benjamin. This thesis explores the snow globe’s resonance and endurance within the larger framework of material culture.

As a material object, the snow globe offers an active, and singular, optic and haptic experience for eye and mind. It evokes childhood memories and connects its owner to life events of time and place. It also allows glimpses of imagined cultural

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\* Quotation from Elyse Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T’filah: A Reform Siddur: Shabbat*, Nontransliterated, Shabbat Evening I, *V’shamru*, 45 [163] (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007).

yearnings in Western society. The snow globe's ice, glass, and snow invoke the trope of the quest, both secular and religious. Additionally, its variety provides collectors a means to display themselves through selections from a vast marketplace. So prevalent is the snow globe that marketers have seized upon its every element to sell not just more like it, but also other objects bearing its features. Its iterations now appeal to consumers who want to wear its features in the form of a best-selling ring from the Museum of Modern Art, a handbag from Kotur, or MAC's "snow globe" eye makeup. In today's market the globe is no longer solely an object of individual interaction, but a symbol and sign.

As Igor Kopytoff observes, an object can have many futures.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, for Alfred Gell, objects can have both careers and, within them, many different receptions.<sup>2</sup> This thesis situates the snow globe's history within theories of object change in material culture. It traces the snow globe's trajectory from three-dimensional metaphor of memory and place into a two-dimensional symbol of the snow globe itself. To track it in material culture requires not only the study of its history as object, but also its ascension into the system of signs. Given this transformation, the snow globe, even as toy, provides at least two templates for object change in material culture: the first from curio to mass-produced object, the second from commodity to symbol and sign.

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<sup>1</sup> Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; first paperback ed., 1988), 64-91.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, repr. 2013), 24.

Chapter I of this thesis traces the globe's history from its likely first appearance to its current method of manufacture. It identifies broad trends in the globe's fundamental construction and production in the twentieth century. It presents the historical evidence of the material construct of the original globe from 1878 into mass production through the twentieth century. It shows that the snow globe as material object has been misperceived as an outgrowth of the paperweight. For that reason, the globe's particular physical structure of miniature, snow in liquid, and glass globe, often mounted or set on a base, has never been the focus of critical inquiry by scholars of material culture.

Using this "corrected" analysis of the snow globe—it is not a paperweight but its own object—Chapter II documents the globe's role both in kindling personal memories and in preserving a broader Western cultural memory. It demonstrates how the viewer interacts with the snow globe in its original form as a specific object. Considered as a toy, the globe plays with time, while as a souvenir it invokes memory of a place visited or time past. Its snowy interior evokes Western mythology of the quest, eliciting a longing for lost paradise. The globe can be properly placed alongside the memoirs of Walter Benjamin, reports of polar exploration, the literary work of A. S. Byatt, and the collages of Joseph Cornell, all of whom use the powerful tropes of ice, snow, and glass to transport the viewer to a state of reverie, an imagining of another time, past or future, that fulfills a utopian vision. The globe in this context is a tool of contemplation or a passive object animated either by hand or by memory.

Chapter III demonstrates the globe's newer place as either a mass-marketed collectible or as an art object subverted for expressive purposes no longer so benign as its toy-like form connotes. It shows how commodification of the snow globe over the last

sixty years has detached it from its association with memory. Mass-marketers target collectors and tourists, who employ it as personal identifier; subversion and terrorism have also influenced the snow globe's cultural meaning. This detachment works a fundamental change in the object's relationship to the viewer: rather than a ready object of individual reflection, the globe, commodified, becomes a token of meaning. This shift presents a template for inquiry broadly applicable to objects generally in their trajectory through time and mass culture.

The Conclusion identifies a second template of change, that from object to symbol. In the Conclusion, I argue that the changes described in Chapter III have opened the way for transformation of the globe from three-dimensional object to two-dimensional representation of that object. The Conclusion pairs theories of hyper-commodification with a survey of forms the globe currently takes in the marketplace, documenting the variety and meaning of these new forms and how such forms manifest shifts in its meaning. Identifying the recent explosion in applications of the snow globe's once standard form to the vocabulary of fashion and on-line gaming, it argues that the developments identified in Chapter III—the work of snow globe marketers and artists, combined with societal and cultural changes in the post-9/11 decade—have invited and created new visual forms and contexts for the globe. The globe's journey from object to symbol and sign specifically illustrates more general theoretical descriptions, notably those of Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard, of an object's transformation into parody and ultimately to pastiche.

In this transformation from object to symbol, the globe demonstrates cultural endurance. As a three-dimensional object, the snow globe can produce delight or dread

and it can attract or repel. It may lend its “elements” to other objects to become mere decoration. Yet as either three- or two-dimensional symbol it remains popular. Karen Harvey, historian of material culture, has written that “[o]bjects are particular kinds of sources, that might be agents as well as documents, and they demand that we acquire appropriate skills to understand them.”<sup>3</sup> This analysis of the snow globe sets forth both particular methods of that inquiry as well as their lessons: meaning is porous, and dimension is malleable. The cultural history of the snow globe offers the biography of a material object polished or eroded by cultural change. Its new forms are ubiquitous and its meanings ambiguous and unlimited.

## I. A MATERIAL HISTORY OF THE SNOW GLOBE

Fundamentally, the snow globe consists of three physical elements: hollow glass; miniature; and snow in liquid. But the snow globe has long been misperceived as a

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<sup>3</sup> Karen Harvey, “Introduction: Practical Matters,” in Karen Harvey, ed., *History and Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London: Routledge, 2009), 6.

“descendant” of the paperweight—a solid glass object—by historians of material culture. This chapter examines the existing documentation of the early history of the snow globe and follows trends in its mass production over the last one hundred years. It demonstrates that the persistent characterization of the snow globe’s origin as paperweight has foreclosed proper analysis of its materials and production. Freed from this historical tether to the paperweight, the snow globe emerges as an object distinctly different from the paperweight. Its three elements—together with its solid base—comprise a unique construction that has allowed it not just to survive, but to thrive, in American culture.

The following historical and physical description of the snow globe draws on key developments in the globe’s production in the West; this thesis, however, will mainly address the cultural history of the snow globe in America across a range of uses and platforms. That the snow globe remains popular worldwide is demonstrated by L  lie Carnot’s book, *Collectible Snowdomes*, first published in French in 2001.<sup>4</sup> That popularity is not limited to Western culture: the Changi Airport in Singapore in 2011 displayed in one of its gift shops approximately 100 snow globes of various sizes containing images of Buddha.<sup>5</sup> The balance of this chapter, however, as well as Chapter III and the Conclusion, focus on distinctly American iterations of the snow globe.

### History: Europe to America

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<sup>4</sup> L  lie Carnot, *Collectible Snowdomes*, trans. Chet Wiener and Stacy Doris (Paris: Flammarion, 2002; originally published as *La Folie des Boules    Neige* (Paris: Flammarion, 2001)).

<sup>5</sup> Author’s visit to gift shop at Changi Airport, Singapore, May 31, 2011.

Collectors of snow globes have documented the globe's history. In the last decade of the twentieth century, continuing into the first decade of the twenty-first century, snow globe collectors' books appeared in rapid succession. They include *Snowdomes*, by Nancy McMichael (1990); *Snow Globes*, by Connie A. Moore and Harry L. Rinker (1993); *Collector's Guide to Snow Domes: Identification & Values*, by Helene Guarnaccia (1994); Carnot's *Collectible Snowdomes* (2001); and *Celebrating Snow Globes*, by Nina Chertoff and Susan Kahn (2006).<sup>6</sup> Of these, the guide by Moore and Rinker is by far the most comprehensive.

Moore and Rinker attribute the first written description of a snow globe to the Report of the United States Commissioners to the Paris *Exhibition universelle* in 1878, published in 1880.<sup>7</sup> In a section on noteworthy glass objects, small type in the left margin of the Report designates the subject matter of the description as "Paper weights," but its accompanying text describes a snow globe:

Paper weights of hollow balls filled with water, containing a man with an umbrella. These balls also contain a white powder, which, when the paper weight is turned upside down, falls in imitation of a snow storm.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Nancy McMichael, *Snowdomes* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), Connie A. Moore and Harry L. Rinker, *Snow Globes: The Collector's Guide to Selecting, Displaying, and Restoring Snow Globes* (Philadelphia: Courage Books, 1993); Helene Guarnaccia, *Collector's Guide to Snow Domes: Identification and Values* (Paducah, KY: Collector Books, 1994); L  lie Carnot, *Collectible Snowdomes*, trans. Chet Wiener and Stacy Doris (Paris: Flammarion, 2002; originally published as *La Folie des Boules    Neige* (Paris: Flammarion, 2001)); Nina Chertoff and Susan Kahn, *Celebrating Snow Globes* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin's biographer, Esther Leslie, in a short commentary, also places its first appearance here, then skips ahead seventy years. Esther Leslie, "Snow Shaker," in *The Object Reader*, eds. Fiona Candlin and Raiford Gins (London: Routledge, 2009), 516.

<sup>8</sup> "Glass and Glassware," contained in U.S. Secretary of State, *Reports of the United States Commissioners to the Paris Universal Exhibition, 1878, Vol. III: Iron and Steel, Ceramics and Glass, Forestry, Cotton* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1880), 223-388, digital edition at <http://books.google.com/books?id=67wgAAAAMAAJ&dq=colneu+exposition+paris+1878&q=snow#v=onepage&q=266&f=false>.

Foreshadowing the immense American popularity of the snow globe, the French commissioners that year did not comment on *presse-papiers*, or paperweights, either in their reports on glass or on bibelots.<sup>9</sup> Nor did the French term for snow globe, *boule à neige*, appear in those reports. This first American description permits identification neither of the physical globes it referred to nor of their likeness, nor is it clear that those were the first such globes. And there is no certain candidate among surviving globes for the figure with umbrella enclosed in glass. The description by the 1878 commissioners only approximates those of two early snow globes owned by the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum in Neenah, Wisconsin, now the Museum of Glass. The Museum's 1989 catalogue, still its documentation of record of Evangeline M. Bergstrom's collection of 700 paperweights, includes within its collection two "spheres" that it calls "snow weights."<sup>10</sup> Number 224 of that collection is described as "French, late 19<sup>th</sup> century," a "[t]hin, colorless glass sphere enclos[ing a] replica of the Marie Antoinette Chalet, Petit Trianon in Versailles; in foreground, woman holds red parasol."<sup>11</sup> Paired in the same image with that sphere is No. 152, described as "French, 1870-90. . . . a [t]hin, colorless glass sphere enclos[ing] façade of castle and girl flying a balloon."<sup>12</sup> The red parasol fits the umbrella shape described by the 1878 commissioners but the figure holding that parasol is here described as a woman—and a balloon does not resemble an umbrella.

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<sup>9</sup> France, Ministère de l'agriculture et du commerce, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1878 à Paris, Rapports jury international, Groupe III.-Classe 19. Rapport sur les cristaux, la verrerie et les vitraux and Groupe IV.-Classe 42. Rapport sur la Bimbeloterie [bibelots]* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1880), digital edition at <http://cnum.cnam.fr/CGI/redir.cgi?8XAE277>.

<sup>10</sup> The City of Neenah Municipal Museum Foundation, Inc., *Glass Paperweights of the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum* (Richmond: United States Historical Society Press for The City of Neenah Municipal Museum Foundation, Inc., 1989), Introduction and Cameo Incrustations by Geraldine J. Casper (hereafter referred to as Casper, *Glass Paperweights*).

<sup>11</sup> Casper, *Glass Paperweights*, legend accompanying No. 224 following page 74.

<sup>12</sup> Casper, *Glass Paperweights*, legend accompanying No. 152 following page 74.

The earliest snow globe for which both specific surviving contents and date can be established is that containing a miniature of the Eiffel Tower from the Paris *Exhibition universelle* of 1889 (Fig. 1). The Bergstrom-Mahler Museum also owns that globe, No. 86, described in its catalog:

Maker unknown: 'L.L.'; Paris, France, 1889. Snow weight. Thin colorless glass sphere encloses replica of Eiffel Tower. Dried ceramic flakes surround Tower base, liquid having evaporated. Sphere mounted on square ceramic base; 'L.L. Paris Made In France' impressed underside.<sup>13</sup>

Its content verifies its age: the Eiffel Tower was completed by the time of the *Exposition universelle* in 1889.<sup>14</sup>

By 1889, then, the snow globe had entered the world's pantheon of objects. Its subsequent history demonstrated many elements common to that of mass-produced objects generally for the next one hundred years. Collectors agree that the first snow globe patent was issued to the Viennese Edwin Perzy. Near the end of the nineteenth century Perzy, a "surgical instruments mechanic," sought to make brighter lighting for the operating room.<sup>15</sup> To do this he attempted to improve upon a magnifying globe, a glass sphere filled with water, by enclosing ground glass in the globe to increase its reflectivity. The ground glass was too fragile for Perzy's purpose and sank to the bottom. He then tried semolina as a reflecting agent. It did not improve reflectivity, but evoked the appearance of snow as it sank, creating an appealing scenic effect.<sup>16</sup> In the meantime, a friend—who was also a souvenir seller—asked Perzy to make a miniature of the

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<sup>13</sup> Casper, *Glass Paperweights*, legend accompanying No. 86 following page 74.

<sup>14</sup> Yasmin Sabina Khan, *Enlightening the World: The Creation of the Statue of Liberty* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010), 144.

<sup>15</sup> Hilary Greenbaum and Dana Rubinstein, "The Self-Contained Snowstorm," *The New York Times Magazine*, December 30, 2011, published online at [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/01/magazine/the-self-contained-snowstorm.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/01/magazine/the-self-contained-snowstorm.html?_r=0), page 1, last accessed Sept. 16, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Greenbaum and Rubinstein, "The Self-Contained Snowstorm," 1.

Basilica of the Birth of the Virgin Mary, which he fabricated from pewter. Perzy decided to place it inside this snowy interior.<sup>17</sup> That globe was about one and one-half inches in diameter and contained the miniature, water, magnesium powder, and rock.<sup>18</sup> A Viennese version of the snow globe was born. Perzy was apparently the first to apply for and receive a patent for the snow globe, issued in 1900.<sup>19</sup>

After Perzy received his patent, snow globe patents were issued to designers in the United States and Germany. Moore and Rinker list four “principal” American patents, two each issued to Joseph Garaja, Pittsburgh, in 1929, and William M. Snyder, of Atlas Crystal Works, located first in Trenton, New Jersey, and later in Covington, Tennessee, in 1944.<sup>20</sup> In Germany, Walter & Prediger were awarded patent rights after a court dispute with Bernard Koziol in 1954 since known as the “snowball fight.”<sup>21</sup> The Koziol firm had manufactured snow globes before World War II. After the war, Koziol was spurred to reinstate production with a new shape when he “glimpsed a snowy landscape with deer and fir trees through the dome shaped rear windows of his Volkswagen Beetle car,” a view that company claims produced the short squat dome shape (Fig. 2).<sup>22</sup>

As the snow globe’s patent history shows, collectors correctly date the beginning of mass production and popular affordability of snow globes in America to the 1920s.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Britta Pitchler, “Into the Wintry World of the Snow Globe: A Museum in Vienna Reveals the History of a Beloved Souvenir,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 19, 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/dec/19/travel/la-tr-snowglobes-20101219>.

<sup>18</sup> Greenbaum and Rubinstein, “The Self-Contained Snowstorm,” 1.

<sup>19</sup> Discussion of this patent appears in Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 13-20.

<sup>20</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> For the date of the dispute, see Leslie, “Snow Shaker,” 517; its reference as “snowball fight” appears in Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 19.

<sup>22</sup> “The Story of the Dream Globes,” posting on Company Koziol website, undated, [http://www.snow-globe.com/history\\_snow\\_globe.htm](http://www.snow-globe.com/history_snow_globe.htm), last accessed October 3, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> McMichael, *Snowdomes*, 11; Chertoff and Kahn, *Celebrating Snow Globes*, 4.

In the 1930s, snow globes with bisque figurines commemorated places and heroes.<sup>24</sup> Just before World War II, snow globes marked with or containing brand names, logos, and cartoon and fantasy figures entered the service of mass marketing: Moore and Rinker attribute a threefold growth in sales in snow globes to RKO's release of the movie, *Kitty Foyle: The Natural History of a Woman* (1940), featuring Ginger Rogers and scene transitions showing a snow globe enclosing a young girl on a sled.<sup>25</sup> Tourism expert Dean MacCannell identifies a growth of tourism between and after the world wars that also increased demand for souvenirs among a wider population.<sup>26</sup> The cheaper manufacture of plastic, and the invention of plastic injection molding for the figures inside, allowed producers to meet the demand for snow globes associated with tourism and leisure activities.<sup>27</sup> Disney characters, for example, emerged as early as 1959 with the appearance of Bambi in a snow globe.<sup>28</sup> During the 1960s the globe sat atop perpetual calendars bearing windows for scrolling months and days, pairing real time with the more "fluid" and independent time within the globe (Fig. 3).<sup>29</sup> Less frequently, the globe bore

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<sup>24</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 17-18; Chertoff and Kahn, *Celebrating Snow Globes*, 30.

<sup>25</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 18-19.

<sup>26</sup> Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, first paperback ed., 1999), 5.

<sup>27</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 29, 34-35.

<sup>28</sup> McMichael, *Snowdomes*, 71.

<sup>29</sup> An example dated 1964-65 appears in McMichael, *Snowdomes*, 23. The term "fluid" was cited by Liedeke Plate, but in the context of describing modern real time. "[Sociologist Zygmunt] Bauman describes our present condition as characterized by fluidity. Life is liquid, our jobs impermanent, and our relations volatile." "Liquid Memories: Women's Rewriting in the Present," in Plate and Anneke Selike, eds., *Technologies of Memory in the Arts* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 100-114, 106.

ceramic figures that formed its pedestal or that partially wrapped it to emphasize its context.<sup>30</sup>

The snow globe today continues to be the subject of patents issued on a continual basis as old patents expire and new variations on the globe are invented. A sampling of recent issuances shows new patents for an “extended snowfall snow globe,” August 18, 2003;<sup>31</sup> a “fetus snow globe,” September 5, 2006;<sup>32</sup> a “White House transparency snow globe,” April 17, 2010;<sup>33</sup> and a “beverage dispenser simulating a snow globe,” May 5, 2010.<sup>34</sup>

### Snow Globe, Not Paperweight

The foregoing history of the snow globe, drawn largely from that provided by collectors, omits a central, and incorrect, feature of their reports: their regular description of the globe as descendant of the paperweight. This description has not only limited appreciation of its elements and manufacture, but has also produced comparison to, rather than distinction from, the paperweight. This misperception has narrowed material analysis of the snow globe and thwarted an appreciation of viewers’ interaction with it. This misperception also ties the appearance of the snow globe to that of the paperweight, almost fifty years earlier.

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<sup>30</sup> McMichael, *Snowdomes*, 75: “Another popular concept of the 1960s and ’70s was a large figurine of an animal either encasing a waterball or perched on top of one”; a contemporary example appears in Chertoff and Kahn, *Celebrating Snow Globes*, 58 (mummy hand holding snow globe of graveyard scene).

<sup>31</sup> US 20050039358 A1, <http://www.google.nu/patents/US20050039358>, last accessed October 2, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> US D565458 S1, <http://www.google.com/patents/USD565458>, last accessed October 2, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> US D634241 S1, <http://www.google.com/patents/USD634241>, last accessed October 2, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> US D646168 S1, <http://www.google.com/patents/USD646168>, last accessed October 2, 2013.

The linkage of the snow globe to the paperweight likely originated with the globe's characterization by the 1878 commissioners as "paper weight," a solid glass object, even though they specified that the glass was "hollow." After the commissioners' description, the next significant historical discussion of the snow globe in English appears in Bergstrom's history, *Old Glass Paperweights*, first published in 1940.<sup>35</sup> Bergstrom calls snow globes "snow weights." She includes a single paragraph on the history of the "snow weight" within a chapter on paperweights from France.<sup>36</sup> Bergstrom describes what ultimately became her namesake museum's castle façade and Petit Trianon globes, respectively. She provides a date for the first "snow weight" nearly thirty years before the globe's description by the 1878 commissioners. But the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum's catalog has rejected that early date: the castle façade globe is dated "1870-1890" and the Petit Trianon globe is dated "late 19<sup>th</sup> century." That catalog still refers to all three globes of early origin—the Eiffel Tower globe of 1889, as well as the castle façade and Petit Trianon globes—as "snow weights."<sup>37</sup>

Although the 1878 commissioners used the word "hollow" in their description, this did not necessarily distinguish the globe from a paperweight. Solid glass paperweights, too, could be described as "hollow." Bergstrom documents "crown weights," produced in St. Louis, France, which "were hollow, and they served not only as paperweights, but as bases for show glass, vases, and door knobs."<sup>38</sup> But "hollow," in the case of a paperweight, refers to a concave indentation in solid glass, not a blown, empty

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<sup>35</sup> Evangeline H. Bergstrom, *Old Glass Paperweights: Their Art, Construction, and Distinguishing Features* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1940).

