

Touching objects: a psychosocial analysis of the BBC television series *The Repair Shop*

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And then there is Polly, who is a saint.

Abstract

Hillary Stevens

Touching objects: a psychosocial analysis of the BBC television series *The Repair Shop*

This study explores the construction of haptic visuality and the emotional significance of touch on the BBC lifestyle show *The Repair Shop*, (2017– ongoing) from 2017 until 2023: a time of social fracture, following the Brexit vote (2016), and tactile restraint during COVID-19 lockdowns. It takes a psychosocial approach (Yates, 2013, 2018; Bainbridge 2014, 2019) drawing on the object relations theory of Melanie Klein (1998). Previous studies of mediated hapticity concentrate on inter-cultural cinema (Marks, 2007), showing limited interest in its televisual application (Waade and Jorgenson, 2010; Zborowski, 2012).

Methodological scaffolding of this qualitative study involved initial close textual analysis of representative episodes, preceding focus groups with members of the show's main U.K audience demographic, aged 50+, discussing selected clips from the show and subsequent in-depth 1-2-1 interviews inviting participants to present their own inherited items. The result is a nuanced appreciation of emotional, tactile, and psychological relationships to the show and familial objects, both 'good', 'bad' and reparative in Kleinian terms.

Contributions to knowledge comprise further insights into the construction of visual hapticity (particularly the use of sound and the pastoral in *The Repair Shop*), the evolution of lifestyle television, its consolatory significance, and reparative qualities, amidst ongoing social anxiety. This study combines insights concerning media objects, (Bainbridge, 2014, 2019; Whitehouse-Hart, 2014; Yates, 2017) with psychological work on inherited material items (Turkle, 2007; Miller, 2008; McCarroll and Kirby, 2023) enhancing understanding of the uses of both. It also identifies 'shadow objects', a concept for psychologically 'difficult' material objects which I have adapted from Freud (1919) and Jung (1969), that are hidden or repressed: those introjected with difficult personal relationships, and those harbouring cultural apprehension. This study expands an understanding of psychological 'shadows' in relation to the depiction of mourning in lifestyle television which avoids melancholia (Freud 1917/2014), demonstrating how repressive inclinations operate in the structure of *The Repair Shop* to reinforce personal and national reparation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The main focus for this thesis is the role of tactility in fashioning and enhancing emotion in the BBC television show *The Repair Shop* [TRS] (2017–), and how the attention to touch may have contributed to its success in periods of anxiety in the country following the 2016 vote to leave the EU (Brexit) and COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns (2020–2021).

This study examines the use of haptic visuality, meaning touch evoked visually (Marks, 2007, Waade and Jørgensen, 2010), in the construction of tactility and emotion on TRS (BBC, 2017–), researching how the experience of touch may resonate with viewers of the programme. Drawing on qualitative data, I consider the major themes of the show and audiences' emotional responses, placing these in the contexts of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, I explore participants' own emotional and sensory responses to inherited or familial objects as a review of the fantasies surrounding the programme at a particularly anxious time.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 Personal context

My first encounter with TRS (BBC, 2017–) in 2019 was watching it as a late afternoon viewer with no consideration other than entertainment. The show invites ordinary Britons to bring loved, often inherited, items to a location at the Sussex Weald and Downland Museum, to be repaired by a team of specialists. It became increasingly clear that the emotionality connected to the objects on the show, and the show itself, would return interesting results when considered within a psychosocial framework as applied in the work of Bainbridge (2012, 2019), Bainbridge and Yates (2007, 2014), Silverstone (1993), and Whitehouse-Hart (2014). Casual viewing became deliberate and formal, and I took careful notes about the objects presented, the emotions displayed on screen, (see Appendix A) and the construction of sentiment for the viewer. As I discuss, I was also interested in the way the programme made me feel.

1.2.2 Psychological context

TRS sits in the compass of affective and emotional programming, designed to “move the audience” (Whitehouse-Hart, 2014, p. 167). The evocation of individual emotional responses creates internal spaces for a range of psychoanalytic (Bainbridge and Yates, 2013) and therapeutic processes (Richards and Brown, 2011). Trading in the past, relatedness, affectivity and experience, *TRS* features connections that are fundamental to psychoanalysis, and particularly to the object relations psychoanalytic framework, shaped by Melanie Klein (1989) and Donald Winnicott (2005), that I apply here. Watched in a domestic setting, which is often highly individual, where the viewer may be surrounded by personalised and symbolic objects (Whitehouse-Hart, 2014), *TRS* has the potential to set up a complex relationship between the viewer and the text, whether consciously or unconsciously. It, too, can be used as an object through which to calm anxiety or contain experiences too challenging to be dealt with immediately. In that sense it sits in the ambit of consolatory television (Bainbridge, 2019; Ellis, 2020)

1.2.3 Social context and the psychosocial approach

In 1975 a referendum was held in the country over Britain’s membership of the European Economic Community (EEC), the forerunner of the European Union (EU); a vote which had been agreed two years earlier. “Two thirds of the British public voted to stay” (Dorling and Tomlinson 2019, p. 262). In the 2016 Brexit Referendum, 52% of those voting opted to leave the EU. The process of Brexit had been “poisonous” (Phillips and Barwick, 2020, p. 107), and “incendiary” with “elements of experience [...] unspeakable, painful and difficult to share” (Macrury and Yates, 2021, p. 488) involving strong socio-political polarisation. Nine months later the BBC episodic TV show *TRS* was first broadcast, with its nostalgic evocations, reassurance of the importance of family, and construction of a certain sense of a shared past. It became an “unlikely hit” for the BBC (Youngs, 2020). In March 2020, when the first COVID-19 lockdown was announced, transmission of the programme moved from early evening to prime time where it regularly reached almost 7 million viewers (Youngs 2020). Viewership in the United Kingdom (UK) remains high, almost fifteen times higher than the average television show, placing it in the “outstanding” category (Parrotanalytics.com, 2024).

The programme has received positive coverage in the UK press, particularly during the period of COVID-19. Kalia, in *The Guardian*, designated it “an uplifting hour” (2019), and Singh, for *The Daily Telegraph* (2020), wrote that, it reassured us “everything will be all right with the world”. In

2023, the programme received a British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) award for the episode *A Royal Visit*, featuring the then Prince Charles.

The psychosocial approach adopted by this study allows the exploration of how “out there”, the social, interacts with “in here”, the psychological: how we reflect upon relationships, experiences, and the world around us as well as the cultural artefacts that help us do this. My study uses an object relations framework (Klein, 1989) which places “relationships at the heart of what it is to be human” (Gomez, 1997, p.1), recognising a need for experience and a need for others. This study argues that touch is an important aspect of those relationships.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The aim of this study is to explore haptic visuality in *TRS*, and the show as a lifestyle television media object, in the psychosocial context of a post-Brexit and COVID-19 landscape, using an Object Relations lens. To facilitate this, I explore the construction of tactility and emotion on the programme (Objective 1) and the depiction of major themes: family, loss, love, memory, mourning, and reparation (Objective 3), through close textual analysis of representative episodes. Employing focus groups and in-depth interviews, I investigate the experiences of touch and tactile meaning in *TRS* for audiences (Objective 2), and emotional responses to the outlined major themes (Objective 4), placing them within the larger context of Brexit and COVID-19 (Objective 5).

Against this backdrop of uncertainty, the need for holding, psychologically and physically, became acute, as did the need for an environment that facilitated a “capacity to live with emotional ambivalence and the processing of complex emotions and thoughts” (Yates, 2018, p. 7). This study will argue, through an analysis of the use of haptic visuality and the subjective representation of key experiences, that such an environment was, and is, provided for audiences by *TRS*.

1.4 Existing research

This interdisciplinary thesis connects touch and memory studies with work on material objects and lifestyle television. Classen (1999, 2005, 2012, 2014) focuses on the historical and cultural importance of physical touch, while hapticity, which refers to mediated touch and memory in film, is explored by Marks (2007) and furthered by Waade and Jørgensen (2010), who, in examining cookery shows, review the intimacy and sensuality that it creates. Analysing *TRS*, this

study demonstrates how haptic visuality may be employed in lifestyle programming to evoke memory and suggest somatic states, while also considering how physical gestures employed by presenters promote viewer empathy and consolation. *TRS*, often categorised as lifestyle television, is here also referred to as consolatory programming, insofar as it does not seek to challenge, appears comfortable and familiar and is usually “emotion rather than message” (Ellis, 2020, p.394). In adopting a psychosocial approach, this thesis considers the intimate psychological meanings of the show for audiences, together with its national role in a temporal and cultural context.

Objects are often used as a qualitative methodological device (Bell, 2013; Hannan et al., 2018; Mannay, 2020), however, with Turkle (2007) and Miller (2008) as exceptions, few have considered their psychological impact, sociological meaning, or “the importance of physicality in evocative objects” recognised, but not examined, by McCarroll and Kirby (2023, p. 4). Examining emotional and sensory relationships to inherited or familial objects is, therefore represents an original contribution to knowledge. Additionally, the thesis examines how tactility may be represented in an audio-visual medium, considering its effect upon viewers within a psychosocial framework.

This study also contributes to the psychosocial and psychocultural understanding of media as an object itself, suggesting what *TRS* may offer viewers when understood in this way. Previous work has focused on the therapeutic effects of drama (Bainbridge, 2019) or how programmes may be chosen for reasons other than entertainment (Whitehouse-Hart, 2014). this study examines the therapeutic possibilities of lifestyle shows in creating a containing environment in a period of national crisis.

1.5 Methodology and theoretical framework

This qualitative study adopts a mixed methods approach. Initially a sample of every fifth show, from Series 1, 2017 to Series 12, 2023 of *TRS*, was conducted to identify key themes. This was followed by close textual analysis of selected representative episodes, supporting examination of the depiction and representation of determined recurring themes as well as investigation of the processes used in the construction of tactility and emotion on the show.

Further exploration was undertaken through focus group discussions and face to face individual interviews with audience members. Eleven study participants in the core demographic aged 60–79 of the programme’s viewers (YouGov, n.d.), discussed clips of the show selected from the

initial sample, to explore emotional responses to touch and tactile meanings and the depiction of core themes. After these focus group discussions, 1-2-1 interviews with all members of the groups were conducted to explore participants' own emotional and sensory relationships to inherited or familial objects. I had asked them to bring both one '*Repair Shop*-worthy' item and one emotionally 'difficult' item to interview.

In common with studies adopting a visual/narrative/object/analysis approach (Hurdley, 2006; Bell, 2013; Hannan *et al*, 2016; Mannay, 2020), this research explores participant relationships with self-selected pieces. It differs from previous studies in that it also explores relationships with damaged or despised pieces, that is, items that while disliked or loathed are not cast out, referencing Kleinian "bad objects" (1989) and phantasies stored away, like the objects themselves, yet still active. It is important to note here that Kleinian phantasies are unconscious, whereas fantasies are perceived as conscious. The concept of "good" and "bad" inherited material objects may be related to Klein's understanding of the infant's unconscious feelings for the mother's breast. When full and satisfied the infant loves and idealises the breast: when frustrated and hungry the breast, and the mother, are bad (Klein, 1998, p.408). Employing an object relations framework for the study is apposite methodologically and theoretically (Johanssen, 2016), as it recognises the importance of the relational experience, and, through the work of Klein (1989), encourages close examination of reparation as a psychosocial process. It invites contemplation of social events in relation to the individual (the psychosocial), as well as the way in which we relate to cultural artefacts (the psychocultural).

1.6 Overview of thesis structure

This thesis is structured as follows.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter examines existing literature surrounding touch, the study's focus. It investigates the social, cultural, historical, psychological, and affective contexts of touch, to comprehend how it may be employed to provide a televisual environment of care and containment. To begin, the review outlines theoretical and psychosocial approaches, prior to considering literature surrounding haptic visibility, its creation and place within lifestyle television. It concludes by identifying gaps in research that this study addresses.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter clarifies the aims and objectives of this study, detailing the mixed methods used and the reasoning guiding choices made. It discusses collection of data and means of analysis. The chapter considers ethical implications of the research undertaken and limitations of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings and analysis Part 1 (textual analysis of *The Repair Shop*)

Textual analysis of pre-title sequences and selected representative episodes of *TRS* is presented here. The chapter examines how haptic visuality is created and its use in developing and intensifying emotion for the viewer. The chapter analyses how the nostalgic and the pastoral are employed by the programme to appropriate and develop fantasies of personal and national belonging and repair, thereby reinforcing aspects associated with identified key themes presented in the show.

Chapter 5: Findings and analysis Part 2 (focus group findings, and discussion)

Here, findings from the three focus groups are analysed. Questions of authenticity and identified tensions within *TRS* are explored, as are the contradictory emotions these provoked for participants of this study. It concludes considering the show itself as an object.

Chapter 6: Findings and analysis Part 3 (interview findings and discussion)

The emotional and tactile relationships between study participants and inherited or familial items are examined in this chapter. It explores how personal and familial introjections and projections surrounding material objects can signify their repair-worthiness or banishment to the furthest reaches of the house, items which I term *shadow objects*. It investigates attitudes towards repair and their possible psychological implications.

Chapter 7: Findings analysis and synthesis

Synthesising analysis from the three data collection points of the study, textual analysis, focus groups, and interviews, this chapter offers a psychosocial and psychocultural appreciation of *TRS*, within the context of the Brexit vote and COVID-19 lockdowns, in addition to its potential use as a media object.

Chapter 8: Reflective statements

Here, as part of the study's psychosocial orientation, I reflect upon my subjective experience of the study, indicating consciously, my influence on the process of data collection and interpretation. The chapter considers my process of psychosocial research and to draw conclusions about its impacts upon the study.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter discusses the key findings of the research, outlines contributions to knowledge and examines limitations to the study. It proposes further areas for research before providing an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The nature of *TRS* means that this is an interdisciplinary project. Examination of the genres and processes of television, the presentation of themes and the experiences, individual and social, of viewers adjoin and intermingle, thus boundaries between academic disciplines become indistinct.

The significance of touch to this study demands that its scope and importance are recognised. This chapter examines the literature surrounding the social, cultural, historical, psychological, and affective contexts of touch, to understand its significance in the creation of a televisual environment of care. The review begins by outlining the theoretical framework of the study, the relevance of psychosocial and psychocultural approaches, and social attitudes to touch, before addressing how touch provides comfort emotionally and physically, intensifies communication and how it can be implied visually and aurally.

The chapter ends by indicating where the literature on touch disregards its representation as a televisual experience, pointing to why an exploration of tactility within *TRS* is significant in appreciating how it may provide a viewer with a sense of being nurtured and allowed to rest from the demands of the outer world.

2.2 Object relations

This study uses the theories of Klein, Winnicott and Bollas to explore thoughts “that lie behind rational and conscious agency” (Johanssen, 2016, p. 688) when examining relationships to objects. Belonging to a “loose school of diverse perspectives” (Gomez, 1997, p. 3) known as object relations, all hold in common the idea “that the need for relationship is primary” (Gomez, 1997, p. 3). Objects are not necessarily material items, they may be unconsciously perceived as parts of people, initially in Klein’s work they are linked to the mother’s breast, whole people, or in more recent theorisations may include “a non-human thing or idea which is subjectively important through to human associations, such as home, art or politics” (Gomez, 1997, p. 2). Silverstone (2007) considered television itself as an object, while Bainbridge (2012, 2019) has made the argument for television programmes being considered as media objects of the mind.

Klein's work is primarily concerned with infants. Her observations of young children playing with toys led her to consider how the play unfolding in front of her related to the people and things in the child's life, and how it communicated the child's anxieties and phantasies, that is, the "mental aspect of instinctual impulse(s)" (Gomez, 1997, p. 34). Klein's work provided the foundation for the British Object Relations school of thought, an "approach which focuses on the relationships between the developing ego and "objects" (people, or parts of people) with whom it comes into contact" (Frosh, 2003 p. 109). This study also applies the work of other psychoanalysts such as Winnicott (1958, 1960, 1965, 1975, 2005) and Bollas (2006, 2018), who developed Klein's ideas to emphasise the role of relationality in shaping human subjectivity and experience. As Frosh (2003, p. 109) argues, the concept of "object relations" implies that "humans are fundamentally relationship seeking creatures" and that alongside the significance of phantasy, and the workings of inner world, one needs to take account of the role of environmental conditions, family, and wider society, in promoting "healthy psychological development" (Frosh, 2003 p. 109).

In contrast to Freud, Klein, focused on the first months of life and the emotions and phantasies stirred up in infancy. Klein argued that "bad" objects were those towards which "the baby reacts [...] with feelings of hatred and aggression", nonetheless, they may be the same objects that produced pleasurable responses. For Klein, the "imprints" such objects create during infancy "exert a continuous and powerful influence on the emotional and intellectual life of the individual" (1998, p. 290). While overtly hostile feelings may not be provoked, or necessarily directed towards specific familial objects, attitudes such as, but not confined to, guilt, envy, greed, or jealousy might be projected onto them, leading to their destruction in phantasy. For Klein, phantasy arose from aggressive unconscious drives attached to people or things, initially an infant's mother, and were often responsible for subsequent loving, creative, reparative responses towards the imagined, destroyed objects. The unconscious nature of phantasy distinguishes it from the conscious daydreams of *fantasy* (Frosh, 2012a, p. 25).

The relationship to, and with, objects, which are both external and internally developed, is "a changing and dynamic process" (Gomez, 1997, p. 3). We both influence how we experience objects and how we are influenced by them. In using an object, we are "played" by it (Bollas, 2006, p. 28). In a state of experiencing, Bollas suggests a distinction "is no longer possible", between the subject and the object, we inhabit a "third area of self-experience" (2006, p. 31), an area Winnicott called potential space (2005, p. 144). From professional paediatric experience, Winnicott (Phillips, 2007, p. 6) developed work in the sphere of the mother-infant relationship, particularly in connection to holding and environmental care of the infant, and how, and in what

space we experience these objects (2005). Later, Bollas (2006) considers how individuals and wider society, in terms of generations, use objects in adult life, books and music in his examples. Use of these objects “conjure[s] up different ‘mes’” (Bollas, p.37), helping to manage the “complex relation each of us has to ourself” and, in some ways, “take on the tasks of our mothers and fathers” (Bollas, 2006, p. 25), providing an environment with potential space, holding, and care. These theories underpinning object relations form the framework and the methodological approach for this research.

2.2.1 The psychosocial and psychocultural

In 2011, Richards and Brown noted a growth in “different broadcast genres of narratives of interiority” (p. 18), of emotion and reflection. The foregrounding of emotion in popular culture, provides a particular link with psychoanalysis. This study recognises how the “feelingful” (Bainbridge and Yates, 2011, 2012), has become prominent in lifestyle television shows, it therefore applies object relations theories to this exploration of *TRS*, adopting a psychosocial approach, through which to examine its particular success.

The psychosocial has provoked considerable debate (Frosh, 2008; 2019; Bainbridge and Yates, 2012; Yates, 2018; Giffney, 2021). The term has “emerged as an umbrella term [...] to represent an area of research since the 1990s” (Giffney, 2021, p. 10), yet “there is no hegemonic version of psychosocial studies” (Frost and Jones, 2019, p. 4). In 2014, Whitehouse-Hart wrote that,

“[p]sychosocial research can be characterised by an interest in ways in which the ‘out there’ of the social world of discourse, disciplinary practices and power relationships, is taken up by the ‘in here,’ of the psychological and unconscious world. However, the ‘in here’ “colours the social world it encounters” (Whitehouse-Hart, 2014, p. 8),

with its own experiences and fantasies. The psychosocial recognises that “psychic and social processes [are] ... implicated in each other as mutually constitutive and co-produced [...] to be read together” (Frosh, 2019, p. 101) offering an “holistic approach to the individual and the situation they find themselves in” (Giffney, 2021, p. 13).

Within the territory of the psychosocial, the psychocultural considers how cultural artefacts are ‘used’ within the contexts of the inner psychical and outer social experience. The field pays particular attention to affective and emotional aspects of experience (Bainbridge and Yates, 2014; Yates, 2018; Yates, 2019), puts the case for the study of television needing to “take account of the identifications and fantasies that might take place between and within viewers,

the text and the lived experience of the immediate environment, also the wider context of culture and society” (Yates, 2018, p.1). Viewers can relate to “emotional journeys of protagonists” (p. 4) and thus be encouraged to “work through personal and cultural anxiety” (p. 5), or at least articulate “difficult feelings and emotions” (Whitehouse-Hart, 2014, p. 10).

The exploration of what Bonner (2003) called “ordinary television”, and the responses it provokes for and within viewers, promotes the consideration of the cultural and social narratives and fantasies that prompted their construction and are embedded within them, that is, wider psychosocial implications. “The psycho-cultural privileges a commitment to reflective thinking about cultural objects and experiences” (Giffney, 2021, p. 20), however, the term psychosocial with its transdisciplinary associations (Brown, 2000; Frosh, 2019; Giffney, 2021), its unification of areas of experiencing and emotion that we negotiate to form and reflect upon relationships with the world around us, recognises, more appropriately, the concerns of this project. The processes at play between the psychical, social, and cultural, or their borders and distinctions, are seldom clear, the relationship is porous and shifting, with each contributing to, and feeding off, the other.

For many, objects once belonging to others encourage emotional and possibly affective responses, that is spontaneous, indeterminate bodily experiences, unlike emotions which can be named. Clarke and Hoggett’s (2009) and Hollway and Jefferson’s (2013) psychosocial approaches to research provides a way with which to consider emotional responses, to look at links and contradictions within stories, or, what they term ‘whole data’. With similarities to narrative research and visual/narrative research with objects, this methodology allows the research participant to guide the encounter. Adopting a psychosocial framework does not mean analysing interviewees but recognising that their inner world is not simply a reflection of the outer world, that participants may not be able to provide reasons why they act or react as they do (Dahlgren, 2013).

2.3 Attitudes to touch

2.3.1 Social attitudes to touch

Touch has physical and emotional elements; it is given and simultaneously received; it may be joyous or frightening, comforting, or aggressive. It could be argued that because of this

ambiguity, touch is the one sense most set about with social rules and the one most derided and ignored.

The everyday stories we recount to one another about ourselves highlight touching moments, but, other than in difficult or romantic circumstances, rarely accentuate the emotional impact of physical touching that occurs during the narrative. Frequently, the most important parts of any anecdote or report are what happened next (Forster, 1975, p.35). We offer plot points suggesting motive and reasons for the actions and feelings of others: sometimes going to considerable lengths to explain how events ‘touched’ us emotionally, but we seldom dwell on the physical caresses, embraces or blows that may, somatically, prompt or play up the moods or sentiments that we experience during the incidents we recount. It is as if in our current, technological machine age, we are touched rather than touch; feeling has been transmuted into something that can quite happily be perceived without a body. Montagu (1986) writes that the proximity senses, touch, taste, smell, develop during infancy. “As soon [...] as one has developed through one’s tactile senses the know-how of being human, vision assumes a special importance” (p. 315), and what Montagu terms distance senses, become paramount. Psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu in a discussion with Gilbert Tarab, (Anzieu and Tarrab, 1990), also demonstrates concern over this development. Both point to the “very large vocabulary” of idioms that we use when trying to communicate the tactile preverbal “true voice of feeling” (Montagu, 1986, p. 314), suggesting a desire and necessity to return to “affective closeness [...] which [...] is being lost” (Anzieu and Tarrab, 1990, p. 4). Physical touch is becoming peripheral, a sense which is a medium for meaningful acts, the peace-making handshake or kiss for example, rather than meaningful of itself (Classen, 2005).

Within western societies there has been a decline in participation in civic life and social networks, a loss of “social capital” (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). Long working hours, long commutes (Stevens et al., 2005), and technology (Putnam 2000; Kobayashi et al., 2015) have been condemned for this withdrawal. However, anxiety generated by terror attacks, 9/11 in the US for example, and global lockdowns during the Covid 19 pandemic, has exacerbated the climate of loneliness (Putnam, 2000; Cala and Ortega, 2024). Fears for our physical well-being and a lack of trust may be encouraging less sociality, fostering a greater sense of vulnerability (Snider, 2013). However, it is recognised that touch, hugs especially, offers emotional support and acts as a buffer to stress (Mayo et al., 2018; Dueren et al., 2021), yet touch, as a source of pleasure, is becoming taboo; ordinary social touching is hedged about with psychosocial readings that increasingly cast it as sexualised and unacceptable (Classen, 2005).

2.3.2 Psychoanalytic attitudes to touch: introduction

Touch is exploratory. Children feel impelled to touch; they understand it as a way of learning. However, from an early age this pleasure is viewed with suspicion by adults. Culturally, socially, and historically, prohibitions surround touch. Initially, as Anzieu writes, parents could understand that the source of their desire for their offspring not to touch things has care at its heart: “As soon as a child is walking, he [sic] is forbidden to touch dangerous objects or touch in a way that hurts or destroys” (Anzieu and Tarrab, 1990, p. 72). However, as suggested by the casting of touch as sexualised, constraints have unconscious origins. These may not have originated with psychoanalysis, but with the social understanding of the field, which informs attitudes for touch being considered warily. Anzieu regards the proscription to lie in the necessity of the child having to separate itself from the mother, to end the “confusion” of apprehending mother and infant as one body. Additionally, “Don’t touch” can guard against the overwhelming pleasure that may be achieved through persistent touching of one’s own or other bodies as well as the aggressive drive; the unconscious is thereby regulated by the social world (Frosch, 2003, p. 62). Psychologically, socially, and culturally, touch is a sense that needs to be regulated even though it is essential.

Anzieu observed that “the surface of the body is missing from Klein’s theor[ies]” (2016, p. 41). By extension this applies to object relations approaches. Anzieu, despite suggesting the importance of separation, makes the case that touch is early pre-verbal communication. This view is supported in anthropological studies. Montagu (1986) declares that an infant can make assumptions about people “in the same way that adults do when they draw inferences about the character of a person from the quality of his handshake” (p. 107).

It also features in sensory studies (Classen, 1999; 2005; 2014). Anzieu writes of the fantasy of the mother and baby sharing a common skin, which allows the mother to sense the baby’s needs, thus providing an envelope of care. Both emit signals that are mutually understood, and which transcend or pre-figure language. Within object relations, this tactile bond is replaced by the mother “holding”, an infant, and through her awareness while holding the baby, “actively adapting” to her infant, furnishing it with physical and psychological care (Winnicott, 2005, p. 13).

2.3.3 Psychoanalytic attitudes to touch: Winnicott

Didier Anzieu’s emphasis on the mother and infant relationship, and the significance of the process of separation for the development of a healthy sense of self, was strongly influenced by

the ideas of Winnicott, who said: “Only if someone has her arms round the infant at this time can the I AM moment be endured, or rather, perhaps, risked” (1960, p. 148).

Winnicott understood the significant moment in the infant’s development is its recognition of its mother as a separate object or part object, that there are things that are “not me” (2005, p. 2). To negotiate this stage successfully, Winnicott theorised that infants must find an object or a routine that will soothe and comfort them while their mother is absent. This object needs to be something that the infant chooses or conjures themselves. Winnicott provides the example of “... a bundle of wool [...] the corner of a blanket” (2005, p. 2) which the baby may use to caress itself. The sensory world of “not me” confirms and promotes individuality, simultaneously providing a link with the maternal: a sensual psychic memory that offers validation for adult attachment to items from childhood. Winnicott names these items “transitional”, (2005, pp. 1– 34) implying that they are consigned to the unconscious, and deattached, that is lose their emotional charge, when they are no longer needed to represent the mother or the stage of its life. The pleasure in the touch of objects as adults, as in comfortable clothing during lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic for example, remains, as do many of the material transitional objects from infancy.

Winnicott does not overly emphasise the tactility of an infant’s transitional object, that it must exist is more important to him than what it is. “[I]t must seem to give the infant warmth, or to move, or to have texture that seems to show it has a vitality [...] of its own” (2005, p. 7).

2.3.4 Touch providing comfort: holding

The mother’s complete adaptation to her infant’s needs lessens over time so that the child can “develop a capacity to experience external reality” (Winnicott, 2005, p. 14). In Winnicott’s terms, in “holding” her child as it adapts, this mother is “good enough”. (1960, p. 591). She creates an environment in which the baby can thrive. As with Anzieu, this requires close attention to the infant; the mother, the care giver specified in the works of Winnicott and Anzieu, must be aware of the infant’s psychological needs, implement the “whole routine of care throughout the day and night” and “follow day-to-day changes belonging to the infant’s growth and development” (Winnicott, 1960, p. 591). Touching, the physical aspect of these requirements, is implied rather than stated, until Winnicott acknowledges, “holding includes especially the physical holding of the infant, which is a form of loving”. (1960, p. 591). The “good enough mother”, recognised as human and flawed, is nevertheless, attuned to when she needs to care for her baby, as well as when she should, by leaving the infant alone, help it to test and

accept reality, to realise that it and she are separate objects. The infant uses its blanket or piece of cloth to symbolise the union with its mother and allow it to feel the mother's existence and the environment that she has created even when she is not there (Winnicott, 1958, p. 417).

