Rescuing and Preserving Values in Vintage Clothing

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Rescuing and Preserving Values in Vintage Clothing

Where previous research into second-hand commodities has focused on dispossession, commodity spheres, and negative contamination, we consider the post-purchase resingularisation and rituals that consumers undertake to preserve invested meaning. Drawing on data gathered from phenomenological interviews with vintage clothing enthusiasts in England and Wales we provide an account of different types of contamination and resingularisation processes. These include new forms of positive and negative contamination where the self becomes a potential pollutant detracting from a good's ability to actualise displaced meanings.

Keywords: Preservation, Contamination, Displaced Meaning, Vintage Clothing, Sacred, Singularisation

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INTRODUCTION

Young people's interest in replicating lifestyles and aesthetics popular before they were born, coupled with a desire for more sustainable fashion have stimulated the growth of the second-hand sector. A recent report claims that by 2028 the US second-hand clothing market could outperform the fast fashion market by £20 billion (ThredUP Report 2019). Reasons for this growth have been linked to perceptions of higher quality, uniqueness, historical value, and the thrill of the hunt associated with vintage clothing in particular (Cervellon et al. 2012; The Guardian 2015a; The Guardian 2015b; ThredUP Report 2019). Added to this, are growing concerns over the environment and a desire for more sustainable models of production and consumption which have made the second-hand market for clothing more attractive. According to the United Nations (2019), the manufacture of clothing accounts for 10 per cent of global carbon emissions and results in a £500 billion of value lost every year because clothes are not recycled or are underutilised.

In this context, the degree to which garments are being singularised (Kopytoff 1986)- made one's own through personal use- is changing. Full processes of singularisation which would see items discarded after use are being disrupted by new ownership models that require that a garment's intrinsic values are preserved for future stages in its biography. Increasingly, consumers will be buying or renting items that have been

singularised at least once and will have to deal with minimising the degree to which their own singularising processes can detract from the garment's candidacy for being resold. This concern over future lives of clothing is something that consumers are already taking into account. To illustrate, in 2019, consumers were five times more likely to buy something with the intent of resell than they were in 2014 (Thredup 2019).

This new impetus to return items gently worn to the market quickly so that its life can be extended, means that singularisation itself may be adopting new modalities that are of yet little known. Processes of singularisation in this context are best described as resingularising, as they are building on already singularised items. Given the urgency in establishing sustainable consumption patterns for clothing that prolong the social lives of garments, understanding the sources of value and value maintenance and preservation are of great importance. Since vintage clothing requires people to deal with traces of previous habitation and demand additional care in their wear because of their rarity and fragility (Crewe 2003; Duffy et al. 2012), the vintage clothing context provides us with a useful testbed from which to observe resingularisation processes aimed at rescuing and preserving values.

Our overall aim is to understand resingularistion within vintage clothing consumption. Our objectives are twofold. Firstly, to understand the role of resingularisation within second-hand consumption. With few exceptions (e.g. Kates 2001; Gregson and Crewe 2003; Roux and Korchia 2006) consumer research has ignored the resingularisation of second-hand commodities in post-purchase. Where research is available it has tended to focus on the negative contaminants of prior habitation (e.g. Gregson and Crewe 2003; Roux and Korchia 2006) and the divestment rituals undertaken to rid goods of their associated meanings (e.g. Gregson and Crewe 2003; McCracken 1986). Despite Gregson and Crewe's (2003) characterisation of charity shop clothing and the use of divestment rituals to 'free up' a possession's meaningful properties, it has contrastingly been observed that consumers use the second-hand sphere to romanticise a commodity's biography before purchase (Duffy et al. 2012). In addressing this gap, this research will build on Lastovicka and Fernández (2005) use of positive and negative valence to better understand the role of contamination and the maintenance of meaning in post-purchase.

The second objective is to answer Lastovicka and Fernández's (2005) call for further research into how owners of used possessions preserve prior owners' invested or imagined meanings. Previously, consumer research has focused on the meaning maintenance of heirlooms only (e.g. Kates 2001; Price et al. 2000) where a strong emotional association is already established. Vintage clothing obliges individuals to interact with generally unknown prior owners through the traces of previous habitation and the known histories associated with vintage clothing (Duffy et al. 2012; Gregson and Crewe 2003). Recognising that vintage clothing already has an invested biography allows an extension of knowledge into the resingularisation process. This research will utilise McCracken's (1988a) work on displaced meaning whereby consumers relate to an idealised history that may be associated with an item, using this to help identify how this is used to recreate a common identity based on an imagined shared self, and thus the resingularisation of prior contamination (Lastovicka and Fernández 2005).