<sup>36</sup> Bergstrom, *Old Glass Paperweights*, 43.

<sup>37</sup> Casper, *Glass Paperweights*, legends accompanying Nos. 86, 152, and 224 following page 74.

<sup>38</sup> Bergstrom, *Old Glass Paperweights*, 29 (reference to illustration omitted).

glass surround.<sup>39</sup> Crown weights bore an indented core, or “hollow,” below solid glass, to permit attachment to the objects they secured or decorated.

Paperweights can also contain moving sand within membranes of otherwise solid glass, suggesting a similarity to snow globes. But this feature appears only rarely and the motion of the sand is not a prominent visual element. These membranes, or bubbles, are inserted by blowing air into the molten glass. The Bergstrom-Mahler catalog contains two such weights made by French houses, one in 1878, possibly by Pantin, the other by Baccarat in 1900 or later.<sup>40</sup> While paperweights could house moving sand in blown hollows, the near invisibility of that movement does not approach the effect of swirling snow in liquid fundamental to the snow globe.

In linking early snow globes with the paperweight, scholar Celeste Olalquiaga, in her 1998 study, *The Artificial Kingdom: A Treasury of the Kitsch Experience*, only clouds the history of the snow globe. She includes discussion of the 1889 Eiffel Tower globe as well as a description of the Petit Trianon globe, No. 224 in the Bergstrom catalog, but omits mention of the globe paired with it, the castle façade globe, No. 152. Yet she conflates these latter two in her description. She casts the snow globe as “fulfilling the mission” of the paperweight.<sup>41</sup> Olalquiaga’s statement puts in dispute whether the globe

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<sup>39</sup> The illustrated weight accompanying her text appears to be the same as that identified in the Bergstrom-Mahler catalog as No. 1159 and used to define a “crown” weight, which is “usually hollow.” Casper, *Glass Paperweights*, plate p. 36 and description on page following.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., Casper, *Glass Paperweights*, legend accompanying No. 1298 following page 74, and No. 443, page 61. Correspondence with Curator Emmeline Erikson, Assistant Curator at the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum, contains descriptions of these two paperweights:

The [earlier] paperweight . . . is unlike a snow globe, as the moving grains are not readily apparent when the weight is shifted. In fact, some of my colleagues had no idea that the piece even had that feature. Photographs do not do it justice, so I will try to describe it for you. Three “rocky” peaks rise up from the base, encased in a solid glass cap. The white opaline glass in the valley of those peaks appears stretched to translucency. Beneath that membrane is where the loose grains of sand or silica reside – in an apparent air pocket at the very bottom of the paperweight. When you move the paperweight, you can view the granules

described by the 1878 commissioners contained a figure that was male or female, carried an umbrella or balloon, and, if female and indeed a representation of Marie Antoinette, stood before a representation of the Petit Trianon.

Olalquiaga also casts doubt on the date of the snow globe's first appearance. Her citations would date the snow globe's first appearance well before its earliest documented dating, whether by description or date authentication. Olalquiaga relies on paperweight expert Sibylle Jargstorf, as well as Bergstrom, to imply that snow globes might have originated as children's toys in Central Europe as early as the sixteenth century.<sup>42</sup> But she documents neither their use nor date of origin. Jargstorf's own authoritative publication, *Paperweights* (1991), dates only the appearance of hollow globes, and that to the seventeenth century.<sup>43</sup> She makes no mention of insertion of objects in those first globes. Bergstrom dates "snow weights" to 1850, with the unsubstantiated statement that they were made primarily as toys for children.<sup>44</sup> Jargstorf does not provide a date for the appearance of the snow globe independent of that for the paperweight, while Bergstrom's 1850 date for the "snow weight" has been rejected by the archivists of her collection.

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shift, but only through the relatively small area in the valley. They are not visible from beneath the weight. . . .

The Baccarat paperweight that has sand or silica which moves when shaken (but the moving granules cannot be seen) . . . was created in much the same way as the above weight, but the rocky peaks are more granular or sandy and natural in coloration, and there is no translucent membrane of glass above the air pocket in the base. There is also a smaller Baccarat paperweight (no. 186) – pictured with and very similar to no. 431 – however it does *not* have any moving granules.

Email to the author from Emmeline Erikson, Assistant Curator, Bergstrom-Mahler Museum, dated July 18, 2013, copy on file with the author [emphasis in original].

<sup>41</sup> Celeste Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom: A Treasury of the Kitsch Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 63.

<sup>42</sup> Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom*, 62 and n. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Sibylle Jargstorf, *Paperweights* (West Chester, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1991), 9.

<sup>44</sup> Bergstrom, *Old Glass Paperweights*, 43.

Taken together, Olalquiaga's references to Jargstorf and Bergstrom, correctly interpreted, date the appearance of only the paperweight, and point to that date as about 1845.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps not coincidentally, it was in that year that England abolished its glass tax.<sup>46</sup> By then, the technique for production of durable English lead glass had spread to the Continent and was already available for cut glass drinking vessels, popular by the eighteenth century. Glass manufacturers in Germany, Austria, France, and England produced signature "weights," or *presse-papiers*, that fit in the palm of the hand. They became a tourist staple.<sup>47</sup>

To rely on the history of the paperweight for that of the snow globe ignores the substantial differences in glassmaking that produce them. Nineteenth-century paperweights, both European and American, were formed by enclosing a design worked in glass in a half-oval mold of glass. That half-oval was then enclosed within a further pedestal-shaped mold with the addition of molten glass.<sup>48</sup> Press-molding appeared about 1820 in America and spread to Europe by 1830.<sup>49</sup> In the case of the paperweight, press-molding produced a transparent object of multiple angles whose top and side views provided differing images of the lampwork or encrustation within the solid glass (Fig. 4A, B). This same process of press-molding also gave the paperweight a flat surface, eliminating the need for the housing of a separate base.

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<sup>45</sup> Both Jargstorf and Bergstrom date the paperweight's earliest documented appearance to about 1845, although the techniques for forming its internal canes developed prior to that. Jargstorf, *Paperweights*, 44; Bergstrom, *Old Glass Paperweights*, 23, 62.

<sup>46</sup> Dan Klein and Ward Lloyd, *The History of Glass* (New York: Crescent Books, 1989 reprint ed.), 191.

<sup>47</sup> Klein and Lloyd, *History of Glass*, 101, 111.

<sup>48</sup> Bergstrom, *Old Glass Paperweights*, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Keith Cummings, *A History of Glassforming* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 136; Klein and Lloyd, *History of Glass*, 192.

Only materials chemically compatible with the basic elements of glass and its formation can be encased in the solid glass of paperweights. Glassmaking requires repeated heating and cooling, or annealing. Nineteenth-century glassforming methods limited paperweight insertions to those of glass or clay. Glass insertions included filigree and canes, themselves formed from glass and then included in the glass mold. Those of clay were “sulphides,” or encrustations, unfinished clay compatible with the glass heating and annealing process. They bonded with the molten glass to produce the appearance of silver.<sup>50</sup> Inserts of reptiles and flowers were formed of lampwork, small rods of colored glass made by glassmakers at home, in the light of oil lamps.<sup>51</sup> The weights, produced in molds, enclosed these glass fruits and animals, as well as sulphide cameos.

The paperweight offers multiple views of the scene inside that vary by the angle of sight. Bergstrom writes:

There is fascination in the study of flowers, portraits, and varied motifs portrayed under the glass, the more so since the glass magnifies and brings out the details clearly. This explains why paperweights are at best represented only indifferently in photographs: they must be handled and examined from many different angles in order to see all the jewel-like fineness of their construction.<sup>52</sup>

In the glass paperweight, the solid glass enclosure of lampwork flowers or *millefiore* fields pushes them forward for inspection. The magnifying effect of the glass enclosure of the paperweight signals the eye that the insert alone requires primary attention.

I have written extensively here on the materials and production of paperweights to emphasize the distinct properties and fabrication methods of snow globes. The snow globe’s hollow glass requires blowing, not pressing, and its progression to an object

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<sup>50</sup> Bergstrom, *Old Glass Paperweights*, 52.

<sup>51</sup> Jargstorf, *Paperweights*, 27.

<sup>52</sup> Bergstrom, *Old Glass Paperweights*, 3.

affordable to consumers lagged behind that of the paperweight. Cheaper production of hollow glass appeared first in the form of glass blow-molding, primarily for glass bottles. Michael Owens invented a partially automated system that required only unskilled workers in 1895, and followed it with a fully automated process by about 1905.<sup>53</sup> This development likely explains Moore and Rinker's statement, unsubstantiated, that "[f]rom 1900 the affordable snow globe arrived upon the scene."<sup>54</sup>

Nonetheless, snow globe collectors continually reinforce the globe's historical, and incorrect, link to the paperweight as predecessor. Collector Nancy McMichael describes the snow globe as "a logical, if less esteemed, stylistic extension" of the solid glass paperweight, citing the description by the U.S. commissioners to the Paris exhibition.<sup>55</sup> Carnot states that the early snow globe's weight made it a variation of the paperweight:

One thing is certain about the earliest snowdomes: they were pretty heavy. In addition to the weight of the water and glass, there was the base, which could be made of ceramic, brass, or even marble. Their heaviness helped them to serve their attributed function as paperweights.<sup>56</sup>

But the weight of water-filled hollow glass domes could not have approached that of their solid glass equivalents: the relative density of glass, crystal, and even plastic is greater than that of water.<sup>57</sup> Only the base could have added such

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<sup>53</sup> University of Toledo Ward M. Canady Center for Special Collections, "Owens the Innovator," summary and documents relating to Michael Owens, <http://www.utoledo.edu/library/canaday/exhibits/oi/oiexhibit/owens.htm>, last updated Jan. 3, 2012, last accessed Sept. 14, 2013; British Glass Manufacturers Confederation, "History of Glass," posting on *British Glass* (undated), <http://www.britglass.org.uk/history-of-glass>, last accessed Sept. 14, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> McMichael, *Snowdomes*, 10-11.

<sup>56</sup> Carnot, *Snowdomes*, 14-15.

<sup>57</sup> "Density, Specific Weight and Specific Gravity," in *The Engineering ToolBox*, <http://www.engineeringtoolbox.com>, last accessed Feb. 25, 2014.

weight; that could be made of marble or wood, and later of ceramic or plastic. The latest collector commentary on snow globe history also maintains the globe's link to the paperweight: Chertoff and Kahn explain that snow globes "were created by the French—derived, most likely, from the process used to create glass paperweights."<sup>58</sup>

Linkage with the paperweight fosters other instances of imprecision in identification of the snow globe's construction and contents. Olalquiaga's work illustrates the failure of historians of material culture to identify with precision the contents of a globe as solid glass, liquid, or some other material, as well as the physical characteristics of the globe's inserts. Olalquiaga employs as a framing device central to her book a globe on a stand that contains a hermit crab she has named "Rodney." She describes him as encased in solid glass (Fig. 5). Reviewing Olalquiaga's book for *The New York Times*, Liesl Schillinger describes "Rodney" as "a hermit crab imprisoned in a glass globe," the globe serving as a "glass-encased, living-death prison."<sup>59</sup> But Olalquiaga's caption for "Rodney" reads "'Nature Gem' manufactured by Iminac, Inc., Lake Jackson."<sup>60</sup> "Rodney" is in fact encased in neither solid nor hollow glass, but in a gel developed by Dow Chemical and licensed by Rodney's manufacturer, Iminac, Inc., to house the remains of once living shellfish and insects as gift items.<sup>61</sup> Iminac, partially owned by Dow Chemical and using patents licensed from it, found the gel surround appealing to enclose

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<sup>58</sup> Chertoff and Kahn, *Celebrating Snow Globes*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> "Toys in the Attic: A history of cherished things most people wouldn't be caught dead with," *The New York Times*, Feb. 7, 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/99/02/07/reviews/990207.07schillt.html>.

<sup>60</sup> Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom*, caption for color plate following page 84.

<sup>61</sup> "Iminac Celebrating Five Years of Operation," *The Brazosport Facts* (Clute, Texas), April 24, 1977, *Newspapers.com*, printed PDF download on file with the author.

gift objects containing shellfish and insects.<sup>62</sup> These are nature's organic remains inside a gel, not man-made objects encased in solid or hollow glass.

### Form, Manufacture, and Content

Uncoupling the history of the snow globe from that of the paperweight permits wider consideration of the particularity of the snow globe—its toy-like elements, its magical qualities, and its movement. Unlike the flat-bottomed paperweight, a raised base hides the mouth of the snow globe and its seal, gives the globe a stable seating, and enhances its ability to charm. The base can be elaborate or simple; Koziol's "beetle"-shaped globes bear just a plastic floor. The base can also house a music box, attracting the viewer with sound as well as sight. Figures set within can rotate mechanically or light up. The base acts as a further isolating feature, serving to enhance the globe's appearance as separate world.<sup>63</sup>

The hollow globe, in addition, provides a uniformly dimensional view of its contents: no prismatic change alters the enclosure's view or magnification. The fixed objects inside remain constant in size and position relative to the base when the globe and snow move. Gravity and the hand only imperfectly control the view. "Snow" visible in liquid must be distinguished from the content of other glass objects, hollow or solid.

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<sup>62</sup> An object encased in the same substance as "Rodney" appears for sale on eBay. "Vtg weird REAL hermit crab specimen paper weight in gel.Nature Gems," listing on eBay, [http://www.ebay.ca/itm/Vtg-weird-REAL-hermit-crab-specimen-paper-weight-gel-Nature-Gems-/321216752844?pt=LH\\_DefaultDomain\\_0&hash=item4aca02accc](http://www.ebay.ca/itm/Vtg-weird-REAL-hermit-crab-specimen-paper-weight-gel-Nature-Gems-/321216752844?pt=LH_DefaultDomain_0&hash=item4aca02accc) (undated), last accessed October 2, 2013.

<sup>63</sup> This thesis does not address the base or these variations as fundamental elements of the snow globe except where that base acts as part of the globe's narrative, described in Chapter III and the Conclusion.

Comparative examination of the snow globe's material differences from the paperweight shows that its three fundamental elements—glass, miniature, snow in liquid—present an intriguing and singular visual source of wonder, both by their connotative heritage and by their collective operation. Hollow blown glass gives the appearance of a permanently frozen bubble. Fascination with that appearance began in ancient Rome and continues today.<sup>64</sup> Barbara Maria Stafford traces awakened interest in glass and light from the Renaissance forward in the 2001 Getty Museum exhibition catalog, *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*.<sup>65</sup> Inventive refractions of light produced a novel and dazzling visual display comparable to that of Renaissance cabinets of curiosity, or *Wunderkammern*.<sup>66</sup> Before glass had become sufficiently stable for common use, hollow glass spheres appeared in Baroque *vanitas* paintings, often serving the same function as the soap bubble that hovered in others of the genre: representation of fleeting life (Fig. 6).<sup>67</sup> Glass also satisfied Enlightenment scientists' need to magnify and to separate. By the time the snow globe appeared, the hollow sphere, by now filled with liquid, had already been used to satisfy curiosity and make discoveries (Fig. 7). Robert Hooke's illustration of his microscope system includes lighting by a water globe and maintenance by a lens grinder.<sup>68</sup> The lens of the magnifying globe fed a popular fascination with things tiny, presaging the ultimate mass production

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<sup>64</sup> Klein and Lloyd, *History of Glass*, esp. ch. 1, "The Origins and Early History of Glass," and ch. 7, "The Nineteenth Century;" Leah Hager Cohen, *Glass, Paper, Beans: Revelations on the Nature and Value of Ordinary Things* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 92-94.

<sup>65</sup> Barbara Maria Stafford, "Revealing Technologies/Magical Domains," in Barbara Maria Stafford and Frances Terpak, *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2001).

<sup>66</sup> Stafford, "Revealing Technologies/Magical Domains," 6-7.

<sup>67</sup> Stafford, "Revealing Technologies/Magical Domains," 21.

<sup>68</sup> Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris, *Baroque Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 104.

of miniatures for insertion in the globe and its liquid. No longer limited to the reliquary, these new glass vessels now invited the Baroque gaze of wonder rather than the medieval contemplation of worship.

The signature elements of the snow globe remain definitive of its form, although the materials of those elements have changed over time. The globe itself is made either from glass or a glass-like plastic resin that produces the effect of clear glass.<sup>69</sup> Glass globes weigh significantly more than resin globes.<sup>70</sup> Miniature elements inside may be ceramic, stone, or injection-molded resin. Most snow globes today are assembled in and imported from China, although some United States manufacturers and the Perzy factory in Vienna do produce them as well.<sup>71</sup> Inside the globe, “snow” is now often commercially made plastic particles or glitter.<sup>72</sup> Water alone has too little viscosity to slow these larger particles; today, alcohol-based additives slow their motion.<sup>73</sup> No evidence of the early liquid combination that created the first snow globes survives; only the remains of the “snow” survive. The Bergstrom-Mahler catalog entry for the Paris 1889 globe states that

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<sup>69</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 29; see items listed under “Resin Water Globe Manufacturers,” listed simultaneously as glass and resin, <http://www.tradeford.com/products/resin-water-globe>, last accessed September 14, 2013. An example appears at [http://www.alibaba.com/product-gs/435304349/Classic\\_snow\\_globe\\_polyresin.html?s=p](http://www.alibaba.com/product-gs/435304349/Classic_snow_globe_polyresin.html?s=p), last accessed September 14, 2013. The latter describes its contents as “resin,” but in “specifications” lists “polyresin inside, polyresin base + glass.”

<sup>70</sup> E.g., Cornell Center for Materials Research, “Packing density and atom masses help glass tip the scales over plastic,” posting on *Ask a Scientist*, July 4, 2002, <http://www.ccmr.cornell.edu/education/ask/?quid=533>, last accessed September 14, 2013.

<sup>71</sup> The last known printed list of snow globe manufacturers worldwide appears in Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 74-79.

<sup>72</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 32.

<sup>73</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 30.

it contains no remaining liquid, but does enclose “dried ceramic flakes.”<sup>74</sup> Those for the two other globes, of only approximate dates, contain no descriptions of flakes.<sup>75</sup>

The contemporary snow globe, like other mass-produced objects, is shaped by cost factors relating not just to production, but also to importation. The United States tariff system requires that individual designs be examined to determine the object’s essential feature. In the case of the snow globe, these inquiries will likely focus on whether that feature is glass, plastic, ceramic, music box, or “festive article.” If no essential feature emerges, examiners will determine the closest description within the possible tariff categories. A stiff tariff of thirty percent is applicable generally to imported glass snow globes.<sup>76</sup> However, a “festive article,” generally associated with a recognized domestic holiday, either secular or religious, is exempt from the tariff.<sup>77</sup> Significantly lower tariffs apply to globes that are plastic, including clear resin globes (5.3 percent), and to globes that function primarily as music boxes (3.2 percent).<sup>78</sup> Legislation introduced in 2010 and again in 2012 would provide a three-year exemption from tariffs for Missoula, Montana importers of glass snow globes.<sup>79</sup> It languishes in the

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<sup>74</sup> Casper, *Glass Paperweights*, legend accompanying No. 86 following p. 74.

<sup>75</sup> Casper, *Glass Paperweights*, legends accompanying Nos. 152 and 224, following p. 74.

<sup>76</sup> E.g., United States International Trade Commission (“ITC”) Ruling NY N004348 (Jan. 10, 2007).

<sup>77</sup> E.g., ITC Rulings NY J82546 (April 23, 2003); NY L82366 (Feb. 16, 2005).

<sup>78</sup> On plastic globes, see, e.g., ITC Ruling NY M83479 (May 23, 2006); on globes deemed to be primarily music boxes, see, e.g., ITC Ruling NY N008528 (March 23, 2007).

<sup>79</sup> Senate Bill 2881, “A bill to suspend temporarily the duty on certain glass snow globes,” 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2011-12, text as of May 8, 2012, <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/s2881/text>, last accessed Sept. 14, 2013.