Winnicott observes that it is entirely for the infant to "create, think up, devise, originate, produce" an item to assist it in transitioning away from its mother (2005, p. 2). He suggests that use of the chosen item might persist into childhood, "so that the original soft object continues to be absolutely necessary at bedtime or at a time of loneliness or when a depressed mood threatens" (Winnicott, 2005, p. 5). In adulthood this 'soft' object is succeeded by cultural artefacts: a moving piece of music, literature, or art. If the baby chooses its own transitional loved objects, it is perhaps unusual, and possibly elitist, to suggest such a limited scope for the adult with, potentially, a greater range of psychological needs. The range of objects available for selection must be vast. Silverstone (1999; 2007) has argued that television may become a transitional object for many, providing solace when lonely or faced with a depressed mood. Bainbridge (2019) has furthered the idea by considering how individual programmes may provide potential "for internalisation of the show as an object, permitting its use by viewers to forge new perspectives on their own experiences" (p. 23).

2.3.5 Adult holding environment

An enjoyable book, a piece of music or a much-loved television programme, additional to television itself, could well provide the unconscious resonances of the blanket or teddy bear, of infancy, but none provide the element of physical holding, perfunctorily treated by Winnicott. The smooth and comfortable things the infant lights upon, in their tactile softness, provide, and substitute for, warmth, reassurance and stimulation of the skin that is suggestive of a mother's embrace or caresses. During the 2020–2021 pandemic lockdowns, a period of heightened anxiety, and restricted tactility, there was a movement away from restrictive work clothing even when working from home. The joke was that while you may be dressed formally above the waist while participating in online meetings, underneath the tabletop on which your computer stood, you were wearing your pyjamas and slippers. (Guardian Community Team, 2020; Quayle, 2021). In a tense time, the desire was for comfortable items and softer fabrics; towards feeling soothed and warm.

Warmth, felt through the skin, is wholly bound up with feelings of physical security and hence psychological reassurance. Quoting Otto Fenichel, Montagu (1986, p. 103) links physical and emotional warmth, arguing that to thrive, infants need to be caressed, cuddled, carried and

warm. He overlooks the psychological significance of the attention, of the awareness of “being seen” (Winnicott, 2005, p. 154), in a similar way that Winnicott discounts the importance of the sensory experiences of the skin (Montagu, 1986, p. 103) in ensuring infant survival. Both physical and psychological elements of attention are also crucial for an adult to thrive. Winnicott established that the psychological space required by an adult, the space for play in children, can be achieved through the cultural, which is the emotional and intellectual rather than the affective and physical. Objects of the mind, such as loved, or even troublesome television shows (Whitehouse-Hart, 2014), may offer significant therapeutic benefits. Mediated tactile material objects, and the environment created around them, can be understood to combine both elements, physical and intellectual, hinting at a warming emotional and affective experience. A combination of the two, the televisual and the tactile through a psychosocial lens, has not yet been considered

Winnicott further theorised how an individual may come to tolerate being alone. He considers that to experience being alone and not be able to bear it, must be suffering “beyond imagination” (1958, p. 416). For a person to appreciate solitude someone else must be present. This can be a mother substitute, who may be reliably represented by “the general atmosphere of the immediate environment”. Material objects and media objects may offer this atmosphere. I suggest that *TRS*, with attention to haptic visuality (see 4.5), sound, and the evocation of nostalgia, offers such an atmosphere.

2.3.6 Bollas and subjective investment in objects

Christopher Bollas (2006) explains that people unconsciously invest material with particular feelings so that certain moods and emotions become connected to specific items. These items are then ‘used’ to experience the state that has unconsciously been stored within them (p. 21).

Bollas explores how, psychoanalytically, introjection may not only involve the “loss of those parts of the self-projected into the object” (p. 22) but that a person may “project a part of himself into the object, thus physically signifying it. This gives the object meaning, converting it into a tool for possible thought: the thinking that is special to the dream state” (p. 22).

This form of projection is not a conscious act as “the subject must ‘lose himself’ at the moments of experience when he projects meaning into objects” (p. 22). It involves a “simplified consciousness” where a person “is out of touch with himself [sic] for a moment” (p. 22). Inside a “daydreaming” we can “furnish an unconscious matrix for dreams, fantasies, and deeper

reflective knowings” (p.23), it is the “complex reflecting self” which aims to “objectify as best as possible where one has been or what is meant by one’s actions” (p. 15).

Not all self-knowings, are sought. Some material objects, referred to here as ‘shadow objects’ (see Section 6.2), are consciously concealed in dark physical recesses of the house, or depths of the unconscious. Explication for these items may be furthered by Freud’s *Unheimlich* (1919), his notion of the uncanny as the unfamiliar familiar and a consideration of ‘hauntology’ where what should be past and over intrudes into the present (Good, 2021; Tennakoon, 2023). Turkle’s study (2007), and television programmes, for example, *Antiques Roadshow* (BBC, 1979–) and *Cash in the Attic* (BBC, 2002–2012), have examined benign or financial relationships with items, this study, though, explores the messy and ambivalent nature of connections to, and with, familial and inherited material possessions, and the fantasies, as well as phantasies, that surround them.

2.3.7 *The Repair Shop* as media object

As will be investigated later, in Section 6.3.5, *TRS* can be seen as an object itself which can invite the unconscious processes of projection of “acquired feelings and images” and introjection where the external reality of the inner world is taken into the self (Gomez, 1997, p. 35). As part of a constant interplay, “recycling almost of a perception and feeling between inner and outer worlds” (Gomez, 1997, p. 35), what is outside may be taken into the self “and made part of [his or her] phantasy” (Frosh, 200, p. 108). The programme has the potential to become a good object, combining one’s own ‘good objects’, family, for example, that it can magnify, or it may take projections of family or other restrictions, thereby becoming a ‘bad object’.

Bainbridge (2019), has written of television as a psychical object, arguing that individual programmes may become “media objects of the mind”, with her work on *Mad Men* (2007–2015) considering “how on-screen characters can seemingly speak so intimately to personal emotional and psychological experiences” (p. 292). Fiction grants identity with characters and can offer access to “the hidden life at its source” (Forster, 1975, p. 53). Makeover/lifestyle television, with its cast of ‘real’ people, can only present “the hidden life that appears in external signs” (Forster, 1975, p. 53), however, it still provides “experiences of and with other people and the lived environment” (Bainbridge, 2019, p. 293). In this way, it is of consequence when the number and popularity of “ordinary” (Bonner, 2003) shows, such as *TRS*, is contemplated, it is pertinent to consider “what we *do* with cultural artefacts [...] in terms of shared experience and in terms of psychological fantasy” (Bainbridge, 2019, p. 293). Linking “emotional responses to

[...] the psychical processes at work” while we watch requires a rethinking “of the role played by television”, (Bainbridge 2019, p. 301), indeed a consideration what type of object it is.

2.3.8 Loss of objects: mourning and grief

Freud, Klein, Winnicott, and Bollas are concerned with human relationships; internal and external, and how, “[e]ach of these worlds affects the other” (Gomez, 1997, p. 2). In concentrating on damaged objects, people and “non-human things” (Gomez, 1997, p. 2), *TRS* attends to grief and mourning in its many guises.

In *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917/2014) Freud identified mourning as the painful frame of mind following “the loss of someone who is loved” (p. 243), which, while difficult to accommodate, lacked the “disturbance of self-regard” of melancholia, a pathological state, which left “nothing over for other purposes or interests” (p. 243). Klein develops these ideas, grief and working through are central to her work. Although concerned with infant development Klein (1989) recognises that a child’s early mourning, the paranoid-schizoid position, “is revived whenever grief is experienced in later life” (p. 344). The baby “attempts to manage the disruptions, deprivations and anxieties which Klein assumed were crucial features of birth and early post-natal life” (Gomez, 1997, p. 37), by splitting them into “what he feels is good and what he feels is bad experience” (Gomez, 1997, p.37). Klein (1989) argued that the mourner “takes into himself [...] the person whom he has just lost [and] also reinstates his internalized good objects (ultimately his loved parents), who became part of his inner world from the earliest stages” (p. 353). For Klein, just as the young child seeks to pass through a stage of “anxieties, guilt and feelings of loss and grief derived “from the loss of his mother’s breast (p. 353), so the mourner goes struggles to re-establish and reintegrate his inner world” (p. 354). For Klein grief and mourning may become reparative and creative. However, Freud’s essay is seminal in the depiction of grief and uncomplicated mourning on *TRS*. Here, the “orders” (Freud, 1917, p. 245) of reality are achieved “bit by bit, at great expense of time and cathartic energy [... with ...] the existence of the lost object [... being...] psychically prolonged” until the ego can become “free and uninhibited again” (Freud, 1917, p. 245).

2.4 Shame and guilt

It is not unusual for mourning to be accompanied by contrition and feelings of embarrassment, shame, and guilt (Volkan, 2019). All require self-awareness and appreciation of social context for recognition and their effect.

Embarrassment, the mistaking of social requirements and niceties, is perhaps the least psychologically damaging feeling on the continuum of contrition. Potentially acutely distressing at the time, it offends group norms or expectations less seriously being focussed on self-presentation.

Socially, shame is employed to impose particular behaviours, usually non-moral. It is not normally “focussed on responsibility issues” (Miceli and Castelfranchi, 2018, p. 711). Piers and Singer (1971) point out that shame arises from intrapsychic tensions “between the ego and the ego ideal” (p. 23), when the subject does not reach the perfection, they have set for themselves. Psychoanalytically, shame has preverbal and affective qualities which are rooted in infancy (Mollon, 2004, Merrick and Goldin, 2024, p. 231). The defences against shame can be linked to paranoid schizoid states of mind, in that shame is denied, split off, or projected. With inherited items, passed on from parent to a, usually, adult child, the feelings surrounding the piece can be a reflection or a repudiation and denial of the relationship, which may be displayed as repressed anger. Mollon (2004) suggests that guilt, a “response to harmful and prohibited actions or phantasies of such actions” (p. 28), can be an aggressive counter to the “weakness” (p. 28) of shame and the failure to do what is expected.

As a private emotion, shame is nevertheless “extremely painful and ugly” (Tangney and Dearing, 2002, p. 3) for those experiencing it, encouraging them to hide “the horrible self from the view of others” (Tangney and Dearing, 2002, p. 92), possibly through fear of abandonment or contempt (Piers and Singer, 1971).

Tangney and Dearing (2002) contend that “[w]hen people feel shame over a particular failure or transgression, they [berate] themselves not just for the specific event” (p. 92), they damn themselves as flawed and unworthy. As a defence against such feelings individuals may deflect the blame outward, towards others.

Guilt can be “clearly differentiated” from shame (Piers and Singer, 1971, p. 44), although “most people cannot provide consistent and meaningful definitions” (Tangney and Dearing, 2002, p. 21); it displays a moral element, “a power and willingness to be harmful” (Miceli and Castelfranchi, 2018, p. 711) caused by “painful internal tension [whenever] the emotionally charged barrier erected by the superego is [...] touched or transgressed” (Piers and Singer, 1971, p. 16). In contrast to shame, an individual is aware of what they feel guilty about and can respond positively. As outlined by Klein (1998), they can feel the need to repair their wrongdoing as they are able to empathise and take responsibility for their actions. For Klein, this capacity to tolerate “thirdness”, to move out of the narcissistic state and into one where it is possible to

acknowledge and empathise with another is a sign of maturity. (1998, p. 311) Guilt can be a shared emotion: shame, especially social shame, based on taste and class, effectively a collective affect. Shame works on a “fear of disconnection”, that an individual is “unworthy of connection” (Brown, 2012, pp. 6869). Brown argues that acknowledging vulnerability and seeking connection despite one’s feelings of shame would allow it to be overcome.

Tangney and Dearing (2002) argue that those feeling guilt are less quick to anger. Offering family items for repair, either locally or at *TRS*, indicates a desire for reparation, suggesting a person might feel guilt concerning an aspect of their broken or dilapidated possession or relationship; passivity could indicate shame, reactions explored in Chapter 4 of this study.

2.5 The importance of touch

From a psychoanalytic point of view, Anzieu is concerned that society is moving away from using and understanding touch to such a degree that it is probably necessary to relearn it (Anzieu and Tarrab, 1990, p. 67). He says, “[a]s soon as a child is walking, he is forbidden to touch” (Anzieu and Tarrab, 1990, p. 72). Classen, working in the field of sensory studies, marks the decline of the social and cultural significance of touch. During the Middle Ages, hand clasping and kissing were recognised as establishing and binding contractual obligations more powerfully than the written word (Classen, 2014, p. 102): bodily commitment carried corporeal consequences. “Laying hands” on an object actually and symbolically indicated possession of the item or person (Classen, 2014, p. 102). This physicality and tactility sit well with a society where community and membership of a physical social grouping are pre-eminent. The rise in the importance of individual identity, and the ascendancy of the life of the mind over the appreciation of the apprehension of the senses, not only degraded the significance of touch, but characterised it as problematic even prior to psychosocial interpretations. Touch and the body have been placed in opposition to one another, with the subjective “tangled, sticky bumpy nature of touch” (Classen 2005, p. 5) devalued in comparison to epistemic objectivity (Calhoun, 2004).

Touch, though, has persisted with some of its subjective, emotional, and possibly superstitious associations. Classen recounts the story of the nineteenth-century poet Horace Smith touching an ancient Egyptian sarcophagus in the British Museum. The aim was to appreciate a physical and emotional connection with the past, a common attraction for the public at the time when visiting exhibitions (Classen, 2012, p. 269). To experience items intimately, to encounter an artefact’s original makers and users, it was expected that an object could be perceived tangibly.

In a culture which promotes sight over the other senses the idea of an emotional connection seems fantastic, yet the desire to touch remains. A letter to *The Times*, at the end of 2022, narrates an encounter in the Kröller-Müller Museum in the Netherlands. A visiting sculptor ran his hands over an exhibit, explaining that the “essence of direct carving was the total experience of the senses”. He lost his argument with the gallery attendant who insisted that the works of art on show were not to be touched (Kindersley, 2022).

A similar idea of tangible connection is evident in contributions in Turkle’s *Evocative Objects* (2007). Susan Pollak recalls her grandmother when she, Pollak, makes cookie dough with her own children using “her wooden rolling pin with its chipped red handles” (Pollak, 2007, p. 227). For her, “[t]his tactile ritual takes [Pollak] back to the warmth of her [grandmother’s] kitchen, the aromas of her cooking and the comfort of her presence” (2007, p. 227). It is not a specific memory that is being recaptured, but an atmosphere of physical and psychological warmth, care and comfort, conjured by the “texture and weight [of the rolling pin] against my floured hands” (2007, p. 227). The item anchors her in the past while simultaneously creating memories for the future.

Classen’s work, and that of Marks (2007), makes the case for touch being one of the ways in which we understand the world: there is no one sense or part of the body that serves as a conduit for all knowledge (Classen, 1999, p. 274). Touch operates and merges with other sensory phenomena (Classen, 2005). It melds the physical and psychical: touching and feeling being complex and intertwined (Garrington, 2013): thus, touch and feeling sit in a nexus of memory, fantasy, imagination, and narrative. Skin, the principal organ through which touch is apprehended, creates the border between us and the carnal world (Garrington, 2013). It provides witness to our conscious memories and unconscious fantasies, (Ahmed and Stacey 2005) and operates as an additional way of thinking (Montagu, 1986) often delivered through objects we keep with us (Turkle, 2007).

Touch as a medium of understanding is still regarded dubiously. Writing about *TRS* in 2023, McCarroll and Kirby considered that “[t]he importance of the physicality of evocative objects is unclear but seems important” (p. 4). This statement demonstrates a lack of sensitivity and a lack of awareness of tactility. Combining haptic visuality (see 4.5) with diegetic and non-diegetic sound *TRS* provides, I argue, Winnicottian “holding” (Winnicott, 1960, p. 585), and a “form of loving” (Winnicott, 1961, p. 591) for a viewer. The mediated representation of this form of perception, explored here, has not yet received significant attention.

2.6 Touch and memory

The process of memory is episodic and fragmented (Turtle, 2007; Keightley and Pickering, 2012; McCarroll and Kirby, 2023). Imagination is required to engage with memory, to fashion links between past, present and future, to “establish continuities” (Keightley and Pickering, 2012, p. 1) over time, interweaving our individual, historical, and social experiences to strengthen our sense of belonging and relating. The memories themselves are not imaginary, they need to be acted upon imaginatively so that we may construct the stories of ourselves (Keightley and Pickering, 2012). The process of memory demands the filling in of fragments that may be irretrievable but provide the opportunity to shift perspective and comprehend anew.

The cultural and psychoanalytic scholar Susannah Radstone (2000) refers to the use of imagination and the fluidity of memory as “fantasy”, proposing it is not linked to “history, community, tradition, the past and authentication” but to “subjectivity, invention, the present, representation and fabrication” (p. 6). From a factual perspective, the unreliability of memory as described by Radstone could suggest futility or unreliability. However, from a psychosocial and cultural perspective, memories from the past are always, at some level, shaped by the processes of subjectivity and by cultural perceptions of history; they grant relatedness in the form of connections to emotion, events, people, and ideas across time. Memory is thus so much more than “exam stuff” (Keightley and Pickering, 2012, p. 5). Material objects become more than just portals to a different time and place. Kaplan (1987) writes about the efficacy of possessions in ensuring that “elderly homeowners” do not forget or feel overwhelmed by the past. “The self as a present body and as past history exist side by side, with possessions yoking them together”. Furthermore objects “stiffen consciousness of self and act in a sense ritually to reinforce or remind the person of who she or he was and still is” (p. 46).

McCarroll and Kirby, (2023) nuance Kaplan’s observation by suggesting that objects and the memories they hold “scaffold recall” (p. 2), with *TRS* repairing memory too. Both, though, suggest that there is a correct or fixed version of the past that is not influenced by the present or the future. In this interpretation, memory is about buttressing personality and ensuring accurate storage and retrieval processes. McCarroll and Kirby suggest the “presence and restoration of restored objects appear to be necessary to elicit restored autobiographical memory” (p. 13), contending that “[p]rior to repair the objects still held memories [...] but their unrepaired forms are less effective retrieval cues” (p. 11).

Sensually recalled memories may be voluntary, a conscious and deliberate recalling of “purposeful reflections” [... or involuntary, when ...] a feeling comes over you whether you want

it to or not” (Sweeney, 2020, p. 188), that is tapping into processes of unconscious affect related to past loves and losses, for example.

In relation to the recall of memories, especially through the use of senses, Marks has proposed that “[w]hat is left out of expression registers somatically, in pain, nausea, memories of smells and caresses” (2007, p. 111), and that sensually embedded memory, unlocked through the mnemonic act of touch (Krasner, 2010) restores “the history that has become fossilized in the object” (Marks, 2007, p. 113).

This power has been harnessed in academic studies (Hannan et al., 2019, Bell, 2013, Mannay, 2020) suggesting that objects connect with memories that might otherwise remain inaccessible. One of the interviewees in the study by Hannan et al. (2019) recalls a Toby jug bought by her father. It sparks a memory of the ornament catching the glow of firelight, which prompts “further insight into her father’s character” (p. 59). In this piece of work, I examine the capacity of material and media objects to prompt personal and social memory of unconscious destructive urges and encourage reparation. Within Kleinian terms this requires the desire to “make sacrifices, in order to help and to put right loved people who in phantasy have been harmed” (1998, p. 311)

2.7 Touch, feeling, emotion and affect

The word “feeling” is polysemic, which creates difficulty not only in distinguishing the physical from the sentiment, but also the type and naming of the experience. Academic boundaries around affect, emotion and feeling often appear “hazy” (Nigel Thrift, in McCosker, 2013, p. 15), not least as the physical reaction is hard to account for (Brennan, 2004) or even properly recognise (Frank and Wilson, 2020). What is possible to agree is that affect is neither reasonable nor intelligent (Gibbs, 2001; Brennan, 2004; Frank and Wilson, 2020). A vague combination of sensory, memory and social prompts, it is transmissible through interaction with people and the environment and is difficult to regulate. However, no matter what is transmitted, affect remains an individual experience: my excitement is different from yours. Schaefer (2019) prefers that “the concept [affect] remains entangled with terms such as feeling, and emotion rather than rigidly channelled into a non-linguistic, non-cognitive, non-personal field”. (2019, p. 2).

Gibbs states how an audience member, walking into a lecture hall may “catch” anxiety from others, experiencing it as a physical tightening of the stomach, a dryness of the mouth or a

reluctance to take their seat. The experience is largely somatic, possibly unnameable. Crociani-Windland and Hoggett (2012) suggest that affect, a spontaneous, indeterminate bodily experience, is distinctly “unruly” (p. 164) and “free-floating” (p. 167). Affect is not attached to an object; it is not possible to point to something and decide that it has made one sad. Emotion has language. Words may not be adequate, but affect, once cognitively recognised, and possibly named, has become contained and linked to discourse. Affects cannot be repressed. However, while “emotions are linked to unconscious processes, it’s the idea not the feeling that is repressed” (Yates, 2019, p. 163). Given this definition for affect and emotion, it is only right to follow Crociani-Windland and Hoggett in their use of the concept of “feeling” to cover “the general area within which we make distinctions along the mind body spectrum” (2012, p. 164) adopting affect to refer to the sensory, somatic, and linguistically ambiguous, while “emotion” is applied to nameable moods and states.

Affect theory has often been placed in opposition to psychoanalysis, as recognised by Crociani-Windland and Hoggett (2012), however, psychoanalytic readings can focus on the “hidden psychical forces that drive the mobilisation of affect” (Yates, 2019, p. 163), and both disciplines share a concern “with unconscious affective processes that find symbolic expression through the subject relationship to real or imagined others” (Yates, 2019, p. 163). Object relations psychoanalysis, which “places relationship at the heart of what it is to be human” (Gomez, 1997, p. 1) emphasises recognising affective communication, for example, Anzieu’s attentive Inuit mother (Anzieu and Tarrab, 1990), and Winnicott’s good enough mother (2005), programme participants and family members or artisans on *TRS*, and making it meaningful.

2.7.1 Touch to Emotion

Those such as Biressi and Nunn (2005), Richards (2007), and Bainbridge and Yates (2011, 2012, 2014) argue that television programmes have capitalised on their viewers’ feelings by appropriating the language of therapy. Richards and Brown (2011) suggest that programmes are becoming “characterised by reflexive talk about feelings and our relational worlds”, thereby exhibiting “a therapeutic imagination” (p. 19). Initially reflexive talk seemed to be the mainstay of confessional reality talk shows. The most successful of this genre dealt with issues of personal addiction, family, or romantic relationship problems. They became characterised by shocking revelations, the repercussions of which were the audience draw, rather than subjective recognition, appreciation, or revelation of an unconscious state for the participant. The pleasure for the viewer was understood to lie in the dramatic consequences of disclosures, the

social embarrassment of the participant, or from a feeling that they themselves had made better life choices and were morally superior to the participant (Bonner, 2003; Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Hill, 2005; Gorton, 2009; Turner, 2009). This type of show, identified by the ferocity and frequency of questions directed at those taking part, was not interested in thoughtful consideration of responses nor care for those dealing with the barrage. The most infamous of this genre in the UK, *The Jeremy Kyle Show* (ITV 2005–2019), was hastily taken off air following the suicide of a member of the public. Steve Dymond's death was thought to have been prompted by his failure of a lie detector test on air (Walker, 2019). Hill has noted how reality television has "gone so far down the scripted and structured route that there is a hunger again for the authentic" (2014, p. 23).

The extremes of "tabloidisation" (Turner, 2009) or "belligerent broadcasting" (Higgins et al., 2011, p. 501) are subsiding, giving way to more kindly and consolatory programming which found favour during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period of April 2020 (Ellis, 2020).

Bonner has written about presenters as "television intermediaries with viewers" (2011, p. 1) a role which they must adopt in a successful show. They establish "the warm friendly aura which brings [...] viewers back" (Bonner, 2011, p. 10). More than this, within some lifestyle shows, skilled prompting, or in the case of Gok Wan on *How to Look Good Naked* (Channel 4; 2006–2008), some repeated hinting and coaxing offers participants a way to approach delicate or half-admitted feelings. This reflexive milieu could offer viewers a way to access their own experiences, in an atmosphere of care and emotional warmth. Here, I analyse the structure and processes of consolatory television in its psychosocial context through *TRS*, considering how it could be used as a media object at a time of heightened anxiety.

2.8 Lifestyle television

The terms, lifestyle, makeover, and consolatory, have been used to refer to *TRS* synonymously throughout the study for stylistic felicity. Boundaries within "factual entertainment" (Hill, 2005, p. 14) are volatile and fluid. It is "ordinary" and "disregarded" (Bonner, 2003, p. 2), for Hill (2005), associated with daytime television, promoting a "narrative of transformation [...] foregrounding responses of 'real people'" (p. 23). Brunsdon (2003) recognised the "emphasis on the reveal, not the process" (p. 10), While Heller (2007) noted its "emphasis on physical change" as the "path to genuine expression of one's inner self" (p. 3). **It offers fairy tales and grants wishes (Bratich, 2007, p. 17).**

Comfortable and familiar, “emotion rather than message” (Ellis, 2020, p. 394), lifestyle programming does not challenge. Offering consolation and connection, its focus is on “the domestic- home, garden, food, clothes” (Bonner, 2003, p. 44). TRS is unusual in foregrounding death and grief, problems for which “mastering the cha-cha-cha” (Heller, 2007, p. 3) or any self-improvement genre is not the solution.

Bratich argues “the closest cultural form to RTV [reality television] is ... the fairy tale” (2007, p. 7). The preoccupation of TRS with memory and mourning does not preclude the programme from adopting elements of “magic” and “enchantment” (Warner, 2018, p. 14): the artisans appear to possess “supernatural powers”; the show participants’ encounters with the craftspeople changes their “past/present/future” (Bratich, 2007, p. 17–8) and their entrance into a world of “wishful hoping,” where “magic is part of the everyday reality” (Warner, 2018, p. 74), allows the programme to “make[s] over its audience as much as its protagonists” (Bratich, 2007, p. 20).

Beyond this is the greater “magic tale” (Warner, 2018, p. 14) of TRS, where “broken Britain” (Ross, *The Times*, December, 2022) is “fixed”: Brexit divisions vanish, the United Kingdom is restored with the four nations in harmony; keeping calm and carrying on triumphs over COVID-19 and “we” share a vision of a green and pleasant land where migrants and refugees are welcome.

Lifestyle shows encourage acceptance of the institutions and ideologies they depict (Gorton, 2009, p. 101). Of significance for this project is the rendering and repression of aspects of family and class. Family is understood as “a place of safety, closeness, intimacy, a place where we can comfortably belong and be accepted as we are” (Kuhn, 2002, p. 1). Families may quibble jocularly, but never disagree, they create solidarity from boundless love, likeness in demeanour and opinions (Bonner, 2003) that they have in common with the audience. There is no place for ex-partners or overtly single-parent families. Lifestyle families are loving, loyal, uncomplaining, plucky, and determined to provide for offspring.

Family groupings featured on British programmes are usually White, heteronormative, and nuclear, although “membership of a family unit may be quite diverse” (Bonner, 2003, p. 110). Other family types, extending to LGBTQ+ family relationships, are more evident on “ordinary tv” (Bonner 2003), they are represented, but less frequently. It is not possible to agree that lifestyle television has made “LGBTQ+ narratives and characters visible on a previously unseen scale” (McNicholas Smith, 2020, p. 1). Although deviations are never wholly made explicit, the

trajectory of relationships favoured on shows, “romance, marriage, children and grandchildren” (Bonner, 2003, p. 110), is changing.

The certainty with which family is presented is not extended to class, which seems non-existent. “[N]ot overtly a subject”, according to Bonner (2003, p. 164), it is nevertheless noticeable (by audiences) in speech, occupation, and dress of those involved. Partly through lifestyle shows, these have been framed as “lifestyle choices” (Gorton, 2009, p. 161) or tastes (Bennett, 2010, p. xxiii), which may explain the limited discussion of its presentation in academic literature. Bonner observes that class is only raised in autobiographical comments during “sociable exchanges” (2003, p. 164), however, it is not absent. Certain class profiles are attached to particular programme types, “upper and upper-middle-class accents are rare away from programmes on stately [...] or historic homes” (2003, p. 164). Such homogenous groupings of people into programmes obscure the consequences of class identification.

2.9 Touch on television

It may seem fruitless to seek tactile experiences as a viewer from the audio-visual medium of television, more so in the lifestyle genre of what Bonner (2003) terms “ordinary television”, the “disregarded programmes” (p. 1) addressing the mundane concerns of ordinary people. For Giddens (1991) and Bratich (2007), the lifestyle genre offers transformation akin to a fairy tale, proffering a “material form to a particular narrative of self” (Giddens, 1991, p. 81), or at least “profound modification” brought about with the help of appropriate knowledge and allies (Bratich, 2007, p. 17).