The paper is divided into three key sections. To begin with we provide a synthesis of biographical approaches to commodities, with particular emphasis being placed on the concept of singularisation introduced by Kopytoff (1986). This is followed by a discussion of meaning and sacredness (Belk et al. 1989), meaning valence (Lastovicka and Fernández 2005) and displaced meanings (McCracken 1988) to further refine our understanding of singularisation processes. In section two, we go over our methodological design and instrumentation. In our last section, core themes including the use of vintage clothing as a bridge to a golden idealised age, the preservation rituals undertaken to maintain sacred displaced meaning, the positive contamination of prior habitation, and the negative contamination of the self, are discussed.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Second-Hand Resingularisation

We begin by exploring the key concepts regarding the biographical approach and the commodity sphere focusing on second-hand goods as outlined by Kopytoff (1986) and Appadurai (1986). The notion that goods have biographies (Kopytoff 1986) or social lives (Appadurai 1986) is well established in cultural approaches to commodities and commodification processes. Appadurai (1986) describes commodities as things in transit and thinks of them not as a terminal condition but rather a situation in the social life of things for which its exchangeability is dominant in its past, present or future. These permutations which mark a commodity in its trajectory are captured in Kopytoff's (1986) analysis of commoditisation and singularisation. Where commodities are "comparable", "having something in common with a large number of exchangeable things" what is singular, is defined as being "uncommon, incomparable, unique… and therefore not exchangeable with anything else" (Kopytoff 1986, p.69). There are numerous types of biographies goods can attain. Second-hand goods can have technical biographies (using improvements and adaptations), social biographies (a good's history and owners), and a cultural biography (commodities endowed with a culturally specific meaning). These biographies imbue commodities with value that can be utilised in recommodification, such as the technical biography for second-hand cars, or the cultural and social biographies of vintage clothing.

An object's biography begins within a commodity state that is defined by exchange values. Once purchased, goods undergo social transformations, they are decommodified and therefore singularised. Singularisation (sometimes referred to as appropriation) occurs when a good is pulled out of the commodity sphere (Kopytoff 1986), and appropriated in symbolic and material terms (Epp and Price 2010; Østergaard et al. 1999). Decommodification removes commodities from the exchange sphere resulting in deactivation, this means goods can become singularised, sacralised, or redefined (Kopytoff 1986). An item can become singularised as part of a collection (a singularisation collective) or through the passage of time (individual singularisation). Thus, the biography of an item becomes the story of its various singularisations (Epp and Price 2010; Kopytoff 1986).

A good's biography continues when items are disposed or recommodified. These biographies are carried within goods and inherited by new owners. Prior owners can empty this biographical meaning residue through divestment rituals (McCracken 1986) or pass these on to heirs (Curasi et al. 2004; Kates 2001; Price et al. 2000). Biographies have multiple stages within which some goods that were once considered worthless can become recommodified. Appadurai (1986) outlined the life history of an item where commodities are retrieved either temporarily or permanently from the commodity state. Second-hand items are at least in their second cycle of ownership, meaning they have an established cultural and social biography (Kopytoff 1986; Parsons 2006). How consumers relate to these previously invested meanings remains underexplored, thus this research explores meaning creation and management within this context.

Sacralisation and Meaning

Through its lifetime, a commodity can attain sacred meaning and status. This meaning creation and maintenance is now further discussed. Belk et al. (1989) outline the sacralisation of commodities, through which sacred status can be acquired through ritualised processes. This can be attributed to a variety of objects, places, and times that express value. This value punctuates a goods' connection to society and to particular individuals. Unlike the sacred, the profane refers to the mundane and the common (Belk et al. 1989). Commodities can be designed or discovered to be significant and become sacred through processes such as: rituals (including preservation), pilgrimages (with a journey to an item), collections, gift giving, or quintessence (goods that are rare and mysterious because they are iconic) (Belk et al. 1989). Sacredness requires ongoing maintenance to ensure a goods' special status, preserve them and keep them separated from the profane. They can also be bequeathed or undergo tangibilised contamination (Belk et al. 1989). However, sacralisation can be easily lost with items falling into the profane, such as heirlooms that lack heirs whereby the invested meaning and sacralisation is lost within recommodification.