Senate because of a perception that tariff reductions or exemptions are politically charged “earmarks.”<sup>80</sup>

More importantly, snow globe histories show that its shape and content, and hence its signification as an object, remained both benign and inviting until the last decade of the twentieth century. Collector Nancy McMichael points to only two globes in her survey that border on dark meaning: meant to emphasize air pollution, the liquid “air” in globes from Los Angeles and Berlin is either dyed or contains dark particles representing soot, respectively (the latter pictured in Fig. 8).<sup>81</sup> Her introduction acknowledges that “anything” can be the subject of a snow globe, but that she excludes from her survey “X-rated and scatological domes [that] are finding their way into the market.”<sup>82</sup> The “X-rated” globes she refers to may include a “Fearless Vampire Killers Snow Globe,” its listing undated but referencing the Roman Polanski movie of 1967, which encloses a photograph of the partially clad Sharon Tate in liquid and snow that “recreate[s] the scene where Sarah (Tate) slips into a warm bath and is mystified to find snowflakes falling on her. She looks up in horror to find Count van Krolock, a vampire, descending through the skylight above her.”<sup>83</sup> The “scatological” domes may refer to Progressive Product’s miniature toilet seat encased in a snow globe with the motto “Tops

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<sup>80</sup> Ota, Alan K. “Former Trade Chief Attempts to Be Dealmaker in Tariff Dispute,” *Congressional Quarterly Today Online News*, posted June 14, 2012, <http://public.cq.com/docs/news/news-000004105916.html>, last accessed September 14, 2013.

<sup>81</sup> McMichael, *Snowdomes*, 7.

<sup>82</sup> McMichael, *Snowdomes*, 9.

<sup>83</sup> “Fearless Vampire Killers Snow Globe Sharon Tate Nude in Bathtub Snowglobe Sexy [sic],” listing on eBay (undated; listing ended), now listed with same description at <http://www.bonanza.com/listings/Fearless-Vampire-Killers-Snow-Globe-Sharon-Tate-bathtub/15427129>, last accessed October 2, 2013. Polanski’s movie was released in 1967 in the United Kingdom. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061655/>, last accessed October 2, 2013.

for Bottoms,” dated circa 1950-1959.<sup>84</sup> A collection of globes labeled “Humorous Domes and Mistakes” appears in Helene Guarnaccia’s collectors’ book, with nothing darker than a globe entitled “I Took the Plunge,” showing a housewife trapped in a globe that forms a transparent toilet bowl.<sup>85</sup>

While these contents may be in poor taste, they threaten neither the viewer nor the snow globe’s benign connotation. A racy photograph that replaces a dimensional miniature inside the globe gently mocks, rather than subverts, its form; a toilet seat mounted in a horseshoe shape suggests nothing unclean. The most recent collectors’ guide to snow globes, dated 2006, omits mention or picture of any dark-themed globes.<sup>86</sup> The fantasy characters of Harry Potter casting spells and the familiar creatures of Halloween in globes only faintly suggest terror. Disney comes closest to encasing terror within the snow globe: a Disney snow globe collectors’ blog displays globes thematically tied to “The Nightmare Before Christmas” and “Villains,” both themes figuring prominently in the blog’s tag cloud.<sup>87</sup>

The snow globe, considered separately from the paperweight, represents a heritage of wonder. Together, glass, miniature, and snow in liquid combine to make a tiny world subject only to the power of the viewer to begin the fall of snow, and hence

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<sup>84</sup> “Andy Zito’s Snowdomes—More Snowdome Favorites,” image posted in *About.com—Collectibles* (undated), <http://collectibles.about.com/od/collectorprofiles/ig/Andy-Zito-s-Snowdomes/More-Snowdome-Favorites.htm>, last accessed October 3, 2013.

<sup>85</sup> Guarnaccia, *Collector’s Guide*, 119.

<sup>86</sup> Chertoff and Kahn, *Celebrating Snow Globes*.

<sup>87</sup> See postings on *Disney Snow Globe Collectors Guide*, <http://disneysnowglobescollectorsguide.blogspot.com/search/label/Villians>, last accessed March 23, 2014.

time, within the globe. It remained toy-like, intriguing and fascinating in content and signification, for the first one hundred years of its existence. Chapter II shows how and why this intriguing object fosters a personal interaction that can retrieve or revive memory.

## II. THE SNOW GLOBE AS OBJECT OF MEMORY

The snow globe's fundamental elements fascinate the eye and free the mind to wander among memories central both to the individual and to the larger culture that places humankind in the universe. All depend on the interaction between individual and globe through the physical construct of the object. This chapter will discuss the cultural connotations of the globe's three fundamental elements, exploring the globe from the inside out: miniature, liquid made visible by flecks of snow, and hollow globe. It will demonstrate how a material miniature of a visual image opens an inviting passageway to reverie, creating a sublime fascination. This fascination makes the globe a repository of individual memory, either as witness to a specific time or event in one's own life or as souvenir that stands in for that time and place. This fascination, or enchantment, makes the globe a symbol of childhood. It also creates an elusive but powerful memory, that of anterior, or cultural, memory. Speaking to Western culture at its primary level, it is an invocation of that culture's own creation, well before temporal memory. Finally, the globe allows the safety of distance, permitting a safe and sure exit from the connection to memory. For all these reasons, the snow globe has become a significant repository for Western cultural thinking.

To support this analysis I present here cultural theories of the miniature set forth by Stephen Millhauser and Susan Stewart. I also examine representations of snow and ice as visual and literary metaphor to explain the power of the globe's enclosure of the miniature within glass and liquid referencing snow. Together, these elements convey a

distant and unconscious place in the mind, as demonstrated by analogies of snow and distance employed by critic Walter Benjamin; the theme of snow and ice in the literature of A. S. Byatt and the collages of Joseph Cornell; and nineteenth-century reports of polar exploration, each specifically discussed by scholars of those works. These visual tropes open the doorway to memory; the blanket of snow settled on the interior landscape gently closes that doorway.

### The Snowfall Begins

The viewer shakes the globe and a narrative performance follows. The snow globe's miniature inspires the story, and the vision of falling snow inside glass begins the action. The interactions of the snow globe's primary elements, together with human touch, sight, and thought, present visual contradictions that require resolution.

Fixed at the center of the globe is its first element, the miniature. The miniature is a detailed representation of objects or people that renders its real-world features in reduced size. By the end of the seventeenth century in Western Europe and England, the miniature had become commercially and culturally significant. Miniaturists perfected the tiny replication of household objects in both cabinets of curiosities and dollhouses.<sup>88</sup> The miniaturization of domestic life in the Dutch dollhouses of the seventeenth century displayed the skill of metalworkers, carvers, and other guilds and produced an active market for miniatures.<sup>89</sup> Theorist Susan Stewart, in *On Longing: Narratives of the*

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<sup>88</sup> On cabinets of curiosities, see Joscelyn Godwin, "The Wonder Years," *Art & Antiques* 31 (December 2008).

<sup>89</sup> On Dutch dollhouses, see Susan Broomhall, "Imagined Domesticities in Early Modern Dutch Dollhouses," *Parergon* 24, no. 2 (2007): 47-67, DOI 10.1353/pgn.2008.0041.

*Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (1993), writes that the miniature presents a “constant daydream” that opens the possibility of narrative unlimited by reality.<sup>90</sup> Stewart points to Charlotte Yonge’s and Jonathan Swift’s creations of fictional small “people” in the form of Tom Thumb and Lilliputians, respectively.<sup>91</sup> Of no function other than to stand in for its life-size counterpart, the miniature needs only human imagination to spring to life in small scale.

Identification of the miniature always requires reference to the real, but by definition is itself artificial. In Steven Millhauser’s view, all miniatures present a visual “discrepancy” with the counterparts they represent:

Wherein lies the fascination of the miniature? Smallness alone compels no necessary wonder. A grain of sand, an ant, a raindrop, a bottle cap, may interest or amaze the eye, but they do not arrest the attention with that peculiar intensity elicited by the miniature. They do not cast a spell. The miniature, then, must not be confused with the merely minute. For the miniature does not exist in isolation: it is by nature a smaller version of something else. *The miniature, that is to say, implies a relation, a discrepancy.* An object as large as a dollhouse can exert the fascination of the miniature as fully as the minutest teacup on the doll’s smallest cupboard [emphasis mine].<sup>92</sup>

Stewart agrees with Millhauser that the miniature is a man-made representation of a real-world referent.<sup>93</sup> The miniature must therefore rely for its impact on the recognition of its relationship to that referent.

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<sup>90</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 54.

<sup>91</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), citing Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, ed. Robert A. Greenberg (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970) (first published 1726-27) and Charlotte Yonge, *The History of Sir Thomas Thumb* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1856; first published in 1621).

<sup>92</sup> Steven Millhauser, “The Fascination of the Miniature,” *Grand Street* 2, no. 4 (Summer 1983): 128-129 (author’s emphasis). DOI: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25006539>.

<sup>93</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 55.

Why the miniature attracts, rather than repels, is explained by both Millhauser and Stewart, although differently conceptualized. Millhauser calls the miniature an object of exhaustible detail, one that offers not just the satisfaction of curiosity, but a satisfaction that does not threaten the viewer in the process of acquiring it. He contrasts fear of the unknown inherent in examination of a magnified object of nature with the “exhaustibility” of the detail of the miniature, inscribed by the artist’s hand and, therefore, knowable. In his view, “[t]he gigantic threatens unceasing revelation, the miniature holds out the promise of total revelation.”<sup>94</sup> Millhauser’s “exhaustibility” finds an equivalent in Stewart’s concept of incomplete reproduction, or “partiality.”<sup>95</sup> The miniature’s state of incompleteness invites recognition. The miniature poses no danger to the viewer, but rather makes possible the viewer’s satisfaction of completion. It is delightfully intriguing.

As noted earlier, the miniature evokes the narrative of performance. Stewart argues that this narrative originates with the viewer, rather than the miniature.<sup>96</sup> Stewart conceives of the miniature as tableau, or still presentation, that triggers the fantasy performance.<sup>97</sup> The miniature’s very partiality requires the viewer to supply not just its missing details, but also a completing narrative, unbound from temporal reality. It requires imagination.

The snow globe’s second element, its moving surround of snow moving in water, is the physical action that raises the curtain on the imagined performance. The globe cannot move itself. Rather, the viewer must tip it to begin the snowfall inside: it is a toy.

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<sup>94</sup> Millhauser, “Fascination,” 133.

<sup>95</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 136.

<sup>96</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 136.

<sup>97</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 54.

Stewart describes play with a toy in general as an opening to interior, rather than social, fantasy; the toy's "animation" unlocks a separate world.<sup>98</sup> More enthralling is the viewer's inability to stop the toy's performance. Stewart calls this a "self-invoking fiction," one that "exists independent of human signifying processes."<sup>99</sup> The wheels of the windup toy move until its interior spring unwinds, even when those wheels move along no surface. The viewer can begin the snowfall in the globe, or reroute or restart its flow by tipping or turning it, but cannot end that snowfall. Its unique lifecycle can neither be stopped nor exactly replicated.

As a corollary, this action of falling snow defines a period of time that is indeterminable to the viewer. Stewart writes in describing the toy that its activation creates the independent time characteristic of fantasy, "the beginning of an entirely new temporal world, a fantasy world parallel to (and hence never intersecting) the world of everyday reality."<sup>100</sup> Tipping the globe starts time afresh and creates a new fantasy sequence.

Particles of snow enhance the visibility of movement inside the globe. Esther Leslie, biographer of Walter Benjamin, describes the actual impossibility of snow visible in water. She questioned why the occupant of the 1878 *Exhibition universelle* globe needed an umbrella while surrounded by water, and observed the oddity in another globe of snow falling "endlessly" on a view of the Berlin Wall after its fall, which portrayed the conceptual opposite, in her words, the "thawing" of relations between East and West.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 56-57.

<sup>99</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 57.

<sup>100</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 57.

<sup>101</sup> Esther Leslie, "Snow Shaker," 516.

But that questioning preceded her later observation, made outside the context of the snow globe, that snow and ice are inherently dialectical:

Where snow and ice are, there are opposites at work—which is why these waterforms offer themselves for reverie, for where there is opposition there is dynamism, mobility, movement and transformation—in a dialectical sense. Under snow, colour is extinguished by whiteness. Roughness is overlaid by the smoothness of ice. And furthermore, ice and snow are made of water. The fluid, the fluid of fluids, is frozen into crystals. Something that was in constant movement appears stilled, until it melts again back into water, showing thereby that its stillness was only an illusion, as it slowly moves itself into fluidity.<sup>102</sup>

In the appearance of snow in liquid lie two sources of visual fascination: snowflakes, frozen yet falling through warmer liquid, as well as the suggestion that the moment of transformation from solid to liquid has become visible.

The globe's third element is the hollow glass surround. Esther Leslie's brief essay also captures this enigma, the impossibility of a whole world subject to the command of the human hand:

The snow globe is a curious object. Contradictions are concentrated in it. It contains a world under glass, or, later, clear plastic, and, as such, the scene inside is untouchable, but the globe itself exists precisely to be grasped in the hand. The hand neatly lifts around its rounded or oval contours, in order to shake the miniature scene, so that the artificial snowflakes . . . slowly sink through water. . . . It is for contemplation and for play.<sup>103</sup>

Miniature and snow in liquid, wrapped inside a transparent world captured in the hand, draw the viewer's attention, then challenge the mind to supply a narrative sequence in a scene submerged in contradictions. The snow globe forms a compact bundle of dialectic

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<sup>102</sup> Esther Leslie, "Icy Scenes from Three Centuries," in *The Sublime Now*, eds. Luke White and Claire Pajaczkowska (Cambridge: Cambridge New Scholars Publishing, 2010), 37-38.

<sup>103</sup> Esther Leslie, "Snowglobalism and Terror Kitsch: Flurry and Freeze in Capitalist Cosmography," published online by the University of California, Berkeley, Institute of International Studies (undated) at [globetrotter.berkeley.edu/bwep/colloquium/papers/Leslie%20EP-Snowglobalism.pdf](http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/bwep/colloquium/papers/Leslie%20EP-Snowglobalism.pdf), page 3, last accessed September 15, 2013.

images: an incomplete miniature, engulfed in a liquid fall of snow untethered from real time, enclosed in glass that fits in the palm of the hand.

Both the subject matter of the enclosed miniatures and the globe's indoor use only amplify these dissonances. Miniatures in snow globes often reference objects that the viewer would not encounter in snow: a bisque figurine of a child holding an umbrella dated to the late 1930s;<sup>104</sup> a dinosaur;<sup>105</sup> or Christ's crucifixion.<sup>106</sup> Department store Gump's "Buddha" water globe demonstrates this juxtaposition of snow and object (Fig. 9).<sup>107</sup> When the globe's snowy liquid envelops its miniature, the two elements form the contradiction of habitation in snow, of inside and outside, and of detail and desolation described by philosopher Gaston Bachelard. In *The Poetics of Space* (1958), he writes:

[O]utside the occupied house, the winter cosmos is a simplified cosmos. It is a non-house in the same way that metaphysicians speak of a non-I, and between the house and the non-house it is easy to establish all sorts of contradictions. Inside the house, everything may be differentiated and multiplied. The house derives reserves and refinements of intimacy from winter; while in the outside world, snow covers all tracks, blurs the road, muffles every sound, conceals all colors. As a result of this universal whiteness, we feel a form of cosmic negation in action.<sup>108</sup>

As a delicate object housed indoors, the snow globe and its snowfall similarly challenge the warmth of the domestic interior. The globe transports the viewer, whether it be merely to a place outside the home or to other seasons and climates. Either way, the snow globe's construct invites the viewer to impose an imagined narrative on the scene inside.

The enclosed glass stage allows this narrative an existence inside, but not outside, the

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<sup>104</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 22.

<sup>105</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 39.

<sup>106</sup> Carnot, *Collectible Snowdomes*, 46.

<sup>107</sup> "Gump's Buddha Water Globe," offered on the Gump's department store San Francisco website, undated, <http://www.gumps.com/p/gump-s-buddha-water-globe>, last accessed April 19, 2014.

<sup>108</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969; originally published as *La Poétique de l'Espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958)), 40-41.

hollow glass, within a substance that is at once both liquid and solid, the snowfall framing an interval outside the known singularity of time. Mirroring the snow floating inside, the mind, too, is suspended, relieved of its attention to real-world duties and adult responsibilities.

### Animating the Snow Globe Through Personal Memory

Given the elements described above, the snow globe bears a fundamental association with memories of childhood. One's toy from childhood is a witness from that time serving, in effect, as a relic of a particular childhood. That toy, even as it ages into disrepair, remains a witness to that time and place, in the same manner that Stewart describes a corsage ribbon as a link to the dance.<sup>109</sup> Lorna Martens, scholar of the childhoods of Proust, Rilke, and Benjamin, describes the function of these relics: by their very preservation, their owners seek both control over time and a tangible embodiment of the past.<sup>110</sup>

The sight of any snow globe, not just one's own childhood globe, can be sufficient to evoke childhood memories. Its specific elemental signature allows attachment to the familiar form of the globe, regardless of its branding, theme, or size. Cultural memory theorist Elizabeth Wood argues that adults with shared culture also share an attachment to objects they consider linked generally to childhood, whether or not

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<sup>109</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 136.

<sup>110</sup> Lorna Martens, *The Promise of Memory: Childhood Recollection and its Objects in Literary Modernism* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 48.

their own childhoods included them.<sup>111</sup> She identifies the sled in the movie *Citizen Kane*, called “Rosebud,” as a childhood artifact of only generalized meaning to the reporters present at his death, who miss its specifically biographical significance.<sup>112</sup> She fails to see the better example of her argument, the snow globe that Kane clutches in his hand as he is dying at the film’s beginning (Fig. 10). The globe falls to shatter on the floor as he dies. As the plot unfolds in flashback, the viewer learns that he took it from his wife’s room as he ransacked it.<sup>113</sup> To Kane, the cultural power of the snow globe is as much a link to his treasured childhood as the sled, even though there is no evidence that he owned a snow globe as a child.

An object can also call forth narratives of personal memories, within or beyond childhood.<sup>114</sup> The snow globe does precisely this. Objects bind themselves to their owners by calling forth memories of their event of acquisition, which need not have occurred at an exotic place. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton identify these associations as the “investment of attention” in objects, calling them “transactions” with these objects.<sup>115</sup> Material culture theorists refer to “souvenirs” not of travel, but of life events. Stewart writes that “[t]hrough narrative, the souvenir substitutes

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<sup>111</sup> Elizabeth Wood, “The Matter and Meaning of Childhood Through Objects,” in *Technologies of Memory in the Arts*, eds. Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 126-127.

<sup>112</sup> Wood, “The Matter and Meaning of Childhood,” 127.

<sup>113</sup> IMDb, “Synopsis for Citizen Kane,” <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0033467/synopsis>, last accessed October 2, 2013.

<sup>114</sup> Raymond Belk, “Collectors and Collecting,” in Christopher Tilley et al., eds., *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 541.

<sup>115</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 188.

a context of perpetual consumption for its context of origin.”<sup>116</sup> Endowing an object with such a narrative renders it a marker of time and place in one’s life.

### The Snow Globe as Metaphor of Cultural Memory

On a broader level, and perhaps not unrelated to childhood memory, the snow globe’s cultural significance is its invocation of a common cultural memory. In Western culture, that memory consists of fundamental narratives, of either fairy tales or religion, that are embedded in early learning that situates the individual in the world. Astrid Erll, summarizing Jan Assmann’s term “cultural memory,” writes:

Cultural Memory transports a fixed set of content and meanings, which are maintained and interpreted by trained specialists (for example, priests, shamans, or archivists). At its core are mythical events of a distant past which are interpreted as foundational to the community (for example, the exodus from Egypt or the Trojan War).<sup>117</sup>

These cultural myths are narratives of fundamental societal teachings of desirable behavior and goals. Memory theorists call these cultural myths “constitutive,” that is, central to the formation of both society and its individual members.<sup>118</sup> Walter Benjamin was among the first cultural critics to distinguish cultural from personal memory, describing *mémoire involuntaire* as outside memory’s time and history, and *mémoire*

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<sup>116</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 135.

<sup>117</sup> Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 28, originally published as Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. Sara B. Young (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, originally published as *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung und Carl Ernst Poeschel Verlag GmbH, 2005)).

<sup>118</sup> A discussion of constitutive, as opposed to historical, elements of memory appears in Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 43-85.

*voluntaire* as housed in memory through personal experience.<sup>119</sup> Olalquiaga explicitly applies Benjamin's distinctions to the individual, positing that one may have a time in one's childhood that is unconscious and unremembered.<sup>120</sup> Both kinds of distant past, located either in social mores or individual childhood, are inaccessible to conscious memory. Their perceived loss produces a melancholic longing for their restoration.