For these metamorphoses to seem credible the viewer needs to suspend disbelief, usually by being wrapped in emotion (Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Hill, 2005; Gorton, 2009; Ellis, 2020): to feel rather than think. It has been noted that emotional content concerning participants may be constructed through, among other practices, valorisation of the body (Biressi and Nunn, 2005), emotional excess (Gorton, 2009), and “skilled performance of self” (Hill, 2005, p. 74). The absence of spoken language is understood by the viewer to indicate an experience felt, or recounted, “... too ‘real’ to be expressed by words alone”, requiring non-verbal “physical registers” (Biressi and Nunn, 2005, p. 111) to communicate its full and authentic import and to allow viewers to share, “the innermost secrets of those filmed” (p. 112), thereby claiming authenticity: the tears or silences of participants (and artisans) on *TRS* claim authenticity. The meaning and place of touch or physical gestures for participants in lifestyle programmes, here exemplified by *TRS*, has not yet been fully explored.

2.9.1 Seeing touch: haptic visuality

Bousé, (2003), Marks (2007), and Waade and Jørgensen (2010), consider how being shown things in minute detail, that we could “never see in real life” (Bousé, 2003, p. 123), can create a sense of closeness, proximity and intimacy: draw a viewer in, allowing them to become a participant not merely an observer. Such proximity may encourage affect; however, combined with haptic visuality the impact is heightened.

Marks (2007) writes about haptic visuality in connection with independent film and the recreation and drawing out of somatic memories. Waade and Jørgensen (2010) consider its application in lifestyle television and art. Haptic visuality is a way of perceiving images through sight which invites appreciation of texture and materiality, thus prompting a synaesthetic response from a viewer. A haptic image draws the eye to foreground objects, allowing time for the gaze to move over the image, appreciating the texture and substance before the viewer fully realises exactly what the object is. In this way “multisensory apparatus is brought into play” (Waade and Jørgensen, 2010 p. 86).

Lifestyle television does not usually allow the gaze to linger on items. More in tune with a glance (Ellis, 1992), camera movement directs the look over the surface of an object sometimes prompting unconscious affects, emotions, and memories. Waade and Jørgensen (2010) contend that haptic images, combined with proximity can “generate the feeling of co-presence” (p. 88), suggesting that proximity and tactility may engender affect.

2.9.2 Hearing touch

Touching with the voice “is a sensation recognised in radio broadcasting, to the extent where a listener can feel “held in a warm embrace” of a voice (Karpf, 2013, p. 63). Karpf (2013) argues that radio has an aural field of 360°, which is different to that of television, where “the viewer casts their gaze at a speaker or sound producing image positioned opposite them” (p. 64).

The tactile sense is the first to appear in an embryo, (Anzieu, 2016, p. 66); while by 28 weeks the foetus can hear. Its surrounding audio landscape comprises the sounds of the mother’s body and voice: both actively holding the baby and producing a secure environment. In a psychological sense this provides the maternal voice with the capacity, “at its best”, to continue containing the child (Karpf, 2013, p. 63). As we grow, unconscious memories of our beginnings

enable us to be held “in the warm embrace of someone’s voice” (Karpf, 2013, p. 63). Again, a separate sense, hearing, is described in terms of comforting tactility.

Being held, especially as an infant, is physiological and psychological, as body and consciousness are not distinct at this early stage. In Winnicottian terms, the care of holding is reliable and empathetic, paying close attention to individual needs, thereby constructing a safe and secure environment. Mediated voices are recognised as creating surety. The disembodied nature of the voice, similar to that of the mother’s prior to birth, can be understood as “strong enough to absorb anxiety and transform it” (Karpf, 2013, p. 65), to reassure the listener that powerful unbearable feelings can be contained; in the process, becoming less destructive and damaging. The voice of a presenter or announcer has “some extra-verbal quality” (Karpf, 2013, p. 61) that works at an emotional (Alburger, 2012) and unconscious level. “Although touch itself is not an emotion, its sensory elements induce the neural glandular, muscular, and mental changes which in combination we call an emotion” (Montagu, 1986, p. 128).

For Anzieu it is also the case that silences could provide the environment in which “a bodily gesture of comfort” could be imagined (1990, p. 74) by him, if not his patient.

Reception of a particular type of voice, delivered in a singular manner may allow the process to work in the opposite direction: from emotion to physicality, thereby reproducing the reassurance of sensual touch.

2.9.2.1 Listening to touch

Psychoanalyst Andrea Sabbadini makes a case for sound being central to the creation of intimacy at a young age. “Silent feeding sessions with a mother never addressing sound or words to her baby may be distressing for the child” (2014, p. 125). This develops the idea that being talked to and heard is as important as being seen and mirrored (Winnicott, 2005). The sounds of items being offered for repair, of work, and a voiceover on *TRS*, may help to create an aurality reminiscent of being held as well as heard.

Bollas considers how we continue to use sound to render “all experiences to the self” (2006, p. 41). We process what we experience in different ways, visually, sonically or somatically for instance, so a sound may unlock an area of experience that vision does not. It is unlikely that a viewer seeks out *TRS* specifically for its music or voices, but the sounds may surprise and provide access to a “different me” (Bollas, 2006, p. 37).

2.10 Television, touch and COVID-19

As COVID-19 spread during 2020, restrictions on personal meetings became stringent, “non-essential contact” with those outside one’s immediate familial group was discouraged (UK Health Security Agency, 2020). Although legally allowed, people were led to understand contact was illegal (Dodsworth, 2021, p. 225): one in twenty adults reported someone else to the police for breaking quarantine restrictions (Spiegelhalter and Masters, 2021).

Locked down, unable to leave home for other than essential reasons, many people turned to television to ease boredom or as “a reprieve [...] from worry and anxiety brought about by changed circumstances” (Xu et al., 2021, p. 2). Ellis (2020), notes how, between 6–12 April 2020, Easter Week, “measured TV viewing grew by 23%” (p. 393), compared to the previous year. People were turning to “consolatory entertainment” in their desire for connection (Ellis, 2020, p. 393).

A study exploring people’s use of nature during the first lockdown period, has suggested that stills and videos accessed via social media elicited “a variety of hedonic well-being outcomes” (Xu et al., 2021, p. 2), providing a further possible reason behind the short clips of countryside and nature inserted into the format of *TRS*. Attitudes to human touch in television drama at this time have also been examined. Writing in the wake of #Metoo and COVID-19, Horeck and Berridge (2024) note that there has been a shift in attitudes to touch; now it is normal to ask for consent, which may account for the lack of social touch on *TRS* post-COVID. Nevertheless, in praising productions for their choreographed depictions of closeness, there has been no attempt to consider the impact of the depiction of intimacy on viewers who could not physically be close to loved ones. Episodes of *TRS* shown at this time were shot before restrictions took hold, thus contributing a tension to the consolation being sought by viewers.

2.11 Summary

Researchers in the field of touch lament how “modern scholars and society alike tend to discount the importance of tactile pleasures” (Classen, 2005, p. 75). Equally neglected until recently (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023), is the way in which touch and repair assists the formation of memory. Turkle’s *Evocative objects* (2007) links material goods to memory and unconscious feeling but does not investigate the emotional or affective processes through which the touch of an item may trigger a narrative of remembrance or a recollection of experience. For Turkle it is the item rather than the touch which is significant. McCarroll and Kirby (2023) argue that

“objects can improve scaffolded recall and bring memories back to life” (p. 1), however, they do not understand “the importance of physicality in evocative objects” (p. 2). Previous research (Hurdley, 2006; Turkle, 2007; Miller, 2008; Krasner, 2010; Hannan et al., 2018; McCarroll and Kirby, 2023) has largely overlooked the importance of the feel of an object in the creation of a subjective meaning making narrative within which a subject can locate themselves, or create fantasies of, a familial or cultural history, or indeed the possible range of experiences that the touch of items might generate. Research has not addressed ambivalent feelings towards familial or inherited objects.

That visual media, film and television, primarily concentrate on image and sound to convey meaning is not remarkable, what is, however, is the discounting of the effect and possible affect, of the textural details employed: Zborowski (2012) concentrates on how the visual is used to create synaesthesia and structure desire in lifestyle property programmes; Waade and Jørgensen (2010) on how hapticity can conjure proximity and closeness for a viewer. Both choose not to explore beyond textual analysis and aesthetics, thereby evading consideration of significant emotional responses which foregrounding of the textural, tactile, or haptic could offer viewers, an area that this thesis embraces.

It is possible that the framing of touch in the present social climate as hazardous (Bradfield, 2022; Maddox, 2022; Franklin, 2022), has led to broadcast media delimiting how it is shown, thereby overlooking the tactile completely. While it is acknowledged that touch is a medium for meaningful acts (Classen, 2005, p. 2), few studies in the field of lifestyle television have sought to examine how tactility and texture is constructed within the genre and medium. Waade and Jørgensen exemplify cookery programmes, investigating the “haptic images of place and food that [produce] a specific sensual and emotional relation between the screen and the viewer” (2010, p.85): Zborowski’s concern is the property lifestyle shows that emphasise tactility and texture.

The range of experiences available through specific programmes for viewers has been the subject of previous research (Bainbridge, 2012, 2019, Lennon-Patience and Røkeberg, 2019). Two matters arise from these studies: their emphasis is primarily upon how prompted emotions may encourage a reflexive reworking of ideas of selfhood (Bainbridge, 2019, p.300); while the experience of the body considered is one of hardship. Bainbridge writes of Joan’s rape, in the show *Madmen* (2007–2015) while Lennon-Patience and Røkeberg, feature Jonathan Phang’s escape from the sinking *Marchioness* party boat. Classen suggests that pleasure is a rare subject for scholars (2005, p.75), it might also appear a rare subject for television which is

desirous of witnessing the privations of celebrities in the jungle (*I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here*, ITV 2002–) or climbing mountains for the charity Comic Relief (Kilimanjaro, 2009, 2019; Cairn Gorm 2023) rather than in communicating affective and emotional pleasure from sewing, gardening or as this study will investigate, the witnessing the repair of damaged items.

2.12 Originality

Building on the work of Bainbridge (2013, 2014, 2019) and Yates (2013, 2018, 2021), who take a psychoanalytically informed approach to cultural analysis of the work of Bonner (2003), on ordinary television, Bell and Hollows (2001) and Brunsdon (2003) on lifestyle television and Mosely (2000), and Holdsworth (2011) on consolatory television, my research addresses an area which few have explored – the role of haptic visuality/tactility in lifestyle television. My study adopts an object relations psychoanalytic framework, which draws on the work of Melanie Klein (1998), D. W. Winnicott (1958, 1960, 1965, 1967, 1975, 2005) and Christopher Bollas (2006, 2018), in order to consider the popular BBC lifestyle genre programme *TRS* through a psychoanalytic lens.

Whilst Hyland (2021) has explored the educational role of the practical, craft, vocational and affective values in *TRS*, there are few published academic studies to date considering the show, and none combining textual analysis of the programme with interviews and focus group responses as viewers, as my study does

A significant body of literature, in a variety of disciplines, sociology, epidemiology, statistics, and psychoanalysis has studied the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical and mental health (Spiegelhalter and Masters, 2021) social attitudes (Cooper, Dolezal and Rose, 2023), and play (Le Birge, 2023). However, work exploring texts as “media objects of the mind” (Bainbridge, 2019, p. 3) during this time period are scarce. My study explores the meaning of *TRS*, on screen and with viewers, at a time impacted by COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns in Britain.

Whilst there has been qualitative research on personally important material objects, some of which have been inherited, (Turkle 2007; Miller, 2008; Hannan et al., 2018) my study not only considers the themes of *TRS* in focus groups but seeks authentication in exploring participants’ emotional and tactile relationships to their own inherited objects in in-depth interviews.

My study addresses the research gaps outlined, making an original contribution to scholarship on visual hapticity, psychosocial understandings of our relationships to lifestyle/consolatory

television, and to inherited material objects, in relation to *TRS* (2017- 2023) and the COVID-19 pandemic (2020– 2021).

The following chapter will outline the aims, methods and objectives of this research. It will lay out the methodological approach, the reasoning behind the use of examples from *TRS*, and the use of focus group and individual qualitative interviews. Ethical considerations will be discussed, as will the limitations of the project and the possibilities for further work.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Philosophically this thesis is interpretivist. A small-scale qualitative study, it explores subjective understanding of the world, offering insights into individuals' relationships with touch, emotions, and memory. It recognises connections and influences in and between people and the world they experience. Analytically it offers possibilities rather than solutions, investigations rather than resolutions.

I adopt a psychosocial approach to exploring the effects and affects of *TRS* and its place within the contemporary social and cultural context of Britain. In this chapter I will outline the various components of my research and their relationships to one another, namely:

- A. Broad preliminary thematic analysis of 52 episodes of *TRS* (see Appendix A)
- B. Close textual analysis of selected *TRS* segments of episodes chosen as representative of the recurring themes as identified above as well as of pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic broadcast periods.
- C. Focus groups with participants in the core audience demographic for *TRS*, in which they were shown clips of the show, elicitation technique taken from the episodes previously subjected to textual analysis in B.
- D. One-to-one, in-depth interviews with participants from the focus groups in C, in which they were asked to bring two objects for discussion – one inherited/meaningful object that they would take to an airing of *TRS* and another, inherited/meaningful in some way, but associated with more ambivalent feelings which they would not feel comfortable offering *TRS*.
- E. Field notes which form part of the psychocultural reflective researcher ethos of the project.

Aim

To explore the role of emotion and tactility in the BBC TV show *TRS*, including its place within the larger COVID-19 pandemic/Brexit psychodrama of the UK.

Objectives:

1. To explore the construction of tactility and emotion in *TRS* [Method A – textual analysis]
2. To explore the experiences of touch, and tactile meaning in *TRS* for audiences [Methods B and C – focus groups and in-depth interviews]
3. To explore the depiction of themes of family, loss, love, memory, mourning, and reparation in *TRS* including in their larger pandemic and post-Brexit contexts [Method A – textual analysis]
4. To explore audiences' emotional responses to *TRS* and its major themes, including in their larger pandemic and post-Brexit contexts [Methods B and C – focus groups and in-depth interviews]
5. To explore participants' own emotional and sensory relationships to inherited objects [Method C – in-depth interviews]

3.2 Qualitative mixed methods approach

This thesis is interested in the nature of affect and the emotional responses occasioned by the perceived prominence of tactility created on *TRS* and the touch of inherited family items. Furthermore, it is interested in the social context of the programme and the evoked psychological experiences of my participants. It is not a study of how widely the emotionality of the programme is shared by its viewers. It engages with values and subjectivity, personal and social experience, seeking to explore and interpret rather than explain or generalise (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013; Yardley, 2015). It therefore adopts a qualitative approach, which offers to provide rich (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013) and messy data (Braun and Clarke, 2013) and introduces what may be called discrepancies. It seeks to contribute to the

field of psychosocial studies about the media. It recognises that context is significant, that research is co-constructed “in and through the researcher” (Frosh and Baraister, 2008, p. 358), and that research is not a process of uncovering “truths” about people (Frosh and Baraister, 2008; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013), rather, its purpose is to shed light on how the world, in this case the limited world surrounding inherited material objects, is experienced and subjectively appreciated. Taylor characterises enquiries of this sort as explorations “of problems in terms of the interconnections between subjectivities and societies” (2017, p. 225).

3.2.1 Mapping methodologies: a mixed methods approach

Close textual analysis of selected episodes of *TRS* undertaken here supports the examination of portrayals and representations, promoting appreciation of conventions and processes used in the construction of tactility and emotion on the programme (Objective 1). Using ‘repair’ as a metaphor for methodology I took *TRS* apart textually, to examine how it worked. Employing textual analysis makes it possible to recognise particular ‘stories’ or fantasies about family, loss, love, memory, mourning, reparation, and Britishness circulating through the programme. This research considers these ‘stories’, applying textual analysis to ascertain their inconsistencies and contradictions. (Craib, 2001; McKee, 2003; Feldman and Almquist, 2012; Morey Hawkins, 2018). Subsequently the representations of the themes which emerged were considered within the broader framework of Brexit and UK lockdown periods (Objective 3).

Interpretations reached through textual analysis were triangulated through focus group discussions and interviews, which I considered would provide a range of responses to the highlighted tactility and the representations of noted themes. To delve further into emotional and sensory relationships with inherited objects, focus group participants were invited to individual interviews where they were asked to bring two inherited familial items: one that they wished to be repaired, as on the show; the other that they wished to dispose of but could not bring themselves to destroy. The individual interview provided a more confidential arena than a focus group, more suitable for intimate stories and revelations, as recognised by Hurdley (2006), Miller (2008), Bell (2013), Hannan et al. (2019), and Mannay (2020).

3.2.2 Data collection

I undertook research into mediated touch and the development of emotion, in connection with inherited familial objects, in two stages. Initially it concentrated on the BBC television series *The Repair Shop* (2017–), examining key themes of the show, the impact of foregrounding textural

detail, and investigating the possible effect of the construction of emotion by the programme. Subsequently, it explored focus group participants' own relationships to the show and their own emotional and sensory relationship to inherited objects, through in-depth interviews.

Pre title and opening sections of the selected episodes were included in the textual analysis of the show. These sequences have been altered or amended for different series, possibly as an attempt to refresh viewer experience, on a directorial whim, or the desire to augment and develop the fantasies within the show (Yates, 2018).

3.2.2.1 Selection of episodes: contexts

Given that “a text is something we make meaning from” (McKee, 2003, p. 4), *TRS* offers an abundance of texts from which to undertake the process. The programme was first broadcast on BBC 2 in the early evening slot during March 2017. Since 2020, two series have sometimes run in parallel: one daytime on consecutive weekdays, the other, weekly at prime time. Repeats of series are also aired on the UK and Irish free-to-air channel Quest. As of July 2023, 286 new episodes have been broadcast (BBC, 2023), although the number is increased when re-edited versions are considered. Delimiting such a large body of material is therefore necessary.

To strengthen the case for the choice of specific episodes upon which this study is based I first sampled every fifth show of the 286 episodes broadcast from March 2017 to July 2023. Date of first broadcast, the items presented for repair, their positioning within the show, the reasons given for seeking renovation, from which recurrent themes were deduced, are all recorded (see Appendix A).

3.2.2.2 Textual analysis and the psychocultural

In keeping with a psychocultural approach, I undertook my textual analysis both in relation to the intimate interpersonal and the broader socio-cultural context of the programme, which was impacted by two great schisms in the national psyche in relation to the time period of my research: Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The questions asked of data collected in any research shape the conclusions reached (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). In the case of textual analysis methodology, the interpretations offered for what “people are likely to make of texts” (McKee, 2003, p.80) are bounded by the researcher's interests. In this study, conclusions from textual analysis are supplemented and triangulated through discussions of analysed clips shown in focus groups.

The key area of focus for this thesis is tactility and its impact upon affect, emotions, and feelings. The close textual analysis undertaken concentrated perceptions on how *TRS* constructs and communicates the experience of touch for the viewer in a somatic and feelingful way (Gibbs, 2001; Crociani-Windland and Hoggett, 2012).

The objects presented on *TRS* are the focus for the show and the evocation of a ‘make do and mend’ approach could be understood to play to the widely perceived notion of Brexit Leave voters harbouring nostalgia for, and drawing boundaries of, “proper Britishness” (Stanley, 2022, p. 62). Additionally, filmed inserts of the Sussex countryside or historic rural activities providing transitions between repairs, are therefore also examined to understand how they contribute to the consolidation or creation of Britishness.

As the cultural anxieties associated with the psychodrama of the Brexit vote might have been thought by some to be abating, uncertainty was reanimated with the advent of COVID-19. In March 2020, “life changed” (Spiegelhalter and Masters, 2021, p. 1): people who were not classed as “essential workers”, for example hospital staff, teachers of key workers’ children, delivery drivers and shop assistants, were required to stay in their homes, “... to limit physical human interaction and therefore the transfer of the coronavirus” (Stanley, 2022, p. 157). Physical proximity to those outside the immediate family, even passing in the street, became hazardous and filled with apprehension. Reported levels of anxiety in June 2020 were nearly double those of July 2019–March 2020 (Spiegelhalter and Masters, 2021).

Episodes of *TRS* broadcast at this time were shot prior to these quarantine measures. They heavily feature touching and hugs between participants and craftspeople on the show, as a medium of comfort, care, empathy, and support during emotional moments. Subsequent series have adopted protocols to minimise contact, with the potential for diminishing the environment of care.

3.2.2.3 Selection of episodes: method

Every fifth episode from the total number broadcast to July 2023 was selected and coded for emerging themes. Those which became apparent from this broader thematic analysis (see Appendix A), were family, loss, love, memory, mourning and reparation. Each episode selection for close textual analysis then took account of these major themes and the period of broadcast ensuring that all were represented. Entire episodes were examined to ascertain structure,

processes and rhythms employed on the show and the bearing these had on the creation of emotion. Ten representative programmes of the twelve series of *TRS* were analysed to explore:

- the programme's construction of tactility and emotion;
- its depiction of themes of family, loss, love, memory, mourning and reparation and
- its place within the larger COVID-19/Brexit psychodrama of the UK

However, particular repairs within each programme were analysed for their exemplification of the mediation of key themes, and the role played by the foregrounding of touch in the construction and effect of emotion. My interest in the consequences of the changes of perception of the programme in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, led to three episodes being selected from pre-lockdown broadcast, three were chosen from the lockdown period (2020–2021) and four from after restrictions had been lifted.

Clips from three of the episodes chosen for textual analysis, representing key themes and pandemic periods, were shown within focus groups, providing a chance for triangulation of interpretations.

3.3 Textual analysis

3.3.1 What data was collected?

Conducting textual analysis requires looking for clues in the text which has been selected (Hawkins, 2018), to “best address the research question” as well as employing “messy concepts like originality, creativity and inspiration” (McKee, 2003 p. 73). McKee's illustrations of textual analysis data include aspects of narrative of a television show, processes of chat shows and the denotation of an image. The fine-grained detail of what a viewer might see or hear is missing; interpretations alone are offered. The exception is his inclusion of an example from Brooker's *Batman Unmasked: Analysing a Cultural Icon* (2000) which details how comic book frames are drawn (cited in McKee, 2003, p.76–79), thereby providing authentication for a contentious interpretation.

The implicit attraction for McKee is the image, but beyond this, the processes of the camera work are of importance. Ellis (1992), Lury (2005), Bousé (2010) and Gouyon (2019) recognise the role of the close-up in conveying intimacy and emotion, with Lury (2005) stressing how camera movement assists in the representation of texture. Furthermore, this study pays attention to

framing and the editing of images and how these aspects assist in creating narrative and determining pace and emotion. Nevertheless, Ellis argues that the casual nature of television “engages the look and the glance” rather than the gaze demanded by film and therefore “sound holds more attention more consistently”: “sound carries details” and anchors meaning (1992, p. 128–129). In the light of this, the use of sound has been examined to determine how it adds to atmosphere and pace or draws attention to specific feelings expressed on the show. The contribution of sound as a cue for emotion is explored within film by Smith (2003), while its ability to contain and absorb anxiety are examined in the work of Karpf (2013), however, consideration of its deployment within lifestyle programming is less noted.

Textual analysis included here involves examination of design aspects of *TRS*. Lighting, colour, props, and clothing, not only have an influence in shaping an understanding of what is seen but, relates a narrative and a fantasy that complements and enhances audio visual elements of the programme.

3.3.1.1 *Textual analysis of television texts*

Analysing a television programme comprises the study of its images, sound, *mise en scene*, camera work and editing; the “formal aspects” (Lury, 2005, p. 2), through which an interpretation of a specific text may be “opened up” (p. 2). As well as examining the text itself closely, textual analysis also offers insight into the culture that produced the text and the primary ideas circulating at a particular time and in a particular place. Work by Bonner (2003) on *Antiques Roadshow* (BBC 1979–), Gorton (2009) on *Wife Swap* (C4 2003–2017), Kleinecke-Bates (2010) on *Flog It!* (BBC 2002–) and Holdsworth (2011) on *Who Do You Think You Are* (BBC 2004–), use aspects of textual analysis to provide cogent readings of the programmes in terms of: approaches to the romance of the past and the lure of money; emotion and shame; the past and personal self-development; and memory and belonging, placing them within a recognisable cultural milieu.

Textual analysis, provides conscious, critical reactions: it can ignore the emotional and affective, either in possible responses or in the creation of the image. Adopting an object relations lens, which combines the work of Klein, Winnicott and Bollas, affords “opportunities to get beneath the surface [...] to think about the messy and nuanced” (Bainbridge, 2019, p. 7). In this study it is applied to all data collected.

Employing this method, in conjunction with focus groups and individual interviews, means that it was possible to explore the narrative, thematic, emotional, and tactile construction of the show in the textual analysis, prior to exploring impacts of the show at individual, and small group levels, as well as reflecting on *TRS* in its broader context as a consolatory and reparative BBC television text with a social background of Brexit and COVID-19.

3.4 Focus group sample and sampling

Participants over the age of 50 with an awareness of *TRS* were recruited. This demographic includes two generations, those born after 1946 and then after 1965, colloquially known as Baby Boomers and Generation X (Fry, 2020). It is within these groups that the programme is most recognised and most popular (YouGov, 2023). 60–64-year-olds are also the wealthiest demographic by age group (ONS, 2022a), the majority owning their own homes. This suggests they are more likely to have space to keep inherited family objects, perhaps also have items they themselves wish to pass on and may be considering their roles as repositories of family history (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 2002).

Convenience sampling (Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao, 2004; Gray et al., 2007) was employed to recruit participants, meeting after a local gym session run specifically for this age group in my local area, with snowball sampling (Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao, 2004; Gray et al., 2007; Blackstone, 2012) increasing the number of respondents. I approached members of this particular group in person because I knew them by sight and was aware of their receptive group dynamic. Initially eight people were invited to take part. Ultimately eleven people engaged in three focus groups with all subsequently agreeing to individual face to face interviews.

These sampling methods provided advantages as participants in focus groups were acquainted. Being part of an “insider” group (Gray et al., 2007, p. 117) encourages interactional familiarity and prompts memories; the atmosphere of friendship is more likely to create honesty and although a range of views may potentially be discussed, one would hope that deliberately antagonistic viewpoints are less likely to emerge. Detrimentally, however, shared knowledge can leave certain things unsaid or unexplained (Braun and Clarke, 2013) and, in some cases participants can compete to tell individual stories (Barbour, 2018). In the case of my focus groups this happened only once where a desire for appreciation or a privileged position within the group was accommodated as if it was a usual occurrence. Otherwise, while respondents may have been reticent at the beginning of a session, by the end, each was contributing, often

prompting others, and pointing out areas of expertise within the group. The participants were mostly female, middle class, and all were White. A further study of a demographic less frequently represented on the show would yield a more diverse response.

Premises for interviews were acquired at the gym complex, which meant sessions had the prospect of taking on the atmosphere and possibly the richness of the usual weekly social gatherings. However, only one group chose to use this space: a further group was convened at a participant's house and another at my house. In keeping with the psychosocial approach to the research, it was important to be flexible and accommodating. Venue choices have the potential to be problematic, for example using 'home territory' in anything other than an individual interview could lead to unwelcome outcomes: the tone of the group may be set in an unhelpful way; for example, the 'host' may adopt, or be given, special status and deference.

The venues where group and individual interviews took place were scrupulously recorded in field notes (see example in Appendix N), to reflect on the possibility of "different messages [being given] to participants" (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999, p. 11).

3.5 Focus group research process

The focus groups of between three and five members were shown three clips from *TRS* selected to encapsulate the core recurring themes of the programme, which had emerged from the larger thematic textual analysis. The clips shown in the groups had already been subjected to researcher textual analysis. One of the clips was shot and aired prior to the pandemic; one was shown during the lockdown period, while the third was broadcast in April 2023. (See Appendix B for a description of each clip).

The focus groups had two main purposes: the showing of clips focused on the construction and emotional impact of *TRS*, allowing for exploring audience experiences of the programme and its tactility and meaning (Objective 1) as well as emotional reactions to the programme's major themes: family, loss, love, memory, mourning and reparation (Objective 4). They also provided my introduction to participants which I hoped would make subsequent individual interviews more comfortable for both parties.

3.5.1 Dynamic administration

The psychosocial approach to research is “more an attitude or position towards the subjects of study” (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009, p. 2) which infuses the administration of focus groups and interviews. Originating in group analysis, dynamic administration refers to the preparation for, and running of, groups and interviews. It requires awareness on the part of the researcher, me, of the implications of choices about size, composition, length, and location of groups as well as the boundaries to be set and the atmosphere to be encouraged (Birchmore, 2015). It was especially important that my participants felt comfortable and at ease, because reminiscing about the past has the potential to present emotional surprises or intensities, whilst at the same time their concerns and anxieties about time and familial commitments required attention. Therefore, participants’ offers and requests for times and places were always accepted. The implications of their choices were reflected upon in contemporaneous field notes. (See Appendix N)

Psychosocial research recognises that data is constructed by both the researcher and the respondent, and that the research encounter is laden with different kinds of affect (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009 p. 11). To try to understand the relationship more deeply, to “look beneath the surface” (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009), I kept a research journal of field notes and reflexive considerations. Prior to all focus groups and interviews, I recorded my observations and emotions, doing so again soon after the meetings. These notes were revisited, added to, and reflected upon as I analysed data (see Chapter 8).