Second-hand goods can attain sacredness when they are part of collections, earmarked as heirlooms or have associations with sacred, historic meaning. This can be achieved through connections made to individuals or through the passing of time through which items can become singularised and possess sacred properties. This is seen within vintage clothing in that its association with different eras creates a sense of 'otherworldness' (Belk et al. 1989). This means that consumers are often consuming goods because of an imagined romanticised or collective recalled past (Duffy et al. 2012; Holbrook 1993; Rindfleisch et al. 2000). These goods may have additionally been individually singularised in a retail environment (Cherrier 2009; Gregson and Crewe 2003) via their presentation as rare commodities. Here the seller and the new owner have undergone somewhat of a pilgrimage to find and secure items that are genuine (Gregson and Crewe 2003; Leone 2014; Parsons 2010). These various aspects can instil sacred properties into vintage clothing and charge them with sacred public and private values (Richins 1994).

Now we consider the preservation of sacralisation within second-hand goods. McCracken (1986) and Cherrier (2009) argue that through divestment rituals prior sacred meaning can become detached before a commodity is singularised. However,

consumer research has additionally established that consumers acquire second-hand goods and preserve the embedded private meaning through interaction with prior owners and forming a common identity. Such is shown in both Kates (2001) and Price et al.'s (2000) research into heirloom's sacred connection to loved ones and Lastovicka and Fernández 's (2005) research on dispossession paths. In other circumstances where the previous owner is unknown, consumers romanticise an imagined history which can be based on a collective recalled past. This can be observed in both Holbrook (1993) and Rindfleisch et al.'s (2000) research into nostalgia materialism, which identified connections between consumers preferences for older items that related to sacred childhood memories. In general, consumer research has neglected to investigate the work required to preserve sacred meaning in second-hand items, and how this meaning could subsequently shape the resingularisation of goods. This study addresses that gap.

Displaced Meaning

We now discuss the strategy of displaced meaning outlined by McCracken (1988a), and the valence of meaning maintenance within second-hand consumption. McCracken (1988a) proposed the use of commodities as bridges to displaced meaning- cultural ideals which have been deliberately removed from daily life for their preservation. McCracken (1988) explains that in order to manage the painful and universal discrepancy between real, everyday life and cultural ideals, strategies to recover displaced meanings are necessary. Following McCracken, goods provide a bridge for meaning recovery, because they connect consumers with an idealised version of life, which is tangibilised in an object, and can be rehearsed in consumers' mind prior to ownership. Displaced meaning can be held both in the future (hopes) and past (ideals); something that may not be seen in daily life can be validated by its existence elsewhere in another place or time (era). In the case of an era, a golden age can give credibility to cultural ideals through demonstrating they once existed. McCracken (1988a, p.116) states, "it allows us to suppose that while things may not presently conform to ideal expectations, there is a time or a place in which they do." As consumers can never truly possess their idealism, this is also true for a golden age that can never fully be replicated (McCracken 1988a).

Now we consider the positive and negative valence of displaced meaning within second-hand commodities. The golden age can create an idealised collective memory and a positive valence of meaning. Research from Duffy et al. (2012) found the staging of second-hand retail environments helped infuse second-hand objects with desirable meanings and value. Displaced meaning has also been observed within the nostalgia literature (Holbrook and Schindler 1991; Kao 2012; Williams 2014). Nostalgia is defined by Holbrook and Schindler (1991) as a preference towards objects that were common when one was young (or even before birth) which create psychological identification with a bygone era and create a collective sense of nostalgia. . This view of nostalgia covers any and all liking for past objects that are no longer commonly experienced (Holbrook and Schindler 1991).

Alternatively, Gregson and Crewe (2003) emphasised the saliency of negative meaning in their research into the second-hand environment with charity shop consumers. The research uncovered the post-purchase rituals that consumers undertake after

purchasing second-hand goods, outlining the main rituals including: transformative, personalisation, and alteration or repair. Previous research has also considered charity shop shopping amongst thrift shoppers, where drivers for purchase were not centred around associated biographical meanings (Bardhi and Arnould 2005; Cervellon et al. 2012). Conversely, Roux and Korchia (2006) have investigated the contamination and singularisation of second-hand clothing looking at numerous aspects including the drive to buy, cost, desire for individuality, nostalgia, and negative perceptions of second-hand clothing. This research provided an overview of negative contamination, encroachment, and taboos associated with second-hand clothing. This research investigates the role of meaning maintenance and connections within vintage clothing.