Both Stewart and Olalquiaga have identified the souvenir as carrying the myth of this distant, "anterior" self. Stewart finds in the distance of the culturally "exotic" the experience of both childhood and, more broadly, primitive civilization.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, Olalquiaga writes:

Just like the oneiric and mnemonic universes, the underwater atmosphere of aquariums and the crystallized one of souvenir paperweights evoke through intensity of feeling that which is otherwise inexpressible: it belongs to the pre-symbolic realm of experience of the unconscious, where events organize and articulate themselves in a non-verbal language subject to the most subtle emotional intricacies. . . .<sup>122</sup>

Olalquiaga's comment relates the paperweight to the domestic aquarium for good reason: they share the feature of a watery landscape trapped in glass. Laurel Waycott, in her 2008 thesis, *The Aquarium in America: 1850-1920*, notes that Olalquiaga describes the aquarium as controlling, or limiting, the perception of loss, citing Olalquiaga's description of the aquarium as a "drowned world."<sup>123</sup> But the aquarium differs

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<sup>119</sup> Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968; reprinted with preface by Leo Wieseltier, 2007; originally published as *Ausgewählte Schriften. 1, Illuminatione* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955)), 160-161.

<sup>120</sup> Olalquiaga, *The Artificial World*, 71-72 and n. 4, p. 71.

<sup>121</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 147.

<sup>122</sup> Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom*, 60-62 (footnote omitted). For a history of the aquarium, see Bernd Brunner, *The Ocean at Home: An Illustrated History of the Aquarium*, revised and expanded edition in English, trans. Ashley Mark Slapp (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005; originally published as *Wie das Meer das Hause kam* (Berlin: TRANSIT Buchverlag, 2003)).

<sup>123</sup> Laurel J. Waycott, "The Aquarium in America: 1850-1920" (master's thesis, Bard College, 2008), 80.

fundamentally from the globe in its display of living creatures, not miniatures. The snow globe's scene is yet a further step removed in both reality and imagination.

For this reason, the snow globe taps, or invokes, an inchoate unremembered past, paradisiacal and eternal, and the quest to return to it. The globe becomes active, rather than passive, in suggesting or forecasting this return. The snow globe invokes this lost past through tropes of ice, snow, and distance, and to do so it employs the same visual themes as have polar explorers, artists, writers, and Walter Benjamin himself.

Benjamin's recollections from childhood appeared in *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*.<sup>124</sup> Benjamin did not record the snow globe as one of his childhood objects.

However, Theodor Adorno documented Benjamin's love of snow globes in a single sentence: "Small glass balls containing a landscape upon which snow fell when shook were among his favourite objects."<sup>125</sup> And Benjamin used the snow globe's image as powerful enough to describe his early childhood memories in his first version of *Berlin Childhood*, culled from passages written between 1932 and 1934. Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings, Benjamin's latest biographers, cite *Berlin Childhood* as Benjamin's "most consummate creation," illustrative of Benjamin's ability to collapse present into past, from adulthood to childhood and back.<sup>126</sup> Benjamin recalls the search for the "mummerehlen," his own misunderstanding of a German nursery rhyme character, a "spirit" that haunted his childhood. He describes envisioning it housed in a snow globe:

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<sup>124</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, trans. Howard Eiland, introduction by Peter Szondi (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), containing both 1938 "final version" and "1932-1934 version."

<sup>125</sup> Theodor Adorno, "A Portrait of Walter Benjamin," *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1967), 227-241, 233.

<sup>126</sup> Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 384, 385.

Sometimes I suspected it was lurking in the monkey that swam in the steam of barley groats or tapioca at the bottom of my dish. I ate the soup to bring out the mummerehlen's image. It was at home, one might think, in the Mummelsee, whose sluggish waters enveloped it like a gray cape. Whatever stories used to be told about it—or whatever someone may have only wished to tell me—I do not know. Mute, porous, flaky, it formed a cloud at the core of things, *like the snow flurry in a glass paperweight*. From time to time, I was whirled around in it. . . .[emphasis mine].<sup>127</sup>

Benjamin's description of the globe disappeared when the final version of *Berlin Childhood* first appeared in German in 1950 after his death; it contains a reference to snow, but not to the snow globe.<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, Leslie believes that Benjamin used the snow globe to transport his imagination to a time when a past utopia could still be brought to life:

Benjamin was enamoured of those glass baubles enclosing a snow-blanketed landscape, which, on being shaken, awakens to new life. These baubles are like the experiences fixed in *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, miniature exposures of significant experiences. Their writing-up, in the 1930s, was an attempt to preserve possibilities, lives and promise that were losing currency. In *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, Benjamin turns *the cosmos into a snow-shaker* [emphasis mine]. . . . The journeys were all along not into an 'out there', but a trip inside, into memory and time.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Benjamin, "The Mummerehlen," *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, 1932-1934 version, 133-134 [editor's footnotes omitted].

<sup>128</sup> Benjamin, "The Mummerehlen," *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, final version (1938), 98-99:

For a long time, the diamond-shaped pattern that swam on my dish, in the steam of barley groats or tapioca, was for me [the mummerehlen's] surrogate. I spooned my way slowly toward it. Whatever stories used to be told about it—or whatever someone may have only wished to tell me—I do not know. The mummerehlen itself confided nothing to me. It had, quite possibly, almost no voice. Its gaze spilled out from the irresolute flakes of the first snow. Had that gaze fallen on me a single time, I would have remained comforted my whole life long.

<sup>129</sup> Esther Leslie, "Souvenirs and Forgetting: Walter Benjamin's Memory-work," in Marius Klintworth, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley, eds., *Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 107-122, 119-120, containing English translation by Leslie citing original published text in German of *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* (emphasis mine).

She places this time as one well before his birth, when the machine had not yet set civilization on course to an industrialized future.<sup>130</sup> In describing Benjamin's view of the cosmos as snow-shaker, Leslie cites this passage from *Berlin Childhood*:

But sometimes in winter, when I stood by the window in the warm little room, the snowstorm outside told me stories no less mutely. What it told, to be sure, I could never quite grasp, for always something new and unremittingly dense was breaking through the familiar. Hardly had I allied myself, as intimately as possible, to one band of snowflakes, than I realized they had been obliged to yield me up to another, which had suddenly entered their midst. But now the moment had come to follow, in the flurry of letters, the stories that had eluded me at the window. The distant lands I encountered in these stories played familiarly among themselves, like the snowflakes. And because distance, when it snows, leads no longer out into the world but rather within, so Baghdad and Babylon, Acre and Alaska, Troms[ø] and Transvaal were places within me.<sup>131</sup>

Equally telling is Benjamin's use of geographical markers to express the distance he travelled in his mind, including Alaska and Tromsø, both destinations of snow and ice.

Childhood memories of toys relating to snow and ice similarly frame *Citizen Kane*'s story, and they can be read as signifiers of cultural or anterior memories. Benjamin's memoirs of his melancholic longings, set during the last years of the nineteenth century, underline the Western practice of associating anterior memory with the Arctic landscape, at its peak of exploration in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. During Benjamin's childhood in the late nineteenth century, Tromsø, located

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<sup>130</sup> Leslie, "Souvenirs and Forgetting," 108-109.

<sup>131</sup> The passage contained in the text was located by the author in Howard Eiland's 2006 translation, "Boys' Books," *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, in 1938 version, 59-60, appearing in the 1932-1934 edition as "Potboilers" and identified by Eiland as "nearly identical" to the later 1938 retitled, but equivalent, text. That text differs slightly, but not materially, from Esther Leslie's translation, which appears in Leslie, "Souvenirs and Forgetting," 120.

within the Arctic circle, was already known as the gateway to the Arctic because so many expeditions originated there.<sup>132</sup>

During Benjamin's childhood, polar exploration was the real-world embodiment of the perils and rewards of the quest for the return to paradise. Barry Lopez, scholar of the impact of exploration of the Arctic on Western culture, finds that the Arctic landscape leads Western and aboriginal minds to interior longing. His expression of that longing is remarkably similar to descriptions of anterior memory. He first notes that the Western experience of Arctic exploration is simultaneously an exploration of "one's own interior landscape."<sup>133</sup> He associates exploration with "the notion of a simpler longing, of a human desire for a less complicated life, for fresh intimacy and renewal."<sup>134</sup> Similarly, he finds in Eskimo descriptions of the aurora borealis references to "events that precede or follow life on earth, of the play of unborn children, or of torches held by the dead to help the living hunt in winter," all suggestive of Western anterior memory.<sup>135</sup> Fridtjof Nansen, who led his own expedition to the North Pole from 1893 to 1896, reported this excerpt of reverie and longing from his diary:

Nothing more wonderfully beautiful can exist than the Arctic night. It is dreamland, painted in the imagination's most delicate tints; it is colour etherealized. . . . Presently the aurora borealis shakes over the vault of heaven its veil of glittering silver—changing now to yellow, now to green, now to red. . . . Presently it shimmers in tongues of flame over the very

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<sup>132</sup> "Key Facts About Tromsø," entry in *Visit Norway*, <http://www.visitnorway.com/us/where-to-go-us/northern-norway/tromso/key-facts/>, last accessed Feb. 28, 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (New York: Random House, 1986, first Vintage Books edition, 2001), 247.

<sup>134</sup> Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, 255-256.

<sup>135</sup> Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, 232.

zenith; and then again it shoots a bright ray right up from the horizon, until the whole melts away in the moonlight, and it is as though one heard the sigh of a departing spirit. . . . And all the time this utter stillness, impressive as the symphony of infinitude. I have never been able to grasp the fact that this earth will some day be spent and desolate and empty. To what end, in that case, all this beauty, with not a creature to rejoice in it? Now I begin to divine it. *This* is the coming earth—here are beauty and death.<sup>136</sup>

Polar explorers could also lose markers of real time in the manner that Stewart describes in the working of the toy. Editors of the *Scientific American* wrote in 1875:

Should the expedition be so lucky as to reach the [north] pole, all the points of the compass will be south; latitude and longitude will vanish; the north star will be directly over head, and all the other stars will revolve around it, neither rising nor setting. The moon will remain for days above the horizon, and the sun, in summer time, will make an unbroken circuit in the heavens, yet always in the south. Time in its ordinary sense will cease; morning, noon, and night will be one; the dial of the heavens will be a blank.<sup>137</sup>

Similarly, Lopez writes that a visitor to the Arctic experiences a nonlinear sense of time, much like Stewart's concept of "independent" time in the physical object, a collapsing of measured distance and time into thought unbound by those measurements. In separate passages, he writes:

The mind we know in dreaming, a nonrational, nonlinear comprehension of events in which slips in time and space are normal, is I believe, the conscious working mind of an aboriginal hunter. It is a frame of mind that redefines patience, endurance, and expectation. . . .

If the mind releases its fiduciary grip on time, does not dole it out in a fretful way like a valued commodity but regards it as undifferentiated, like the flatness of the [Arctic] landscape, it is possible to transcend distance—

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<sup>136</sup> Fridtjof Nansen, *Farthest North: The Epic Adventure of a Visionary Explorer* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2008 (no translator credited); Kindle digital edition; originally published in two volumes by Harper & Bros., 1897), location 2264-2278 (19-20%) (emphasis in original).

<sup>137</sup> *Scientific American*, "Work for Arctic Explorers," in "Tragedy and Triumph: The Heroic Age of Polar Exploration," special digital issue (July 2012), excerpt reprinted from *Scientific American*, July 17, 1875, 32, <http://www.scientificamerican.com/magazine/sa-classics/classics-tragedy-and-triumph/>.

to travel very far without anxiety, to not be defeated by the great reach of the land.<sup>138</sup>

For the nineteenth-century polar explorer, the Arctic landscape also represented the trope of the quest—or success against adversity. Framing his comment to include journals of those explorers, Lopez writes:

In all these journals, in biographies of the explorers, and in modern narrative histories, common themes of quest and defeat, of aspiration and accomplishment emerge. . . . Encounters with the land in the nineteenth century are more brutal than tender. And are shaped by Victorian sentiment: a desire to exert oneself against formidable odds; to cast one's character in the light of ennobling ideals; to sojourn among exotic things; to make collections and erect monuments.<sup>139</sup>

Snow and ice can also unify the landscape of reverie. Nansen wrote:

When I came on deck next morning (August 23<sup>rd</sup>) winter had come. There was white snow on the deck, and on every little projection of the rigging where it had found shelter from the wind; white snow on the land, and white snow floating through the air. Oh! how the snow refreshes one's soul, and drives away all the gloom and sadness from this sullen land of fogs!<sup>140</sup>

In like manner, Francis Spufford, analyst of Victorian literary descriptions of polar exploration, finds that ice specifically suggests, but covers over, signs of distance and, with it, time, in effect describing the effect of reverie the globe produces:

But then the preserving ice does something curious to history. It does not distinguish between the recent dead and the remote dead; all are glazed over alike and in a place, furthermore, where the signs of *period* by which we make familiar judgments of historical time are almost completely absent.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, 200, 258-259.

<sup>139</sup> Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, 358.

<sup>140</sup> Nansen, *Farthest North*, location 1721 of 11755 (15%).

<sup>141</sup> Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996, first paperback ed., 2003), 163 (emphasis in original).

The Arctic is described here in the transcendent, liminal terms that describe the passageway to anterior memory opened by the snow globe.

### The Quest, Fantastic or Religious: A. S. Byatt and Joseph Cornell

The naming of distant places and the reports of polar explorers are nonfiction examples of the broader Western fictional theme of the quest, often situated in the supernatural worlds of fantasy and religion. Fantasy of the quest narrative is the fairy tale. Religion finds the quest narrative in resurrection and eternal reward. The connotations of the snow globe contain both. By the late nineteenth century, when snow globes were first mass-produced, fairy tales had been in print for three hundred years. Jack Zipes, cultural historian of fairy tales, casts their appeal as metaphoric illustrations of successful choices in the negotiation of the real-life quest for meaningful existence.<sup>142</sup> Supporting the commonality of themes in fairy tales, religion, and the snow globe is the use of ice, glass, and snow. The writing of A. S. Byatt and the collages of Joseph Cornell employ these tropes to invoke the fantasy of the quest; theorist Susan Stewart and filmmaker Hans-Jürgen Syberberg employ them to describe its religious counterpart, the quest for resurrection.

Scholar Jessica Tiffin writes that Byatt consciously employs the cultural memory of the fairy tale: her protagonists acknowledge that they are both caught within its inevitable plot and also fight against its limitations.<sup>143</sup> Byatt invokes the fairy tale with

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<sup>142</sup> Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge Classics, 2012), Introduction to the Routledge edition, xiii.

<sup>143</sup> Jessica Tiffin, "Ice, Glass, Snow: Fairy Tale as Art and Metafiction in the Writing of A.S. Byatt," in *Marvels & Tales*, Vol. 20, no. 1 (2006): 48-52. Tiffin writes that Patricia Waugh "has defined a

visual signals of ice, glass, and snow. Tiffin describes the workings of these signals in this passage:

Glass and ice similarly illustrate an essential aspect of Byatt's narratives, which, like [her character] Gillian's paperweights, have a 'paradoxical nature': like a glass bottle, they both enclose and reveal; they are simultaneously transparent and containing, invisible yet entrapping. Like the djinn's bottle or the glass paperweight, these substances appear to be solid, to hold meanings that seem to offer themselves transparently to our view; yet like Gillian's paperweight, they shift and change as they are tilted, to offer multiplicity of meaning within their apparently simple stasis. Both ice and glass are thus images of art itself, of artifact and the creation of artifacts. . . . The young woman in her glass coffin and the miniature castle under its glass dome contain and enclose not only the woman and the place but the narratives that explain them, which are released when the glass is broken and the woman tells her story.<sup>144</sup>

The boxed collages of found objects by Joseph Cornell share the physical elements used as narrative elements by Byatt: ice, glass, and snow. Analisa Leppanen-Guerra has placed them squarely in the context of fairy tales to inform their meaning. For Cornell, she reports, distance provided the child's protection from adult "contamination." He expressed that distance through use of the glass that sheaths his compositions, particularly the Victorian glass bell-jar.<sup>145</sup> Cornell included visual cues of winter found in the snow globe to fashion his favorite work, *Untitled (Bébé Marie)* (Fig. 11), as well as *Untitled (Pink Palace)* (Fig. 12). In *Bébé Marie*, a doll stands among glitter-covered twigs. The snowy forest obscures the doll's view from all but one angle.<sup>146</sup> In *Pink Palace*, an imposing but two-dimensional castle, window openings backed in mirrors, sits

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metafictional text as one that 'self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality.' " Tiffin, 48 (footnote omitted).

<sup>144</sup> Tiffin, 52-54. Neither Tiffin nor Byatt in these excerpts pauses to make clear the difference between the falling snow of the globe and solid glass of the paperweight, although Tiffin explains that the heroine Gillian does express her preference for paperweights over snow globes.

<sup>145</sup> Analisa Leppanen-Guerra, *Children's Stories and "Child-Time" in the Works of Joseph Cornell and the Transatlantic Avant-Garde* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 97.

<sup>146</sup> Leppanen-Guerra, *Children's Stories*, 208.

among bare trees that suggest winter. In Leppanen-Guerra's view, the tale of *Sleeping Beauty*, a quest to release the sleeping princess isolated in a briar-covered palace, unlocks their meaning. She argues that a lone building situated in an untrod snowy landscape suggests both a long, difficult journey to refuge and an attempt to capture, or suspend, childlike imagination.<sup>147</sup> Cornell's diaries make no reference to fairy tales; rather, Leppanen-Guerra argues that Cornell uses such distances in his collages to invoke, rather than evoke, the trope of the fairy tale, and through her application of such texts argues that fairy tales enrich the meaning of his work.<sup>148</sup>

Pointing out that Cornell's work can be read as a response to that of Marcel Duchamp, she allows a better understanding of Cornell's link to the work of the Surrealists. In that context it is not surprising to find that the Surrealist Man Ray created at least one photograph of a snow globe, consisting of tubes and a single open eye (Fig. 13).<sup>149</sup> That photograph, without snowfall visible, can be understood as another method of creating distance between viewer and work, by preserving a fragment of time that can never be recaptured in the same way.<sup>150</sup>

If the power of the snow globe can be explained by analogy to the fairy tale, it also benefits by analogy to the religious quest for resurrection and eternal life. Fairy tales often blur the lines between religious and folk history and so appropriate from religion a

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<sup>147</sup> Leppanen-Guerra, *Children's Stories*, 222.

<sup>148</sup> Leppanen-Guerra, *Children's Stories*, 6.

<sup>149</sup> Man Ray, "Snowball," 1927, pictured at the Man Ray Trust website, <http://www.manraytrust.com>, "Objects," last accessed September 30, 2013. I thank snow globe artist William Harroff for calling this to my attention.

<sup>150</sup> A discussion appears in Susan Sontag, "In Plato's Cave," *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977), 3-48.

more powerful significance.<sup>151</sup> For Stewart, tipping the snow globe into motion to restart its “narrative” carries the qualities of resurrection, a power not expressed by objects that do not depend on the viewer to start their motion, writing that “. . . [t]he inanimate comes to life. But more than this, just as the world of objects is always a kind of ‘dead among us,’ the toy ensures the continuation, in miniature, of the world of life ‘on the other side.’”<sup>152</sup> Olalquiaga also finds a resurrective quality in the very act of remembrance: “[s]ouvenirs personalize] through the involvement of their consumers, a personalization that, no matter how clichéd, momentarily ‘resurrects’ the dead possession.”<sup>153</sup>

That the mythic quality of the snow globe places it both before and after the transformative moments of death and rebirth is illustrated by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg’s 1978 movie *Hitler: A Film from Germany*.<sup>154</sup> Critic Susan Sontag describes it as a complex montage exploring the meaning of Hitler to German history.<sup>155</sup> Part I of four parts, in total spanning more than seven hours, begins as if it were a movie entitled *Der Gral* [“The Grail”]. The camera closes in on a snow globe containing a house beneath a blanket of snow, then moves through its glass to frame the movie as if it were taking place inside the globe (Fig. 14). Although the use of the snow globe as lens has been called a reference to *Citizen Kane*, that reference does not limit the globe’s use to carrier

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<sup>151</sup> Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, Introduction, ix.

<sup>152</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 57.

<sup>153</sup> Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom*, 78.

<sup>154</sup> Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, *Hitler: A Film from Germany* (1978), Part I posted Dec. 27, 2012, by CelticAngloPress on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3M8aMvT35ys>, last accessed April 19, 2014 [no longer posted due to copyright violations]. I thank Noam M. Elcott, Assistant Professor, Department of Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University, for calling the film and its snow globe framing motif to my attention.

<sup>155</sup> Susan Sontag, “Eye of the Storm,” *The New York Review of Books*, February 21, 1980, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1980/feb/21/eye-of-the-storm/>, last accessed October 3, 2013.

of individual memory.<sup>156</sup> Rather, in this context it speaks to a world longing to recover an impossible past: the film announces that it will portray the trial of Adolf Hitler, thwarted forever by his suicide. The globe winds time back to a point when this specific justice was still possible.