A psychosocial approach, where the “psychic and social processes demand to be understood as implicated in each other, as mutually constitutive and co-produced, and hence read together” (Frosh, 2019, p.101), is a fearful undertaking (Gilmour, 2009). Recognition of the importance of “interactions which take place outside the recorded event” (Hollway, 2008, p. 215) make both interviewer and interviewee vulnerable. “Apparently simple” (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p. 36), it demands an interviewer vigilant to her/his role in the conversation and pursuit of this to understand how they have reached their interpretation of the data gathered. It demands accepting that one’s findings and analysis are tied to the particular interview, moment in time, and circumstances, and that “uncertainty has to be tolerated”, however much one wishes to speak more confidently about one’s results and interpretations (Gilmour, 2009, p.134).

3.5.2 Pilot focus group

“Focus groups are ideal for exploring people’s experiences [and] opinions” (Kitzinger and Barbour, 2011, p. 5), it is therefore important to ensure that groups are organised and run to optimise participant’s forming and expression of ideas, the communication of experience and the equanimity of everyone taking part.

To help promote this atmosphere, a pilot focus group and pilot interview were conducted. In doing so it was possible to recognise that both formats were appropriate for the information I wished to gather (Braun and Clarke, 2013). *TRS* and more general ideas surrounding the renovation of heirlooms were discussed in groups, leaving individual interviews to cover feelings about both treasured and ambivalent family objects.

The pilot group comprised three acquaintances and met at the home of one of the members taking part. This venue was convenient for all, having pleasant and convivial connotations for everyone. Although elements of the set of *TRS* were discussed, the way in which participants and craftspeople touched objects, and the emotional resonance of this act, was not broached. In subsequent groups, therefore, specific attention was drawn to tactility.

There is a balance to be achieved between guiding a group and leading an encounter to ensure a coverage of issues, disabusing participants that there are specific required responses (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013, p. 44) and becoming “almost invisible” (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013, p. 36). Recording the discussion is a necessity; however, there is often a relaxation of mood, and a cessation of ‘performance’, when participants know that the recorder is no longer running. At this point, interesting and intimate insights are often shared. In one focus group for example, questions were asked of each other by group members about the making of wills, as well as spousal attitudes to inherited material goods. In another, facts provided during the group discussion were disputed. The gist of these conversations was recorded in contemporaneous field notes.

The focus group prompts led to helpful discussions about the main themes of *TRS*; the way it was shot and the emotional responses it elicited, and was perhaps trying to ‘manipulate’, all of which offered a triangulation of textual analysis of the programme. The discussion also introduced topics that could be expanded in individual interviews. The decision to split the general discussion of the programme and the collection of audience response (focus groups), from the more personal conversations about familial objects and inheritance (interviews) was vindicated when participants talked about choice of objects. There was a consensus that choosing an item that others did not view as ‘odd’ was particularly difficult. There seemed to be

an understanding that only certain types of artefacts are worthy of being called inherited and kept as ‘special’. In the light of the items mended on *TRS*, hammers, ironing boards, and coffee grinders for instance, this view may be beginning to change.

The pilot focus group demonstrated the need to organise prompts appropriately (Billups, 2020), and be aware of the order, especially when dealing with the technicalities of showing clips at the same time as being aware of group dynamics. Running the pilot allowed for reflection, an opportunity on my part to modify prompts and clips and to consider the quality of the information that was being gathered. (Krueger and Casey, 2015).

3.6 The interview process

Face to face interviewing is “the most familiar data collection tool [...] for [...] qualitative researchers and participants” (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 78) aiming to produce a conversation in which the participant feels sufficiently comfortable to provide full, detailed, and rich responses to prompts (Braun and Clarke, 2013, Hollway, 2016). To assist with making the participants in this research feel at ease, focus groups were run prior to individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. The process moved from a meeting attentive to reactions to the programme *TRS*, which may have helped those unused to research participation (Braun and Clarke, 2013), to a more subjective 1-2-1 narrative around the significance of touch and emotion in connection with the comfort, or discomfort, of familial inherited material objects. Each interview lasted on average fifty minutes.

The individual interviews also broached the subject of emotional responses to problematic or disliked inherited items, which could not, for some reason, be cast aside. Participants were invited to present an inherited item that they felt would benefit from attention by a team of artisanal craftspeople as featured on *TRS*. Additionally, they were encouraged to bring an item to interview that was perceived unfavourably but had yet to be discarded. This request broached the concept of “bad” objects as outlined by Klein (1998).

Given the importance of the participant’s relationship with material objects, face to face semi-structured interviews demonstrated considerable advantages over questionnaires, for example. In-depth semi-structured interviews (Thille et al., 2021; Madill, 2023) provided flexibility, an opportunity to adapt to the interviewee: prompts could be explained or unplanned questions asked. In this case they allowed the introduction of personal artefacts (Hurdley, 2006, Bell, 2013, Hollway and Jefferson, 2013; Mannay, 2020) and offered participants the chance to lead

the conversation (Mannay, 2020, p. 322). I recruited a sample of eleven participants for this study (see Appendix I for anonymised details of participants) and individual interviews promoted the collection of rich, subjective data over which there was some control for both participants and me (Braun and Clarke, 2013). In face-to-face interviews respondents may say more than they intend, may reveal information through word choice and somatic responses or may feel that the co-production of data (the conversation on that day, at that time, in that place with that interlocutor) brings out memories that had been hidden. Mannay (2020), argues that asking respondents to bring a material item to interviews hands back some agency; it allows participants “to introduce what they felt was worth talking about” rather than being fixed within a defined set of interview questions (Mannay, 2020, p. 323).

Advantageous as interviews were for this project, fundamental drawbacks of the method remain. It cannot be assumed that responses are truthful: a participant might feel pressured into providing answers they consider helpful to the researcher; they might feel the need to justify themselves (Craib, 2001; Wetherall, 2005); or adopt a particularly unhelpful persona. It is also misguided to presume that a participant understands and can explain the reason why they respond as they do (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013; Johanssen, 2016). A psychosocial approach which recognises, and values subjective experiences, perceives that a participant’s experiences in the outer world permits a deeper knowledge of the way in which their inner worlds shape that experience (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013), goes some way to appreciating otherwise contradictory responses.

Further disadvantages may be discovered in the performative nature of stories told by interviewees as well as the influence of the interviewer. For this study all focus group and personal interviews were carried out by the researcher. Being close in age to some of the participants may have obviated possible difficulties in terms of generational misgivings; however, it is important to remember that both the researcher and the researched in a dialogue are influential. Although at best the interviewer is “invisible” (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013, p. 36) within the interview, it is always necessary to reflect on one’s own subjectivity, a practice addressed through detailed field notes (see Appendix N).

3.7 The importance of reflexivity within psychosocial methodology

It is difficult to imagine a research encounter or interview as neutral. The interviewer and interviewee approach each other with assumptions and experiences conscious and

unconscious, which will guide and colour the outcome of their meeting. Both may well have a different view of the power dynamic; the participant perhaps considers the researcher as more esteemed, while the researcher is beholden to the participant for data.

A psychosocial approach attempts to take account of such feelings and acknowledge the effect. It also recognises the difficulty of separating the researcher from the researched in the collection of data. Adopting this method demonstrates the absurdity of a researcher claiming an objective focus while attempting to immerse themselves in the world of their subject (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009 p. 3). Psychosocial methodology assumes that researchers affect participants and vice versa (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013): that the data collected and analysed is a co-production between both parties. Given that this is so, it is important to do justice to participants, that researchers examine their own subjective involvement (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013; Hollway, 2016) as well as the impact of their seemingly mundane choices of time and location of interview on the particular stories told, and the points emphasised.

Hollway and Jefferson argue that “The research subject cannot be known except through another subject [...] the researcher” (2013, p. 4). Ostensibly it is the research subject who is the most important of the duo, in which case it is crucial for the researcher to examine how their own experiences, unconscious rapport, transferences and counter transferences affected the data collected and the stories told. Furthermore, it is also necessary for the researcher to reflect on how and why the research subject has been chosen, their investment in it and the effect of those choices on their relationship to the study (Hunt, 1989).

While a psychosocial method recognises that it is impossible to separate the strands, influences, and knots of research, in order to represent participants as clearly as possible, it is an ethical responsibility to do so. To achieve this, to be aware of blind spots and to lift research above the discursive (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013) the researcher must reflect on their own unconscious contributions and evasions.

As a researcher, I am afforded a certain status within the interview, however, it would be naive to think the requirement for information from my participants did not provide them with a measure of control. Throughout the interview process shifts of power, and shifts of persona for myself, a White woman of a similar age and background to most of my interviewees, was noticeable. Psychosocial research requires that one is aware of similarities and differences and how I regulated myself in relation to my subjects (Frosh, 2019, p. 104) or not, as this has an

implication for knowledge and interpretation. (See Chapter 8 for reflections on my role as a reflexive researcher).

3.7.1 Participants' stories and thematic narrative analysis

3.7.1.1 *The Repair Shop* participants' stories: thematic analysis

TRS is, initially, in this study, interpreted through analysis of textual detail; the understanding of its participants' stories requires a different methodological frame. Narrative analysis, with a range of analytic strategies to make sense of them, is an appropriate method with which to explore these narratives. Nevertheless, when mediated, these stories still need to be interpreted with a regard to visual aspects of their presentation. Additionally, what is not said, the silences besetting stories, and the unspoken on *TRS* of an unsuccessful renovation, will be addressed. No material object is presented on the programme that has any associations other than those that connote reparation. However, Klein argues that this urge to "make good" comes from the desire to "[put] right loved people who in phantasy have been harmed or destroyed" (1998, p. 311). How this destruction is acknowledged and accommodated within the format of the show by the participants, considering their symbolic relationships to material items in phantasy, is of considerable interest.

Narrative analysis is animated by debates about different types of narrative: they may be event centred as defined by Labov and Waletzky (1967); featuring past events that happened to the teller; or be centred on experiences events tellers have heard about or events they themselves have experienced (Squire et al., 2017). Boundaries between the two approaches cannot be considered rigid as life experiences forming the basis of many stories told to friends, family, and researchers, often comprise both, while also including reflexive content (Squire et al., 2017). The interests of this thesis mean that responses cannot be conveniently divided between experience and event.

3.7.1.2 *Research participants' stories: thematic analysis*

Outside the media environment of *TRS*, as indicated, this thesis sought to explore research participants' own sensory and emotional relationships to inherited objects: not only how such objects prompted and scaffolded memories but how they released bodily memories or "intense physical sensations" (Keightley and Pickering, 2012, p.7). Marks (2007) suggests that sense

memories may well present themselves as fragmented. However, as indicated above, these sensations, when appreciated, recognised, and honed over occasions of retelling to family and friends, are usually marshalled into a time sequence for cognition and clarity with emotional immediacy often lost.

3. 7.2.3 A note on narrative research and visual analysis

The use of objects to elicit and illustrate experiences and events, clearly employed on *TRS* is recognised in academic visual research methods (Hurdley, 2006; Bell, 2013, Hannan et al., 2019; Mannay, 2020). It is not within the compass of the show to analyse the stories or their telling, although viewers may draw their own conclusions, such examination is very much at the core of this thesis both for the show's participants, and the research participants.

Bell advocates that “visual images can be used as alternatives to the standard question” (Bell, 2013, p. 144), while for Mannay (2020), objects are a “tool of elicitation and a way to engender participatory forms of research” (p.322). Adopting this methodology for a project in 2019 Hannan et al described objects as introducing a “different range of life events and relationships” while offering a “deeper insight into the meaning of [...] times, places and people” (p.63). These approaches build on the work of Hurdley (2006) and Miller (2008), researching “how people express themselves through their possessions, and what they tell us about their lives” (Miller, 2008, p. 8).

For both Miller and Mannay, objects were used to “set the agenda” (Mannay, 2020, p. 322), but in slightly differing ways. For Miller, objects were seen as “an expression of that person” (2008, p. 8), for Mannay, and for Bell, they were a “useful addition in the social scientists’ methods tool kit” (Mannay, 2020, p. 323).

Writing specifically about photographs, Bell (2013) concluded that “people are able to make statements [...] that cannot be fully made with words” (p. 144). The same could be claimed for a creative medium, art or music for example, research of this kind though, in moving away from the expectations and acceptance of language as the only storytelling medium can “make explicit ideas not easily articulated” (Bell, 2013, p. 144), or indeed, emotions not easily perceived.

Narrative research therefore elicits stories that can assist in helping to understand more about a participant and help recognise and explore, “different and contradictory layers of meaning” (Squire et al., 2017, p. 1). To appreciate a participant’s relationship with, and to, an inherited

family artefact a form of visual analysis as outlined by Hannan et al. (2019) and Mannay (2020), was used. Interviewees were invited to present an inherited item, at the discussion, that they may have wished to see repaired, and one which they disliked but could not cast off. As indicated earlier, this request sought to explore the idea of Kleinian ‘bad objects’ and their imprints, how these items were used and the interviewee’s tactile relationship with the items is the focal point of this investigation.

As delineated above, narrative analysis in this thesis was used as a method and process of enquiry. To more fully suit the explorations proposed, it was adapted to incorporate elements of visuality and tactility. *TRS* implies that relationships to and with inherited familial objects involves emotionality. Inviting research participants to present items helped make explicit feelings not readily discussed, nor, possibly, easily accessed. The interview conversations had the possibility of a form of ‘working through’, that is, of recognising, acknowledging, and communicating feelings and emotions.

The practice of using material objects in research may not be widespread, although a significant number of studies adopted the method towards the end of the 2000s (Hurdley, 2007; Miller, 2009). Since then, it has achieved greater recognition (Bell, 2013; Hannan et al., 2020; Mannay, 2020) although it is still in the process of “developing systems” for appropriate transcription of tactile responses (Bell, 2013, p. 154). This thesis adopts an experiential method to attempt a working solution to this problem.

“Deep emotional responses stimulated by object handling” (Chatterjee, 2008, p. 4) offer further areas of complexity, not least in terms of interactions between researcher and researched, between memory and narrative (Chatterjee, 2008) and between the conscious and unconscious mind. However, objects provide the opportunity to range across time and space, across meaning and emotional impressions which affords the potential for rich and deep narratives regarding family, loss, love, memory, mourning, and repair.

3.8 Ethical considerations

In line with Bournemouth University’s policy, ethical approval was sought and granted prior to participant data collection (see Appendix D). Possible participants, approached personally, were given a Participant Information Sheet (Appendices E and G) detailing the purpose of the project. Information and Participant Consent Forms (Appendices E and F), concerning both focus group and one-to-one interview consent, were handed to participants before to any

meetings, allowing them time to read, understand, and ask questions about any aspect of the research. Before commencing any type of interview, signed consent forms were collected and securely stored. During the welcome to each session, participants were reminded about the protocol surrounding anonymity of their data and the right to withdraw prior to the point where the data had been coded and anonymised. The fact that interviews would be recorded for transcription purposes, and objects photographed was also repeated. Participants were also made aware of Bournemouth University's data protection, storage, and disposal policies.

The emphasis of the focus groups and interviews was on personal memories as well as responses to *TRS* and its temporal/cultural context. This signalled a potential for highly emotional responses. To ensure participants felt as comfortable as possible during the research, they were encouraged to choose the venue and there was constant vigilance should they need to interrupt proceedings for a time to collect themselves. Discussion of memories introduces questions of empathy and closeness between researchers and researched, (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012, p. 1), which are of especial significance when undertaking qualitative research within a psychosocial framework (Frosh and Baraitser, 2008; Clarke and Hoggett, 2009; Jervis, 2009; Watts, 2009). Ideally a researcher needs to listen and be empathetic while being analytic and aware of their own vulnerabilities.

The granting of ethical approval cannot be understood as an end to ethical considerations. Brown (2021) recognises three main ethical areas: procedural, situational and relational. Procedural elements have been outlined above; situational and relational considerations echo Wiles' view (2013) that ethical decision making cannot be predetermined. Ethical responses are influenced by "what happens in the field" (Brown, 2021, p. 102), and relationships between researcher and participants: it is important for a researcher to be cognizant of always working with dignity and respect (Brown, 2021).

3.9 Trustworthiness

Qualitative research affords contextually specific rich data. It recognises that social, cultural, and historical influences will shape the way people think and feel. Necessarily researcher influenced, it cannot be held to the same measures of validity as quantitative research. While quantitative researchers seek to eliminate bias and strive for a methodology that can assure a replication of findings, qualitative work acknowledges that the researcher "inevitably influences production of knowledge" (Yardley, 2015, p. 259). Trustworthiness, championed by Lincoln and

Guba (1985), is a way of “reassuring the reader that a study was of significance and value” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p. 162). For this study the term is more understandable in the sense of providing “rich evidence [...] offer[ing] credible and justifiable accounts” where the “research process [...] can be replicated” (Scotland, 2012, p. 12).

It is useful to consider, along with McLeod (2001), the reliability of qualitative research “more broadly as being about ‘trustworthiness’ or ‘dependability’ of methods of data collection and analysis” (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 279), as well as “how well the researcher has provided evidence that her or his descriptions and analyses represent the reality of the situations and persons studied” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p. 162).

Within a study using a psychosocial framework this also becomes an ethical question (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). Therefore, the validity of the study resides in whether the investigative methods employed examine what the study proposed and whether the “gathered data reflects the phenomenon under scrutiny” (Alexandrov, 2009, p. 33).

As can be seen from the opening of this chapter, and the introduction, these methods were carefully aligned with the study's objectives.

To complement the trustworthiness of findings textual analysis data was triangulated by prompting focus group attention on texts that are also analysed in the body of the study. The self-reflective nature of the study requires known biases to be recognised, while the psychoanalytic framework accepts unexpected findings or anomalies. Such findings confirm the “richness, ambivalence and contradiction of human experience” (Johanssen, 2016, p. 688). Preconceptions and influences were recorded in self-reflective field notes and, throughout, possible personal leanings were reviewed and discussed with supervisors to afford the most accurate representation of data.

The particularity of this study yielded rich data that is sensitive to individual meanings (Scotland, 2012) which, as with much qualitative research, does not lend itself to generalisability or transferability (Scotland, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013). However, in line with Yardley (2008), insights derived from investigating *TRS* in the context of the UK of the late 2010s and early 2020s may prove useful in situations that show similarities while demonstrating an understanding of cultural, media, and social influences from an individual perspective. The methodology and research process can be applied to other shows and media artefacts where emotion and visual hapticity are foregrounded. This research is interpretive: it does not seek explicit truths, rather it explores subjective experiences.

3.10 Methodological limitations

Qualitative research has been seen as “unscientific” and for some, it might provoke anxiety “because it lacks the clarity and control of quantitative research” (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 9). However, it offers rich data and yields insights that acknowledge the emotion and inconsistencies of what it is to be human (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013; Johanssen, 2016).

At the heart of qualitative research is the researcher, their communication and rapport with the participants, their valuing of personal involvement and their desire to understand or interpret what they see, hear and experience. Subjectivity raises questions about the extent and depth of researcher involvement (Frosh, 2008; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). A key limitation, yet also strength, of this study is that some of the research participants were known in various capacities to the researcher. Social knowledge may carry with it assumptions of how to behave for both researcher and researched that some participants may have found difficulty discarding. Acquaintance may have encouraged overly helpful responses in the understanding that they would progress the study. Despite the explanation and reassurance that there were no right or wrong answers, several interviewees ended with, “Is that alright?” or an apology that their responses probably were ‘not good enough’.

These potential drawbacks may also be seen as advantageous. Participants could be more inclined to free associate around the questions and topics introduced, without being concerned that they had committed themselves to something akin to a therapy session. The relational model of research allowed insights to emerge, although it is also open to allowing the unintended imposition of interests or ideas on my behalf. Ethical boundaries may have stayed the same throughout the interview process, but each participant, an individual, encouraged a continual reassessment of emotional edges. It could be said that the most honest attitude in qualitative research is to treat each encounter with curiosity and humility, being alive to the participant’s emotional state (Wetherall, 2005; Hollway and Jefferson, 2012; Hollway, 2016).

Convenience and snowball sampling yielded a particular, middle class, all White, participant group. The absence of participants from generations other than Baby Boomers and Generation X does not suggest a lack of interest in responses of younger people to inherited family objects. Black and Asian Britons’ responses to *TRS* is of interest, and a productive direction for future research, especially as the programme endeavours to diversify its range of participants. On this occasion these groups fell outside the scope of this study.

Qualitative research restricts the number of participants in order to produce complex accounts from interviewees offering narrow rich data rather than shallow, broad responses (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Opportunities to apply the findings to other groups of people in other contexts, is minimal. However, by detailing contexts and the background of the study, it is expected that it will contribute to the field of psychosocial studies and the media.

It was not possible to analyse interview data wholly without bias. The participant's names were removed from focus group and interview transcripts, but having personally facilitated both, it was not possible to fully forget their contents.

3.11 Future work

TRS presents familial harmony, providing individuals with the comfort of a sense of a place within time, a past, a present and a future. The idea is most clearly shown when participants on the show desire repairs in order to consolidate a legacy or to keep the family aware of its history. It opens further areas of study as to the alternatives to the repair of familial objects, to the objects that cannot be acknowledged, but equally those that cannot be ejected from family life which were explored in my interviews. Therefore, as I hope to demonstrate in this project, it is also possible to examine the psychocultural attitudes to repair and familial objects, in more detail than has happened to date.

3.12 Summary

This chapter provides an explanation of the foundational research methodology of this study. A qualitative approach was adopted to access and investigate the multi-layered processes of affective emotion and subjectivity. Mixed methods were used: textual analysis, focus groups and interviews, applying psychosocial concepts, particularly those derived from Kleinian Object Relations to investigate the construction of tactility and emotion and their relationship to wider cultural themes in *TRS*. Individual interviews and narrative/thematic/visual/object analysis explores emotional and sensory relationships to inherited familial objects, while focus groups provide a collective, small, group audience response to the programme, thereby offering a mode of triangulation within the research design.

The following chapter presents my textual analysis of *TRS* and consequent findings. Further, in Chapter 5, I present findings and discussions from focus groups covering viewer responses to

the programme as well as more general attitudes to inherited or saved familial items. Chapter 6 moves on to analysis and discussion of the individual face-to-face interviews carried out where precious objects, which might require repair, were presented. In Chapter 7, I synthesise the findings across the three types of data collected. Chapter 8 presents my reflections on the study.

Chapter 4: Findings and analysis. Part 1: Textual analysis of *The Repair Shop*

4.1 Introduction to findings and textual analysis of *The Repair Shop*

The methods and processes by which *TRS* creates illusions of texture and tactility, in other words, how it establishes haptic visuality, are analysed first. This chapter then proceeds to examine how these techniques may heighten emotionality for a viewer. The use of the pastoral, combined with the programme's embedded theme of memory and the past, is considered within the discussion of nostalgia, where its psychosocial significance at the time of Brexit and pandemic lockdowns is explored.

4.1.1 *The Repair Shop* formula

It is apparent that *TRS* has a formula. Items presented need not be expensive nor particularly unusual to be admitted for repair, but the participant must petition for the miracle in particular ways. The wonder performed by the artisans is the renovation of a material object which, for the participant, represents a pledge of faith that the dead have been kept alive. Psychoanalytically, damage inflicted on the internal good objects of the petitioner (parents or partners) has also been mended; and positive, loving, feelings restored. The response on receiving the renovated item needs to be authentically performed emotion of relief and gratitude: guilt for the actual and psychological damage has been absolved. Close-ups and gestures confirm, and take advantage of, the emotions of participants and craftspeople, while the repair and reveal of the renovated item provides viewers with a cathartic resolution.

The format for introducing an item has remained constant since the first programme. As the participant walks towards the barn clutching their wrapped object, they, and the type of item for repair, are introduced to the viewer through the voiceover. Each participant is named and where they live in the country (or abroad) is usually provided. Details about the object are particularised in the introductory conversation with Jay Blades, the assumed foreman of *TRS* and presenter of the programme (see Appendix C), and the relevant craftspeople. This elicits who the item previously belonged to, the damage sustained, why it is precious to the participant, and why they want it repaired. Occasionally, the viewer learns why the repair is important currently.

Throughout the initial conversation with the main presenter (during the period of my study), Jay Blades, questions may be asked concerning the last time the item worked, how it sustained any visible damage, and what type of repair the participant wishes to see: total renovation or a repair that recognises wear and tear over the life of the piece. On leaving their item, the participant gives a piece to camera elaborating the emotional significance of the object and the memories it holds. The participant departs with the knowledge that the artisan will do their best and that there is hope that their requests will be achievable. All appear delighted.

The item is moved to the artisan's workbench, where it is inspected in more detail. The camera, usually in close-up, follows a tactile examination of the object, while a voiceover or piece to camera by the artisan during this process, may reveal that they have not seen or worked on anything like this item before. With illustrative extreme close-ups, problems with the item and details of the work needed to rectify them are clarified. Attention is drawn to the time needed to complete the work, although this is not given in hours or days. The programme deals in emotional capital, time taken over repair is unspecified, to be precise may foster the notion of a financial transaction, as in *Antiques Roadshow* (BBC, 1974–) where items are valued, thereby diminishing the emphasis on “the subjects and their relation to the object and the meaning they put into it” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 13).

Having broadly outlined the work required, the artisan sets about cleaning, dismantling, or stripping the item back. After this the repair can begin. In the first series of the show a false time frame was introduced; Jay Blades, in the role of foreman, would prompt the craftspeople by reminding them that the owner was due imminently to collect the repaired item. This device is no longer used and seems out of keeping with the unhurried nature of the show. Currently, jeopardy is provided by the delicacy of the repair work. When straightening the wooden handle of a hammer (Series 10, episode 3, 2022), Dominic Chineá worries that the pressure he is applying may break it. (See Appendix C for the cast of characters). However, all repairs are shown to be carried out to the satisfaction of the participants. Both artisan and participant perform the roles Bonner (2003) recognised in *Antiques Roadshow*: reliability from the experts and gratitude from the owners.

4.1.2 The title sequence

This section analyses the title sequence, opening, and transition shots used between repairs and segments of the show. Since the first transmission of the show the visual reoccupations of the initial minutes of the programme have remained similar: establishing shots of the barn,

close-ups of items in stages of repair, and the camaraderie of the artisans. The thematic emphasis has been modified from one of sustainability (Series 1, 2017), to the promotion of heritage crafts and traditions in Series 5 (2019–20), and the personal meaning of items (Series 7, 2021). Below is a description of the opening of *TRS*, followed by an exploration of how the elements assist in the construction of the emotional tenor of the programme.



Figure 1 Sussex countryside – screenshot from The Repair Shop title sequence

The establishing shot is of idyllic rolling West Sussex countryside on a summer's day. The sky is blue, the grass green, the trees in full leaf, birds sing, and all is right with the world. The opening of the programme for Series 12, 2023 is an aerial shot of five of the regular craftspeople walking purposefully, although not hurriedly, away from the camera, toward the thatched timber barn and an early morning sun, as if to begin work.



Figure 2 Walking to work – screenshot from The Repair Shop title sequence

Footsteps on the gravel driveway relay a pleasing crunch as they progress. Shadows thrown by the buildings and trees create a sense of perspective while the unevenness of the grass, the timbers and the roof tiles enhance the sense of tactility (Lury, 2005 p.42). The camera follows them; all is fluid movement.

Inside the barn, viewers are shown close-ups of sparks flying from a grinding process and an implement scraping the surface of a wooden plank: the sparks and the dust travel towards the camera, both are accompanied by seemingly appropriate sounds. The Teddy Bear Ladies (see Appendix C) haul a very large toy lion onto their work bench, giving it weight and substance with their reactions and exclamations. As the sequence proceeds, hammers tap, cleaning steam jets hiss, while the clouds created billow towards the viewer.

Shots of artisans working, enjoying their successes, capture the *mise en scene* of the barn. Here are rough textures of wood and thatch, pots of tools, scruffy metal filing cabinets and artfully placed wooden, china, and metal bric-a-brac.



Figure 3 Working – screenshot from The Repair Shop title sequence

The sequence proceeds to show, usually mid-shots, of participants’ reactions collecting their “resurrected, revived and rejuvenated” items, (2017, *TRS* title sequence, Series 1, episode 1) hugs for the artisans and shots of the repaired items. The sequence culminates with the illuminated Repair Shop sign shorting out, complete with sparking sound, before it lights fully. Within fifty-one seconds the textural and tactile qualities of the programme have been communicated.

The opening presents the viewer with an idyllic vision of the English countryside and work, examined later in the chapter (see Section 4.3). The inference is that all viewers appreciate the countryside in a similar way and can call on similar memories. A report published by Natural England (2023) indicated that 6% of the population never venture outside with the “larger proportion of infrequent visitors [to green and natural spaces] in the oldest age groups, lower socio-economic groups, and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds” (p. 18).

The setting, a Romantic picturesque landscape “full of variety and interest [...] a rural scene of idyllic simple beauty” (King, 2003, p. 62), open to the “exploration” of “nature, beauty and history” (National Trust, 2023, p. 5), is historically more accessible to the White middle class, therefore, provides more of a fictional illusion for some than others.