Contamination Valence

As we have alluded to, consumer research has previously explored the valence of positive and negative meanings within the singularisation of second-hand goods and contamination in first-hand (Argo et al. 2006; Nemeroff and Rozin 1994) and second-hand commodity spheres (Østergaard et al. 1999; Roux and Korchia 2006). Thus, we further explore the effect this has on commodities. Prior research has shown consumers harbour a fear of contamination towards potential possessions prior to ownership. Contamination is defined within a retail context by Argo et al. (2006) through the law of contagion, when a source and recipient come into contact the source influences the recipient through the transfer of essence. This essence could be through a sign of habitation, or symbolic pollution. Symbolic pollution was introduced by Douglas (2002) to explain contamination beyond hygiene or physical dirt, but as a form of symbolic pollution. Within the context of vintage clothing this is an important aspect to consider. As Argo et al. (2008) concluded, there can be a positive evaluation of contamination when contamination is from an appealing source, or sometimes a known source such is the case with heirlooms (Kates 2001; Lastovicka and Fernández 2005; Price et al. 2000), or linked to an idealised era (Duffy et al. 2012).

The singularisation process within second-hand clothing also differs from first-hand consumption. Clothing that has been worn provides a stronger personal connection to the previous owner more so than that of furniture or cars (Roux and Korchia 2006), this previous habitation requires negotiating when resingularised. There may be no physical difference after being cleaned, but in a symbolic sense second-hand clothing may possess the 'spirit' of the prior owner. For instance, dresses or suits may be deemed acceptable to purchase second-hand, whereas second-hand underwear has an attached taboo (Østergaard et al. 1999). As discussed, previous research has reported on valence of positive and negative contamination, focusing on both first and second-hand retail environments but not within post-purchase. This research investigates positive and negative contamination and its maintenance in post-purchase.

METHODS

The story we tell is emergent; we examine connections and processes connected to vintage clothing using existential phenomenology as a paradigm. Existential phenomenology seeks to develop an in-depth understanding and allows a detailed

ideographic and cross case analysis of individual situations that cannot be generalised, allowing voices to be heard (Lester 1999; Thompson et al. 1989). This study is the result of two months of fieldwork across the UK speaking to informants in London, Wales, Dorset and Shropshire. Initial participant recruitment began through a purposive sample, which resulted in a snowball sample. This involved contacting vintage dealers across the UK, attending vintage events and fairs in Dorset, and spending time at vintage and antique shops in Dorset, Shropshire and Wales. Additionally posters were placed in vintage shops in Wales and Shropshire advertising the research project and calling for informants passionate about vintage clothing.

Phenomenology uses consumers' experience at the forefront for consumer research (Hogg and Maclaran 2008), as such the research required a first-person dialogue with informants largely talking about personal experiences with vintage clothing. One-on-one semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a total of eight informants from England and Wales. This consisted of seven female and one male participant, ranging in age from 23 to 74 with a mean age of 56, detailed in Table 1. All informants reported having a passion for vintage clothing, love for an era, and each had amassed a collection of vintage items. The sample was small as the aim was not to produce a generalised theory or representation of resingularisation and meaning maintenance, but rather an aspect of experiences (McCracken 1988b; Thompson et al. 1989). Phenomenological interviews use circular dialogue, descriptive questions, and yield a conversation with informants, for this a discussion guide was used. Following McCracken's (1998b) recommendations for qualitative interviewing, biographical questions were asked first, followed by more focused questions to do with how vintage garments were sourced, used and handled. The data was analysed as an autonomous body of work. In interpreting the data the goal was to understand meaning ensuring an accurate reflection of the respondents experiences and to identify and collate emerging themes (Thompson et al. 1989).

The majority of interviews were conducted at participants' homes, whilst two were held in local vintage shops. Although data collection was based on in-depth interviews, some of the research was also ethnographic in tone, with one interview lasting over three hours. Immersion in the field enabled establishing rapport with informants and helped to develop knowledge of terminology related to fabrics, designers, eras and music. This allowed observations of lived experiences and conversation to be elicited from clothing, storage, memorabilia and photographs that adorned their homes, walls and rails. Observations were recorded in notes and photographs, whilst interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for all informants. This yielded over 497 minutes of interviews, 113 pages of transcription and 85 photographs of cherished vintage clothing.

Table 1: Sample Profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Location	Occupation	Era	Vintage Profile
Dorothy	F	70	Mid-Wales	Antique Shop Owner	1920's	A long-standing love of vintage clothing, older items specifically. Owns a vintage shop .
Mair	F	50	Mid-Wales	Nurse	1940's	Through a friend's interest, attends vintage events - 1940's, predominate historical interest.
Tina	F	66	Dorset	Retired Teacher	1940's	Strong interest in 1940's dances, and a member of a swing band, dresses daily in vintage clothing.
Barry	M	74	Dorset	Retired Lorry Driver	1940's	Strong interest in 1940's wartime solider uniforms, and re-enactments, dresses daily in vintage clothing.
Francis	F	23	London	Costume Designer	1940's	Appreciation for 1940's style (make do and mend). Wears vintage or replica daily. Considers her clothing a reflection of her identity.
Meryl	F	68	Dorset	Retired Shop Assistant	1950's	Previously ran a Rock'n'Roll club, house is filled with 50's memorabilia, wears 50's vintage or replica clothing everyday.
Linda	F	58	West Wales	Children's Storyteller	1950's	Inherited a selection of vintage clothing over the years, has built an appreciation from memories of her mum wearing items.
Ella	F	35	Shropshire	Vintage Shop Assistant	1930's	Has worked in a vintage shop for over 22 years. Enjoys wearing vintage clothing to special occasions, and undertaking restoration.