Although the snow globe can be dismissed as “kitsch” in material culture, Walter Benjamin found in “kitsch” this same redemptive significance. Typical of “kitsch” are mass-produced portable objects, generally souvenirs or trinkets, that reflect contemporaneous popular themes or represent political or fantasy characters. Literally, the word is a shortened form of the German word for “cheap” or “sloppy.”<sup>157</sup> The word’s essence is inauthenticity. It was coined at the time the machine overtook the hand as the primary method of production of objects.<sup>158</sup> Benjamin’s attraction to kitsch reveals why the term in his view instead honors the globe as redemptive. Benjamin framed his life in relation to objects large and small: childhood toys, windows, arcades.<sup>159</sup> Adorno, the only witness, as recipient of Benjamin’s letters, to his affection for snow globes, characterized Benjamin’s view of objects as *nature morte*, as relics housed in reliquaries. Calling him “drawn to the petrified, frozen or obsolete elements of civilization,” Adorno also describes Benjamin as a cultural resurrective force, “driven not merely to awaken congealed life in petrified objects—as in allegory—but also to scrutinize living things so

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<sup>156</sup> George Robinson, “Hitler, The Film: Hans-Jürgen Syberberg plumbs the German character, and film history, across more than seven hours in ‘Hitler: A Film from Germany,’” *The Jewish Week*, Aug. 31, 2010, [http://www.thejewishweek.com/arts/film/hitler\\_film](http://www.thejewishweek.com/arts/film/hitler_film), last accessed October 3, 2013.

<sup>157</sup> Stewart identifies *kitschen* as the original word, meaning “put together sloppily,” *On Longing*, 168, while Olalquiaga adds to this *verkitschen*, “to make cheap,” *The Artificial Kingdom*, 38-39, n. 8.

<sup>158</sup> Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom*, 38-29.

<sup>159</sup> For a summary description of Benjamin’s childhood and adult wanderings among objects and architecture, see Esther Leslie, *Walter Benjamin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 18-19.

that they present themselves as being ancient, ‘ur-historical’ and abruptly release their significance.”<sup>160</sup>

Scholars agree that Benjamin was a proponent, not a detractor, of the mass-produced object, finding in it a tonic for the masses who had been denied access to the elite’s “art.” For Benjamin, true art could belong only to the masses, and so could neither be “high” nor “low”: mass-produced objects resulted in societal leveling, overriding that distinction.<sup>161</sup> Peter Szondi’s seminal essay, published in English more than twenty years after the first publication of Adorno’s essay in German, offers both Adorno’s reliquary and Szondi’s own citation of the Hebrew Ark of the Covenant as analogies for Benjamin’s view of objects.<sup>162</sup> Both are apposite, despite Adorno’s use of *nature morte* in tandem with the image of the reliquary. In the medieval world, only the remains of saints,

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<sup>160</sup> Adorno’s passage follows:

The essay as form consists in the ability to regard historical moments, manifestations of the objective spirit, ‘culture’, as though they were natural. Benjamin could do this as no one else. The totality of his thought is characterized by what may be called ‘natural history.’ He was drawn to the petrified, frozen or obsolete elements of civilization, to everything in it devoid of domestic vitality no less irresistibly than is the collector of fossiles [sic] or to the plant in the herbarium. Small glass balls containing a landscape upon which snow fell when shook were among his favourite objects. The French word for still-life, *nature-morte*, could be written above the portals of his philosophical dungeons. The Hegelian concept of ‘second nature’, as the reification of self-estranged human relations, and also the Marxian category of ‘commodity fetishism’ occupy key positions in Benjamin’s work. He is driven not merely to awaken congealed life in petrified objects—as in allegory—but also to scrutinize living things so that they present themselves as being ancient, ‘ur-historical’ and abruptly release their significance. Philosophy appropriates the fetishization of commodities for itself: everything must metamorphose into a thing in order to break the catastrophic spell of things. Benjamin’s thought is so saturated with culture as its natural object that it swears loyalty to reification instead of flatly rejecting it. This is the origin of Benjamin’s tendency to cede his intellectual power to objects diametrically opposed to it, the most extreme example of which was his study on ‘The Work of Art in the Era of its Mechanical Reproduction’.

Theodor Adorno, “A Portrait of Walter Benjamin,” 233.

<sup>161</sup> Leslie, “Snow-Shaker,” 516-517.

<sup>162</sup> Peter Szondi, “Hope in the Past: On Walter Benjamin,” translated by Harvey Mendelsohn, *Critical Inquiry* 4 (Spring, 1978): 491-506.

preserved in reliquaries, would return to, and share in, eternal life at Judgment Day.<sup>163</sup>

Jews believe that the Ark contains evidence of God's promise of resurrection. Each illustrates Benjamin's faith in the mass-produced object: relying on Benjamin's letters as well as close study of his body of work, Szondi clarifies that Adorno's "reliquary" image captured Benjamin's view of objects as protectors and preservers of a memory of a lost time, one to which society must return *en masse* to reestablish the utopia that was possible before the advent of the machine.<sup>164</sup> Leslie, Benjamin's biographer, agrees that Szondi views Benjamin's emphasis on reliquaries as a "freeze-framing of a scene of *life*, not death [emphasis in original]."<sup>165</sup> To Benjamin, the snow globe, as kitsch, establishes the promise of a resurrected life by returning the viewer to a place where resurrection remains possible. Biographers Eiland and Jennings capture the centrality of "resurrection" to Benjamin's thinking in *Berlin Childhood*:

[T]he nonchronological, discontinuous narrative as a whole continually superposes, by a variety of references, the author's disenchanted present day on his enchanted past, so everywhere a dead and resurrected world of play is framed in the perspective of exile and everywhere the man is felt to be prefigured in the child, whose not yet conscious knowledge, embedded in the world of things, is weighed in a philosophic historical balance, like a dream recalled down to its smallest detail. The stratum of the writer's present day, broken through and made transparent, becomes a window onto remembered experiences that preform it and that also depend on it for the realization of their latent meaning. For it is by virtue of the afterhistory that the forehistory is recognizable.<sup>166</sup>

For Benjamin, "kitsch" holds out optimism for the machine-age masses, as does the snow globe's invocation of the unconscious memory of a lost paradise.

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<sup>163</sup> Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, rev. ed., 1990), 32-43.

<sup>164</sup> Szondi, "Hope in the Past," 499.

<sup>165</sup> Leslie, "Snowglobalism," PDF version p. 4 (emphasis in original).

<sup>166</sup> Eiland and Jennings, *Walter Benjamin*, 383.

Olalquiaga defines a “kitsch” object as representing the transformation of authentic experience into a reproduction of that experience, death of the authentic real time moment and its revival as commodity. Kitsch resides at the intersection of life and death, the moment of ultimate mystery. Olalquiaga interprets Benjamin as placing the sacred within reach.<sup>167</sup> If the snow globe is indeed “kitsch,” it nonetheless offers the experience of both death and resurrection, over and over.

For Stewart, Olalquiaga, Syberberg, and Benjamin, the snow globe represents a place to which no real-world return is possible. Even in its mass-produced form, the globe represents the fundamental narrative of the return to paradise, calling forth the anterior self.

### The Snowfall Ends

If visual incongruities can open the door to memory, the viewer must be able to emerge from that memory. The snow globe’s popularity is attributable not just to the access to memory it invites, but also to the safe exit it provides: the snowfall ultimately ends. Analysts of material and visual culture identify aspects of the snow globe that in fact should be seen as safeguards: unification of the miniature figures in a suggested narrative; the calming effect of the completion of the fall of snow; and enclosure of that snowy world in glass. Each of the globe’s visual dissonances, or dialectics, presented in this chapter that opens the way to individual or cultural memory also contains its own ultimate end point. The failure of scholars of material culture to discern the vital

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<sup>167</sup> Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom*, 89.

difference between paperweight and snow globe, discussed in Chapter I, has produced a similar failure to appreciate the singular connotations of the snow globe's unique structure that make it not only a safe entrance to, but also a predictable and sure exit from, memory.

The material of the surround, whether air, glass, or liquid, is key to the cultural meaning of the objects enclosed. Olalquiaga suggests that a desire to isolate and protect led directly to the creation of aquariums and their "still-life counterparts," paperweights.<sup>168</sup> Isolation in hollow glass for scientific purposes yields an experience of preservation that will only be harmed by touch or movement. Olalquiaga, again overlooking the difference between paperweights and snow globes in chapters on "Dream Spheres" and "The Debris of the Aura," emphasizes the "sense of suspension and containment conveyed by glass globes."<sup>169</sup> Stewart agrees. Referring to the vernacular of the "picturesque," she writes:

Such a work transforms labor into abstraction, nature into art, and history into still life just as eighteenth-century and Victorian souvenirs of nature (sea shells, leaves, butterflies placed under glass), as well as contemporary 'snow balls' (those souvenirs in which representations of locations are placed along with particles of 'snow' or glitter within water-filled plastic spheres), eternalize an environment by closing it off from the possibility of lived experience.<sup>170</sup>

To cast the snow globe as this kind of isolating device, however, ignores the liquid and its motion inside. If the globe's miniature scene were broken out of the hollow glass and water, its meaning, bound by liquid and snow, would disappear, as the comparative images in Figure 15 show. Placement of the miniature within a glass globe and

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<sup>168</sup> Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom*, 52-54.

<sup>169</sup> Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom*, 65.

<sup>170</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 144.

submerging it in a liquid surround made visible by particles of “snow” unifies, amplifies, and limits the miniature scene inside. The globe filled with liquid is its own fixed universe, perhaps neither dead nor imprisoned.

That life is, for the viewer, comfortably magical and circumscribed. Underscoring the differing cultural meanings of paperweight and snow globe, solid glass suggests imprisonment. The object enclosed in solid glass might wreak unimaginable havoc were it suddenly released: optic capture in solid glass suggests the haptic possibility of release. Tiffin observes that Byatt captures this in her reference to the glass coffin, from which Snow White could break free and come to life. The solid glass is protection for those outside from the escape of the object within. Paperweights’ glass and sulphide enclosures include fully formed reptiles and portrait busts. The paperweight poses a persistent looming threat because it can be broken and these figures released. In contrast, the interior liquid space of the snow globe and the lack of magnification by solid glass limit the scene inside to the incomplete representation of the miniature. That miniature requires liquid and narrative to give it life. A miniature Eiffel tower, balloon, or Petit Trianon, or indeed a likeness of the person of Marie Antoinette, miniaturized to allow them to stand in for their real world counterparts, suggest action and command space only within the world of the hollow globe and the liquid surround inside. The globe both endows them with room to move and circumscribes that space. Drained of its liquid, the interior poses no threat.

When the fall of snow ends in the globe, the scene comes to rest. In passages that describe water, snow, and ice in painting and literature, Leslie’s commentary on the dialectic of ice and snow, earlier quoted, contains at midpoint the recognition, repeated

here, that “[u]nder snow, colour is extinguished by whiteness. Roughness is overlaid by the smoothness of ice.”<sup>171</sup> Marita Sturken, a twenty-first century commentator on material culture, has specifically identified the calming, unifying process of the snowfall inside the snow globe. She frames *Tourists of History* (2007), her book on tourism of sites of terrorism in the United States, with snow globes from the Oklahoma City National Memorial and the 9/11 National Memorial. In both her introduction and conclusion, she describes the “comfort” of the snow globe as the promise of its return to its “originary” state, that “the chaos of being shaken up will predictably settle down.”<sup>172</sup> This process resolves the dialectics that draw the viewer’s gaze. The snow’s overall act of blanketing, combined with its fall on a miniature, itself not “real,” end the experience of self and time suspended. That experience is thus guaranteed not only to be harmless and benign, but also finite, limited, and experienced at a distance.

Nineteenth-century writers demonstrated that cultural memory is best experienced from a safe distance: they used distancing analogies to express polar themes of ice and snow. First-hand accounts, as reported by Barry Lopez, did not use those analogies. Francis Spufford’s critical analysis documents the ways in which popular literature presented that exploration. He argues that the Victorian experience of the “sublime,” a combination of fear and beauty, required distance for its enjoyment, paralleling the

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<sup>171</sup> Leslie, “Icy Scenes from Three Centuries,” 38, also quoted at note 102.

<sup>172</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 2-3 (footnote omitted), 284-285. Depending on the audience, this signification is not always productive. Françoise Král writes:

[T]he snow globe also evokes another discourse, that of colonialism, in which the native land is frozen in time, and described as belonging to a distant past, before history even started. As such the snow globe is also reminiscent of colonial discourse and its representation of foreign territories as unspoiled and ready to be settled, as if they belonged to a time before modernity and progress [citing the work of Edward Said, 1978].

*Critical Identities in Contemporary Anglophone Diasporic Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 81.

distancing effect of the snow globe's glass enclosure. Suggesting that the Arctic landscape could present the same response as did Edmund Burke's description of the "sublime" in the eighteenth century, he writes:

The most important of Burke's rules for the sublime was that the person gaining the terrible delight should not be too close to the object of terror, whatever it was. There had to be some distance between, or the observer would be overcome with a reasonable fear that the sublime spectacle might actually overwhelm them, and be left in no state to entertain any aesthetic satisfactions.<sup>173</sup>

Among the reveries in polar ice he cites in period fiction are those of Mary Shelley's Robert Walton, captain of the Arctic ship that ultimately meets Frankenstein, speculating on his destination as one of beauty and delight; Emily Dickinson citing "soundless dots...on a Disc of Snow" as conveying the "chill stasis of being dead, an equivocal 'safety' lying at the end of change"; and the distance, both physical and imaginative, of those lying dead in polar snow described by Dickens in a scene made powerful by "being vaguely sensed. And in place of the Arctic as a geographical region, there could be substituted an Arctic which was an arena for the imagination."<sup>174</sup>

The globe's glass tempers the risk of overstimulation that might otherwise be caused by its multiple paradoxes. The enclosure of the snow globe allows an unfolding of thought and time while protecting the viewer from the harsh requirements of human survival. In Spufford's words, "... [I]t makes something different of the North Pole to bring it into a domestic interior."<sup>175</sup> In a sense, the globe's glass acts as a dual shield: the

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<sup>173</sup> Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 30.

<sup>174</sup> Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 59 (Mary Shelley); 171 (Dickinson, "Safe In Their Alabaster Chambers"); 174 (Dickens, "The Lost Arctic Voyagers, II," in *Household Words*).

<sup>175</sup> Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 12.

miniature within the globe is contained and the domestic interior outside or surrounding the globe is protected too.

### III. THE COMMODIFICATION OF THE SNOW GLOBE: COMMODIFYING, COLLECTING, SUBVERTING

In Chapter II, I demonstrated the ways in which the snow globe can be passive or active in the production of memory. That chapter showed that the snow globe is a popular and powerful object because it opens pathways to memory, both personal and cultural. Yet, over time, cultural forces act upon material objects to erode and replace their meaning. Cultural theorists have described numbers of forces that can change both the physical and symbolic aspects of objects. This chapter identifies cultural forces that have acted on the snow globe in the last twenty-five years, particularly in regard to its commodification through mass marketing and a subversion of its content. It asserts that the commodification of an object of memory removes that association with memory. Central to the globe's association with individual memory is its animation of personal interaction, by or for its owner. The globe's passage through the hands of collectors and marketers severs this link. Subversion, too, erodes memory: the globe's normally benign connotation makes it particularly vulnerable to the harsh light of subversion. The threat of terrorism, which can result in confiscation of the globe, at the airport, for example, provides an association with fear, anger, or loss, not reverie. Simply put, commodification and changing content destroy the globe's role as mediator of memory between viewer and object.

This chapter examines the snow globe as commodified and collected in relation to recent scholarship on tourism as well. It also discusses how the snow globe has been

appropriated by artists as a form within which to contextualize personal expression. In these new roles the snow globe becomes the agent not of the viewer, but of third parties. The role of the object as agent in social networks was first identified by Bruno Latour in his 1993 book, *We Have Never Been Modern*.<sup>176</sup> Alfred Gell applied the concept of agency specifically to art objects and artifacts in his 1998 work, *Art and Agency*, and that work will be primarily used here to explore these new roles for the snow globe.<sup>177</sup> Gell envisions the object as “agent” of its human “patient,” whose identity varies from owner to artist depending on the context of the object’s use.<sup>178</sup> The forces that act on the globe shift the globe’s allegiance. In Gell’s view, the collector, marketer, or artist abducts the globe’s agency.<sup>179</sup> A targeted message occupies the landscape or space that would otherwise host personal memory: the viewer can no longer animate the globe with remembrance.

### Collection as Replacement of Personal Memory

While the power of the snow globe as an object of narrative is central to its longevity, so is its transformation to collectible. As snow globes have proliferated, they have attracted collectors interested in capturing their diversity. These collectors do not insist that such globes represent a place or time of individual memory. Rather, as the image-driven compilations of collectors—from McMichael’s *Snowdomes* (1990) through

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<sup>176</sup> Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>177</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 5-7.

<sup>178</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 22.

<sup>179</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 14-19.

Chertoff and Kahn's *Celebrating Snow Globes* (2006)—demonstrate, they display only benign subjects. If the process of collection is meant to display personal identity, it also must display an identity that is socially attractive. Collectors typically seek to invite viewers, not to repel them.

Susan Pearce has established the highly personal significance of the creation of a collection, including the personal desires it represents.<sup>180</sup> Stewart writes that the collector's arrangement represents a process by which "[e]ach sign is placed in relation to a chain of signifiers whose ultimate referent is not the interior of the room—in itself an empty essence—but the interior of the self."<sup>181</sup> In creating a collection, the collector seeks to reflect his or her own image:

To arrange the objects according to time is to juxtapose personal time with social time, autobiography with history, and thus to create a fiction of the individual life, a time of the individual subject both transcendent to and parallel to historical time. Similarly, the spatial organization of the collection, left to right, front to back, behind and before, depends upon the creation of an individual perceiving and apprehending the collection with eye and hand.<sup>182</sup>

Pearce writes that the continuing opportunity to arrange and rearrange the collection provides the opportunity to create oneself anew.<sup>183</sup>

Collections typically must be displayed in order to demonstrate the collector's acumen, wealth, diversity of opportunity, or diversity of appreciation in the acquisition of like objects. The snow globe's size and varied miniature contents fulfill the collector's personal needs; in Stewart's words, "the miniature is suitable as an item of collection

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<sup>180</sup> Pearce, "The Urge to Collect," in Susan M. Pearce, ed., *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994), 159.

<sup>181</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 158.

<sup>182</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 154-155.

<sup>183</sup> Pearce, "Collecting Reconsidered," in Susan M. Pearce, ed., *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, 202.

because it is sized for individual consumption at the same time that its surplus of detail connotes infinity and distance.”<sup>184</sup>

The snow globe’s rise to prominence in the late nineteenth century coincided with the rise of middle-class domestic collecting and display in that same period. Domestic furnishings indicated personal identity; the elite’s practice of antique collecting was cultivated as a talent.<sup>185</sup> Literary theorist Lorna Martins reports that Benjamin viewed collecting as memory: she writes that “[i]f remembering is analogous to collecting, collecting is also, to [Benjamin’s] mind, a form of memory.”<sup>186</sup> The snow globe in multiples, as a collection, represents a display of one’s memory of oneself.

Collections can both fuel and reflect the commodification of an object.

Commodification refers to the emergence of an exchange value, commonly shortened to the concept of price, for an object.<sup>187</sup> The exchange value of collections in turn is greater than the sum of the objects’ individual exchange values, since exchange value includes the value of the work of gathering them together. The snow globe can move from use to exchange value and back again. Igor Kopytoff’s concept of object biography demonstrates these shifting meanings. Ian Woodward usefully paraphrases Kopytoff’s analysis:

Essentially, this means that in modern societies, where meanings and interpretations attached to images are relatively flexible and fluid, objects have careers or trajectories whereby their meaning for consumers changes over time and space. As Kopytoff points out, this may involve objects shifting in and out of commodity status. That is, at some stage of their

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<sup>184</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 155.

<sup>185</sup> Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 86, 145-169.

<sup>186</sup> Martins, *The Promise of Memory*, 181.