4.1.3.1 Introducing haptic visuality

Haptic visuality, a term used by Marks (2007) and Waade and Jørgensen (2010), refers to the way in which visual images can evoke a sensation of touch. Marks pursues the idea through the study of intercultural film, arguing that it involves the body, appealing to non-visual knowledge prompted by the recall of the private senses of touch and smell. Haptic visuality employs “sense memory” (Marks, 2007, p. 110), accessing familiarisations and experiences often considered lost. To achieve it, shots foreground the materiality of an object, presenting it in such a way that the texture is encountered before the object itself is recognised. With film, the camera has the opportunity to linger and the viewer’s eye to move over the surface of the object: there is concentration in the activity (Ellis, 1992, p. 137).

Television creates the intimacy required to appreciate this differently; its sense of familiarity is based on “the notion of the familial which is assumed to be shared by all”. Television encourages a “glance” rather than the “gaze” associated with cinema, “no extraordinary effort is [...] invested in the activity of looking” (Ellis, 1992, p. 137). With film, it is the viewer’s eye that moves across the surface of the image, with television, Ellis implies that it is the frequently moving camera that directs the look. Nevertheless, Waade and Jørgensen (2010) recognise the use of haptic visuality in television cookery shows. They argue intimacy, required to appreciate the tactile visually, is enhanced for the viewer through narrow tight shots and close bodily proximity to the chefs demonstrating their skills. It is as if the viewer was beside them.

The camera movement shifts viewers between haptic and optical visuality, between extreme close-up shots and mid or long shots where the whole object can be viewed and recognised. This organisation allows the haptic images to be “more closely linked to ‘real’ tactile and bodily experience” (Waade and Jørgensen, 2010 p. 89). Waade and Jørgensen (2010) recognise that image and sound are used to provide sensuousness, Marks (2007) confines her comments on the value of sound to appreciating “haptic hearing”, allowing the viewer to make a choice as to which sound to focus on, yet sound works differently on television and is crucial to the viewing experience. (Ellis, 1992).

4.1.3.2 Sound

Lury (2005) considers that sound “aurally ‘guarantee[s]’ the veracity of the image” (p. 58) and gives “substance or weight to the actions of people, animals and objects” (p. 79). She explains that knowing what sounds to expect, audience assumptions are seldom disappointed. Diegetic sound, which an audience can assume is heard by the participants in the programme (Clark et

al., 2007), can therefore be understood to “place the viewer as [a] listener in the visual scene” (Lury, 2005, p.82) and contribute overall to the sensuous experience, intensifying the hapticity of the image. Watching *TRS* barn door being pulled open provides an example. The squeak of hinges consolidates the tactile appreciation of its weight and the feel of the wood beneath the hand, just as the crunch of the gravel under the feet of the artisans recalls instances of walking on similar surfaces. Diegetic sounds do more than place the viewer; they help recall bodily memories of comparable experiences. The sounds may not uncover great emotional truths for a viewer, but they add to the intimacy evoked by close-ups (Lury, 2005; Waade and Jørgensen, 2010) encouraging a bodily appreciation and a predisposition on behalf of the viewer to access non-visual knowledge, in this case, placing the body in the world of *TRS*.

Two other aspects of sound require attention: use of voice and use of music. During the title sequence close-up or mid-shots of a selection of artisans are used; they either speak directly to camera or over a cutaway shot to an item undergoing repair. These shots and accompanying voices give the viewer an opportunity to recognise key figures on the programme, renew acquaintance, or be reassured by their presence. However, the voice may have more impact when employed as a voiceover. Two actors have provided this: Bill Patterson predominantly, with Robert Pugh working on Series 2, 3 and 4. Patterson is Scottish, Pugh is Welsh, perhaps an echo of the early days of radio when regional voices were appreciated as providing a sense of national community (Cardiff and Scannell, 1987).

The pitch and timbre of their voices, their measured pace and level tone, rather than the words used, imply safety “absorbing anxiety and transforming it” (Karpf, 2013, p. 65). The disembodied radio voice is often identified, by listeners, with home (Karpf, 2013) and, perhaps, a fleeting return to the absorbing and transforming safety of the sounds created by the voice of the mother and “suckling child” in “quiet dialogues at the breast” (Sabbadini, 2014, p. 124). The disembodied television voice potentially works in a similar way.

Sabbadini makes a case for sound being central to the creation of intimacy at a young age. “Silent feeding sessions with a mother never addressing sound or words to her baby may be distressing for the child” (2014, p. 125). This develops the idea that being talked to and heard is as important as being seen and mirrored (Winnicott, 2005). The sounds of items being offered for repair, the sounds of work, and of a voiceover, may help to create an auralty reminiscent of being held as well as heard.

Bollas considers how we continue to use sound to render “all experiences to ourselves” (2006, p. 41). We process what we experience in different ways, visually, sonically or somatically, so a

sound may unlock an area of experience that vision does not. It is unlikely a viewer seeks out *TRS* specifically for its music or voices, but the sounds may surprise and provide access to a “different me” (Bollas, 2006, p. 37) and a different ‘us’.

The theme music of the show responds to, and augments, the voiceover. The repetitive upbeat piano and orchestral arrangement connotes continuity, whilst the percussive ending indicates joyful achievements. Lury writes of music as “aural wallpaper” employed to “provide mood and atmosphere”, it “imports a meaningfulness to [...] images seen on screen” (2005, p. 71) fusing everything together. For Ellis it is more than this, it “carries details” (1992, p. 129); with haptic visuality it is the close details, however evoked, that are important.

The voices and sounds add to the creation of the sensuous, haptic atmosphere of the programme, helping to “emphasise its tactile qualities” (Lury, 2005, p. 43).

4.1.3.3 Emotion

The title sequence of *TRS* works to signal the intimacy of the programme and construct the emotional environment viewers will encounter. The final section of the sequence moves between mid-shots and close-ups of participants, hands to mouths, gasping, hugging, crying or profusely thanking the artisans, who themselves may appear on the brink of tears: there is the promise of catharsis. The close-ups fulfil three different purposes. They reveal, in minute detail, information about the processes of artisanal repair, form an intimacy with the person working and create a narrative of the renovation (Bousé, 2003). The narrowness of the shot, the bodily proximity to the artisan and the drawing of the eye to foregrounded objects “provoke the viewer to perceive the texture and materiality of the object” (Waade and Jørgensen, 2010, p. 85).

Close-ups also highlight moments of emotional intensity, generating intimacy for the viewer (Ellis, 1992, p. 131), working to create haptic visuality and also emotion. Facial expressions may be ambiguous (Bousé, 2003, p. 28), although this has been disputed (Mayo et al., 2018) but the facial close-up operates as an amplifier of affect, conveying the feeling displayed with speed and power (Gibbs, 2001). However, it must be recognised that editing shapes the way the shots are interpreted (Bousé, 2003, p. 128).

The title sequence sets up two key emotional sites for the programme through its use of haptic visuality: memory, and perhaps to a lesser extent, family. Following the artisans to work at the very beginning of the sequence (Series 10 and 11, 2022), attempts to summon visions of a ‘simpler’ age when people were understood not to suffer long, stressful commutes to a soulless

job. Such visions align with William Morris's ideals in the Arts and Crafts movement of the 1880s and its own imagined ideological antecedents in the Medieval Guilds. This invocation, repeated at the beginning of each programme, is examined later in this chapter. These shots may not elicit particular memories, but they hover on the border of post-memory, a term formulated by Marianne Hirsch, referring to memories at a generational remove requiring "imaginative investment and creation [...] the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth" (2012, p.22) and nostalgia, the yearning for "another time, a better life" (Boym, 2001, p. xiv). Having introduced the viewers' sensitivity to the just-out-of-reach imagined past, it is consolidated through the *mise en scene* used throughout the programme.

The core demographic for the show, Baby Boomers, born from 1946–1965, and Generation X, from 1965–1980 (YouGov 2023; Beresford Research, 2024), may well recognise items they were aware of in their childhood: jointed teddy bears, peg boards, faded hardback books, earthenware jugs and bottles, for example. All have the "power to tell stories of where they have been" (Marks, 2007, p. 97) or, more significantly, where they have been consigned to in viewers' pasts. Awakening 'generic' memories, which are remembrances of how prevalent such items were, may lead to more specific and subjective recollections. Self-states can be stored in objects "through a kind of associative projection" (Bollas, 2006, p. 35), prompting stored feelings and memories to be uncovered later. This opening sequence merely introduces the possibility of connections, it is items brought in by participants and the accompanying stories that attempt to secure links to lost places, people and feelings for viewers.

The second emotional site is family, this is currently more implicit on the programme than in the past, where mentions of family heirlooms and history were specifically scripted into the voiceover (Series 1, 2017). The creation of intimacy by television, and haptic visuality, according to Ellis, gives the impression that the viewer is co-present at the events they are witnessing rather than merely looking on. For Ellis, "television has ingested the domestic", at the heart of which is the family, "assumed to be shared by all" (1992, p. 137), in this way the familial is introduced through televisual structuring. On another level the artisans featured on the title sequence provide emotional identification for audiences, becoming a para-social family (Rojek, 2016); recognisable faces and voices offering comfort, connections and reassurance (Ellis, 2020, p. 395) without reciprocal demands and expectations (Bonner, 2011, p. 18). Creating bonds, actual or mediated and para-social (Perse and Rubin, 1989), potentially opens emotional areas connected with loss and mourning, which are not only associated with the familial, but may act as areas of projection for the familial.

The title sequence of the programme is a self-contained section introducing the premise of the show, its key characters, emotional landscape, and haptic visuality, finishing with a close-up of the programme's title picked out in lights which flicker then fully brighten. This is followed by a segment developing the idea of continuity of time and place.

4.1.4 The opening segment

Following the title sequence, but prior to the introduction of participants, the opening segment develops the sense of the past and nostalgia raised in the title sequence. The established mood is amplified with long shots of the West Sussex countryside and the Weald and Downland Museum, where the show is filmed. These segments, differing slightly with each series, usually begin with an image suggesting early morning, for example the sun rising over distant hills, shots of nature follow. The craftspeople make their way to the barn in pairs or groups where they are greeted by Jay Blades who is presented as if he had readied the workplace for the day ahead.

The narrative presented is of an imagined idyll of pre-industrial work, where artisans are handsomely paid and work in communities where they are well known and respected. That this was ever the case is difficult to corroborate, suggesting its status as pleasing fantasy even in the late eighteenth century (E.P. Thompson, 1963). Links to a Romantic rural landscape are promoted throughout the programme; there are shots of heavy horses, sheep grazing and ducks drifting lazily on the 'village' pond. Christopher Shaw (Chase and Shaw, 1989) refers to the prevalence of references to landscape in English art and literature as "cultural nationalism", a reference to late Romanticism where the land is connected to ideas of organic community, compatibility and a sense of common identity. He observes that "nature, culture and history are rolled up" (Shaw and Chase, 1989, p. 12). Williams characterises such idealisations as an acclamation of "feudal and post-feudal values: of an order based on settled and reciprocal social and economic relations" (1973, p. 35) which were ruinous for labourers and the poor. Furthermore, the images can be understood as a "reaction against modernism" (Pepper, 1996, p. 5) industrialism, capitalism, and commercialism (Williams, 1973, p. 36). The viewer could well understand that the presentation is a myth, however, as Boym (2001) indicates, it is not the vision of the past that is influential here, but the needs of the present which, after the upheavals of Brexit and COVID-19 demanded stability and safety.

The aim of the title and opening sequences would seem to be to suffuse the programme in a glow of nostalgia from which positive subjective memories emerge to reinforce a mood of amity and benevolence. Psychologically, they set up the programme as a containing space. That is, a

viewer's projections and impulses are held in an abeyant place of calm and order. Having discussed the title sequence and introduction of *TRS* I will move on to examine the main content of the programme.

4.2 Nostalgia and the evocation of touch

The popular use of the term nostalgia, which “refers to warm feelings about the past” arising from “happy memories, pleasures [and] joys” (Kaplan, 1987, p. 465) is often decried as “an affectionate insult at best” (Boym, 2001 p. xiv). Nostalgia is understood as an attempt to cling to “alleged certainties of the past” (Chase and Shaw, 1989, p. 8), be simplistic or commercial (Lowenthal, 1989), or attempt to recall an inauthentic, “always absent” past (Stewart, 2007, p. 2).

This section begins by presenting a clarification of the term before considering how the concept is used subjectively on *TRS*. It proceeds to examine how the depiction of the countryside, in evoking the pastoral, develops ideas of longing and belonging before considering nostalgia in a national context and its possible connections with the emotionality of Brexit.

4.2.1 What is nostalgia?

“Nostalgia as a medical diagnosis was widely known in eighteenth-century Europe (Arnold-Forster, 2024, p. 19). A “deadly mental and physical illness”, it was documented as fatal for soldiers during the American Civil War (Dixon, 2023, p. 44). Nostalgia is now popularly understood to refer to a “sentimental and rose-tinted longing for the past” (Dixon, 2023, p. 44), that can be “enhancing and uplifting” but also “sad and bittersweet” (Kaplan, 1987, p. 465). Notably it is usually referred to as an emotion (Sedikides et al., 2008) claiming “victims” who are “older people” and therefore “vulnerable” (Campanella and Dassù, 2019, p. 104). However, as with most work on nostalgia this is not strictly true with some scholars have determining that it “transcends social groups and age is found cross-culturally and can refer to a variety of objects” (Sedikides et al., 2008, p 305).

Over time, the effects of nostalgia seem to have migrated from the body to the mind. However, by clarifying terms, it may be possible to appreciate its scope and manifestation. Crociani-Windland and Hoggett (2012) employ feeling as an umbrella term for the “general area within which we make distinctions along the mind/body spectrum” (p. 164), a definition followed here. At the body end of the scale is affect where somatic responses to experiences are strongest;

emotion resides at the cognitive end. The mutability of nostalgia allows it to glide effortlessly along this spectrum.

4.2.2 Nostalgia as affect and emotion

Sweeney (2020) determines that nostalgia is subjective, “directed towards one’s personal past rather than the past” (p. 185). The argument is that we do not long to return to a specific event, but a “previously experienced complex emotion” (Sweeney, 2020, p. 187), often linked to a series of events.

Recognising that the emotion is ‘complex’, intimates it is hard to separate the tangle of feelings one from another and therefore register them cognitively. However, they must be ‘felt’ somewhere. The close affiliation of bodily expressions with emotions has long been recognised (Dixon, 2023). It might be possible to understand the emptiness or the glow of nostalgia as an affect in that it is chaotic, difficult to qualify cognitively, or locate within the body; it is “free floating” (Crociani-Windland and Hoggett, 2012, p. 167). Considering nostalgia as an affect recognises that it can refer to feelings beyond the personal and subjective, Sedikides et al., (2008) have noted how “nostalgia is a social emotion” with those experiencing it feeling “moved and protected” (p.307). This is especially significant when examining the cultural effect of readily available audio-visual images.

Sweeney contends that the senses can afford a direct route to nostalgia which “comes over you whether you want it to or not” (2020, p. 188). It is, therefore, understandable for the opening credits of *TRS* to aim for affect with its representations of tactility through close-ups of textural surfaces and heightened aural landscapes: it seeks an emotional connection with a viewer, paramount for consolatory television (Fiske and Hartley, 1996; Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Hill, 2005; Ellis, 2020).

As discussed in the Literature Review, along the continuum of affect, body, and emotion, cognition, it is often difficult to determine where one “becomes” the other. If emotions are “usually short lived” (Music, 2022, p. 4), affect may be thought of as a longer lasting mood during which “important elements of [...] self-experience are expressed” (Bollas, 2018, p. 64). Emotions are created through particular modes of life, rules and expectations, they have a social element and a linguistic trace, they are the words in which feelings are expressed. Having uttered those words, the speaker can intensify their own feelings and those of their listener.

For many individuals, short lived and usually open to being linguistically identified (Dixon, 2022), nostalgia also inhabits the territory of emotions. Boym, however, indicates that it involves a “romance with one’s own fantasy” (2001, p. xiii), thus introducing language and explanations associated with psychoanalytic fields and unconscious origins.

Thus, nostalgia is an unstable concept. It is both subjective and collective, an affect and a short-lived emotion, induced through the senses or longer lasting, having its roots in the unconscious, again both individual and collective. The unstable and elusive nature of definitions of nostalgia requires this project to make use of the above interpretations in the attempt to examine its complex effects on *TRS*.

4.2.3 Longing and belonging: fantasies of nostalgia

Kaplan and Boym characterise fantasies of nostalgia as having connections with family, a central theme for *TRS*. For Kaplan these romance fantasies exist for a child because of the discrepancies between “his idealised and real picture of his parents” (1987, p. 472). They originate in “fulfilling unsatisfied wishes through the creation of an imagined situation in which the wish was represented as being fulfilled” (Kaplan 1987, p486).

Generally, such fantasies involve heroism, rivalry and physical beauty with the child rescuing the parent from harm.

Boym writes of the fantasies of the children of immigrants who return to their parents’ birthplace and “confuse the actual home with the imaginary one” (2001, p. xv) in their search to belong. Boym notes that “Nostalgia charts space on time and time on space” (2001, p. xviii) an impossibility with which *TRS* engages.

Both types of fantasy are about the past but are driven by present needs. These may be needs of individuals, which correspond with the genre of the programme and the stories of the show’s participants, or more collective needs for “connection and reassurance” (Ellis, 2020, p. 395) exemplified through viewing figures. Emotional affinity, relationships between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations between personal and collective memory (Boym, 2001, p. xvi), while evoking a sense of a shared past plays a major part in *TRS*’s success. Furthermore in “bringing people together for shared experiences”, or indeed recognising them, the show could be said to contribute to fulfilling the BBC mandate of “social cohesion” (Dept. Culture, Media, and Sport, 2016). Items presented by participants provide shared memories of personal objects for the target audience, vacuum cleaners or bicycles for

example, however, the programme potentially consolidates a version of national collectivity with its representation of the countryside and the pastoral.

4.3 The pastoral

A literary mode, the pastoral is characterised by a “nostalgia for the past [a] hypothetical state of love and peace which has now been lost” (Cuddon, 1975, p. 490), and a life in a rural idyll away from the sophisticated and corrupting environs of the city. Throughout *TRS* the viewer is treated to brief segments capturing the natural environment surrounding the barn. These may be a close-up of a butterfly resting on a wildflower with the next shot following it as it starts to fly away, sunlight through spring or autumn leaves or Red Kites wheeling in a blue sky. These segments are transient, less than ten seconds long, and have no particular connection to those that precede or follow them. Ellis (1992) indicates that these types of shot act to separate items: they fulfil this function on *TRS*, being placed between the drop-off of one item, its repair and collection, or the appearance of another item. They work to maintain the emotional tone of the programme, invoking the affect of rustic peace, slow time, and in their intermittent appearance, suggest a known set of routines and a narrative progression. The televisual process of repetition and therefore reassurance is augmented by the natural repetition of the seasons and rural life. Furthermore, the shots with their narrow and close focus and camera movement accentuate hapticity and the tactile.

During the COVID-19 lockdown in England, nature and green spaces were recognised as being important for individuals’ wellbeing (Natural England, 2023). “Research has also acknowledged that a person may experience nature as such when viewing natural elements [...] in photographs and films” (Hartig et al., 2014, p. 208).

Anecdotal reactions on social media platforms to nature-based videos were reported by Xu et al., (2021) to be “therapeutic, soothing, healing and useful for combatting loneliness” (p. 10) during COVID-19. A review of previous studies by Ríos-Rodríguez et al. (2024) concluded that “exposure to natural environments, both real and virtual, enhances subjective vitality and positive mood” (p. 8).

Landscape scholars firmly relate the countryside with poetry and supporting emotional and nostalgic responses; the territory settled by consolatory television programmes. Recognising that “[l]ocal, regional and national landscapes are intertwined in complex and overlapping ways with individual, family and community narratives that profoundly shape our sense of identity”

(Changing landscape changing lives, n.d.), augments an appreciation of how landscape is “rolled up” in an amalgam with nature, culture and nostalgia (Chase and Shaw, 1989, p. 198). This admixture should also include tradition, the home of which is most often considered to be the countryside (Fowler, 2020, p. 51). *TRS* often references traditional ways or traditional materials, while ‘traditional’ objects, such as the thatched roof of the barn, feature in the *mise-en-scene* and in shots of the landscape, acting as transitions between participants and passages of repair.

Romantically, the Sussex Downs are shown picturesquely as limitless and open. While wildlife and domesticated animals are evident, people are not. Either humans have turned away from a “disenchanted” nature (Stone, 2005) or, here is the antithesis of crowded urban spaces boasting modernity, anonymity and during a pandemic, danger. Time in nature became important during lockdown, the BBC show *Springwatch* (2005–2022), during its lockdown broadcasts, used to air a “mindfulness moment” segment where film of the natural world without an accompanying commentary or voiceover was shown. The Romantic concept of the sublime seems referenced here with nature and the landscape offering viewers a time of “intense feeling” (Fowler, 2020, p. 75), a chance to “see into the life of things” (Brennan, 1987, p. 52). Viewers of *TRS* are invited through haptic visuality to touch flora, feel the movement of air and through enhanced sound become imaginatively, somatically, immersed in the moment and indulge in the picturesque rather than the sublime which has an element of awe.

The COVID-19 reality was different: visitors were discouraged from entering rural communities (Jacob and Butchart, 2020) and beauty spots, for example the ‘Blue Lagoon’ in Buxton, were even deliberately spoiled to “deter gatherings” (Miles, 2020). At the lagoon, Derbyshire police dyed the water black (Collins, 2020). Corrine Fowler (2020) has argued that “industrialised farming and escalating environmental destruction ought to have made naive visions of the countryside hard to sustain. Yet they have sustained” (p. 45).

This is a view endorsed by Friends of the Earth (de Zylva, 2023). Furthermore, the countryside is a “terrain of inequalities” that may be particularly hostile “to those who are not seen to belong” (Fowler, 2020, p. 50; Jacob and Butchart, 2020), rural boundaries confirming “proper Britishness” (Stanley, 2022, p. 62) are financial and “racially” infected, determining who belongs and who is an outsider.

In 2023 The Ramblers reported that “most white-dominated areas have 144% more local paths than the most ethnically diverse”. Also highlighted was that “health was worst [where] the number of paths is lowest” (The Ramblers, 2023). These figures suggest that because not

everyone has access to the countryside or has a vision of it as a place of leisure; the brief nature segments of *TRS* lack inclusivity.

Epitomising “honesty, kinship, solidarity and paternalism” (Fowler, 2020, p. 51) the British countryside offers a preferable set of values to the anonymity of the city. Such values are exemplified in the programme by shots of the artisans of *TRS* walking to the barn together, being greeted at the door of their workplace: the sun shines, the rain falls benignly, the local flora and fauna blossom. Rural difficulties: isolation, poverty, poor public transport are forgotten, as is the “UK’s biodiversity crisis” (IPPR, 2024). Barry Richards has written that “visions of the English (and British) countryside are essential to many everyday understandings of the national heritage” (1994, p. 51). Therefore, someone blocked from the experience is denied “proper Britishness” (Stanley, 2022, p. 62), and, ultimately, access to scarce resources.

Viewed through a psychoanalytic lens, the implications of this deprivation become more profound. Richards argues that the countryside is experienced as a body (1994, p. 53), which is certainly the case in English Literature, for example, Rupert Brooke’s *The Soldier* (1914).

Perceiving the landscape in this way raises the sensation of touch. The sensuousness of the landscape as body is echoed in the programme through the use of close-up visual images and sound: leaves being blown by the wind, rain dripping off roof tiles and the steamy breath of a horse for example. The evocation of touch adds difficult layers to Richards’ outline. Historically the English countryside is seen as “sweated into” (Richards, 1994, p. 57) by white bodies, therefore, “at the same level of collective phantasy – so must the body itself be white” (Richards, 1994, p. 51). Bearing this in mind, and Fowler’s work on the social and historical ties of British country estates to slavery (2020), it is unsurprising that people of any other colour cannot feel “at home” in the countryside (Richards, 1994, p. 52). However, the choice of Jay Blades, a Black British man, as the main presenter (see Appendix C), welcoming crafts people and participants to the barn, seems a deliberate attempt to include non-White Britons in the landscape and alter the cultural filter through which it is seen.

Developing the idea of the body, Richards follows Hinshelwood’s (1991) conception of the British countryside and its links to the city as “expression of variations in prevalent unconscious phantasy of the parents in intercourse” (1994, p. 53), and the Kleinian idea of an infant’s phantasy life. Having mentioned the nurturing experience of the baby at the breast, Richards does not go on to consider this within the compass of Klein’s thoughts on guilt and reparation. Aggressive when not offered what it needs, feeding and the breast, an infant can unconsciously believe it has inflicted great harm on its mother. Recognising this, the infant becomes

remorseful and seeks to put right the harm it has caused. When taken within the context of *TRS* and its principle of restoration and renovation, the interpolated shots of the countryside acquire deeper significance. The landscape is simultaneously nurturing yet exclusive; reparative, yet itself in need of repair, an ideal or a psychological defence against what is. *TRS*'s opening sequence attempts to present a restorative countryside, one in which the recent national fracture of Brexit is invisible, sublimated and submerged by the soothing Sussex countryside.

4.4 Brexit, the pastoral and the psychopathology of nostalgia

Dorling and Tomlinson (2019) suggest that the reason Brexit happened “was that a small number of people in Britain have a dangerous imperialist misconception of our standing in the world” (p. 2).

They examine and explain voting patterns, yet the emotionalism surrounding the referendum, and noted by Hughes (2019) and Macrury and Yates (2021), is diminished to the word “fervent” and applied to those with the “imperialist misconceptions” (Dorling and Tomlinson, 2019, p. 3) who found it difficult to let go of the colonial past. Admitting that “collective infatuation with a mythological past can shape politics” (Campanella and Dassù, 2019, p. 105) still does not adequately explain the “incendiary talk” and emotions surrounding Brexit (Macrury and Yates, 2021, p. 474).

Kaplan (1987) defined psychopathological nostalgia as a longing for the past without accepting it is over”, which would seem to fit with “the small number of people”, identified by Dorling and Tomlinson, (2019, p. 2) responsible for Brexit. Dorling and Tomlinson narrow this faction down to “the British rich” (p. 7), who encourage the “nostalgia for empire (p. 13) in order to maintain their grasp on the “pomp and ceremony” enjoyed by their grandparents (p. 7). Having idealised the past, these people are unable to move towards the future. Is it possible to consider that such a state took hold psychosocially in the lead-in to the vote in 2016? Psychopathological nostalgia highlights the importance of keeping particular attachments alive rather than, as with Klein, focussing on repair and renewal. It revolves around being seen as strong and heroic in the subject’s own eyes, usually through creating fantasies of rescue.

This state is not temporary, it produces a “distorted version of life’s conflicts in which fantasies become dominated by (an) infantile and fixated version of masculinity, heroism, physical beauty, rivalry and happy endings” (Kaplan, 1987, p. 469).

Hughes (2019) and Stanley (2022) suggest that at least a proportion of the British looked to their collective past during the referendum, seeking to relive their finest hours, reinforcing the idea of a national idealisation of the past and an emotional need to save the country, protect the land, and cling to a disappearing loved object.

The “patriotic BBC” told them what they wanted to hear (Dorling and Tomlinson, 2019, p. 3). *TRS*’s penchant for shots of idealised countryside vistas and a bucolic life may be interpreted as illustrating and strengthening this nostalgic vision, but equally as seeking reparation in the aftermath of “an act of national ‘self-harm’” (Hughes, 2019, p. 2)

Brexit, which happened the year before *TRS* began, followed by the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020–21, were difficult and stressful. These events now provide a shared past of social anxiety, gloom, and division. However, people lived through the hardships, and could be said, especially perhaps during quarantine restrictions, to find something positive in looking back, even if the optimism was not entirely in their own experience. Such an optimism exemplified in Queen Elizabeth’s “We will meet again ...” speech, in April 2020 (BBC, 2020a) which drew parallels between Britain’s 1940s wartime spirit of ‘pulling together’ and the COVID-19 era.

Batcho’s research (2019) has found nostalgia most prevalent in young people at transitional times or pivotal periods, going to university for example, when they have one foot in childhood whilst also looking to the future. Brexit and Covid provided pivotal moments for all generations. *TRS* grew its viewership significantly during the COVID-19 period, from 2.9 million viewers in November 2019 (BBC Media Centre, 2020b.) to 5.8 million in April 2020 (Barb, 2023), partly because people were at home more and its transmission time had changed, but also because its bucolic mood and episodic catharsis provided an appealing sense of therapeutic comfort, as contemporary journalism attested (Golby, 2020; Singh, 2021). I suggest its haptic visuality provided a sense of psychological containment in a socially distanced world.