FINDINGS

To begin with, it is important to state that throughout our informants spoke about owning two different types of vintage clothing. We clarify this using terminology outlined by Greyson and Martinec (2004). Firstly, indexical vintage clothing includes genuine articles that aren't imitation but have a real spatiotemporal link. Secondly, iconic vintage clothing are replica items that are a physical manifestation resembling something that is indexically authentic. We now discuss key findings, including the role of displaced meaning, the undertaken preservation rituals ensuring sacralisation and meaning, the lack of resingularisation and positive and negative contamination.

Displaced Meaning

Prominent throughout the research was the use of vintage clothing as a bridge to displaced meanings (McCracken 1988a). For all our informants, a love or passion for vintage clothing was exclusive with a specific golden age ranging from the 1920's to the 1950's. Hereby, iconic and indexical clothing was used as a bridge from the real to an ideal era. This was nicely depicted by a discussion with Tina and Barry. Tina, a retired music teacher and Barry, a retired lorry driver had adorned their home with vintage clothing draping from every wall and doorway (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Tina and Barry's Spare Room

The hallway was decorated with various vintage war jackets and 80's dresses, this was juxtaposed against white walls and a 70's carpet. Here we see Tina discussing her preference for 1940's clothing and the ideals that she associates with the period:

> "…Um, and the styles were so much better, weren't they, I mean a lot of people, young people would probably think they were a bit too mumsie and a bit too frumpy but a lot of the styles were really good weren't they. The designs, the styles, and I mean what they could do with their resources at the time it was marvellous really, and I think because they were so restricted they were much more, wanting to make themselves look good and making the best of what they've got."

Throughout Barry and Tina shared their admiration for wartime communitarianism in general, this idealisation of a 'better time' was seen across informants. Both indexical and iconic vintage clothing was used as a talisman in some form to help recreate an element of a golden age, specifically indexical items were used to feel a sense of preservation for displaced meanings. This allowed participants to replicate an aspect of a time either from their childhood or a romanticised imagined past. These eras represented a set of cultural ideals, as we will further discuss in sacralisation. Part of McCracken's (1988a) displaced meaning strategy involves the recovery to the here and now. From our research we seen this through the maintenance and preservation rituals that we now discuss.

Resingularisation

Following Kopytoff (1986) we now consider the lack of total resingularisation our informants undertook as a means of preserving displaced meanings. Our respondents

gently resingularised their garments in order to preserve their imagined biographies. This is best illustrated by Francis's experiences. She is a designer from London. Her flat was neat with floral bedding and fairy lights bordering the window. The room we interviewed her in was filled with oddities from old sweet tins to vintage scarves; the magnolia walls were decorated with museum posters from TATE exhibitions. Her wardrobe brimmed with vintage tweed and tea dresses, every item was a part of her collection. This is how she describes her favourite vintage coat:

> **Francis:** "Um, my favourite one is one again that I never wear, seems to be a pattern here. Which I'm actually storing at my sister's house, because I never wear it and it's really precious and she has a nice big wardrobe. Whereas my wardrobe isn't really tall enough, my dresses hit the floor because they're too long and the wardrobe is too short. Anyway, it's quite funny. It is a dress, not a dress, a coat I found in Osterley, which is kind of South-West London it's a bit far out, you might have heard of Osterley park or house that I went to, and I stopped in a little tiny antique shop with a friend on the way there and there was a coat which was from, specifically from 1947 in bit rubbishy condition, but the shop owner said it had been donated by the woman who made it and she was a tailor and she'd made it for herself, and yeh she just donated it one day because she just didn't ever wear it. Um, and she lived in Osterley but obviously this coat had, the owner of the shop had the coat for a while so the woman may well have died by now I don't know, and I think I spent too much money on it really, I spent £50 on it even though it wasn't in great condition and it wasn't even lined, and the wool isn't in great condition either, but I have this lovely dream that I'm going to copy the pattern of it because it's beautiful there are loads of seams at the back, and it's really flattering and like the cuffs do this really unusual pointy thing that I've never seen before, and it's just a lovely item. I love that it has a story behind it. Um, but I never wear it because it's in bad nick, and also I'm a bit scared that I'm going to break it. So, yeh hopefully one day I will get a pattern from it and then make like a replica, or several replicas because I love it and actually wear that and put lining in it and make it a more modern coat but with the cut that this woman has come up with for herself because it's beautiful. Yeh, that's my favourite one even though I don't ever wear it."
>
> **Researcher: That's nice that you know the history.**
>
> **Francis:** "Yeh I think that was more interesting, and that made me more willing to part with that much money because I definitely shouldn't have bought it because it's not practical or useful. Um, but yeh I think the romantic idea that somebody loved it and made it, yeh and enjoyed wearing it. Put time and effort into it is really nice, and knowing even where it geographically came from is nice, and knowing it hasn't travelled far um, yeh it definitely adds some depth to what you're wearing, if you do actually wear it eventually. And I like the idea that I might make it into something like a new version in the future, the process and the life of the garment is extended so far, it's kind of an interesting thought."