<sup>187</sup> The process of arrival at price as symbolic of use value is summarized by Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 190-191.

lives, objects are primarily defined by their relation to a monetary or exchange value which defines them as ‘commodities’, while at other times, generally some time after an economic exchange has taken place, they become ‘de-commodified’ as they are incorporated—or ‘subjectified’ and ‘singularised’—by people according to personal meanings, relationships or rituals.<sup>188</sup>

A particular snow globe at any time can fulfill more than one of these roles before its destruction, and during its “life” it may be clothed in varieties of these meanings.<sup>189</sup>

Essayist Leah Hager Cohen, in her book, *Glass, Paper, Beans* (1997), notes that “[o]f course, once an object passes back out of the realm of commodities, its identity may shift again. If we buy something with no thought of resale . . . its exchange value goes dormant; then it takes on whatever new character we assign it.”<sup>190</sup>

The snow globe’s move into collections provides a glimpse of the process of the conversion from use to commodity value. That process of conversion is made visible by the separate documentation, or release, of the associated personal memory when a globe becomes part of another’s collection. The largest individual donation of snow globes at the Museum of Play in Rochester, New York, is from a former employee of what was at the time one of the largest photographic equipment makers in the world, Eastman Kodak. The donor, Cecelia Miller Horwitz, went to Hong Kong in 1987 on business for Kodak, a background that might have given her a particular sensitivity to the visual imagery of the snow globe. Each globe in that donation bears the same legend, supplied by Horwitz:

My hotel room had a window seat and well into the evening I would watch the sampans and ships traversing the harbor. It struck me then, that when it was dark and the stars were shining it was like being inside a snow globe.

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<sup>188</sup> Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2007), 29 (references omitted).

<sup>189</sup> Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things,” 64-91.

<sup>190</sup> Leah Hager Cohen, *Glass, Paper, Beans: Revelations on the Nature and Value of Ordinary Things* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 208.

All the magic was captured in what seemed to be a spherical entity, the universe. The Hong Kong sojourns sparked my love of snow globes. . . . The globes, if done well, capture the feeling and character of the cities I visited over the next 24 years. So in every new city, we would wander around some very interesting places in search of the right snow globe. . . .<sup>191</sup>

Another collection, that of the Museum of the Snow Globe, displayed online and in a small physical facility, requires that donated snow globes have been purchased by the donor at the site of the memory it represents: “The donor must have visited the location in question. No eBay purchases.”<sup>192</sup> Perhaps these donors anticipate their deaths and with them the deaths of the original memory of acquisition. When their globes become part of another collection, the value of the individual narrative associated with the globe is extinguished and replaced, or monetized, by its valuation as part of that next collection. There is no evidence that recorded personal memories accompanying these donations add to the value of these collections: rather, donation severs those memories from the globe.

If collecting plays a significant role in the display of self, it has also become particularly susceptible to the display of the manufactured representation of self, combining ersatz memories with the badge of brand identification. Perceiving this power, marketers, manufacturers, and other commercially driven subgroupings expanded the

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<sup>191</sup> National Museum of Play, entry for snow globe, *Montreal: Je Me Souviens* [Montreal: I Remember], 1998-2008, <http://www.thestrong.org/online-collections/nmop/5/4/111.4493>, author’s translation. Each of Horwitz’ donations carries the same legend. The museum’s other large donation of snow globes carries no legend of memory. E.g., National Museum of Play, entry for snow globe “Times Square New York,” 2002, The Iris F. Hollander November Collection, donated by Mort and Iris November in honor of her mother, Celeste Coriene Flaxman, <http://www.thestrong.org/online-collections/nmop/5/4/103.285>.

<sup>192</sup> “Collection Guidelines,” posted in “About,” *Museum of the Modern Snowglobe*, <http://museumofthemodernsnowglobe.com/about>, last accessed September 29, 2013. It is not clear whether the Museum will accept a globe that bears no visible link to place. At least one such item, a pair of Christmas-themed salt-and-pepper shakers, appears in the current online collection.

snow globe collection market with globes containing popular, and trademarked, characters and scenes. Collectors date the use of snow globes for advertising to the early 1950s.<sup>193</sup> Snow globes in their variety of content made them susceptible to fetishistic collecting at least this early. A prominent example is Disney's pervasive marketing of hundreds of its characters, including markers of its theme parks encased in snow globes. Online sites assist collectors in the identification and pricing of Disney globes.<sup>194</sup> Pearce identifies this form of collecting as the goal of ownership of as many different examples of a type as possible, rather than the collection of samples of types, the goal of specimen collecting.<sup>195</sup>

Tourism boosts this form of collecting. Dean MacCannell, scholar of late twentieth-century American tourism, identifies the separation of the marker of a site from its physical location.<sup>196</sup> He describes the transformation of tourist sight to its semiotic marker—using a miniature street sign as example—as the process of sight displacement, a stand-in of the miniature for its life-size and unique counterpart.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> E.g., McMichael, *Snowdomes*, 81.

<sup>194</sup> E.g., *Disney Snowglobes Collectors Guide*, online blog, <http://disneysnowglobescollectorsguide.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2008-01-01T00:00:00-08:00&updated-max=2009-01-01T00:00:00-08:00&max-results=50>, last accessed September 29, 2013, and *Snowglobes 101: Snowglobe Miniature Wintery [sic] Wonderlands*, online blog, <http://snowglobes101.com/snowglobe-guide/>, last accessed September 29, 2013.

<sup>195</sup> Susan M. Pearce, "Collecting Reconsidered," in *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994), 200.

<sup>196</sup> MacCannell, *The Tourist*, esp. ch. 2, "Sightseeing and Social Structure," and ch. 6, "A Semiotic of Attraction."

<sup>197</sup> MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 124.

This transformation has rendered both tourism, a social endeavor distinct from travel, or perhaps a form of commodified travel, and the tourist more concerned with the collection of places visited, rather than the memories of them. MacCannell describes sites of American tourism as a methodical collection that forms its own system of symbols and significations. He couches the tourist's expression of identity in terms of those of the collector, "a catalogue of displaced forms."<sup>198</sup> Further, he writes, tourism invokes the theme of the quest:

What begins as the proper activity of a *hero* (Alexander the Great) develops into the goal of a socially organized *group* (the Crusaders), into the mark of status of an entire social *class* (the Grand Tour of the British "gentleman"), eventually becoming *universal experience* (the tourist).<sup>199</sup>

If the cultural traditions of fantasy converge in both collecting and tourism to represent today's version of the quest, that quest can be fulfilled by purchase, rather than by experience. The snow globe parallels these themes to become tourism's quintessential souvenir, one detached from both travel and memory.

The miniature inside the snow globe and the souvenir of tourism speak the same semiotic language. When the souvenir of place is a snow globe, it likely contains a particular form of miniature, a symbolic abbreviation of the place visited. Portability, durability, size, and affordability, make the snow globe the perfect commodity for a commodified tourism.

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<sup>198</sup> MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 13.

<sup>199</sup> MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 5 (emphasis in original).

At this intersection of childhood and mythic memory, object, and theme park tourism, Disney in particular speaks to a vulnerable audience by placing inside its globes its own version of nostalgia, a replacement memory meant for universal consumption.<sup>200</sup> As toy, the snow globe is particularly appealing to children, and to the “child” in adults. It is no accident that Disney has created a renewable resource of collectors of its globes in children who age into adults. The globes act both as souvenirs of its theme parks and also as purchased, or replacement, childhood memories.<sup>201</sup>

Disney puts characters associated with Disney cartoons, films, and theme park sites inside its globes. Over the last several years its globe offerings have included miniature parks or miniature symbols of the parks within the globes, suggesting that the sites themselves are collections.<sup>202</sup> These parks are not authentic “historical” landmarks: they are commercial in origin. MacCannell calls the parks themselves “spurious” places.<sup>203</sup> The acquisition of theme park and related character globes only mimics the acquisition of souvenirs of “real” places. Disney’s use of the globe demonstrates a commodified tourism, a substitution of brand for authenticity of place. The collection of Disney snow globes is an example not just of fetishistic collecting, but also of spurious

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<sup>200</sup> Henry Giroux, in *The Mouse That Roared*, offers a template for study of the “pedagogy” of Disney’s commercialized “memory.” See Henry A. Giroux and Grace Pollock, *The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*, 2d ed., revised and updated (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 43.

<sup>201</sup> See Giroux and Pollock, *The Mouse That Roared*, 33.

<sup>202</sup> “Four Parks Walt Disney World Resort Mickey Mouse Snowglobe,” [http://www.disneystore.com/disney-store-official-site-for-disney-merchandise-four-parks-walt-disney-world-resort-mickey-mouse-snowglobe/mp/1258248/1000281/?D=snow+globe&Nr=pPublished%3A1&Ntk=All\\_Shopping&Nu=pProductID&Ntt=snow+globe&Dr=pPublished%3A1&Ntx=mode+matchallpartial](http://www.disneystore.com/disney-store-official-site-for-disney-merchandise-four-parks-walt-disney-world-resort-mickey-mouse-snowglobe/mp/1258248/1000281/?D=snow+globe&Nr=pPublished%3A1&Ntk=All_Shopping&Nu=pProductID&Ntt=snow+globe&Dr=pPublished%3A1&Ntx=mode+matchallpartial), last accessed Sept. 17, 2012, now available at “Your WDW Store,” [http://www.yourwdwstore.net/Disney-Snow-Globe--Mickey-Mouse-Four-Parks-Mini-Globes\\_p\\_10427.html](http://www.yourwdwstore.net/Disney-Snow-Globe--Mickey-Mouse-Four-Parks-Mini-Globes_p_10427.html), last accessed October 6, 2013.

<sup>203</sup> MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 152.

tourism. That they are available without visiting a particular park removes them from any creation of personal memory.

Disney's globes also exemplify the frequent enhancement of the globe's portrayal with the addition of text on the globe's base. The bases of snow globes frequently bear place names as souvenirs for buildings or other sites related to the miniature, generally acting as textual identifier of the scene inside. But the globes currently offered by Disney draw attention from spurious place to specifically marketed character and story: globes labelled "The Little Mermaid" and "Beauty and the Beast" replace the Western myths and fairy tales with Disney's trademarked characters. Text assists the globe in replacing imagination with product.

Marita Sturken has identified a grimmer form of fantasy, or spurious, tourism in sites of terrorism on United States soil, associating them with snow globes. Sturken describes globes that memorialize the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995 and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 on New York City, noting that each represents "a mystical temporal moment."<sup>204</sup> Her point is illustrated by the 9/11 commemorative globe that appears in Figure 16, showing the towers before the attack, with a police car as its base. In reality, each portrayal represents a fantasy destination: neither the ruins of the Murrah building, nor the original Twin Towers, remain. These souvenirs contain miniatures of places that no longer exist.

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<sup>204</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 2-3.

### Subversion: the Post-9/11 Decade

Toys have particular power to shift meanings. Modes of expression usually considered benign carry greater potential for shock value, and hence greater impact, when subverted. Material culture scholar Ian Woodward writes that “being ‘out of place’ — consequently disturbing semiotic coherence and the ‘natural order’ of things . . . gives an object cultural power.”<sup>205</sup> Like the subversive use of fairy tales, the subversive use of toys transforms a benign object or portrayal into one that can be amusing, disgusting, or terrifying. Subversion creates polysemic openings that cause the viewer to revise prior internal perceptions of the object. Once those revisions are possible, they create the possibility for a host of other revisions. Signs and signifiers continue as tools of analysis, but must be continually monitored as individuals and groups revisit and revise their perceived meaning.<sup>206</sup> The snow globe today has already undergone a decade of literal “re-vision,” spurred in large measure by the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. At mid-decade, one psychiatrist called that period an “age of melancholy.”<sup>207</sup> Over the last decade, the globe has shed its visual innocence.

By the turn of the twentieth century, postmodernism had embraced expression through subverting the childlike and fairy-tale qualities of toys. Florence Bazzano-Nelson wrote in an essay published in 2011 about the work of Liliana Porter that “[t]oys have appeared with such surprising frequency in the art of the last fifteen years that cultural historian Eva Forgacs has observed that ‘an ocean of toy-based art works’ has

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<sup>205</sup> Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, 77.

<sup>206</sup> Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, 27-29.

<sup>207</sup> Dan G. Blazer, *The Age of Melancholy: Major Depression and Its Social Origins* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.

surged through contemporary art in the United States and Europe.”<sup>208</sup> Porter arranges a variety of familiar toy miniatures to show them in film and photograph mimicking intelligent human behaviors that require coordination and insight beyond toy capability (Fig. 17). At the same time, toys, both familiar and found objects, fit easily within the favored postmodernist construction of *bricolage*.<sup>209</sup> Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright define *bricolage* as “[a] mode of adaptation where things are put to uses for which they were not intended and in ways that dislocate them from their normal or expected context,” an adaptation that creates new meanings.<sup>210</sup> These new contexts are formed, literally, not of the stuff of fantasies or utopias, but of new versions of existing reality: they offer new juxtapositions of real-world objects.

Miniatures are convenient and readily understood forms of subversive expression because they can be so easily manipulated to create powerful images within a small, yet defined, space.<sup>211</sup> When the miniature is also a toy, subversion is accomplished by a change in its signification. In Bazzano-Nelson’s analysis, Porter’s subversive work uses a coding sufficiently shared to appeal to a wide audience, as well as a postmodernist “manipulation of toylike objects . . . as an effective creative strategy that invites viewers to resignify the items she displays in her pieces . . . and thus become actively engaged in the production of polysemic readings that serve to open the structure of the work.” She adds that Porter’s work opens a “door to the imagination so that viewers can create their

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<sup>208</sup> Florence Bazzano-Nelson, “Subversive Toys: The Art of Liliana Porter,” in David I. Getsy, ed., *From Diversion to Subversion: Games, Play, and Twentieth-Century Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 132-147, 136-137.

<sup>209</sup> Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, 78.

<sup>210</sup> Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 223 (emphasis in original).

<sup>211</sup> April Greiman, “A Way of Looking at Things,” in Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt, eds., *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion, 1970-1990* (London: V&A Publishing, 2011), 243-245.

own stories about the worlds they observe, even with regard to the most impossible things they encounter, like headless mariachis with beautiful voices.”<sup>212</sup>

If play is the outcome of engagement with a toy, more memorable play can result from engagement with a toy outside the parameters of its intended use, a subversion of the toy.<sup>213</sup> Takashi Murakami’s creation of the mouse-like, yet child-size, character known as “DOB” (Fig. 18) requires the same adjustment in perception as does the work of Porter. Manipulation of proportion, both in the gigantification of the forest figures relative to DOB and in the overall gigantification of the tableau itself, creates an unsettling fear despite its cheery colors.<sup>214</sup> Bazzano-Nelson’s analysis extends to visual culture the theory of John Fiske that “[popular] texts are polysemous, open to both dominant and oppositional readings,” a premise that “instruct[s] the scholar to pay close attention to the use of irony, metaphors, jokes, contradictions, and excesses (especially hyperbole and camp).”<sup>215</sup>

In the last decade of the twentieth century, two artists produced darker-themed snow globes that were playfully symbolic, rather than representational, and in so doing expressed social commentary. In 1991, the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, commissioned 23 snow globes by eight artists for exhibition along with commercially made snow globes in “Snowbound: The Enduring Magic of Snowdomes.”

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<sup>212</sup> Bazzano-Nelson, “Subversive Toys,” 141.

<sup>213</sup> Ellen Handler Spitz, “Art as Play? The Digital and the Surreal,” *American Imago* 66 (Spring, 2009): 111-118, 114.

<sup>214</sup> Heather Whitmore Jain, *The Darker Side of Playland: Childhood Imagery from the Logan Collection* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2000), 7 and pl. 26.

<sup>215</sup> Fiske’s theory is summarized by Harold E. Hinds, Jr., “A Holistic Approach to the Study of Popular Culture: Context, Text, Audience, and Recoding,” in Harold E. Hinds, Jr., Marilyn F. Motz, and Angela M. S. Nelson, eds., *Popular Culture Theory and Methodology: A Basic Introduction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 163-191, 171 (footnote omitted), reprinted from *Studies in Latin American Culture*, Vol. 16 (1996), 11-29.

Among the artists who made globes for that exhibition was Mark Soppeland, whose globes included “Nuclear Winter,” featuring a nuclear missile launcher with “snow” colored with “radioactive” violet flecks. The only other available description of the 1991 exhibition with illustrations shows one globe filled with pink curlers atop a tall pedestal of found objects, and another, by Soppeland, filled with objects commonly “missing” in the home: pens, pearls, and miniature toy objects are recognizable.<sup>216</sup> In 1993 Soppeland created “Idiots,” primitive human figures battling each other with sticks, the whole painted red and bathed in red “snow” (Fig. 19).<sup>217</sup>

At about that same time, William Harroff designed snow globes he called “waterbooks.”<sup>218</sup> Most bear his signature construct of replacing “snow” with letters or words that fall at random. But more controversial political issues are referenced in “The Black Hole,” a snow globe referencing Anita Hill’s testimony in Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas’ confirmation hearings.<sup>219</sup> It features a miniature soda bottle at center and a substance similar to pubic hair as “snow” (Fig. 20).

Snow globe subversion in the post-9/11 decade featured political commentary and gruesome hyper-reality. Artists Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese’s first snow globe was produced in December 2001, enclosing the bust of then-Attorney General John Ashcroft

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<sup>216</sup> Moore and Rinker, *Snow Globes*, 59.

<sup>217</sup> Elaine Louie, “CURRENTS:[sic]Snow at Your Fingertips, No Mittens Required,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 9, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/09/garden/currents-snow-at-your-fingertips-no-mittens-required.html>, last accessed September 16, 2013. Description of “Nuclear Winter” and the image of “Idiots” are contained in emails from Prof. Mark Soppeland, Sept. 22, 2012, on file with the author.

<sup>218</sup> Artist’s statement from William Harroff, included in an email to the author March 26, 2013, on file with the author.

<sup>219</sup> William Harroff, “The Black Hole: The Clarence Thomas Hearings,” exhibition archive, *The Center for Book Arts* (undated entry), <http://www.centerforbookarts.org/exhibits/archive/workdetail.asp?workID=641>, last accessed October 3, 2013.

and a legend portraying him as patriot. The Ashcroft globe, sold out with no further production indicated, bears the following sales description:

Remember America before Homeland Security? Before racial profiling became the norm? When our streets, homes and offices were safe and our civil liberties still free?

Attorney General John Ashcroft is the symbol of a new patriotism, an America where civil liberties are now personal liabilities; a land of hollow security and mounting intolerance.

Each snow globe, hand-sculpted and hand-assembled by artists, comes with a windup music movement of “White Christmas,” a bust of the Attorney General in ivory resin and, of course, white snow.<sup>220</sup>

Two years later, highly specific and miniaturized ominous scenes appeared in snow globes created by Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz. The *Travelers* series, their most widely displayed collection of snow globes, first appeared in 2003.<sup>221</sup> An example from that continuing series appears in Figure 21. A third artist, Thomas Doyle, does not employ moving snow in water within his clear globes: instead, he references snow globes in the piles of snow and ice-embedded homes that appear in his miniature scenes encased in glass globes. His first such work appeared in 2005 as miniature constructions called *Bearings*, and in the next year, as *Reclamations*, which included a clear globe encasing a miniature scene of a furtive burial. His 2011 installation at New York’s Museum of Art and Design, *Distillation*, displays suburban residences in miniature visible at the viewer’s feet as embedded in a substance evoking pack ice (Fig. 22).<sup>222</sup> Other globes in the same

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<sup>220</sup> [http://www.pureproductsusa.com/wp-content/orig\\_ppusa/globe.html](http://www.pureproductsusa.com/wp-content/orig_ppusa/globe.html), last accessed October 4, 2013. It was introduced on the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98 (December 12, 2000). “Purity of Essence—The History of Pure Products USA,” posted on [www.pureproductsusa.com](http://www.pureproductsusa.com) [captive online seller for LigoranoReese], last accessed October 4, 2013.

<sup>221</sup> Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz, “Selected Bibliography,” *Travelers* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 2008), 92-93.

<sup>222</sup> “Thomas Doyle: *Reclamations Series*, ‘The Reprisal,’ and *Subsistence Series*,” posting on Thomas Doyle’s online gallery site, <http://www.thomasdoyle.net>, last accessed October 3, 2013.

series, in elongated shapes reminiscent of Cornell's bell jars, use snow only in patches as grounding for dark scenes. Overlapping with Martin and Muñoz's and Doyle's more recent works is a series of five globes produced by Maartin Vanden Eynde, dated 2009-2013, each bearing debris collected from a "gyre," or vortex of nonbiodegradable material, from one of the five major oceans of the world.<sup>223</sup> (Viewed within this context and time frame, it is no accident that during this decade Disney issued its greatest number of snow globes in its "Villains" series, also the most elaborate in the series. Of those dated by collectors, the earliest of these globes appeared in 2001, and the latest in 2012.<sup>224</sup>)

Martin and Muñoz's *Travelers* sets forth scenes of terror. This set of globes first frustrates the viewer: approximately six inches in diameter, they are too big and heavy to permit most adults, and certainly all children, to lift them without fear of damage. Activating the "snow" inside is almost impossible except with assistance and great care. *New York Times* reporter Celia McGee described them in 2008:

Inside the globes, beneath curved glass that creates optical distortions, blind, suited figures carrying suitcases appear ambushed by hunting parties. Citified ladies trudge through snowbanks toward lurking wolves and worse. Trees are not just leafless but may have nattily dressed bodies hanging from their branches. A large-headed boy methodically bangs his forehead against a tree trunk. The art critic Carlo McCormick, who has known Mr. Martin's work since it came to notice in the East Village art scene in the '80s, said . . . 'It's the way he sees the world, now reflected in the snow globes,' he said. 'They're like funny nightmares or disturbing fantasies, rosy and dark at the same time.'