4.5 The introductory construction of visual hapticity: a summary

This section examined how the title, opening and incidental segments (Ellis, 1992) of *TRS* introduced, promoted, and consolidated important aspects of the programme. The use of close-ups and camera movement introduces haptic visuality and the sensory experiences of objects and surfaces. Furthermore, shot choices allow the viewer a position comparable to standing next to the craftsperson, providing a sense of intimacy. Understood collectively, these segments present the emotional moods on which the programme is based: one in which

history, landscape and nature are bound together (Chase and Shaw, 1989, p. 12), in which nostalgia and the pastoral are invoked. For some viewers this may offer reassurance and a sense of belonging: for others, it could indicate exclusivity. The programme must therefore also employ “good feeling generated by the host” (Waade and Jørgensen, 2010, p. 87) to overcome such a reproach and provide the sense of comfort and belonging suggested by the qualities of the voiceover and the foregrounding of tactility. I go on to consider the content of selected representative episodes.

4.6 Recurrent themes: introduction

Based on my initial systematic large sample of *TRS* episodes (see Appendix A), discussed Chapter 3, the following core repeating themes emerged: family, loss, love, memory, mourning and reparation. The ten clips referred to in this chapter are from ten different episodes spanning pre-, mid- and post-COVID-19 times. (See Appendix B for close descriptions). Each demonstrate a number of these themes; however, they have been selected to clarify the discussion around a particular idea or feeling. What follows is an exploration of the structure of the programme, its presentation of the noted key themes and the role played by tactility in both.

4.6.1 The structure of *The Repair Shop*

For many viewers the enjoyment and success of *TRS* rests in the “compelling” (Blades in Farrington, 2020, p. viii) and emotional stories of the participants. Each episode of the programme showcases either three or four owners and their items and stories depending on running time: three objects in a forty-four-minute programme, four featured over an hour. Each story follows a narrative arc whereby the context of the item is explained, and names of original (often deceased) owners are spoken. The participant shares the emotional importance of the item to themselves or their family, before clarifying the problem: this may be a desire to secure a memory, as with Helen Bannon (Series 5, episode 22, 2020), pass the item on to other family members, as with Nowzad (Series 5, episode 17, 2019), and Mahbuba (Series 8, episode 1, 2021), or memorially reuse items to keep a deceased loved one close. The artisans take over the narrative at this point; solving the problem in repairing the item; the resolution is achieved as the renovation is revealed.

Items are 'brought in' during the first half of the programme and returned throughout the second half, ensuring staggered story arcs during the show and regular resolutions providing the platform for consistent uplifting optimism and comfort (Kalia, 2019; Singh, 2021).

The initial story of the item is teased out during an empathetic interview with an artisan and, customarily, the host Jay Blades. Told in the first person, they cross the experience/event divide identified by Labov and Waletzky (1967), ranging chronologically over past and present and looking towards the future. The interview questions and format offer a recognisable structure to the stories, their general contents and, for the viewer, an understanding of expected emotional responses. The stories provide elements of "routine and repetition-with-difference [...] an important feature of contemporary TV to many citizens" (Ellis, 2020, p. 394).

The presence of material objects "an extraordinary vehicle for storytelling" (Ramsay quoted in Starling, 2021), offers the opportunity to range over time and make the absent present (Mannay, 2020, p. 322). The names of previous owners are voiced, heightening the emotion. Blades has spoken of how, "faced with cameras contributors often get caught by feelings that well up inside" (in Farrington, 2020, p. viii). The presence of material objects helps to blur the partition between "the personal and the social" (Mannay, 2020, p. 322), providing the potential for "raw emotion" (Blades in Farrington, 2020, p. viii) a marker of "emotional realism" (Biressi and Nunn, 2005, p. 5) to be caught on camera, enhancing the show's authenticity. Material items also act as surrogates for the absences called up; a hug or the touch of a deceased loved one is substituted with a caress of the damaged object presented for repair.

The programme is structured to provide two potential moments when experiences are "too real to be expressed by words alone and rely on guests breaking down in tears" (Biressi and Nunn, 2005, p. 111) with much at play at these junctures. The participant is understood by the viewer to have appreciated that this is the role they must perform: the repair of their precious item is paid for in sobs and tears (which may be joyful), thus gratitude may be measured in authentically performed emotion. It is also possible to consider that the participant has achieved some catharsis and feel relieved on their behalf; equally, in having followed the participant's story viewers too, may feel an element of release. Cathartic points occur at intervals during the second half of the show; in this way it is possible to maintain a comfortable and comforting, slightly elevated, plane of emotion rather than a sudden flood of feeling.

4.7 The depiction of themes: family

The segments of the title sequence and opening, operate “in effect [as] a commercial for the programme”, providing “a narrative image” (Ellis, 1992, pp. 119–20). Having been enticed into “glancing” at the show (Ellis, 1992, p. 128), it is necessary for it to live up to its promise for the viewers. What follows examines how the main body of *TRS* episodes develop the tactility, hapticity and emotionality signalled, as well as how significant themes, family, loss, love, memory, mourning, and repair are depicted. The approach of the programme is to ignore distinctions between these ideas, merging them through the items and stories presented. Within Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalysis separation is difficult; each theme is an aspect of the others. Nevertheless, within this cluster of interrelated and often entangled experience, it is possible to discern distinct thematic representations. This section of analysis considers how the programme depicts the major themes identified within the wider context of contemporary events by undertaking close scrutiny of selected episodes which represent these recurring themes.

For Ellis (1992) the idea of family was central to broadcast television. It governed its processes and aesthetics. The first COVID-19 lockdown in the UK in March 2020 saw a return to viewing broadcast television in the type of domestic setting that Ellis had written about thirty years earlier. The following section considers the significance of the family on the structure of lifestyle television and ideas and at the values and norms located in the family. Turning to *TRS* it then examines the mode of address of the programme, its representation of family, how the notion of family may be related to nationhood and its psychosocial implications.

4.7.1 The family and the structure of viewing

Broadcast television is a domestic medium (Ellis, 1992). The television is a domestic object. Domesticity leads to audiences being assumed to “be the family” (Ellis, 1992, p. 135). In 1992 Ellis wrote of this unit as consisting of “wage-earning husband, housekeeping wife, two children” (p. 136). Bonner (2003) added that such was the homogeneity of the view of the family, it was thought that the children were sent to bed at the same time, thereby accounting for scheduling choices. In 2022, 43% of families in the UK had no children living with them and 30% of all households were single people living alone (ONS, 2022b). Initial daytime scheduling of *TRS* suggests a target audience of older people, some probably living alone. The nature of the family may have changed, but the institution of broadcast television assumes the nuclear family

norm. Television gives cultural precedence to the concerns of the nuclear family and reflects the audience's conception of what that should be (Ellis, 1997, p. 115).

The demands of domestic life require television to be watched differently to film. As entertainment in the home, the consequence is of it being seen by any person in the family. It is also always on, that is, always potentially ready to be watched, whatever the time. Ellis argues that broadcast TV represents the outside world to this domestic combination in segments over which a viewer may cast their eyes or miss them. The reason for this segmented construction is not entirely apparent. Perhaps, it is imagined that the interrupted nature of family life, in whatever form, requires it. Television provides simplified images, informative and distinct sound, and "repetitive and sequential connections" (Ellis, 1997, p. 112).

This structuring allows for management of catharsis for the viewer, who is offered moments of emotional release throughout *TRS*. The emotionalisation and affective resonances of television programming has long been recognised (Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Bainbridge and Yates, 2011, 2012; Yates, 2013), as has its role in offering spaces "for what we might understand as 'working through'" (Bainbridge and Yates, 2011, p. iv). Segmentation also makes sense commercially, as sections may be relatively easily constructed into shorter or longer programmes.

Ellis argues that television viewing demands the glance rather than the gaze of cinema. Programmes cannot rely on "the same level of attention" (1997, p. 128), largely because of its domestic setting. However, an audience restricted by lockdown may have offered new ways of viewing. At a structural level however, programmes did not change, even though broadcast television viewing became more popular and regained some ground as a formal daily domestic structuring medium (Ellis, 2020, p. 394). Since 2020, "traditional television is losing its grip on household leisure time" with those aged 16–24 preferring "platforms such as YouTube and TikTok" (Davies, 2024).

4.7.1.1 The Repair Shop "*family*": creating the parasocial

Jay Blades (see Appendix C) has talked about *TRS* teams, "people in front and behind the camera" providing him with "another family" (*Desert Island Discs*, BBC Radio 4, 2022), looking after him, understanding and accepting his "differences", his fatherless upbringing in Hackney and his mental health problems. These sentiments do much to secure the appreciation of the show as a "comfort blanket" (Singh, 2021), a family providing security and care. The impression of familial closeness is enhanced by the knowledge that two of the artisans on the team, Steve

and Suzie Fletcher, are brother and sister. A demonstration of ideal familial reassurance is evident in Series 4, episode 8 (BBC, 2019). During a repair Suzie becomes emotional at being reminded of her husband's death. The sequence shows Steve leaving what he is doing and going to hold her as she cries.

Fiske and Hartley (2003), using the example of Bruce Forsyth and *The Generation Game* (BBC 1, 1971–1977), write about how presenters inhabit a familial role. Forsyth would join competing families in the persona of the “jolly uncle” (p. 118).

“He is familiar, in the root sense of the word, calls them “my love” and uses codes of touch and space to establish familiarity: he often hugs them in a non-sexual familial way and stands close to them, inside that proximity normally reserved for intimates.” (Fiske and Hartley, 2003, p. 119).

Writing about the role of the presenter, Bonner remarks on their “familiarity within the domestic setting” and how the “way they speak directly to the audience assume(s) intimacy” (2011, p. 10). Blades’ role is more fluid than that of Bruce Forsyth, sometimes uncle, brother, friend, however, his role on *TRS* sees him operating in the capacity of creating a parasocial family with which a viewer can create a one-sided attachment (Rojek, 2016). COVID-19 lockdown may have encouraged domestic parasocial affinity because of the “physical and environmental constraints preventing [...] interacting in person” (Scherer et al., 2021, p. 129).

As with game show contestants, the participants on *TRS* are introduced by their name and, usually, the area of the country from which they come. The conversation on arrival concentrates on the object they have brought for repair, as outlined. This firmly sets the item in an emotional rather than a financial domain and reiterates the importance of family memory and history. While not deploying the 1970s epithet “love”, Blades uses names frequently and, prior to COVID-19, was happy to employ familial touch (Fiske and Hartley, 2003). Since post-pandemic, such tactility has mostly disappeared. By the end of Series 12 of the programme (January 2024) handshakes between participants and craftspeople were starting to return.

Episodes broadcast at the beginning of COVID-19 lockdown (Series 5, BBC, November 2019) continued to show familial embraces and gestures between craftspeople and participants as they were shot beforehand. During Series 6 (aired between October 2020 and March 2021), physical distance between the craftspeople on the show and between them and participants was noticeable. There was no touching. Distancing continued until Series 11 (January 2023), when the artisans began to stand closer together again.

The withdrawal of familial physical touch lessens the sense of familiarity, intimacy and possibly empathy created in the relationship with participants, and, potentially, the viewer, conceivably weakening the parasocial bond. Focus on the touch of material objects may have operated as a substitute for the viewer, ensuring a continued trace of intimacy and belonging.

4.7.2 Family touch

Families on *TRS* hold hands, hug and touch most notably when collecting their renovated item, a practice which continued throughout COVID-19 measures, as households were in a permitted 'bubble'. At an emotional moment, touch offers reassurance, affection, and comfort (Durkin et al., 2020). Writing about possible narratives and relationships evident in her own family photographs, Marianne Hirsch comments on "the powerful gaze of familiarity which imposes and perpetrates certain conventional images of the familial" (2012, p. 11). Hirsch's material is the static image; with *TRS* the viewer is shown a fleeting moving image of the familial which, despite the voiceover explanation, or lack of it, through performance, consolidates the myth of idealised strong, loving family bonds.

4.7.3 The representation of family on *The Repair Shop*

As television programming does much to communicate societal values and norms it is necessary to explore the notion of family presented on the "ordinary" programmes (Bonner, 2003) that so many watch. The introductory voiceover of early series of *TRS* emphasises family heirlooms, stories, and memories, clearly placing the idea of the family at the centre of the programme and confirming it as a strong social and cultural structure, as outlined here in Chapter 2. *TRS* has alluded to an adjustment in this pattern through the programme's introductory voiceover. From "cherished family objects [and] irreplaceable pieces of family history" (Series 1, 2017) the emphasis has shifted to "faded treasures [and] irreplaceable heirlooms" (Series 6, 2020), and "irreplaceable treasures [and] keepsakes" (Series 13, 2024).

Participants usually arrive with their item alone or accompanied by one other family member. If two people walk towards the barn the relationship is acknowledged, as with "Paul James and his husband Mashuk" (Series 9, episode 6, 2022). The relationship of a child to a parent is recognised, but, if the parent is single for any reason other than bereavement, as Bonner notices, that is not mentioned (2003, p. 109). The viewer is left to make assumptions concerning the family make up at this moment but is not "encouraged to trouble [about] the notions with

which [they] are presented” (Gorton, 2009, p. 101). For the reveal, other family members may be present, especially the case when toys or games have been renovated for the delight of grandchildren (Series 4 Episode 8, 2019). Even if they do not appear in person, grandchildren may be present in family photographs shown during the introductory narrative from the participant or provided as a reason for the repair.

The initial questioning about the damaged item places the object, and the participants in a familial context. Deceased parents, grandparents or siblings are named with, usually, photographs of their younger selves displayed. In many cases the introductory conversation provides the participant with an opportunity to talk about someone who has died whom they miss deeply. Two years after her death, Albert breaks down in tears while remembering his late wife, Eileen (Series 4, Episode 1, 2019). Socially prohibited against the expression of grief (Volkan, 2019, p. 5), Albert has been allowed to stop pretending that death does not exist and has briefly re-anchored his wife in the present (Barnes, 2014).

TRS is unusual in that amongst the domestic concerns of lifestyle television, house, garden, personal renovation or reinvention (Bonner, 2003; Bratich, 2007; Heller, 2007; Gorton, 2009), it cannot ignore death nor deny grief: it is founded on the comfort of memory and memorialisation. Therefore, the deceased and the pain of the participant’s loss are acknowledged. Emotion is confirmed and sympathy extended, but the programme nevertheless requires an acknowledgement that grief can be lessened by the renovation of the object presented. The focus can return to deceased family members when the repaired item is revealed. Participants often volunteer, or can be asked, how their relative might react to the renovation, thus suggesting that one’s emotional world continues to be peopled with the deceased and lending the item some qualities of a fetish object with magical powers.

Taken from my larger thematic analysis (see Appendix A), the sample of representative episodes used for textual analysis in this study (ten episodes, aired between April 2019 and May 2022) comprising thirty items, thirteen participants appeared on screen with family members, a further sixteen referenced relatives, only one, Helen Bannon, (Series 5, episode 22, 2020) made no allusions at all to other family relations.

When individual participants appear on the show their present family circumstances may be left for the viewer to imagine or ignore. For example, Mahbuba and Nadia (Series 8, episode 1, 2021) are introduced as mother and daughter. There is no mention of male members of the family during their initial conversation with Jay, nor evidence in the photographs that illustrate

the story of their item. The indication is that they do not constitute the mythical “two parents and two children of school age” norm (Ellis, 1992, pp. 113–4).

However, given that the programme’s foundation is memory and that it presents crafts as an antidote to throwaway culture (voiceover, Series 2, 2018), participants are obliged to fix their credentials in terms of their “historical connectivity” and be seen to be “an active historical agent” (Holdsworth, 2011, p. 4). Connectivity in the case of Mahbuba works in the past, but also in the future as she affirms her status as a grandparent and her wish for stories of their antecedents to be passed on to her grandchildren. So, the acceptance of the normative ideal family myth contradicts the “lived reality of family life” (Hirsch 2012, p. 9).

The item for repair “weaves”, by means of narrative a significance of blood relation (Stewart, 2007, p. 137) and roots the individual firmly in the family stressing the importance of the social unit. Despite including individuals, very few participants on *TRS* fail to acknowledge relatives. Helen Bannon (Series 5, episode 22) is unusual in meeting these criteria. The programme does not stress familial patterns that do not include inheritors. If the restored item is for the participant alone the familial is quietly dropped from discussion, the absence suggesting a lack and a reason for empathy.

4.7.4 Family and nationhood

During the early years of the BBC, producers “held constantly in mind the image of the family audience seated around the fireside at home” (Cardiff and Scannell, 1987, p. 161). They looked to “forge a link between dispersed and disparate listeners and the symbolic heartland of the national life” (Morley and Robins, 1995, p. 66). Morley and Robins suggest that “what is assumed to unite the audience, the ‘nation of families’, is their experience of domestic life” (1995, p. 66). *TRS* offers domestic life in abundance, materially with the objects it shows as well as with the families it presents and the stories they tell. It “play[s] an ideological role in establishing notions of ‘home’ and in transmitting the emotions we should associate with home” (Gorton, 2009, p. 101).

It plays a similar role in establishing ideological familial bonds and emotions. Although the families presented may be different from the heterosexual couple norm, with mother/daughter, father/daughter pairings and gay couples, the promotion and, indeed the promotion of *TRS* presenter family itself, is one of idealised, strong, loving familial bonds recalling Reithian notions of a “settled community with traditional roots, a diverse but atavistic family” (Cardiff

and Scannell, 1987, p. 164). It is the domestic family that was understood to supply these roots.

Writing about radio programmes in the inter-war years, Cardiff and Scannell recall Williams' ideas about "residual culture" (Williams 1977, p. 122), "an element of culture that has been formed in the past but is still effective because, however sentimentalised or idealised it may have become, it supplies a lack and even offers an alternative to the dominant contemporary order" (1987, p. 164).

Increasingly, Britain is no longer the Reithian family round the fireside, rather, a diverse, multicultural, multigenerational, blended, single parent or same-sex family (ONS, 2022b). During COVID-19 "the routinising aspects of ordinary tv" and "shared family viewing" (Ellis, 2020, p. 393), in whatever form that family took, returned. Charged with mission values to "reflect, represent and serve" (BBC, 2023) diverse communities, *TRS*'s location in the past of "precious and faded treasures" and in the present of "restoration", requires, and assists in attempting, negotiation of an impossible chasm between change and reassurance; it draws on an idealised domestic culture to offer a fantasy of optimistic certainty. The mediatised idealised family here becomes a consolatory transitional object offering psychic wholeness in a Britain fractured by Brexit and COVID-19.

The Brexit vote and COVID-19 lockdowns were divisive events, provoking uncertainty, and distrust in institutions "that once provided support and a sense of emotional containment" (Macrury and Yates, 2021, p. 477). Both phenomena weakened "everyday empathy" (Macrury and Yates, 2021, p. 476), the ability of people to "stand in another person's shoes" (Winnicott, 2005, p. 177) and irritated generational conflict. With Brexit, "over 65s were more than twice as likely as under 25s to have voted to leave the European Union" (Moore, 2016), while COVID-19 lockdowns were seen as detrimental to the young (Adams, 2022). Open to further interpretation, these narratives have public credibility, as voiced by participants in this study.

TRS, with its construction and use of familial conceits points the way, consciously or unconsciously, towards psychological reparation. Listening to the stories of participants on the show, acknowledging and accepting them, illustrates the empathy wanting in the everyday. The show seldom criticises or attaches shame for the dilapidated state of items, rather the impetus is practical, finding a way to solve the problems renovation will uncover. The artisans provide the faith that they "can mend anything, including those items that look way beyond help" (Ross, 2022). Thus, anxiety is contained, emotion held. While the participant base is predominantly White, and what might be construed as middle class, the broadening representation on the

programme, to include same-sex couples, Black, Asian and other minority ethnic Britons, offers the fantasy that such containment is available to all.

4.7.4.1 Beyond the family

Society operates as an extended family according to Lebeau, who takes “Winnicott’s understanding of dependence” (2019, p. 160) “beyond the mother’s arms and out into the world of family and society”, arguing that “[t]he caring functions of the mother and the caring function of the state appear to converge” (p. 171). In this guise, society harbours “experiences so painful” they are “unassimilated in the consciousness and thus unspeakable and unrepresentable” (Tennakoon, 2023, p.4)

Two episodes of the programme have been especially dedicated: one marked 75 years of the NHS, (Series 12, episode 8, 2023), the other, Windrush Day (Series 12, episode 7, 2023). They signalled a conscious, or unconscious, intention to author a ‘national narrative’, pointing to the programme’s national reparative work. However, the failure to confront uncomfortable legacies, including the impact of Brexit or COVID-19, limited its scope. The items presented on both special episodes were overwhelmingly personal, only two, a food trolley used on a children’s ward, and a radiogram belonging to a campaigner for Windrush Day, hinted at problems: underfunding in the case of the NHS and racism in the Windrush case. The collective difficult experience of patients or of immigrants was touched upon only lightly.

4.7.5 Family: conclusions

The role, and understanding, of, what the ideal family provides, are embedded in *TRS*: from its segmented structure, its scheduling, its participants, the roles played by its presenters, to the values it demonstrates. The centrality of the family recalls Reithian ideas of growth outwards from the settled domestic context to a community with shared values and outlook: from the domestic to the national. The institution of television seemingly bolstering the institution and fantasy of the family, both domestic and national.

“In ordering daily life, we avoid panic” (Silverstone, 2007, p. 1). Broadcast television, its schedules, its “routine and repetition-with-difference” (Ellis, 2020, p. 394), helps to contain and “provide resources for our ability to sustain” a defence. Within daily life we need to be able to “preserve a sense of the continuity and reliability of things” (Silverstone, 2007, p. 1). *TRS* assists with maintaining the necessary continuity and reliability. As a show it demonstrates the

durability, in damaged form, of material objects and the survival of skills to repair them. *TRS* “family” provides “reassurance that everything will be right with the world” (Singh, 2021) and offers a parasocial relationship.

For participants on the show a protective familial environment is created through hugs and touching gestures in addition to touching and holding familial items. Winnicott noted that for an individual to be alone successfully, someone else had to be present. This could be a “mother substitute [...] represented for the moment by a cot [...] or the general atmosphere of the immediate environment” (1957, p. 416). The objects presented and held by participants help generate an environment for them and most viewers.

4.8 The depiction of loss

Continuing the textual analysis of *TRS*’s major themes, I will explore the presentation of participant items connected with loss (Objective 3). The ideas of death of a loved one, loss and mourning are linked; however, as Freud argues, the pain of loss can be occasioned by an “abstraction [...] such as one’s country [...] an ideal, and so on” (1917 p. 242). The losses in the segments examined in this section of analysis, lack the focus of the death of a loved one, which are examined in Section 4.12. The emptiness of the loss explored here, is more diffuse. Brought about by sudden, catastrophic events, a fire, impending war and exile, these participants had little time to prepare for the consequences of loss, but some, perhaps considerable time to “create an empty space where no history is certain” (Marks, 2007, p. 5). Marks casts this ordeal as “physically draining” (2007, p. 5). The Freudian concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (afterwardness) is helpful in considering the feelings of displacement and grief presented in these episodes. Freud suggests that something from the past “that never [...] had an explicit meaning takes on significance” is “revised, created and elaborated” (Stern, 2017, p. 502) through present experiences. Memory is not fixed but moulded by events and interpretations sustained in the present: it can grow and develop.

The death of a loved one may result in idealisation, which is often recognised by family and friends, but the loss of homeland exemplified in two cases here, affords the opportunity for outsiders to level claims of nostalgic vagueness, possibly glorification and hence dismiss the emotion shown. Using three episodes from the large sample of episodes (see Appendix A): Helen Bannnon (Series 5, episode 22, 2020); Nowzad Khurshid (Series 7, episode 17, 2019); and Mahbuba Abdullah (Series 8, episode 1, 2021), this section investigates how the presentation of

loss and nostalgia in the introduction and the opening of the show are personalised, nuanced and developed in the body of the programme.

4.8.1 Helen Bannon: Series 5, episode 22

Helen's narrative conforms to the emotionality of lifestyle television stories (Bonner, 2003; Bratich, 2007; Heller, 2007; Gorton, 2009) and unfolds in the same way as others featured on *TRS*. It is, however, unusual in that the trauma she has experienced is hers to go through alone. The presentation makes clear the alienation of loss. The programme consistently performs and extols the concepts of togetherness: couple, family, team, community, in this case it is shown to attempt to offer hope of this through the physical repair of a material item. Helen Bannon presents ceramicist Kirsten Ramsay (see Appendix C) with the trophy she received on becoming world kickboxing champion in 2011. As she walks, in longshot, towards the barn, and the viewer, she is introduced as having a "story of triumph and tragedy". The accompanying music is percussive with positive connotations. As soon as she shakes hands with Kirsten and Jay Blades, the non-diegetic music stops, and she is left to tell her story against the muted sounds of artisans carrying out repair work.

Her achievements are greeted with admiration. Jay tells her, "That's quite special" and shakes her hand: the viewer is shown a photograph of her victory, she is alone. Questioning reveals that the trophy marked her last participation in the sport due to a back injury. Subsequently she suffered a fire at her flat which destroyed her possessions and killed the pet dogs that had become the centre of her life after her sporting 'heartbreak'. Throughout her account Helen looks down, eventually becoming tearful.

During the interview the question about the dogs' death is left hanging. When asking it Jay is shot in close-up, while Helen is in mid-shot, implying the depth of her loss requires privacy. At this point Jay moves to her side of the work bench to give her a hug. Her face is towards the camera. The silence is broken by his comment that he is "feeling this one ...". Again, the sentence is unfinished, it is as if the emotion cannot be spoken, thus it accrues authenticity. The conversation ends positively with Helen talking about how the trophy recalls "a happy part of my life" and how she needs those memories. The interview lasts five minutes.

Helen's story presents difficulties. One setback could invite empathy (Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Palmer, 2008; Gorton, 2009), the three she suffers, that include injury, death of pets and loss of her home, could well appear parodic to a sceptical viewer. To evoke compassion the encounter

must be carefully crafted. The value of the trophy could be said to be negligible, not worth the concern or the trouble that Kirsten Ramsay goes to execute the repair. Such an interpretation offers viewers a defence against the anguish of Helen's experience. For Helen's narrative to be shown, and be successful within the field of consolatory television, it is necessary that it prompts an empathetic response from the viewer (Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Palmer, 2008; Gorton, 2009). Failure to do so may point to the poor presentation of the story or the limits of the format of the show as a convincing impetus for emotional work.

4.8.2 The construction of empathy

Empathy is a "crucial element of human relatedness [...] a response to basic human need" (McKay, 2019, p. 75). It requires the use of "one's inner experience as a guide to the inner experience of others" (Michels, 2021, p. 232). The guidance could be a result of "a thoughtful and [...] affective process" involving an "emotionally engaged imagination" (McKay, 2019, p. 76) or, psychoanalytically, benign projective identification (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 295). A face-to-face meeting would allow experiences to emerge from an interlocutor, within the confines of television communicated feelings are part of a constructed process, which stresses the limits of consolatory programmes, especially, in this case for the viewer, who does not need to work so hard to achieve the experience of another (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 295).

The use of "real people" on television programmes already encourages "emotional identification" for the audience (Gorton, 2009, p. 109) and viewers are prepared to believe that they are privy to intimate feelings in the interview: in this case, Helen's reactions suggest she does not anticipate the tears she sheds as she tries to maintain a cheerful and optimistic air throughout the encounter. The unsuccessful attempt at composure and her apparent gratitude for the hug serve to foster a sense of connection (Gorton, 2009) for the viewer.

The presenters of *TRS* do much to convince the viewer of the authenticity and sincerity of what they are watching, both crucial in the success of a lifestyle television programme (Bonner, 2003; Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Hill, 2005; Turner, 2009). While direct address to the audience may be considered necessary for creating an aura of intimacy (Bennett, 2010; Bonner, 2011), here, the participant is the focus of Blades' attention. When she is in shot, Kirsten Ramsay's gaze is on Blades as he speaks, pointing to his significance. Bennett suggests that the gaze assists in the illusion of a personal relationship with the viewer (2010, p. 127), when directed at the participant the dynamics of that relationship must be changed: it reinforces the sincerity of the visitor who, with their ordinariness bolsters Blades' 'normalcy' and trustworthiness. The ability

to perform 'ordinary', to create a rapport with the audience, being consistent and eradicating distance between television and those watching at home is a marker of credibility (Bennett, 2010; Bonner, 2011). This persona has since been called into question with a charge of controlling and coercive behaviour brought against him in 2024 and charges of rape in 2025.

Although within the world constructed for the show his role lacks working validity, Blades, however, stands out. The narrative of the show presents him as an overseer or manager of the artisans: he does not undertake any repairs, nor does he always receive participants. He is also dressed differently, favouring more tailored monochrome attire and occasionally a leather workman's apron. The craftspeople often wear jeans, t-shirts or plaid shirts. The participants, while occasionally seeming to have chosen particular clothing for their appearance on television, are usually seen in items that the viewer might consider unspectacular. Helen performs a convincing version of ordinariness (Bonner, 2003, p. 70), which may boost viewer empathy: Blades is depicted as 'ordinary' and directs that empathy.