In this excerpt we can observe how a 1940's coat was chosen and purchased due to its known history (Kopytoff 1986). It was attributed to an exact date and the prior owner's

own career as a tailor resonated with the participant, a costume designer, creating an heir to the unknown owner's work and an appreciation of the coat's technical biography (Kopytoff 1986), forming a common experience (Lastovicka and Fernández 2005). This formed a romanticised partnership even though neither had met. Here the biography of the item was at the forefront, this was also observed with other informants when no social biography was known but cultural era biographies were embraced. The item was stored elsewhere due to lack of space, it is therefore singularised away from her current vintage collection and her own immediate possession. This creates an extreme form of sacralisation where the body of the owner, and the closet itself is a pollutant to the preservation of the item. The item had previously encountered damage, so Francis had a fear of repairing the garment even though she possessed an expert knowledge in materials. Francis was apprehensive in restoration, in her fear of resingularisation, she hoped to replicate the design and thus preserve the original. This means there is a lack of resingularisation due to a fear of damaging the item in the process; this was also prominent across informants with indexical items.

Partial resingularisation was observed through cleaning. However, this was unlike the cleansing rituals that were documented in both Gregson and Crewe (2003) and Roux and Korchia's (2006) research where contamination was seen as a deterrent and cleansing was used to rid items of their previous habitation. Cleaning was instead undertaken to help preserve indexical items, with every participant stating specific cleaning instructions for garments including: specialist cleaners and products, hand-washing, freezing items, baby wipes, and upmost a hesitation to 'overly' clean garments, this was undertaken to ensure minimal damage. In some cases items weren't cleaned at all to preserve details such as fur, sequins, lace, and delicate older items. This form of partial resingularisation was sometimes laborious and expensive and less about ridding an item of the previous habitation but instead preserving an item by removing marks and stains. This again shows a lack of full resingularisation, supporting their quest for preservation overriding their need to singularise the item for themselves, and managing their own body's and actions as polluting agents. This avoidance is further outlined in the context of sacralisation.

Sacralisation and Meaning

We now describe some of the sacralisation processes that our informants undertook and the ongoing process of displaced meaning that added to the legitimacy of their indexical vintage clothing. As Belk et al. (1989) explain, sacralisation is an investment process and this was apparent in informants' dedication to vintage clothing. Like Duffy et al. (2012), who observed highly invested and laborious processes involved in the staging of vintage clothing, we found that consumers had to carried out extensive work to preserve sacred displaced meanings in post-purchase. The process of sourcing and storing indexical vintage pieces was often described as labour intensive and expensive. Informants often resorted to arduous processes to ensure meaning preservation entailing cleansing rituals, storage and restoration to ensure the garment's indexicality could be preserved. The aforementioned rituals reassured informants that they were preserving the garments' biography and therefore an aspect of an imagined golden age. Ella had worked in a vintage boutique for the last 22 years. The shop's rails of clothes lined the walls and hats were nestled into the ceiling. Ella emerged dressed in bright orange modern clothes;

she seemed to contradict her vintage surroundings. Here we see the lengths that Ella is prepared to undertake to preserve vintage clothing when talking about a dress she recently purchased:

> "…So, I sent it to Sal and she said she might be able to do something with it, might. But I had to beg her, because sometimes she's like, 'Now come on, that's a little bit past it, what do you want me to do with that?' But even if we just keep it for trims or to fix something else, we do try and save everything, but you can't save everything can you? We do try. But, you can't save it all, we do try and conserve as much of it as we can, and bring as much of it back to life, if it means us shrinking dresses down so they're exactly the same but just a size smaller to loose holes, then that's what has to be done. You know? But, that's just all part-and-parcel. It's like being a doctor, if somebody lost 2 legs you wouldn't stitch one on and not the other, would you? So that's the way I look at it."