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<sup>223</sup> Martin Vanden Eynde, "1000 Miles Away from Home," [http://www.maartenvandeneinde.com/?rd\\_project=239&lang=en](http://www.maartenvandeneinde.com/?rd_project=239&lang=en) (entry undated), last accessed October 3, 2013.

<sup>224</sup> Disney Snow Globe Collectors Guide, <http://disneysnowglobescollectorsguide.blogspot.com/search/label/Villians>, last accessed March 25, 2014.

She cites in their work the influence of the terror attacks of 9/11, sounding more loudly the theme of the earlier Ashcroft globe created by LigoranoReese.<sup>225</sup>

Like postmodernist scenes staged in film and photograph, these scenes take the viewer to events of criminality and terror that would require intervention if they were occurring in real time. In one sense, the hyper-real offers the viewer access to realities he would ordinarily not experience. In another sense, the viewer becomes a voyeur of the worst kind, one who fails to take preventive action. In a recent globe constructed by Martin and Muñoz, a priest leads young boys and girls in a bare-treed, snow-covered winter forest.<sup>226</sup> (A c-print of the figural arrangement appears in Figure 23.) The priest should have more care for their well-being in cold weather. He is warmly dressed; the children, heads down, are not. News reports over the last ten years allow the viewer to surmise that the priest may have sinister intentions for the children under his care.<sup>227</sup> They are bound for tragedy. Not coincidentally, the formal Jesuit dress of the priest mixes fairy tale and religious quests, opening the way to both evocation of terror and invocation of the violation of Western cultural myths, discussed in Chapter II. Martin and Muñoz play on the suggestion of those myths with the form of the snow globe: the expectation of benign content is immediately destroyed. It takes a moment to realize the true nature of the scene. The viewer initially resists the clues that lead to the inevitable reading of these figures. The dark scene inside the snowy interior of the globe is doubly powerful because it asks the viewer to shift his perception of reality twice: once in absorbing the miniature

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<sup>225</sup> Celia McGee, "Aesthetic Heft, Sized for a Snow Globe," *The New York Times*, Jan. 6, 2008.

<sup>226</sup> Author's visit to Martin & Muñoz gallery exhibition, P.P.O.W. gallery, New York City, February 28, 2012.

<sup>227</sup> A summary appears at National Public Radio, "Timeline: Priest Abuse Claims Date Back Decades," <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126160853>, April 26, 2010, last accessed Mar. 2, 2014.

scene itself, and again in adjusting to its presence inside the well-known, benign construct of a toy-like globe. Applying Bazzano-Nelson's analysis, the placement of a scene of dark hyper-reality within a benign object changes the object's signification. The scene challenges its container, indeed battles it, ultimately requiring a realignment of the viewer's cultural perception of that object. This pairing shocks.

Prior to Martin and Muñoz' widely publicized work, the globe's interior miniatures had not changed the signification of the snow globe. Perhaps because the internet had not yet permeated culture, neither Harroff's nor Soppeland's work, nor the early work of LigoranoReese, received the quantity and quality of media attention that has accompanied the work of Martin and Muñoz. Snow globes had remained within a culturally agreed parameter of the benign. Harroff and Soppeland, then Martin and Muñoz, followed by Doyle, recognized the potential for conflict between container and content. That separation alone was not new: as discussed in Chapter II, the globe's contents were long ago separated from any association with snow as a realistic aspect of the miniature scene. The appearance of the ominous scene within, however, presents a major visual questioning, or subversion, of the snow globe as object.

Analysis of objects of material culture necessarily includes events that propel those objects into a new contextual spotlight. Here, too, terrorism has affected the snow globe, by virtue of its physical construction alone. After the events of 9/11, the newly created Transportation Security Administration ("TSA") imposed restrictions on the size and types of objects that passengers could carry in hand luggage aboard United States

airlines. In 2009, when the possibility of the use of gels and liquids in the onboard construction of explosives was discovered, onboard carriage of those substances was limited to 3.4-ounce containers that fit into a single one-quart bag.

Caught in the net was the snow globe. Between the summer of 2009 and July 2012, the TSA prohibited the transport of snow globes in hand luggage because the quantity of liquid inside the globes could not be measured.<sup>228</sup> In July 2012 the TSA announced that it would permit travelers to carry snow globes that fit within the single one-quart bag permitted for liquids and limited the size of the globe itself to the size of a regulation tennis ball, or about two and one-half inches in diameter, apparently intending that the globe fall within the 3.4 fluid ounce limit on the capacity of containers inside the single quart-size bag.<sup>229</sup> Regulation tennis balls must fall within 2.5 and 2.7 inches in diameter (“slow” balls may reach 2.87 inches) and their mass within 1.975 to 2.095 ounces, without exception.<sup>230</sup> Yet typical commercial snow globes vary widely in size, and most are beyond this size limitation.

The kinds of attachment snow globes create, and the significance consumers give them, may have been significantly and negatively altered during this time. Without changing the fundamental elements of the snow globe, the TSA rules may have altered its size and, therefore, its narrative and cultural power. The TSA first applied the liquid limitation to snow globes in July 2009, but snow globe sizes did not appear to diminish

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<sup>228</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “For Travelers,” table of prohibited items including “snow globes and like decorations....” <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm/>, last accessed October 2, 2013. As of that date, website carries warning that it will not be updated due to shutdown of federal government.

<sup>229</sup> Ben Mutzabaugh, “Report: TSA to OK snow globes for carry-on bags ... kind of,” *USA Today*, July 18, 2012, <http://travel.usatoday.com/flights/post/2012/07/snow-globes-to-get-reprieve-from-tsa/806186/1>, last accessed October 3, 2013.

<sup>230</sup> International Tennis Federation, “Rules for Equipment: The Ball,” Appendix I, <http://www.itftennis.com/technical/publications/rules/balls/appendix-i.aspx>, last accessed October 3, 2013.

markedly in size until 2011.<sup>231</sup> A review of eBay reseller offerings shows that the size of the available globes offered there, classified by year of the seller's dating of their manufacture, does not noticeably diminish until offerings for 2011, although multiple sizes continued to be offered. To conclude that there exists a causal relationship between the initial TSA ruling and this size reduction requires the assumption that a reduction would be intended to facilitate packing them in checked luggage rather than in carryon bags.

The lag time in this change in size is better explained by the possibility that there was active lobbying with TSA by retailers and suppliers to renew carryon status for the snow globe, limited by the new size reduction, in July 2012. Tiny versions, some less than two inches in diameter, now appear in tourist shops in New York and in foreign airports as well (Figs. 24-27).<sup>232</sup> Erwin Perzy's Viennese factory was well ahead of these events when he reinstated production of his grandfather's "original" 25-millimeter globe in 1995. The Perzy snow globe site reports that "[i]n 1995 we decided producing [sic] the 25mm snowglobe as a replica of grandfathers [sic] production and it has turned beside [sic] the 80mm to one of our best selling sizes."<sup>233</sup> Such limitations change the range,

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<sup>231</sup> On the 2009 restriction, see "Threatening Snowglobe Administration [TSA] Lifts Some Restrictions," <http://www.loweringthebar.net/2012/12/threatening-snowglobe-administration-lifts-some-restrictions.html>, posted on *Lowering the Bar*, Dec 20, 2012, last accessed October 3, 2013. Since most snow globe shipping from foreign suppliers occurred in August of 2009, the July interpretation would likely not have affected 2009 shipments. Data for 2011, in contrast, show highest shipping volume in October of that year, which might reflect shorter design to manufacture time in anticipation of changing regulations. "Snow globe trade information, Snow globe buyers, suppliers, trend trading," *Greatexportimport.com*, data posted for 7/2009-7/2012, <http://www.greatexportimport.com/t-snowglobe?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>.

<sup>232</sup> Visit by the author to gift shops in Times Square, New York City (May 30, 2012); to gift shops in the airport of Helsinki (June 22, 2012); to the gift shop in the New York Thruway Modena Rest Stop (August 13, 2012); to a gift shop in London's Heathrow Airport (Terminal 5) (June 15, 2013); to a gift shop in the Manchester International Airport (Terminal 3) (September 11, 2013); and to a gift shop on New York City's Upper East Side (April 9, 2014).

<sup>233</sup> Erwin Perzy, III, "History of the Original Viennese Snowglobe," <http://www.viennasnowglobe.at/index.php?page=history&lang=eng>, last accessed October 3, 2013.

number, and materials of miniatures that can be placed inside the globe while remaining recognizable as stand-ins for their real life counterparts. Placement of more than one character or building miniature in a globe of this size is problematic; the visibility and appeal of even a single miniature inside is reduced. Narrative possibilities shrink.

Beyond changes in the size and effect of the snow globe, hapless travelers unaware of the restrictions must yield the globe to the TSA, adding humiliation and disappointment to the transport of a snow globe. Because many globes are purchased as souvenirs and gifts, their confiscation can be particularly traumatic. Bloggers and travel writers have complained about the difficulty of uniformity of compliance when TSA officers must estimate whether the globe approximates the size of a tennis ball.<sup>234</sup> Scott McCartney of the *Wall Street Journal* reported in July 2012 that a warehouse in Austin, Texas receives, then auctions, shelves of globes confiscated from travelers by the TSA at nearby airports.<sup>235</sup> The bluntness of the TSA's signage, most visible during the holiday season, indicates that many travelers may remain uninformed of the restriction (Fig. 28).

The marketplace of material culture has produced numbers of new meanings that destroy the snow globe's link to memory, replacing that memory with message. Each of these actions, whether the broadly cultural event of the collection and branding of snow

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<sup>234</sup> "TSA SNOW GLOBE GUIDELINES MAY MISLEAD HOLIDAY TRAVELLERS—Denver Snow Globe Maker Warns that TSA Guidelines May Create Holiday Disappointment for Snow Globe Lovers," posted on Snow Globe Central, November 20, 2012, <http://www.snowglobecentral.com/snowglobe-blog/tsa-snow-globe-guidelines-mislead-holiday-travellers.html>, last accessed October 3, 2013.

<sup>235</sup> Scott McCartney, "Shopping for a Rolling Pin, Scissors Or a Bat? This Auction Is for You: Warehouses Sell Confiscated TSA Items; Good News for Snow Globe Owners," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 16, 2012, p. 1, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB20001424052702304373804577521210993059828>, last accessed October 3, 2013.

globes, the dark artistic subversion of the snow globe, or restrictions on its transport, marks a fundamental change in the relationship between viewer and globe. To be sure, the snow globe in its original form, discussed in Chapter II, remains for those who seek it out: the Metropolitan Museum of Art currently sells a snow globe “based on historical photographs and drawings of New York City in the Museum's collection.”<sup>236</sup> But in each of the globe's new forms, the interaction of viewer and globe, dependent on the individual and cultural memories the viewer brings to it, is replaced by the owner who collects them, the marketers who brand them, and the tourists who attempt to carry them home. Rather than offering a canvas for the imagination, the globe displays personality, brand identification, a new tourism to fantasy destinations, or terror. This cultural influence changes the very function of the globe from interactive to message-bearing. In that new role, it no longer offers contemplation: it signifies expression.

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<sup>236</sup> “The Metropolitan Museum of Art Snow Globe,” offered at [http://store.metmuseum.org/decorative-accents/the-metropolitan-museum-of-art-new-york-snowglobe/invt/06072532#.UxKPt\\_0V\\_wI](http://store.metmuseum.org/decorative-accents/the-metropolitan-museum-of-art-new-york-snowglobe/invt/06072532#.UxKPt_0V_wI), last accessed Mar. 1, 2014.

## CONCLUSION: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AMERICAN SNOW GLOBE

This Conclusion argues that the commodification of the snow globe has opened the way for the globe's veritable physical transformation, or "hyper-commodification."

Woodward defines "hyper-commodification":

The gist of the postmodern claim is that consumption has been aestheticized and semiotized by recent processes of hyper-commodification. The contrast made commonplace in commentary on consumption processes is that if consumption could ever be characterized in historical perspective as typically utilitarian—that is, being essentially a question of utility in use—then by contrast it is now characteristically constructive: identity-forming, reflexive, expressive and even playful.<sup>237</sup>

The globe's new variants show the pressure not just of the forces of commodification described in Chapter III, but also of more than a decade of themes of melancholy and disaster prominent in a post-9/11 culture. The globe's fundamental appeal to the imagination has not been lost, but today resurfaces as flattened or two-dimensional symbol. No longer primarily a stand-alone object of fascination, the snow globe now is used by marketers and gamers as a symbol of delight and desirability. They apply its features to objects of utility and decoration, enlarging its size to house a skating rink, reshaping it as picture frame, or setting music within it. Theories of material culture developed over the last twenty years identify the progression of an object from its original function past commodification to hyper-commodification, resulting in an uncoupling of the object from its original form and function. The snow globe, I argue, marks out just such a path.

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<sup>237</sup> Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, 23 (references omitted).

To assess change in the snow globe it is appropriate to identify its physical and functional differences. Elimination of one or more of the globe's three fundamental physical elements creates change. Parody mocks the object, yet to succeed requires a form similar to that of the original object. In complete hyper-commodification, the new representation is a copy lacking an original. This does not mean that it lacks a referent: it means, rather, that the referent survives in a new form that now substitutes for it. That referent appears in contexts and forms with which it has no prior association and to which its original function is irrelevant. Contemporary uses of snow globes demonstrate how artists have departed from its basic form; how corporations engage it in marketing; and how consumers use it as forms of makeup and on-line gaming symbols, each referenced in this Conclusion.

Snow globe artists Martin and Muñoz, for example, have apparently concluded that the snow globe no longer has the impact they require. As part of their 2012 show in New York City, entitled "Night Falls," they displayed both snow globes and c-prints.<sup>238</sup> The accompanying catalog, however, pictures no snow globes, although the c-prints they include frequently portray a snowy landscape, and a few suggest snow falling.<sup>239</sup> Thomas Doyle's latest installation, *Subsidence*, part of his *Distillation* series, uses miniaturization and the evocation of ice and snow, but no glass surround. At the same time, Camryn Forrest, a self-described snow globe "artist," uses the globe's original theme of delight and intrigue: working in a genre called "steampunk," she encases in her globes fantasy objects appearing to be powered by steam and built with ironclad soldered parts.

Doubling back both to nostalgia for an early industrialized, rather than technological,

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<sup>238</sup> Visit by the author to P.P.O.W. gallery, February 28, 2012.

<sup>239</sup> Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz, *Night Falls* (Blurb, Inc., online publisher, 2012).

ethos, as well as to the Victorian origins of the globe, the tableaux inside contain machines and figures that have no real-world counterparts, past or present. When the tiny shapes of human figures do appear, their function is to give relative scale to the gigantic machines: they are featureless mannequins, posed in positions that defy gravity (Fig. 29).<sup>240</sup> Forrest created her first globe in 2012, at about the same time that Martin and Muñoz abandoned that form.<sup>241</sup>

Equally significant is Disney's declining use of the snow globe in its merchandise. Import data show a marked reduction in Disney's snow globe imports from China, which dropped for the years ending August 31 in 2011 and 2012 from 350,000 kilograms to fewer than 25,000 kilograms, reflecting an overall drop in snow globe orders from all buyers of similar magnitude.<sup>242</sup> Evidence of Disney's view of the value of the snow globe in its marketing is its current listings of new offerings at its online store:

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<sup>240</sup> With an explicit nod to M.C. Escher, she shows that the globe can be viewed from all sides and upside down because of the multiple orientations of its stairways and figures. <http://camrynforrest.com>, last accessed Sept. 23, 2012.

<sup>241</sup> Camryn Forrest Designs Etsy shop, <http://www.etsy.com/shop/CamrynForrestDesigns>, last accessed September 17, 2012; "steampunk" design discussed on the artist's blog, *Camryn Forrest Designs: Water Globes and Curious Inventions*, <http://camrynforrest.com>, last accessed October 4, 2013.

<sup>242</sup> That figure edged back up to 76,000 kilograms for the same period ending in 2013. See "Snowglobe trade information, Snowglobe buyers, suppliers, trend trading," *Greatexportimport.com*, data posted for 9/2011-9/2012, <http://www.greatexportimport.com/t-snowglobe?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>. Filtering for material, such as resin or glass, is not possible on this site. The search term formatted with the two-word "snow globe" produces over-inclusive results because it includes reporting of lighting, fruit, and other higher volume items. A check of the months July through October, 2011 using the two-word format shows some retailer orders for snow globes but no Disney orders, indicating that Disney uses a one-word format for its "snowglobe" orders. Whether Disney has outsourced its production to, or is trading under the name of, another company, or with another nation or a domestic partner, is not indicated by this data. United Nations data for exports from China of glass globes that include snow globe tariff coding dropped from 12.4 million units in 2010 to 9.7 million units in 2011, and further to 6.5 million units for 2012. See United Nations Data, "Trade of Goods, US\$, HS 1992, 70 [two-digit harmonized tariff classification] Glass and Glassware," data by country, import/export, dollar value, weight, and quantity, 2010-2012, [http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=ComTrade&f=\\_11Code%3A71](http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=ComTrade&f=_11Code%3A71), last accessed October 4, 2013. While this could again reflect outsourcing by Disney, it could also reflect either a drop in snow globe popularity generally, or a drop in orders as a direct result of the TSA's travel restrictions.

its 533 items included only one snow globe in October, 2013. Today the site offers just five globes.

Even in prior years, Disney's snow globe designs reflected its changing form and significance as physical object. Its globes have included figures outside the globe performing in tandem with figures inside the globe. Six such globes were issued in 2012.<sup>243</sup> Four such globes were available at its online store in that same year. The latter are no longer available from Disney, but all appear at sites of other online sellers. Snow White and the dwarf Happy, in a glass bubble, join the other Dwarves outside in dance (Fig. 30).<sup>244</sup> In another, Minnie Mouse opens her old costume chest to find not only vintage wear, but her own miniature staring back, encased in a snow globe.<sup>245</sup> In a single setting, snow globes enclosing miniature scenes from four Disney theme parks surround a larger Mickey, who appears as director and tour guide.<sup>246</sup> One features Mickey, dressed

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<sup>243</sup> Disney Snow Globe Collectors' Guide, <http://disneysnowglobescollectorsguide.blogspot.com/search?q=2012>, last accessed October 6, 2013.

<sup>244</sup> While Disney's site did not give separate dimensions for its globe designs, the globe appears to be approximately four inches in diameter in a resin sculpture described as 7 ½" high by 9 ½" wide by 8" deep. See [http://www.disneystore.com/disney-store-official-site-for-disney-merchandise-snow-white-and-the-seven-dwarfs-snowglobe/mp/1292412/1000281/?D=snow+globes&Nr=pPublished%3A1&Ntk=All\\_Shopping&Nu=pProductID&Ntt=snow+globes&Dr=pPublished%3A1&Ntx=mode+matchallpartial#productDetailsAnchor](http://www.disneystore.com/disney-store-official-site-for-disney-merchandise-snow-white-and-the-seven-dwarfs-snowglobe/mp/1292412/1000281/?D=snow+globes&Nr=pPublished%3A1&Ntk=All_Shopping&Nu=pProductID&Ntt=snow+globes&Dr=pPublished%3A1&Ntx=mode+matchallpartial#productDetailsAnchor) [no longer available], last accessed Sept. 17, 2012, next available on eBay, <http://www.ebay.com/itm/like/331038506275?lpid=82>, [no longer available], last accessed October 6, 2013, now available on eBay, <http://www.ebay.com/itm/DISNEY-VINTAGE-SNOW-GLOBE-SNOW-WHITE-AND-THE-7-DWARFS-SEE-DETAILS-/251503118833>, last accessed April 19, 2014.

<sup>245</sup> "Costume Chest Minnie Mouse Snowglobe," [http://www.disneystore.com/disney-store-official-site-for-disney-merchandise-costume-chest-minnie-mouse-snowglobe/mp/1254719/1000281/?D=snow+globe&Nr=pPublished%3A1&Ntk=All\\_Shopping&Nu=pProductID&Ntt=snow+globe&Dr=pPublished%3A1&Ntx=mode+matchallpartial](http://www.disneystore.com/disney-store-official-site-for-disney-merchandise-costume-chest-minnie-mouse-snowglobe/mp/1254719/1000281/?D=snow+globe&Nr=pPublished%3A1&Ntk=All_Shopping&Nu=pProductID&Ntt=snow+globe&Dr=pPublished%3A1&Ntx=mode+matchallpartial), last accessed Sept. 17, 2012, now available on eBay, <http://www.ebay.com/itm/Disney-Snow-Globe-Minnie-Mouse-Wardrobe-Costume-Chest-/150981412209>, last accessed October 6, 2013.