Helen's story, although connecting to the British reverence for sporting achievement and triumph, is one of appreciable loss; status, companionship, home, and memories have all disappeared. Such "unhappy experiences, whatever their nature, [have] something in common with mourning" (Klein, 1998, p. 360) and can be recognised by a "disturbance of self-regard, loss of interest in the outside world and [a] turning away from activities not connected with the lost object" (Freud, 1917, p. 243).

It is perhaps more moving because of the emptiness of her success. Helen's five-minute introductory interview does not permit a viewer great insight into her frame of mind, nor is it the aim of this study to offer psychological profiles of participants, however, elements of mourning are emphasised in the presentation of this story of loss.

The voiceover highlights through a pause, the "tragedy" in Helen's circumstances. It accentuates the "hard won" nature of the item she is bringing, and the hope she is placing in the repair team that it can be made "fighting fit again". The punning commentary, and the sense of hope implied are the currency of the programme. Artisans undertake to "bring items back to life" (Title sequence, *TRS*) implying that the present owner cannot only resurrect now hazy memories but also regain some peace of mind. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Klein might describe this as a subject deepening their "relation to [...] inner objects in the happiness of regaining them after they were felt to be lost" (Klein, 1998, p. 360).

Helen is alone. It is more usual for participants to appear in pairs at least on one occasion during their experience on the show. Her solitariness implies a turning away from the outside world. Laying the broken sections of her trophy on the bench, Helen only touches them to point out damage. Her relationship with the item seems distant. The colour palette within the barn is dulled brown, her clothes are muted shades, she remains wrapped in her coat, and her expression is downcast despite the smiles, her gestures small and apologetic, all of which contribute to the depiction of loneliness and loss. In the photographs illustrating her narrative she is the only person. It is difficult to suggest that the loss illustrated in this case prompts nostalgia, at least not the obviously “enhancing [and] uplifting mood” recognised by Kaplan (1987, p. 465), a conclusion which could be reached in the other two examples considered in this section. It is perhaps “repairing longing with final belonging” (Boym, 2001, p. xiii), in that the repaired trophy recaptures the camaraderie of the sporting arena on which Helen seeks to build pleasant memories, as her shiny new flat is soulless.

Collecting the trophy, Helen admits to nervousness. The viewer is shown the restored item before witnessing her reaction. She begins to touch the repaired trophy, outlining it with a finger rather than picking it up. Tactility comes with her need to hug Kirsten Ramsay in appreciation for the work. The final conversation between them emphasises the importance of physical external reminders of memories, the suggestion from the hug is that relatedness is now possible for Helen.

4.9 Loss of country

Helen’s loss is characterised by emotional exile. For Nowzad and Mahbuba, the deprivation of their homeland through war and banishment is geographical, emotional and cultural. The following section examines the representation of the loss of the abstraction of one’s country on *TRS*.

4.9.1 Nowzad Khurshid: Series 7, episode 17. Mahbuba Abdullah: Series 8, episode 1
Helen’s perceptible isolation suggests that her loss is recent. The clips selected from the larger analysis (see Appendix A) exemplifying loss, as seen through the stories of Nowzad Khurshid’s samovar and Mahbuba Abdullah’s wooden trunk, are demonstrated as altering over time. The loss may be less immediately obvious, nevertheless it acquires emotional depth. The losses these participants have experienced are similar. Nowzad and his immediate Iraqi family,

escaped the Iran-Iraq war in 1980 (the First Gulf War) leaving “everything in the house” except the samovar, which had been his mothers. Mahbuba was a child in Zanzibar in 1964 when revolution gave her Arab-Zanzibarian family twenty-four hours to leave the country; they fled with nothing when the majority Black population overthrew the island’s first, mainly Arab, post-British-colonial regime. The trunk is a replacement, sourced from Oman in the 1970s. It holds displaced memories for Mahbuba, her daughter Nadia though, sees it as a location of “post memories”. Hirsch’s term referring to memories at a generational remove (2012). The participants’ stories of these conflicts are not placed in historical context on the programme, nor is the UK’s role elaborated.

Stories of migration occur with regularity on *TRS*, for example, as discussed above, the special episode devoted to the arrival of The Empire Windrush in Britain in 1948 with its Caribbean passengers, ready to help “The Motherland” (Series 12, episode 7, 2023). The programme works to construct an inclusivity which pays attention to the diverse ethnicities that have contributed to economic and cultural growth and a Britain at odds with the exceptionalist and colonial-nostalgia promptings for Brexit (Campanella and Dassù; 2019, Dorling and Tomlinson, 2019; Koegler et al., 2020).

The repair of items looks backward to loss and displacement, and forward to a new integrated life. In Nowzad’s and Mahbuba’s cases, each repair does recall childhood but also imagines the lives of their grandchildren as part of a different country. Within the framework of the larger ‘Repair Shop’ story of Britain and its migrants, repair may be seen as a working for, rather than a working against, those setting out on a new life.

For Nowzad and his wife, and for Mahbuba, as first-generation immigrants, the items manifest their past and home cultures which have been diluted for them. In Mahbuba’s case, the chest is almost a souvenir, it is not the original, it has had a layered authenticity thrust upon it, whereas for her daughter, Nadia, it encapsulates legitimate experiences, if not the memories she would wish. Nadia is demonstrated as using the trunk to grasp at “post memories”. Marianne Hirsch post memories are “distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection” (2012, p. 22), indeed, during conversations about the trunk’s origins it is Nadia who becomes tearful and reaches out to touch it. These items complicate the notion of loss already explored, introducing a longer look backward and forward, a weightier significance of tangibility, and the importance of tactility.

The work of mourning exacts a continuous experience of loss (Klein, 1998, p. 345) until “respect for reality gains the day [...] bit by bit” (Freud, 1917, pp. 243–44). However, an abstraction of loss

that is of one's country may work differently. The original displacement may be cast as exciting, as explained by Mahbuba, or a relief, as Nowzad implies. As time passes the emptiness demonstrates its narrative weaknesses but its emotional magnitude (Marks, 2007, p. 5): it may be difficult to identify what exactly has been lost and what emotion or feeling accompanies that hollowness.

It would be straightforward to argue that Nowzad and Mahbuba are presented as suffering from nostalgia "a sentiment of loss and displacement" (Boym, 2001, p. xiii). Boym and Stewart contend that they would both long to return to what they once had and be part of a "community with a collective memory" (Boym, 2001, p. xiv) or inhabit an "ideological self-created narrative" (Stewart, 2007, p. 23). In these two contentions, loss is bolstered by longing. The word implies a protracted desire for what: "another time, a better life" (Boym, 2001, p. xiv) a "feeling of irretrievability of the past" (Sweeney, 2020, p. 185) particularly childhood or a desire to re-experience a complex emotion (Sweeney, 2020, p. 187). Nowzad and Mahbuba narrate moments from their childhoods, but it does not seem that it is this they wish to consciously recreate. Their stated aspirations call for them to look forward: Nowzad wishes to establish the teatime storytelling of his childhood for his grandchildren; Mahbuba wants to pass on the repaired trunk as an heirloom for her daughter, again not only looking backward but also forward. In this sense the items are transitional objects; their psychological power rests in their 'touching' diverging times and, as Classen (2005) indicates, providing a "chain of tactile connections" (2005, p. 278). Stewart discredits the idea of the heirloom, writing of it elevating "the significance of blood relations at [the expense of] the larger view of history and causality" (2007, p. 137). Nevertheless, it is easier to comprehend and narrate occurrences at an individual or family level, to extrapolate one's place in the larger picture from oneself, rather than work from national movements to find one's place within them.

The losses experienced by Nowzad and Mahbuba are arguably far removed from those of a casual or majority viewer of *TRS* and may seem less bleak than those forced on Helen. This is partly a consequence of their presentation. The participants do not approach the barn alone; Nowzad brings his wife, Mahbuba her daughter, which might suggest some moderation of their loss by implying an existence beyond it. The familial is clear here. Jay extended sympathy to Helen in the form of a hug, but the implication is that the real support through loss comes from people close to you. COVID-19 restrictions were not in place when Nowzad was filmed collecting the refurbished urn, but the supportive arm resting gesture extended by Jay when Nowzad is overcome with emotion, is less sympathetic than his wife Karen's who comments on the samovar and thus fills the silence and deflects attention away from his distress. With

COVID-19 protocols operating when Mahbuba's episode was filmed, it is left to Mahbuba to embrace her sobbing daughter and provide emotional strength, which ends with images of hugs and laughter.

Shots accompanying participants' introductions have an impact on the viewer. In both these cases the shots are of green spring countryside: a softened light bathes the area while wildlife is in evidence. The non-diegetic music and voiceover are blended with birdsong, adding to a generally promising atmosphere. While conversing with Jay and the artisan carrying out the repair, both participants look at them directly and react closely with the items they have brought: Nowzad hugs the samovar as he walks in and carefully touches its damage. Mahbuba resists this, but her expressive hands fly over and around the trunk demonstrating games of hide and seek and how the trunk was cleaned. Neither is hesitant.

The items presented, unusual but not exotic, do not seem to display too great a contrast with the quintessential English countryside in which they are filmed. The visual influence is that item, and their owners, are not overly prominent, they have been enveloped and accepted. This reading suggests that Britain is a nation proud to accommodate immigrants, is curious and is accepting of other, different, cultures. Conversations with both participants represses hardships they may have encountered in this country, preferring instead to focus on their future lives.

To appreciate the subjective importance of the items presented, the viewer needs to feel the emotion surrounding them. Close-ups show them in detail and invite touching. The sensory aspects of the samovar are introduced by the sound of the paper it has been wrapped in being removed, and extreme close-ups of its dull and tarnished surface. Nowzad touches the samovar as if to confirm its presence and its relation to himself.

Tactility is brought to the viewers' attention through visual hapticity (Marks, 2007; Waade and Jørgensen, 2010) and language. The item becomes increasingly tangible as Brenton West and Will Kirk (see Appendix C) begin working on it. Brenton talks about and demonstrates in close-up the 'elbow grease' required in polishing the urn, comments on the smoothness of the metal and holds the item carefully as he takes it apart. Will, too, uses his hands to measure, explain, and feel the success of his work when creating new handles for the trunk. Brenton's approach to repair is physical, about feeling his way around items, demonstrated in his polishing of Mahbuba's trunk. The camera shots place the viewer closer than alongside him: as the camera pans down the length of the box lid in close-up, the viewer, with Brenton, can run their hands across the surface (Waade and Jørgensen, 2010).

The artisans are quick to touch objects, indicating acceptance of differences and similarities to domestic items they have repaired. Perceiving the sense of touch encourages physical and emotional proximity. Having felt the repair of the physical item, it is a short imaginative step to feeling the emotional responses as it is returned. The intimacy of haptic visuality, could provide an invitation into the personal worlds of Mahbuba and Nowzad: hinting at sense memories and traumas “fossilized in [the] object” (Marks, 2007, p. 113).

The exposition and depth of loss on *TRS* is enriched by the physical gestures between the craftspeople and participants at moments of stress. A hug, which offers consolation and reassurance, requires cooperation “for submission into the [...] soother’s bodily stability” (Cekaite, 2015, cited in Cekaite, 2020, p. 89): an acceptance of relatedness. It is possible to discern emotions in tactile behaviour without being touched (Hertenstein et al., 2006, p. 532); thereby suggesting the compassion and relatedness seemingly generated on the set of *TRS* can be communicated to viewers either through affect or cognitive appreciation. Protocols adopted by the show to continue filming during COVID-19, although modified, have been retained: embraces between craftspeople and participants have been discontinued. At times (Series 12, episode 1, 2023) the omission of physical responses feels socially awkward and works against the notion of consolation and connection. Sympathetic and consoling gestures between artisans and participants have not yet fully returned.

4.10 The depiction of loss: conclusions

COVID-19 restrictions enforced social isolation and loss, many people experiencing a “complicated nexus of stress, grief, loneliness, estrangement, abandonment and pain” (Cooper et al., 2023, p. 3). Exposure to this loss may well have encouraged empathy for those, as detailed above, suffering further losses; the associated feelings could become collective. The emotional turmoil that may accompany the loss of a concept, homeland or cultural roots, for example, is presented on *TRS* in personal terms of loss of family and possessions, the former experienced by many during the pandemic. The item for repair provides a concrete substitute for the abstraction. Touching a damaged item might well admit to feelings long buried, indeed the ability and connotations of touch changed during the period of COVID-19, becoming prohibited and dangerous. Boym suggests that for some immigrants the idea of looking back is characterised with dread; should they do so they would become paralysed and their departure futile (2001, p. xv), Nowzad and Mahbuba talk of saving the item for their grandchildren, thus items take on a liminal, transitional quality pointing both to the past and the future, their

tangibility and tactility linking to both. The mediation of loss is experienced on a number of levels: changes over time, the unconscious mechanisms of mourning, as well as cultural implications.

Participants' stories are listened to sympathetically, or with a performance of compassionate concern (Bonner, 2011) exemplified by physical gestures of support and hugs, touch therefore creating a "benign environment" (Winnicott, 1957, p. 417) and consolation for viewers (Ellis, 2020). Stories from immigrants and refugees, presented on the programme as personal, become woven into the experience of viewers, and subsequently recognised as the experience of all Britons (born here, as well as newcomers). In extending empathy and thus modifying ideas of national identity, *TRS*, could, consolingly attempt to signal a subtle beginning of reparation after Brexit.

4.11 The depiction of romantic love: Eros

Another theme weaving its way through *TRS* is love. (See Appendix A for full thematic data). Televisually, love appears to belong firmly within drama where its darker side, envy, lust and revenge is more frequently evident. In line with the lifestyle genre and its consolatory nature (Bonner, 2003; Heller, 2007; Palmer, 2008), *TRS* shies away from these forbidding aspects, preferring to dress love in rose-coloured raiments. The programme makes much of love in its familial guise, friendship rarely being featured; love of parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren and siblings is frequently seen, although occasionally love in its romantic expression, eros, is presented. This section considers the construction and depiction of romantic love on the programme, analysing the presentation of couples, their feelings for one another and their relationships with the items they present, although it is significant in three of the examples, romantic and familial love are firmly entwined.

Four episodes have been selected from the larger sample (see Appendix A), to examine the representation of romantic love, and consider the possibility of joint subjective objects: Barry and Bernadette Jarvis (Series 10, episode 3, 2022) request that a jewellery box be repaired; Mashuk and Paul James offer Mashuk's grandmother Grace's diary (Series 9, episode 6, 2022). Both episodes were broadcast after COVID-19 restrictions had been lifted, but in place at the time of filming. Albert Thompson (Series 4, episode 1, 2019) brings in a radio that he purchased when he and his wife were courting, while Julie Yates, (Series 4, episode 8, 2019) collects a

rocking horse she began renovating with her husband. Both episodes were shot and aired prior to COVID-19 restrictions. The presentation of Barry and Bernadette Jarvis is the first considered as the couple offer the most recognisably romantic pairing, this presentation is then compared with that of Mashuk and Paul James.

The analysis of the presentation of romantic love is followed by a consideration of the role of tactility within the representation of the emotion.

4.11.1 Barry and Bernadette Jarvis: Series 10, episode 3. Mashuk and Paul James: Series 9, episode 6

Introduced in the voiceover as “childhood sweethearts”, Barry and Bernadette approach the barn arm in arm. Bernadette’s difficulty with walking may be a reason for this, but the sustained shot of their linked arms connotes closeness and deep affection. They have been together for fifty-eight years, having “... done well, haven’t we lad?” The programme makes a point of emphasising the longevity of a relationship and its closeness; holding hands is a specific indicator of affection.

These long-standing heterosexuals, married, relationships are assumed to be faithful, reinforcing a traditional heteronormative ideal of married bliss, although increasingly, as with Mashuk and Paul, same-sex couples are featured. Within lifestyle television “marriage breakdown is barely acknowledged” (Bonner, 2003, p. 108). Instead, a fairy-tale idealisation of people and matrimony is adopted, supportive of the reassurance of consolatory television, and affirming the “compelling hold in contemporary culture” (Brown, 2005, p. 24) of romantic love.

Bonner submits that the tone should be “happy and light” (2003, p. 108), in this instance it is infectious and joyous. Barry and Bernadette do not need the interview questions to prompt them to recount their meeting; rather they clarify their story with each other and revel in recalling their younger selves. The artisans become caught up in the affect, accompanying the telling with smiles and giggles, a reaction that is also noticeable when Mashuk and Paul talk about their relationship with Mashuk’s grandmother.

While presenting the jewellery box that Barry sent Bernadette as a young man, both stroke and hug the item, excitedly explaining how it should work. Mashuk, too, tenderly touches his grandmother’s diary, fearful of further damaging the pages and losing her recipes or thoughts. Paul lightly supports his partner. The couples’ tactility around the objects and their imaginings of the previous beauty of the items enhance the artisans’ reactions to them.

Looking at these episodes with help from Klein and Bollas, it is possible to theorise the craft people's responses. Klein argued that "anything that is felt to give out goodness and beauty, and that calls forth pleasure and satisfaction [...] can in the unconscious mind take the place of the whole mother" (Klein, 1998, p. 333).

While not taking the place of a loved person, the items, even in disrepair, release the owners into "*jouissance*" (an affect of joy) (Bollas, 2010, p. 17) of their true selves and assist the artisans in achieving the same state. Bollas (2006) considers this state akin to the "simple self" of the dreamer. In dreams it is possible to experience, "instincts of [...] knowledge" (p. 5), whereas on waking "the complex self" attempts to understand "where one has been or what is meant by one's actions" (p. 5). The presentation of both couples: their gazes, their compliments to one another and their touching of the object brought in for repair, recalls childhood states of delight and trust, indeed, it "signifies hope or aliveness to oneself and the other" (Brown, 2005, p. 32). From Klein's psychological perspective, the good relations with friendly figures in the mind, instigated in relation to our parents and then taken into ourselves, allows the displacement of love into the outer world (1998, p. 340). The repair and renovation of material objects strongly identified with these figures, Mashuk's grandmother, Barry, and Bernadette, could be seen to increase the "wealth of loving feelings" they experience. The beneficence allows them to "displace love into the outer world" (Klein, 1998, p. 340). Such beneficence, communicated to all the artisans on set, may also be grasped by a viewer or extend to the programme itself becoming a psychosocial object of pleasure and satisfaction, thereby releasing the viewer into a "simple state" (Bollas, 2006).

While Barry and Bernadette conform to the British lifestyle television norm, of White heterosexual coupledness, Mashuk and Paul do not. Acknowledged as a married couple in the voiceover, their presentation is, nevertheless, slightly different: Barry and Bernadette approach the barn arm in arm, Mashuk and Paul walk side by side but separately. For Barry and Bernadette, the introductory conversation covers their first meeting and initial thoughts of one another, Mashuk and Paul do not get the opportunity to explain. This may be influenced by the fact that the item requiring repair belonged to Mashuk's grandmother, however, their relationship, obviously important as they are introduced as married, is hardly mentioned. This reticence is unusual, given that illustrative photographs show the three of them together, Mashuk and Paul demonstrating a similar physical and emotional closeness to Barry and Bernadette: looking at one another, finishing each other's sentences and enjoying each other's company. Paul and Mashuk are one of the few same-sex couples to appear together on the show. While other same-sex relationships have been acknowledged, it is more usual for one

grieving partner to participate after the death of the other. Although recognised, it seems the programme is reticent about overtly celebrating this big social shift about which it might consider its core demographic to be less comfortable than younger generations, as same-sex marriage was only legalised in Britain in 2014.

Prior to its repair, Bernadette is shown hugging the damaged jewellery box. In the light of Klein's ideas about reparation it is interesting to consider what the restoration of the box might indicate about attitudes to love. While symbolically its damaged state may suggest an imperfect relationship, the fact that it contains items generally recognised as precious and sentimental, and that it has been kept despite the damage may be read as signifying care. Klein argues that "[i]n the depths of the mind the urge to make people happy is linked with strong feelings of responsibility for them" (Klein, 1998, p. 311).

The box, kept in its damaged state, only now being considered ready for repair, may indicate it has become a transitional object between their younger and older romantic selves and suggest a strong desire to care for and protect, as both Barry and Bernadette come towards the end of their lives. The future of the box is uncertain, as neither mention passing it on to children or grandchildren.

Presenting love as harmonious, long lasting, and reciprocal poses problems: even in fairy tales the king and queen seldom die together, one partner will suffer widowhood. This is a state that *TRS* is bound to depict dealing as it does with damage, memories and hurt. There is really only one possible representation in the circumstance: happiness and fidelity in life requires despair, fidelity and stoicism in death. Participants requesting repairs of items intimately identified with their partnership are not uncommon. (Within the sample of shows in Appendix B this occurs four times). The following section considers the portrayal of love and grief following the death of a partner.

4.11.2 Albert Thompson: Series 4, episode 1

Albert, accompanied by his daughter Lynn, wants his 1950s GEC portable radio working again. Albert does not need much prompting to relate the history of the radio, recalling how he and his wife "clubbed together" to purchase it, how they took it everywhere and how it became central to gatherings when they were on holiday, all illustrated with photographs of his wife Eileen and himself when younger. Recalling these memories makes both him and his daughter smile. Recounting the occasion when the radio stopped working, Albert is delighted to explain how his

nephew used toothbrush handles for station select buttons to keep the radio going but becomes sorrowful and tearful when he relates that it finally ceased to play “two years to the day when Eileen passed away”. The mention of her name in this context prompts an admission of how much he still misses her. At this point his daughter puts her arm round him, and Jay Blades leans forward to hold his hands and whisperingly reassures him that “It’s alright”. Albert needs to be held together. In a Winnicottian sense, this demonstrates holding as a protection from psychological “jarring experiences” (Gomez, 1997, p. 89). Emotion is contained, as is the case throughout *TRS*, by way of tactility.

The show of emotion from Albert, his daughter, and Jay, serves to emphasise Albert’s devotion to his wife and the celebration of their partnership; a union of that intensity deserves the consolation that emotional collapse is acceptable. When showing the radio, Albert is only able to touch the damaged parts; it is Jay who cannot resist its feel. The history of the radio has provided Albert with the opportunity to talk about Eileen. His cheerful demeanour at the start of the interview suggests that he has come to terms with widowhood and the social requirements to “hide grief so fully that no one would guess anything had happened” (Didion, quoting Gorer, 2012, p. 60). What it has done though is “briefly re-anchor her in the present” (Barnes, 2014, p. 108). It could be suggested that Albert has disappointed Eileen or himself in that he has not kept her safe and undamaged (Klein, 1998, p330) or keep her from being forgotten by those around him. Klein details how increasing concern for a loved one and “anxiety about their death” may be expressed in “creative and constructive ways” (1998, p. 336). This creativity, it seems, can also take the form of seeking repair of a cherished item on a successful television show.

4.11.3 Subjective objects and responses

The items exemplified are suggestive of what Bollas terms ‘subjective objects’ (2006), they hold significance for their owners and relay something about the relationships the viewer witnesses. Bollas’s ideas about material objects are illuminating in this context: for him they are expressions of inner states (2006) as discussed here in Chapter 2. Speculatively, the items explored here hold deep unconscious meanings for their owners; Albert’s radio recalls his wife; Mashuk’s grandmother’s diary a situation of comfort, care and acceptance, while Barry and Bernadette’s jewellery box holds a profusion of introjections that consciously become a symbol of their “lasting love for each other” (Barry, Series 10, episode 3).

Participants’ endeavours to explain the importance and significance of the items they present, structure *TRS*. Stories of family objects recalling memories, love and loss, demonstrate the

themes of the programme and the connection with and between those in the barn and those watching. The centrality afforded the narratives underlines how “relationships [are] at the heart of what it is to be human” (Gomez, 1997, p. 1) while furnishing connection and reassurance for viewers (Ellis, 2020, p. 395).

When talking about the associations of their items, all the participants here appear to be in a state approaching what Bollas termed the simplified self: Albert’s unabashed grief, Mashuk and Paul’s delight, and Barry and Bernadette’s childlike joy, encourage physical reactions of comfort or joy from those around them, yet they seem unaware of them. The ‘simplicity’ might be considered infectious, affecting, it provides those around these participants with a particularly rich experience and the potential for the moment to contribute to their own *jouissance* (Bollas, 2006, p. 19). Their embodied feelings are directly linked to their somatic gestures.

Bollas, however, as outlined in the literature review, writes about individual projection. What appears to be happening with Mashuk and Paul, and Barry and Bernadette, is that both partners have projected elements within the item. While not the same, this projection evokes corresponding responses to their partner, in this way the intimacy of the couple becomes enhanced.

4.11.3.1 Tactile responses

Given the acknowledged emotional significance of these items to the couples, their tactile responses pre and post repair invites scrutiny. Classen (2005) sought an answer as to why museum visitors wanted to touch exhibits, as well as what that touch meant to them (p. 276). While the social contexts are different, the items participants reach towards on *TRS* are their own, and the formality of the setting in *TRS* barn, possibly less forbidding than that of a museum, means her explanations bear further investigation.

Classen suggests that “[t]ouch functions to correct the misconceptions of sight” (2005, p. 277). This is pertinent for participants on *TRS* whose renovated item may look much different on collection: the visual memory of the piece has to be remade to accommodate its appearance in the recent and the distant past, this in addition to trying to work out how the repair has been achieved.

Furthermore, Classen proposes that touch annihilates the idea of space and time. Krasner explains that in autobiographical memory “the self as present body and as past history exist side by side” (2010, p. 44), but in biographical memory, that is post-memory, or in an imaginative

pursuit of a link with history, “a sensory encounter [...] provides a thrilling or disturbing access to” something remote (Classen, 2014, p. 269). However, with a renovation it may seem as if the past and present have collided. It is as if, through touching their object, owners are attempting to rediscover the traits and traces of the original item, external and internal, and thoroughly repossess it.

Concentrating on older people, Krasner (2010), reiterates that as people become physically frailer, they rely more on intimate senses: visually based memory gives way to tangible memory (Rubinstein and Parmalee, 1992, in Krasner, 2010, p. 47). Touch and smell are experiences of the lived body, they offer reliability. For Mashuk with his grandmother’s diary and Albert with his radio, it may be that they wish the boundaries between self and object to be blurred.

Arriving to collect his grandmother’s diary, Mashuk and Paul walk closer together, setting the tone for a tactile response to the repair. Jay Blades seems to encourage this with his comment that Mashuk just wants to hold the repaired diary. He shows no hesitation in picking it up, or in sharing it and his delight with Paul. His statement about how precious his grandmother was to him is made while he strokes the spine and the cover of the repaired book. He is initially “scared to open” it, but once that is achieved his hands move over the pages. Mashuk and Paul pass the book between them as they appreciate it. They leave the barn with their arms across each other’s shoulders. Paul comments that being able to touch the diary again is like receiving a hug from Mashuk’s grandmother, Lucy-Grace, thereby making a link between the item and a sense of physical affection and care in his mind. Further comments indicate that the repair was important “to us”, Mashuk and Paul, associating the repair of the diary with a greater physical closeness between the couple. It is possible to suggest that their relationship has been legitimised within the frame of the programme by their relationship to family progenitors, here, Mashuk’s grandmother.

Surprisingly for a couple for whom the tactile nature of the jewellery box was important prior to its repair, the response of Barry and Bernadette on collecting it is more reticent. They arrive arm in arm again. The artisans are excited when anticipating the couple’s response to the renovation, smiling and giggling before the couple enter. Filmed during a restrictive period of the pandemic, Jay can only smile and wave in greeting. Unusually, it is Barry who is invited to unveil the renovated box, an ‘honour’ customarily undertaken by the artisan completing the repair in pre- and post- COVID-19 protocols. As Barry and Bernadette lean closer to each other to look at what has been done, Bernadette begins pointing out different features of the renovation, and Barry asks if they may touch their item.

Albert is happy to touch his radio to demonstrate the damage and his nephew's repair. Appearing to be a man appreciating tactility, he is delighted by the handshakes and reassuring gestures extended by Jay Blades. On his return he has his arm around his daughter although this time it is he who is being supported, she is also the one who talks to camera, detailing what she believes a repaired and working radio will mean to her father.

Albert's reticence at this point seems fearful. It could be that he is anxious that the repair of, in Kleinian terms, the damage he has inflicted on his wife Eileen in phantasy, has not been executed. However, striving to recover Eileen has become a quest for Albert (Bowlby, 1980 cited by Krasner, 2010, p.30). Having completed it, his relationship, to, and emotionally with, the item, the quest and Eileen has changed. Potentially he no longer has a daily reminder of an action that would continue to link them, there is nothing more he can do for her or himself. He must adapt to a different tactile presence from the radio and, as Krasner (2010) would suggest, Eileen.

On entering the barn, though, Jay and Albert hug. The physical contact and the warm-hearted greeting are taken as sincere and authentic. Albert's joy, tears and smiles on seeing the radio elicit hugs from those around him. He touches the previously useless handle and strokes the upper surface of the radio. Turning the radio on to check if it is working is something he is not willing to do. Once assured of its working status though, he puts his hands around it, hugging it and leaves after being embraced by Jay. In the final piece to camera his arm is around his daughter, in affection rather than in need of support.