Later in the discussion Ella refers to restoring vintage clothing as, "a labour of love", it is clear that she feels she is saving a physical piece of history as she says, "bring as much of it back to life" and interestingly juxtaposes her job preserving vintage clothing with that of a doctor saving patients, highlighting the importance of vintage clothing to her. From this vignette, the restoration processes and hope in preserving the biography of goods is apparent. We show that sacralisation and therefore the preservation of displaced meaning was an ongoing and time consuming process which added to indexical clothing's legitimacy. Secondly, informants undertook lengthy storage rituals to ensure the preservation of sacred displaced meaning. This was briefly seen with Francis and more clearly depicted by Meryl. Every inch of Meryl's flat was a mosaic of photos, pictures, statues, and records from the 1950's. She had converted her second bedroom into a dressing room piled from top to bottom with 1950's clothes (shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2: Meryl's Dressing Room

The storage rituals were seen whilst Meryl was talking about transitioning her summer and winter wardrobe:

> "No, because I have quite a few hangy things in there, yeh mothballs. You can't smell them, like coats and that you have to be careful, like fur coats. But every so often, you know as I say all my winter stuff I'll be putting away in the next few weeks so what I do is give them all a good clean and a shake and make sure you know there's nothing in the pockets and that, and um put lavender or mothballs in them and they all get packed away in the cases. So, then I'll unpack all my summer things! As I say in those boxes is quite good because they're air tight, sometimes it's a struggle if I want something right at the bottom and I think, 'oh God'. Never mind hey."

Meryl cleaned items before storage, hung mothballs and lavender, placed items in dust coats, wardrobes and airtight containers to keep her indexical vintage pristine whilst in storage. In the above extract we can observe the work required to preserve her garments even whilst they're removed from the self, with many items stored away from the profane, and rarely seen or used. The time invested in storing such a vast collection and ensuring its preservation was common across informants, often requiring participants like Francis, to find other means of storage outside the home. Rarely did informants dispose of goods. Vintage clothing was expensive in time, money, and space but none of these aspects were a deterrent to informants instead validating its sacralisation.

Finally, as participants' commitment to vintage clothing became apparent, questions were asked regarding the future biographies of their garments. Whereas Lastovicka and Fernández (2005) found sellers hoped to establish a legacy through their possessions, this was something that informants hadn't overtly considered and didn't have heirs they felt would be worthy of their vintage clothing, this would mean their items risked falling into the profane or being lost in recommodification.

Contamination Valence and Preservation

In this section we continue to discuss preservation rituals and the valence of contamination, including positive contamination elicited from prior habitation and negative self-contamination. The valence of contamination was evident throughout the study. As previously discussed, prior habitation was a positive contaminant that enhanced the garment's imagined era biographies. The prior habitation was seen as the basis of indexical vintage's appeal, with informants sharing numerous stories in regards to the positive contamination of a previous owner. This was evident in Mair's home and during her interview. Mair's home was overflowing with antiques. The carpet swirled against the floral wallpaper with antique clocks hidden amongst the patterns. When asked about her preference for vintage she gave the following answer:

> "I suppose because it's got a history behind it, and it's um, it just feels like it's got more character, its um, there's something nice about something that's been used before. You know? Whereas new is okay, I'm not adverse to new. But, um I do tend to prefer the old, and I've always been like that, it's not something that as I've got older has happened, I've always been that way, you know. I think you either like stuff or you don't. I have an uncle and an aunt who always go for modern stuff, they

> can't abide old stuff, I mean they're always coming here with my stuff around but they always go for new, they're always updating and going for newer, and newer again. You know? But, I find it very cold, their style that they like is very cold, whereas I find the vintage style and stuff it's cosy, it's sort of gives out a warm vibe, it's nice, it feels lived in. Sometimes it has been lived in [laughs] you know?"

Mair's description of vintage clothing and the warmth it provided her, depicts the positive contamination that was elicited through the prior habitation and biography which the garments have accumulated and represent. Instead of seeing the contamination as negative, it is something that attracted her to vintage clothing. When informants shopped at charity shops to buy iconic items they were less willing to spend much money on them. Iconic items often underwent significant alterations and cleansing. Informants clarified that indexical items had already been singularised as valuable within a vintage sphere, therefore avoiding the same negative connotations of second-hand clothing. The events, shops, and websites that informants bought their indexical vintage clothing from further legitimised their purchases and helped them form idealised displaced meanings regarding the prior habitation.