<sup>246</sup> "Four Parks Walt Disney World Resort Mickey Mouse Snowglobe," [http://www.disneystore.com/disney-store-official-site-for-disney-merchandise-four-parks-walt-disney-world-resort-mickey-mouse-snowglobe/mp/1258248/1000281/?D=snow+globe&Nr=pPublished%3A1&Ntk=All\\_Shopping&Nu=pProductID&Ntt=snow+globe&Dr=pPublished%3A1&Ntx=mode+matchallpartial](http://www.disneystore.com/disney-store-official-site-for-disney-merchandise-four-parks-walt-disney-world-resort-mickey-mouse-snowglobe/mp/1258248/1000281/?D=snow+globe&Nr=pPublished%3A1&Ntk=All_Shopping&Nu=pProductID&Ntt=snow+globe&Dr=pPublished%3A1&Ntx=mode+matchallpartial), last accessed Sept. 17, 2012,

as the Sorcerer's Apprentice, holding high a tiny globe, its "snow" consisting of floating miniatures of landmarks within the parks.<sup>247</sup>

Snow globes had often featured as part of their base plastic or ceramic contextual characters or buildings that enhanced the globe's interior scene. But they did not suggest dialogue between figures inside and outside the globe. The bases of these new Disney globes include characters of the same size as those within the companion globe. In this way, the globe itself seems to become a participant within a narrative, rather than a carrier of narrative. The power of the original globe as object lies in its self-contained world. A visual presentation of communication between figures inside and outside the globe disrupts this unity. The resulting duality prevents imagined narrative, replacing it instead with visual performance.

Replacement of the miniature altogether is another common alteration of the snow globe in today's marketplace, but the globe, liquid, and even the voluntary tip required to start the snow's motion also can be altered. Without its miniature, the globe becomes a frame, or backdrop, for consumer-driven objects. For example, a snow globe "picture frame" features red pellets in liquid embedded in a square surrounding a picture insert (Fig. 31).<sup>248</sup> Picture holders inserted in snow globe constructs are also readily available.<sup>249</sup> The photograph replaces the miniature as an object of memory, yet spurs no

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now available at "Your WDW Store," [http://www.yourwdwstore.net/Disney-Snow-Globe--Mickey-Mouse--Four-Parks-Mini-Globes\\_p\\_10427.html](http://www.yourwdwstore.net/Disney-Snow-Globe--Mickey-Mouse--Four-Parks-Mini-Globes_p_10427.html), last accessed October 6, 2013.

<sup>247</sup> Described at [http://www.magicalearscollectibles.com/Disney-Snow-Globe--Four-Parks--Disney-World-Mickey-Mouse--Mini\\_p\\_968.html](http://www.magicalearscollectibles.com/Disney-Snow-Globe--Four-Parks--Disney-World-Mickey-Mouse--Mini_p_968.html), last accessed October 12, 2013. The snow globes available at Disney's online store appear to be even smaller. See <http://www.disneystore.com/collectibles/snowglobes/mn/1000345/>, last accessed March 25, 2014.

<sup>248</sup> "Present Time Wanted Red Heart Shaped Glitter Square Snow Globe Photo Frame," posted on *TheFind.com*, <http://www.thefind.com/gifts/info-photo-frame-snowglobe>, last accessed September 17, 2012, now found at <http://www.presenttime.com/p-1690-wa0765rd.aspx>, last accessed October 2, 2013.

<sup>249</sup> E.g., "Snow Globe Central," <http://www.snowglobecentral.com>, last accessed October 4, 2013.

imaginative narrative: the photograph is a record of the fixed temporal past. A personal computer program invites the owner to insert the image of a residence in a globe on the screen merely by insertion of the address, uncoupling the globe's image from any authentic claim to place of origin. The globe itself becomes a two-dimensional photograph.<sup>250</sup> Removal of snow in liquid from the "snow globe" is apparent in the advertisement of a "snow globe Christmas ornament" in December 2013 with the "note" that it "contains no water."<sup>251</sup>

Expansion of the globe's glass enclosure is another transformative change. Blown up in size to host humans, the snow globe has been marketed as an inflatable walk-in space, where humans replace the miniature with a live performance.<sup>252</sup> In mid-August of 2012 the Jaguar Company built a temporary "snow globe" beneath the High Line Park in New York City and invited the public to skate inside it.<sup>253</sup> In these cases, removal of the globe's miniature or snow in liquid, or expansion of the globe's size, results in its use as container. Removal of the control of the snow globe by any human hand was a prominent element of Saks Fifth Avenue's 2012 Christmas windows, which featured 100 snow globes turned mechanically, in tiered formation.<sup>254</sup>

Parody of the globe's form has become common. Parody, the mocking of an established form, is not as harsh as subversion: rather, parody is playful entertainment that results from use of the object in a context or form that surprises but does not threaten.

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<sup>250</sup> See <http://www.draftfcb.com/holiday2011/>, last accessed October 4, 2013.

<sup>251</sup> Olive and Cocoa, "Tour Eiffel Snow Globe Ornament," *Olive and Cocoa Wonderland/2013 Holiday/2013* catalog (Salt Lake City: Olive and Cocoa, 2013).

<sup>252</sup> <http://www.thegiantsnowglobe.com>, last accessed October 4, 2013.

<sup>253</sup> Marshall Heyman, "Chilling Out in a Giant Snow Globe: Jaguar Wheels Out the White Stuff—and Ice Skating—Near the High Line," *The Wall Street Journal*, Greater New York Section, Aug. 17, 2012, A17.

<sup>254</sup> "Saks Fifth Avenue Holiday Windows 2012," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lstncz60ats>, at 1:07, last accessed Mar. 2, 2014.

It is a step toward hyper-commodification that requires knowledge of its referent for appreciation of its message. Fredric Jameson, writing in *The Cultural Turn* in 1998, explains that parody “capitalizes on the uniqueness of these styles and seizes on their idiosyncrasies and eccentricities to produce an imitation which mocks the original.”<sup>255</sup>

The snow globe’s parody takes two forms: substitution of the miniature inside the globe with text or replicas that by definition are not “miniatures” as defined by Millhauser and Stewart, or removal, rather than replacement, of the miniature, leaving a globe filled with water and “snow.” These objects depend on consumer recognition of the original form of the snow globe for their appeal.

Substitution of text for the miniature has proved popular and lucrative. In this process, text replaces imaginary or symbolic narrative. In 2008, LigoranoReese produced a snow globe carrying the word “FUCK,” offered by the New Museum gift shop,<sup>256</sup> and in 2011 a limited series of globes entitled “history of art,” encasing in each the word for a specific art movement—Bauhaus, Fluxus—in typography associated with each movement (Fig. 32).<sup>257</sup> The success of the art history series is demonstrated by their newest series, encasing the “seven deadly sins” by word, not illustration, in snow globes, at the price per series of three thousand pounds sterling.<sup>258</sup> The words of the phrase itself describe a ready-made collection of seven: a single globe may be purchased, but

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<sup>255</sup> Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” in Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998* (London: Verso, 1998), 4.

<sup>256</sup> “FUCK” snow globe, <http://www.newmuseumstore.org/browse.cfm/fuck-snow-globe/4.2538.html>, last accessed October 4, 2013.

<sup>257</sup> [http://www.artwareeditions.com/product\\_p/ligo11.htm](http://www.artwareeditions.com/product_p/ligo11.htm), image and ordering available, last accessed October 4, 2013.

<sup>258</sup> [http://www.artwareeditions.com/product\\_p/ligo11.htm](http://www.artwareeditions.com/product_p/ligo11.htm), last accessed October 4, 2013. Even these have been copied. See “Bitch Snow Globe,” offered on *ThisNext* online shopping site (purchasing links no longer live), <http://www.thisnext.com/item/75646DF7/Bitch-Snow-Globe>, last accessed October 4, 2013.

ultimately it is part of a set, easily completed in a single purchase. In 2009, LigoranoReese produced a pair of snow globes, one light, one dark, featuring the words “blind” and “faith,” respectively.<sup>259</sup>

Other objects that parody the snow globe enclose full-size replicas rather than miniatures. In 2011, the City of Vienna sponsored a campaign to combat trash and urban blight. That campaign featured a series of snow globes that focus not on the Vienna cityscape, but on its trash: one enclosed an inorganic reproduction of dog droppings in a globe, and another contained replicas of cigarette butts.<sup>260</sup> Finally, removal of the miniature altogether parodies the snow globe. The 2010 offering on Elle’s gift site of Maison Martin Margiela’s snow globe is a stark example, complete with liquid and snow, but empty of miniature (Fig. 33).<sup>261</sup>

Beyond parody lies pastiche, or complete hyper-commodification. Jameson defines hyper-commodification as a copy “amputated of the satiric impulse.”<sup>262</sup> It is one step beyond parody: the hyper-commodified object does not require the original’s form to give it meaning. Jameson calls objects that have lost dimensional or functional touch with those referents “pastiche.” Defining pastiche as the “death of the subject,” Jameson

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<sup>259</sup> <http://ligoranoreese.net/edition-size-dimensions/>, no longer available, last accessed October 4, 2013.

<sup>260</sup> If the dog droppings were real, and not replicas, their organic composition would require treatment to resist breakdown in fluid. Yet only a single dimensional globe of each may have been made for a photograph at the launch of the campaign: the English report features a campaign primarily of filmed images. See [http://osocio.org/message/vienna\\_vienna\\_you\\_alone\\_wien\\_wien\\_nur\\_du\\_allein/](http://osocio.org/message/vienna_vienna_you_alone_wien_wien_nur_du_allein/), last accessed October 12, 2013.

<sup>261</sup> <http://www.elle.com/shopping/bright-ideas-the-2010-holiday-gift-guide-516310-33#slide-33>, still marketed (showing sold out with possibility of further availability), <http://shop.leclairer.com/shopping/women/maison-martin-margiela-snow-globe-item-10112786.aspx>, last accessed Sept. 17, 2012, next marketed at <https://art-object.totokaelo.com/store/products/maison-martin-margiela/souvenir-snowball/silver>, last accessed October 2, 2013, now pictured, but no longer available, at <http://www.net-a-porter.com/us/en/product/388287>, last accessed April 20, 2014.

<sup>262</sup> John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Essex: Pearson Education Ltd., 2009), 192.

describes pastiche as a reconstruction of meaning through stereotypes and popular culture, without authentic context.<sup>263</sup> For Jean Baudrillard, writing in 1968 in *The System of Objects*, the consumed object is a copy without referent, but nonetheless exists because of that referent.<sup>264</sup> In his terms, the simulacrum replaces simulation.<sup>265</sup> As summarized by theorist Daniel Miller, writing in *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987), Baudrillard's approach leads further than that of Jameson, to total loss of meaning in the reconstructed object.<sup>266</sup>

Application of Jameson's and Baudrillard's discussions to the snow globe today locates it along an arc of transition, both visually and culturally, to ultimate hyper-commodification. Simultaneously declining in its use by artists and Disney, the snow globe shows transformation to a simplified, coded visual signifier. And that transformation appears in the place theorist Miller expects it to be, in the milieu of fashion:

Art and unique objects are, however, only a minute proportion of the material world, and our ability to discriminate through perception is as pronounced for the everyday observation of fashion and cosmetics as in any appreciation of fine art. In most material culture, the individual object is as much a type-token of the larger group of identical handbags, armchairs, spears or canoes as is the case with words, and, even when held as individual property, may thereby mark the relation of object and owner to the set of items it represents.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," 10.

<sup>264</sup> Jean Baudrillard, "The System of Objects," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 2d ed., 25.

<sup>265</sup> Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," in *Selected Writings*, 169-174.

<sup>266</sup> Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 190-191.

<sup>267</sup> Miller, *Material Culture*, 97.

Writing about hypermodernity, Gilles Lipovetsky likewise finds that fashion is the initial crucible in which the markers of this change form.<sup>268</sup> And the snow globe has in fact emerged within forms of fashionable consumption. Since 2005, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City has sold a snow globe ring, a tiny plastic dome filled with glitter floating in liquid. A wave of the hand produces swirling snow (Fig. 34).<sup>269</sup> For the 2011 holiday season, Swatch offered a snow globe watch assembly that included a small snow globe enclosing a miniature pagoda for attachment to the top of the watch face, although this obscures the watch face itself.<sup>270</sup> (Only when the viewer removes the snow globe “cover” can the watch indicate time.) Chopard’s Happy Snowflake watch features diamonds, including a diamond snowflake, that fall across its surface. They cannot circulate, but only move along its face.<sup>271</sup> For the 2013 spring fashion season, Kotur marketed a snow globe clutch (Fig. 35) fronted by a flat plastic panel encasing glitter that moves across the panel as the clutch moves.<sup>272</sup> Demonstrating the globe’s ultimate conversion—from dimensional object to surface application—in fall of 2011 MAC cosmetics offered glitter face powders, one called “Snow Globe,” as well as a collection of shimmering “Snow Globe” eye shadows, packaged in “shakeable” containers (Fig.

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<sup>268</sup> Gilles Lipovetsky with Sébastien Charles, *Hypermodern Times*, trans. Andrew Brown (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005), 14.

<sup>269</sup> “Snow Globe Ring, 2005,” [http://www.momastore.org/museum/moma/ProductDisplay?purpose=crawl&catalogId=10451&categoryId=26693&productId=13733&langId=-1&parent\\_category\\_rn=26690&keyWord=Snow+Globe+Ring&storeId=10001](http://www.momastore.org/museum/moma/ProductDisplay?purpose=crawl&catalogId=10451&categoryId=26693&productId=13733&langId=-1&parent_category_rn=26690&keyWord=Snow+Globe+Ring&storeId=10001), last accessed October 2, 2013.

<sup>270</sup> “Ice on My Wrist,” posting on *Sicka Than Average* blog, Dec. 8, 2011, <http://www.sickathanaverage.com/2011/12/ice-on-my-wrist-swatch-presents-limited-edition-lucky-snow-watch.html> [site link to Swatch online store no longer active], last accessed October 2, 2013.

<sup>271</sup> E.g., <http://www.swissluxury.com/chopard-watches-happy-sport-happy-snowflake.htm>, last accessed October 2, 2013. It is not clear, however, whether this design remains in production at Chopard.

<sup>272</sup> [http://modaoperandi.com/fiona-kotur/resort-2013/accessories-726/items/gold-glitter-snow-globe-clutch-98920 \(trunk show ended\)](http://modaoperandi.com/fiona-kotur/resort-2013/accessories-726/items/gold-glitter-snow-globe-clutch-98920 (trunk show ended)), last accessed October 4, 2013.

36).<sup>273</sup> The purchaser removes the “snow” and applies it, rather than contemplating its movement. China Glaze nail polish offers “Snow Globe,” a white translucent polish with glitter.<sup>274</sup> Instructions for creating “snow globe” acrylic nails appear online.<sup>275</sup> The use of the word “snow globe” to advertise that makeup discards the three-dimensional object, reducing it to metaphor.

Shifting cultural meanings also transform the globe to visual sign and textual referent. In the online game *Terraria*, the “snow globe” is a two-dimensional game piece that can be used as a “summoning” object; it can only be won from the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 31<sup>st</sup> of December.<sup>276</sup> In the online game “*Fallout New Vegas*,” played in a post-nuclear war virtual world, virtual “snow globes” are hidden in seven places as objects of reward (Fig. 37). The “characteristics” entry describes them: “These rare, pre-War artifacts are widely considered to be useless baubles, but rumor has it that some collectors will pay dearly for them.”<sup>277</sup> Blog *Golden Snow Globe Contest* has since the winter of 2009-2010 hosted an online contest allowing players to guess the U.S. city with the highest snowfall for the year.<sup>278</sup>

These new forms have common features. They reduce the globe as object either

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<sup>273</sup> <http://www.temptalia.com/mac-how-beautiful-snowglobe-beauty-powders-reviews-photos-swatches>, last accessed September 2, 2012; no longer marketed by MAC as of this same date, <http://www.maccosmetics.com/3820/19174/reviews.htm>.

<sup>274</sup> <http://www.amazon.com/China-Glaze-Polish-Globe-Fluid/dp/B002SICH1C>, last accessed October 12, 2013.

<sup>275</sup> E.g., *Nails Magazine* (online), “Water Works,” <http://www.nailsmag.com/demoarticle/967/water-works>, entry dated Jan.1, 2010, last accessed October 12, 2013.

<sup>276</sup> *Terraria Wiki*, [http://terraria.gamepedia.com/Snow\\_globe](http://terraria.gamepedia.com/Snow_globe), last accessed October 12, 2013.

<sup>277</sup> Entry in “Nuka Pedia *Fallout* Wiki,” [http://fallout.wikia.com/wiki/Snow\\_globe](http://fallout.wikia.com/wiki/Snow_globe), last accessed October 12, 2013. The game’s website lists it as “America’s First Choice in Online Post Nuclear Gaming Simulation.” <http://fallout.bethsoft.com/eng/home/home.php?country=u>, last accessed October 12, 2013.

<sup>278</sup> Golden Snow Globe National Snow Contest, <http://goldensnowglobe.com>, last entry dated October 7, 2013, warning of several days’ shutdown, last accessed October 12, 2013.

to a word or symbol standing for the original visual referent, in either case reducing the globe's form to a mere sign of the dimensional object. The "snow" is wearable as decoration or the globe itself acts as virtual trophy. The snow globe itself is now extant in the two-dimensional worlds of makeup, fashion, and gaming, as a virtual object of desire. If it retains anything of its original or its referent, it is the snow globe's potential for magical transformation now associated with the ephemeral world or with the promise of fashion and makeup.

The unfolding changes in the snow globe show a malleability in meaning that validates theories of change in material culture and cultural studies. Chapters I and II of this thesis traced the history of the globe's material and cultural significance in the realm of personal and broader Western memory. Chapter III showed the globe's new uses as both commodity and art form. This Conclusion shows that the globe is now hyper-commodified, transformed into multiple meanings in multiple contexts. Miller's theory predicts this increase in forms.<sup>279</sup> Play, for Miller, is the entertaining use and change of meanings of things as social expression; it is best suited not to architecture, but to the small, cheap object—of which the snow globe is a perfect example.<sup>280</sup>

The globe's new forms lead consumers away from its original use as object of memory. Marketing that references the "snow globe" may refer only to "snow," represented in some cases as moving glitter, in others as a stilled visual representation, or to the "globe," itself miniaturized, and by definition only partial, in form. Use of the term

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<sup>279</sup> Miller, *Material Culture*, 214.

<sup>280</sup> Miller, *Material Culture*, 170-171.

“snow globe” adds a connotation of desirability and imagination to “marketing” but may in fact have nothing to do with the snow globe’s original construct. Theories of material culture explain that this uncoupling represents the maturity of the snow globe in the push-pull of consumer desire and producer marketing. Now inhabiting fashion itself, the snow globe jumps quickly among the roles offered in Kopytoff’s biography of an object.

Although hyper-commodification can be the last step before the physical object disappears altogether, the snow globe is likely to endure in symbolic form. Baudrillard is most dire among theorists in predicting that hyper-commodification leads to destruction of all signification of the original object. Public response to the City of Vienna’s cleanliness campaign, featuring replicated dog droppings encased in a snow globe, expresses this precise fear: that the globe, claimed as Vienna’s own home-grown product—likely a reference to the Perzy family—will lose its meaning.<sup>281</sup> Yet its disappearance is not imminent. Today the snow globe remains visible as both original object and as “skeuomorph,” an object whose familiar shape appears in a new context or material.<sup>282</sup> Its inviting and intriguing connotation is too valuable to be lost to American culture: its physical form decorates other objects and its two-dimensional symbol associates it with contexts of amusement, novelty, play and fashion. It will not disappear; it will simply appear in new forms and places.

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<sup>281</sup> See [http://osocio.org/message/vienna\\_vienna\\_you\\_alone\\_wien\\_wien\\_nur\\_du\\_allein/](http://osocio.org/message/vienna_vienna_you_alone_wien_wien_nur_du_allein/), last accessed October 12, 2013.

<sup>282</sup> Oxford Dictionaries, s.v. “skeuomorph”: “An object or feature that imitates the design of a similar artifact made from another material,” [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/skeuomorph](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/skeuomorph). I credit Nicolas Herman and Sarah M. Guérin’s Session Proposal, “Skeuomorphic: From the Acropolis to iOS,” CAA, 2015 *Call for Presentations*, <http://www.collegeart.org/pdf/2015CallforParticipation.pdf>, p. 10, with introducing me to this term.

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