The history of the item enhanced the need for preservation which meant there was a fear of self-contamination. An example of this fear is well illustrated in a discussion between Tina and Barry on 1940's clothing. When asked about wearing their vintage clothing, they gave the following explanation:

> **Tina:** "It's very difficult to buy vintage clothing, it's very expensive and um, the trouble is if you're using it, if you're actually doing something, the fabrics are so fragile it's a bit difficult it can easily be damaged. So, if you're dancing, or moving about a lot it's not that good of an idea, but we have, if we're sort of doing something static like we're just dressing up for the day, or going out for the day or doing something like that then we will."
>
> **Barry:** "We're what people call walking history. That's the term they use for us a walking history. We dress up, we re-enact, mainly World War II and Pre-War."

In this self-disclosure, Tina shared an anxiety over wearing the clothes for an activity other than static wear. As outlined by Douglas (2002) the contamination of the items symbolic meaning is seen here as positive, and therefore worth preserving from the negative physical contamination the self may inflict.

As we briefly covered in resingularisation and sacralisation it appears to be a curious situation within which the informants don't use indexical items regularly to ensure they don't tarnish them. Suggesting that the self has been removed to ensure preservation, with the self actually detracting from an item's value. This negative contamination showed how the use of indexical vintage clothing could result in its destruction. Tina specified throughout the interview that both herself and Barry would often wear iconic 1940's items instead, with Barry describing himself as a 'walking history' this highlights the importance to them of the preservation of the indexical items. This lack of use of an indexical commodity further imbues it with sacred properties (Belk et al. 1989) and

means the informants lightly consumed the clothes, as previously stated not allowing singularisation in full. We observe across informants the use of indexical garments solely for special occasions or events; this wasn't seen to be due to cost, but preservation. This further supports the willingness to store and preserve an item creating attributes of a shrine to an era. Contradicting this, when asked about what vintage items he might not buy Barry stated, "something we can use, that's why we do clothes because it's something you can wear. A 1940's washing bowl is only a washing bowl" this highlights how he feels clothes more effortlessly embody an era for him, but still their actions and avoidance of wearing indexical pieces highlights their love for the era and their efforts in preservation.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have provided a first account of processes of resingularisation within a particular second-hand clothing context- that of vintage. Our focus on vintage was purposeful as it allowed us to observe how individuals deal with items that are already singularised and requiring of additional care for their preservation. Thus, our context helps us bring to the fore relations between people and goods in conditions where the preservation of values is at the forefront. In doing so, we offer initial insights on processes of resingularisation that may be applicable to emergent second-hand and resale markets. Our first objective was to understand the role of resingularisation within vintage clothing. Where past research has often emphasised singularisation as a way of building identity (e.g. Parsons 2010; Roux and Korchia 2006) or extending the self (e.g. Belk 1988; Belk 1990; Epp and Price 2010b), interestingly here the self becomes something that detracts from an object's value due to potential self-contamination and possible destruction of indexical meaning. Future research should focus on this to see if this is prevalent in other second-hand contexts, in particular, in those where there is emphasis placed on re-selling.

Secondly, the research aimed to investigate how invested meaning in vintage clothing had been preserved. We have discovered and documented the lengths consumers are willing to undertake to rescue and preserve displaced meaning. We found participants undertook numerous sacralisation rituals that were ongoing in preserving displaced meaning and adding legitimacy to the indexical nature of vintage clothing. As was seen in Duffy et al.'s (2012) research within second-hand consumption environments, in our study we also show how involved processes were continually undertaken to preserve sacred displaced meaning. In part agreeing with Lastovicka and Fernández (2005), and contrary to Cherrier's (2009) research, we found the maintenance of meaning was more important than singularisation with meaning maintenance imbued with sacred meanings. This was seen clearly with Francis's avoidance of use of her sacred vintage coat to preserve the garment. This lack of resingularisation supported participants' commitment to the preservation of their garment's biographies. This was seen as more imperative than their desire to self-singularise items. Informants ensured sacralisation through various preservation rituals including storage away from the profane and the self, repair to ensure an extended life and cleansing rituals to preserve displaced meaning. Further research should consider what preservation rituals are undertaken in different contexts and how these differ from those found within vintage clothing, for

instance within the broader context of second-hand clothing. Additionally, further research could examine the roles of vintage clothing using Actor Network Theory (e.g. Bajde 2013; Epp and Price 2010), as we have seen in this research the items are sacred and play a role in recreating an aspect of a golden age, we have predominately focused on the maintenance of these meanings and it would be interesting for future research to investigate the role of vintage clothing in displaced meaning to fully understand how these roles are constructed.

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