4.11.3.2 "Can we touch it?" "Of course you can"

Albert refuses to turn on the radio, Mashuk asks if he can open the book and Barry and Bernadette seek confirmation that they may handle the box. An intense example of this hesitancy is notable with Julie Yates (Series 4, episode 8) and her rocking horse.

A present from her parents, Julie wants the horse repaired so that she can pass it on to future grandchildren. The story of the damage to the horse, boisterous games and use by her children is a familiar one for the show, she explains that with her husband she had renovated the item before her own children played with it and that there were plans to do this again before passing it on. Julie demonstrates the entanglement of romantic and familial love on display on the programme. It is through the voiceover, rather than Julie telling the tale, that the viewer learns of

her husband's illness and death. Julie has no wishes for the restoration other than asking that her husband's signature, which she remembers as being underneath the saddle, be kept.

TRS's Suzie Fletcher (See Appendix C) finds the signature and herself is moved to tears. The camera stays on her in close-up, cutting to her touching the signature as she reveals that she too lost her husband to cancer. Her distress is recognised by her brother, also an artisan on the programme, who comes to embrace her while she cries. When Julie returns, she talks about her nervousness at seeing the rocking horse and her usual unemotionality. She appears delighted by the renovation but does not ask about the signature. Suzie brings this up and removes the saddle to display it. Julie is reluctant to move to look, proclaiming that she "doesn't know whether [she] can". She is gently encouraged to do so. Unlike Suzie who had her hand on the signature while talking about her own grief, Julie does not touch it, and only twice briefly touches the repaired horse. As with Albert, the repair of the item has changed her relationship with it, her deceased husband and her living children. Her partner's death means she no longer has the role of wife. While Julie may understand this change rationally, she may not have finished reviewing this relationship or be ready to "let go" (Volkan, 1993, p. 31). Seeing the repaired horse maintains distance, but touch annihilates it "physically uniting toucher and the touched", emphasising the difficulty she is experiencing in confronting her "essential loneliness and yearning" (Volkan, 1993, p. 30).

4.11.4 The presentation of romantic love: conclusions

In his lectures on novel writing, E.M. Forster (1975) observed that the novelist can make love a "permanency and his readers [will] easily acquiesce [...] we cannot bear to apply our bitter knowledge to the future, the future will be so different" (1975, p. 62).

TRS and its viewers duly acquiesce, refusing to apply their knowledge as they want to lend the programme their dreams and "cannot relinquish [their] attachment to a romantic ideal" (Brown, 2005, p. 40). Nevertheless, there are dilemmas the show must negotiate: the difficulty of not knowing and death.

The presentation of romantic love, explored in the examples above, fulfils the requirements of lifestyle television relationships where "romance, marriage, children and grandchildren" are assumed (Bonner, 2003, p. 108). If not confirmed in this way they are legitimised, as in the case of the same-sex couple, Mashuk and Paul, by familial love, in this case Mashuk's grandmother. Romantic love and familial love are intertwined; a couple are seen as founders of a family. The

couples presented radiate happiness when talking about spouses, signalling fidelity and providing the cornerstone of the illusion explained by Forster and demanded by lifestyle television, as outlined here in Chapter 2. Nonetheless, the joyful and somatic reactions of the artisans indicate the fragility of the fantasy: if the love exhibited here was usual such extravagant responses would not be called forth. Everyone is entranced by what they experience because it is unusual and, in that sense, ideal and aspirational.

Love's permanency is questionable (Forster, 1975): death is not. Nevertheless, *TRS* indicates that demise of a loved one does not end the emotion, and that the grief and mourning of the still living partner demonstrates its strength: furthermore, the repair of an item associated with the beloved bolsters their presence in the here and now.

4.12 The depiction of memory

For *TRS*, touch is the key to “imaginative engagement” with memory (Keightley and Pickering, 2012, p. 1) for its participants. For its viewers, touch is advocated through haptic visuality. The programme is not concerned with precise facts and figures, instead it encourages participants and viewers to access an imaginative iteration of memory that allows it to act as “a resource for thinking about transitions between past, present and future” (Keightley and Pickering, 2012, p. 1). These memories are compiled of fragmented episodes employing multisensory cues.

To explore the presentation of memory on the programme, this section further analyses the clip of Nowzad and his family samovar (Series 5, episode 17, 10.12.2019), shot and broadcast prior to COVID-19 restrictions; Ross Brown's sailor's hat (Series 8, episode 14, 26.01. 2022) and Clare Funge's unfinished jewellery box (Series 9 episode 3, 16.03.2022), both aired after COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, but filmed while COVID-19 protocols were still in operation. (See Appendix B for description of clips).

These extracts feature “direct evocative objects” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 4) that is, they are unambiguously linked to the personal and are laden with autobiographical experiences, introjected and projected meanings. “Indirect evocative objects” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 7) recall what Hirsch (2012) terms “post-memory”. These are memories that are distinguished from autobiographical memory “by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 22), nevertheless, they “create a focal point of memory” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 13) and memorial. It is not entirely possible to separate the

categories, as here, for the exemplified participants the objects memorialise others, as do many material objects on the programme.

4.12.1 Imaginative memory

The recall of the participants' memories is aided by the objects that they present on the show. Employing touch, sound, and smell as well as sight, the basis for the retrieval of memories is expanded. Newspaper and magazine articles on the programme have quoted craftspeople remarking on how a physical object is "an extraordinary vehicle for storytelling [...] that encourages people to confide things they have never done before" (Starling, 2021) or how "simple belongings can become inseparable from our lives" harbouring powerful memories (Kalia, 2019). As they progress through their 'lives' objects accrue damage, become marked and age. Nowzad, touching the dent on his beloved family samovar (Series 5, episode 17) recounts how, when moving it, his brother slipped. Rather than clouding memory the damage expands it, including further distinct incidents and related to specific people and times. Choosing a particular item for repair, participants have already selected memories which they wish to preserve and hold onto (Hannan et al., 2019), the phrase itself implies the tactility of recall.

The play of senses may intensify a memory, they do not, though, allow it to be presented as fully formed. Memories possess the capacity to be altered by current exigences, and, as personal recollections are often interwoven with collective memories, indicate both individual and social necessity.

4.12.2 Collective memory

The term 'collective memory' used here applies to large social events, Brexit and COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns amongst them, not though, in terms of dates, times or political manoeuvrings, but of the social, emotional and psychological experiences generated for people. It does not engage with contentions of how the remembrance has been crafted, nor what has been approved or left out of a recollection.

TRS weaves shared memories into its fabric of personal recollection as quiet social context. They are constructed so events are neither denigrated nor extolled, a move which would offer too political a comment for a programme offering collective repair, attempting to show a multi-cultural, rather than a White nationalist Britain.

The term here is concerned with an aspect of what Bollas terms “generational consciousness” (2006, p. 247). It adopts his idea that “Each generation selects its generational objects [...] which have particular meaning to the identity of the group” (p. 259), Ross Brown’s sailor’s cap, for example, or specific toys, a Dalek from the BBC television series *Doctor Who* (1963–1989, 2005–) in *TRS* Series 1 (episode 3, 2017) or a Raleigh Chopper bike (December 2019). Emotional experiences, which often form memories, are not, though, confined to one generation. Experiences of childhood, love, marriage, or death are felt across ages, with objects recalling them, teddy bears, or jewellery, for example, setting up intergenerational and relational resonances. It is with these references in mind that the term collective memory is used, although collective and personal memories are rarely without colouring from one another.

4.12.3 The representation of memory

TRS celebrates private memories and recollections. Helped by the respectful attentiveness of the presenters and craftspeople, participants’ stories are mined for veracity of emotion, not dates or times. A visual medium has difficulties in showing the internal. The programme is compelled to find a televisual language through which to communicate individual memory and encourage collective appreciation. McCarroll and Kirby (2023) provide the example from *TRS* of Natalie Cumming and a violin (Series 2, episode 1, 2018). They comment on her use of language, she is “overwhelmed” but conclude that “[t]he memories evoked are internal, yet somehow shared between her and the object” (p. 5). For the viewer, programme makers have to make the concept and coherence of the dust and affect of memory on the individual into an emotion that can command sympathy/empathy. Holdsworth, (2011) contends “that empty space is the key to the representation of memory” as the viewer is being asked to appreciate the space as a “site of profoundly personal experience” (p. 84). A blank face on screen, the equivalent for *TRS*, however, does not invite a similar imaginative response, rather it suggests disappointment within the context of the show.

For *TRS*, touch is the visual key to memory. Panning, close-up shots along a revealed item, concentrate on texture. Appreciative of the feel of a material object, a viewer may be drawn in to the intimate experience of touch for someone else. The public, physical, manifestation of touch, encourages a link to a personal memory and emotional experience. Such experiences, for the viewer, are intensified through the participants’ loss of language. An example of the association between, touch, memory, emotion, and the viewer can be seen when Bernadette and Barry collect their renovated jewellery box (Series 10, episode 3). The camera dwells, in close-up, on

Bernadette's hands and face as she lifts the lid, opens drawers and makes mechanical elements work that she has not seen in motion. Her inarticulacy communicates her childlike joy, part of the permanent childhood daydream that maintains "the poetry of the past" (Bachelard, 2014, p. 58). Vocals and visuals are combined to demonstrate the inadequacies of language. Nevertheless, the process of memory and remembering remains partly concealed on screen as it is interior to the participants.

4.12.4 Memory and stories

Methodologically it is important to wait for stories of memories to surface, and the fragments pieced together (Hollway, 2016; Hannan et al., 2019; Mannay, 2020). Within television, where the narrative of personal experience is a driver, to be successful, stories need to be told chronologically in first person, with a distinct narrative arc, communicating affective experience within a tightly controlled time. The object presented and the relation of its passage through time allows "a point of entry into the common emotional ground of memory and belonging" (Heaney, 1993, p. 36).

Told in this way, narratives imply certainty. The conviction of chronology and resolution can be attractive at a time of uneasiness and anxiety, implying that contemporary times lack something, which may only be found in the past; the distinction between memory, nostalgia and fiction, often indeterminate, is possibly one of the attractions of *TRS* in post-Brexit and COVID-19 times. Making sense of our experience through evolving memories and developing narratives, "help[s] us to frame our lives as not entirely meaningless" (Arnold-Forster, 2024, p. 180). Memory narratives place us as part of a wider history and encourage us to consider ourselves as "active historical agents" (Holdsworth, 2011, p.4). *TRS* strengthens this belief through an understanding of participants on the show as engaged in ensuring that their personal history, or their "realities" (Heaney, 1993, p. 36) survive through their stories and their items.

TRS participants' recollections involve incidents of unhappiness yet always include joyful memories for the teller to recollect and celebrate, which can gloss over, exclude, or repress, certain types of memory. Nowzad fled war in northern Iraq, his escape is highlighted, but not the fate of his wider family, nor Iraq's role as aggressor; Mahbuba's wooden chest is a replacement purchased in Oman, years after her family were exiled by a revolution in Zanzibar against a post-colonial Arab regime, the viewer does not find out how she and her family fared initially. Bonner noted how few objects "from settler colonies or Africa" (2003, p. 198) are featured on *Antiques Roadshow* (BBC, 1979–), the same applies to *TRS*: memories pertaining to domestic aspects of

White British culture predominate. The optimistic pattern for memory is therefore set by the programme even when it is probable that the positive outcome is overly idealistic. The setting of The Empire Windrush memories as immigrants overcoming challenges through resilience, (*Windrush Special*, Series 12, episode 7, 2023); the hard-pressed NHS serving its patients with professionalism and dedication throughout COVID-19 (*NHS Special*, Series 12, episode 8, 2023) provide clear examples. Both play into a larger reparative narrative for the British nation.

4.12.5 Family memory

The emphasis on family heirlooms and history accentuates the importance of connecting, especially connection associated with lineage and relationships. The individual's place is within the family (see Section 5.1.5) and whatever the configuration of the group may be, participants are helped to preserve their connection through the rescue and renovation of material possessions. Kleinecke-Bates (2010), comments how participants on *Flog It* (BBC 2002–2020), a show centred around “the sentimental and monetary value of antiques and heirlooms” (p. 222), have inherited items the history of which has been forgotten, therefore expediting their sale. This indicates a fragility to memory and the limited assurance in even repaired items promoting remembrance, surviving thoughtlessness, or creating ties that bind beyond the present.

Connection works not only across time, as above, but also across mediated space. On-screen participants' stories, told on object orientated television programmes need to resonate with the viewer for the show to achieve success. As suggested, many people who watch will have lived through similar experiences. Being able to adopt a different perspective, even multiple perspectives, viewers are granted the opportunity to reflect on their own feelings and identify with those on screen and in their homes. Bainbridge (2019) has argued that a “sense of shared histories provides a springboard for thinking about present day anxiety” (p. 7). Further “reflection and self-experience are modelled as a source of meaning and understanding” (p. 12), even if that experience is restricted by televisual demands.

4.12.6 Continuity and connection

Brexit and COVID-19 lockdowns increased anxiety (Hughes, 2019; Phillips and Barwick, 2019; Macrury and Yates, 2021; Spiegelhalter and Masters, 2021; Bruzzi and Biriotti, 2022). Both events underlined vulnerability and signalled profound change. Volkan writes “Human beings do

not give up things easily [...] we mourn what is left behind” (1993, p. 1), be that status, a sense of cultural connection as with Brexit, or social connection and a way of life with COVID-19 lockdowns. Emotional and psychological continuity may be sought through appreciating things that have not changed and through creative work that nurtures new bonds. *TRS* does much to emphasise historic, emotional and psychological continuity to curate a sense of care that enables one to build up a “continuity of being” (Winnicott, 1960, p. 593).

The set of the show is a seventeenth or early eighteenth-century barn now situated at The Weald and Downland Museum on the Sussex Downs. The position of the building, as well as the age, suggest the stability of tradition. However, whilst the bucolic situation evokes the idea of the pastoral, an environment we have lost, “a sanctuary from the harsh realities of the urban world” (Fowler, 2020, p. 51) which Fowler maintains is not only naive but “hard to sustain, yet [has been] sustained” (2020, p. 46), it is not entirely true. The barn has been moved to its present location from Lee on the Solent, approximately thirty miles away and therefore could be termed displaced continuity: the programme might be said to be playing with history, altering place, and disrupting coherence in the way that memory might operate.

Mise en scene within the barn is composed of items common seventy or eighty years ago: old cameras, pegboards displaying various hand saws, and metal lockers, all of which may trigger recognition for the older demographic amongst those watching. For the focus groups in this study, identification of items was the precursor of interrogation, exchange, and corroboration of reminiscences, of connecting with others and confirming generational experiences. The timbered barn too, with its mellow, natural hues complemented by warm lighting, is utilised by the production team to create an atmosphere of enveloping comfort and warmheartedness.

Teaching craftspeople “the old-fashioned way” of repairing or making items (Introduction, Series 4) and the appeal to tradition adds a further layer to *TRS*’s invocation of memory. Conceptually tradition is “soft” (Bronner, 1998, p. 10) given to “emotional usage, imprecise, inconsistent, and infuriatingly elusive”, it has much in common with memory: they share the unreliability of orality and imagination. Thought of as a “handing down of lore from generation to generation” (Bronner, 1998, p. 9), it gathers around it authority and reverence that can be characterised as “a kind of substitute for history”, providing “easy and comfortable answers in the present” (Chase and Shaw, 1989, p. 11). Tradition seeks to connect people experientially to the past: it is not the memory of “exam stuff” (Keightley and Pickering, 2012, p. 5).

Handing down or handing on, reinforces a sense of stability and can provide reassurance during times of uncertainty, rather than “an enactment of continuity” (Chase and Shaw, 1989, p. 11), it

can become that continuity. In psychological terms tradition may contribute to the Winnicottian environment of care (1960). The phrase “handing down”, often used with the concept of tradition (Bronner, 1998, p. 9), references a sense of touch. The link between tradition and touch is strengthened in the show when craftspeople comment on using tools previously owned by their mentors or preceding generations of artisans, invoking a personal world before mass production.

The concept of tradition can encourage negative connotations of backwardness. *TRS*, though, also summons it to apply to repairs conducted with more modern materials or methods. It is suggested that through time, artisans have often sidestepped problems through being creative, combining methods and materials in a distinctly non-traditional way to solve a problem, thus tradition is used to cover painstaking historical methods as well as to commend inventiveness.

Holdsworth’s analysis of *Who Do You Think You Are* (BBC 2004–), in 2011, explored participants on the programme visiting sites of memory: “It is an emphasis that illuminates the potential for the interaction between place and memory”, as it asks viewers to “imaginatively invest the story into the image” (p. 78). The first series of *TRS* visited some participants, showing them in domestic surroundings. This has only been repeated once more (Series 3, episode 1, 2018) when a pocket watch was returned to a participant living in The Netherlands. Holdsworth argues that “[t]he spectacle of landscapes and a strong heritage discourse serve to emphasise lines of tradition that feed into construction of national identity and Britishness”. (2011, p. 85).

Using the barn as the setting for repairs would therefore seem to dilute the possibility of imaginative interaction with personal memory. As Holdsworth suggests though, the use of the Sussex landscape and shared setting for all participants may do much to confirm a close interplay between the individual and collective. That is not to suggest that its consolidation of a national identity is an overt purpose of the show. However, its depiction of the countryside, history and crafts promotes a reparative ‘common’ vision of Britishness which avoids debates around “what the nation should be and who it should represent” (Stanley, 2022, p. 25) attendant on Brexit.

4.12.7 The presentation of memory: conclusions

Memory, as presented on *TRS*, is an imaginative and creative capability as detailed by Keightley and Pickering (2012). It is largely personal and autobiographical although it may have links to family members unknown to the participant (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023). The commonplace,

often mass-produced items operate to resonate widely with the show's demographic, while the craftspeople set up romantic associations with the Arts and Crafts tradition. Tactility is important in revealing fragments of memory (Marks, 2007) that may be lost to sight alone. The physicality of objects offers a direct creative link to the past as well as the future, annihilating time, and providing a chain of tactile connections (Classen, 2005).

The demands of lifestyle television, as discussed in the literature review, shapes memories and narratives in concise ways (Bonner, 2003; Waade and Jørgensen, 2010) avoiding their fragmented nature but emphasising their emotional content. Within *TRS* format, personal memories, woven with recollections of collective life moments, operate to consolidate a sense of belonging, either in terms of family or shared past experiences and understandings which aid its work of national reparation.

To convince a viewer to appreciate a memory the programme has developed an audio-visual language of touch, communicated in close-ups and bodily gestures, which invites recognition, sympathy, and an emotional connection.

4.13 Mourning: introduction

Mourning the death of a loved one is a recurrent trope in *TRS* (see appendix D). Below, three examples are described; Albert Thompson (Series 4, episode 1), mourning the death of his wife four years previously; Julie Yates (Series 4, episode 6), coming to terms with the death of her husband, about a year before the episode was made, and Mashuk James (Series 9, episode 6) suffering the death of his grandmother in 2017, five years before the episode aired. For two of the three examples, the time between the death and their request for the repair of their item, indicates the lengthy horizontality of mourning. (All programme segments are described in detail in Appendix B).

Loss, grief, and mourning can appear as an inseparable trinity. Volkan's *Life after loss* (1993) introduces them together as does Klein (1998), while Freud concentrates on *Mourning and melancholia* (1917). This study has previously considered the representation of loss on *TRS*, applying the term to loss of home and what Freud refers to as a "loss of some abstraction", preferring mourning to stand for "the reaction to the loss of a loved person" (1917, p. 243). This chapter will focus on the representation of mourning on *TRS* as the loss of a loved one.

This study's textual analysis can only explore the manifestations of the inner emotional and psychic pain endured "in the slow process of testing reality after the death of a loved one"

(Klein, 1998, p. 354), considering how *TRS* represents fragments of a participant's mourning, bringing together individual experiences into a generalised representation of the state. Mourning is the term used throughout this section. Following Barnes (2014), I understand grief and mourning to overlap presenting difficulties in differentiation.

4.13.1 The depiction of mourning

The programme recognises the state of mourning providing moments for it to be acknowledged in recurring story segments. The stories of departed loved ones are told employing close-ups and seen to be listened to respectfully and sympathetically; Jay Blades looks intently at Albert when he talks about his wife. He seems so alert to Albert's feelings that his clasping of Albert's hands on the admission of how much he is missing Eileen, appears instinctive. Blades is deprived of this physical action by the time he greets Mashuk, as COVID-19 protocols were in place. With physical contact forbidden, Blades (and bookbinder Chris Shaw's) "active adaptation" (Winnicott, 2005, p. 13) to Mashuk's needs can only take the form of gestures of agreement in close-up. Pre-COVID-19, Steve Fletcher is quick to enfold his sister in his arms when she is upset on discovering a deceased's signature. Jay Blades and Steve Fletcher could be understood to be playing a version of the role of Winnicott's "good enough" parent (2005, p. 13), containing emotions, physically and psychologically, until the participants are able to bear them themselves. For Julie Yates, Will Kirk, the craftsperson accepting her rocking horse for repair is sympathetic, adapting to her needs to appear unemotional by not offering physical, or substantial responsive gestures. For these participants it is as if they have had a brief respite from the demands of the work of mourning.

The programme further acknowledges the significance of mourning in the initial interviews with the participant. While presenters ask questions, the answers are provided against a soundtrack of diegetic sound. For Julie Yates, some of the explanation of her husband's illness is carried by the voiceover and, at that point, backed by music. After this brief interlude, it is she who explains the speed of the outcome with only diegetic sound noticeable. Robert Pugh's voiceover is one of sympathetic calm. It is the tone and timbre of the voice rather than the music which provides emotional resonance for viewers. The absence of music, usually employed, "to impart meaningfulness to events and images on screen" (Lury, 2005, p. 71), indicates that this emotion is different to others encountered in the lifestyle genre: it is painful for the participant, and the authenticity of its communication does not need to be heightened for the viewer. To use backing music for the voiceover and a snapshot of Paul and Julie, is an attempt to shape the viewers'

emotions, more would discredit its truthfulness. Mourning is too serious not to be seen to be taken seriously.

Presenters and craftspeople are not heard to comment on the emotions displayed, other than to suggest that feeling them is normal: “it’s alright”. They do not turn away, rather, move forward to embrace them. As such they offer a distinction to the ways in which mourning is usually received contemporarily in public. Barnes writes that friends thought of mourning as a debilitating condition that they were waiting for him to throw off, so that “we can all go back to pretending that death doesn’t exist or is at least comfortably far away”. (2014, pp. 106–7). In featuring “ordinary people” (Turner, 2009) who, while not collapsing, or maintaining a stiff upper lip, allow their feelings to show in public space, the programme denies neither death nor the emotional pain of mourning: implying whatever form “uncomplicated mourning” (Volkan, 1993, p. 6) takes is acceptable. However, the inference is that repairing an item associated with a loved one brings solace.

Participants often reference their spouses (or grandmother, for Mashuk) looking down or feeling proud. The dead become an all knowing, all observing presence from on high in some kind of afterlife. This trade off with psychic reality, attempts, perhaps briefly, to hold on to a relationship, intensifying it by completing a task (Julie Yates), ensuring a continued ‘conversation’ (Mashuk) or briefly forgetting a partner’s death, while pursuing a hobby (Albert).

Talking about a deceased loved one is presented as a joyful experience; it is a chance to anchor them in the present although it is not emotionally painless. No person or object introduced is not loved or treasured. Viewers are not presented with distasteful or abusive relationships or ugly objects about which participants may be ambivalent. The programme does not favour what Freud calls melancholia (1917), or Volkan, “complicated or delayed mourning” (1993, p. 5), The introductory conversation about the object for repair, legitimises talking about the deceased in a culture that denies mortality (Volkan, 1993). In the process of internalising their dead loved one, mourners may recognise the death, although that “doesn’t mean they do not exist” (Barnes, 2014, p. 102). A conversation, the repair of a loved item, and the care taken over the renovation, corroborates their being and helps to re-establish them, when the mourner themselves cannot (Barnes, 2014).

Photographs and the speaking aloud of names recalls and affirms, the person who has died. Images fix in time though, the subject can be seen as hovering between life and death (Hirsch, 2012 p. 20). The snapshot, on screen momentarily, operates in three particular ways. It adds detail and intensity to the tight narrative of the item presented for repair. It confirms the

centrality of the personal relationship for the participant, either from the intimacy of the shot of the deceased on their own, or the evidence of the participant and their loved one side by side or embracing. Poignantly it also attests to impending but unknown change, to “the vulnerability of lives heading towards their own destruction” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 19)

Furthermore, snapshots confirm individuality and universality; each individual, and each individual mourning is particular, but contains events and emotions that represent the universal and establish interconnectedness through the similarity of experience. This is part of the reparative work the show sets out to undertake: the particular is universalised. The colour in the photographs may change, facial expressions may alter, but snapshots offer recognisable poses and recognisable glances between the subjects. The immediacy and carelessness of the domestic snapshot often make it difficult to comprehend that the subject no longer exists (Hirsch, 2012).

Barthes, looking through photographs of his deceased mother, writes how he has “no hope of finding her” (2020, p. 75). Snapshot images are not “a living resurrection of the beloved face” (Barthes, 2020, p.76), he has instead, to look at photographs of “the objects she kept on her dressing table” (Barthes, 2020, p. 77) and conjure the “softness of her crêpe de Chine” (Barthes, 2020, p. 78) in order to bring her back. The photographs confirm his loss; the memory of objects brings her closer.

A key piece of information often elicited during introductory conversations on the show, is the deceased’s name. During mourning this may help to confirm their existence, bearing witness to the relationship (Brault and Naas, 2001, p. 3). Equally though, speaking the name points to the absence of the loved one, as intimacy does not require the formality of a name, only the informality of “you”.

4.13.2 Empathy and mourning

Reality/makeover television, of which *TRS*, in its lifestyle niche, is a part, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), enjoins the “TV subject [...] to share their [the participant’s] pain, their surprise or their joy” (Biressi and Nunn, 2005). *TRS* explores the stories attached to items presented to tap authenticity and emotional *realism*, fashioning them into consolatory television, which is “comfortable and familiar; emotion rather than message” (Ellis, 2020, p. 349).

Empathy is carefully constructed on the programme through providing “invitations to feel” (Smith, 2003, p. 12), emotionally and physically. It is mediated around the response to participants offered by the regular cast of *TRS*. The tactility employed in the repair of meaningful objects was extended through hugs and physical gestures of support to participants. During COVID-19, the care taken with material objects became more significant: standing not only for reverence to the deceased but also solicitude and consolation for participants and viewers.

To achieve success the programme is required to engage the empathy of its viewers for its participants. It requires a recognition and aligning of one’s own inner experience to the experience of others (Michels, 2021) so that the opportunity to work through similar experiences or at least feel a sense of “human interconnection” (Biressi and Nunn, 2005, p. 112) is present.

This may initiate “the capacity [for] creative repair” (Holmes, 2023, p. 11) for viewers.

4.13.3 The depiction of mourning: conclusions

Presenters and craftspeople on *TRS* appear not to shrink from grief and mourning, encouraging participants to name deceased loved ones and tell stories of their past together, rather than attempting to deny its presence. It is as if participants’ emotions are briefly held and managed, relieving them of carrying the sole burden. In programmes pre-COVID-19, physical holding became a manifestation of the emotional experience, during and post-pandemic, empathy is mediated through the care and repair of items presented and nonphysical bodily gestures.

Simplistically, the repair of a treasured object is framed as an alleviation of unhappiness; a participant has precipitated a memorial act that will allow them to free themselves from the “constant siege from the past”, the reviewing of “elements of the relationship” and “repeatedly confront[ing their] essential loneliness and yearning” (Volkan, 2019, p. 30).

What the programme does not confront is what Volkan terms “complicated mourning” (2019, p.44) and Freud melancholia, that is “the cessation of interest in the outside world [and] the loss of the capacity to love” (1917, p. 244). It demands that the repair it carries out allows the participant to “be free of the loss and move on” (Volkan, 2019, p. 31); it requires optimism.

A capacity for self-perception and reflection, key features of empathetic projection are central to *TRS*’s potential for national repair. Experiential similarities with show participants, highlighted in narrative, images, and objects, temper individual isolation and “the poisonous discourse of prejudice, [and] nationalism” (Phillips and Barwick, 2020, p. 107) that surrounded Brexit, as

does the programme's sharing of vulnerability and insistence on multi dependency, demonstrated by the cooperation of artisans as they affect a repair.

Phillips and Barwick (2020) point out how Brexit occasioned mourning; having chosen to leave the EU, Britain had relinquished its opportunity to remain. The rhetoric of neo-liberalism requires that to be successful, someone or some group must be seen as weaker: it does not concede to subtleties of regret or allow the mourning for a lost potential future, both of which indicate vulnerability. (Phillips and Barwick, 2020, p112)

TRS was produced and broadcast through a time of more traditional mourning: COVID-19 lockdowns. People became fearful for friends, family, and their own mortality, in a way that “no human being really grasps” (Freud, 1919, p. 94). Confronted with the physical loss of loved ones, and a loss of future, vulnerability became indisputable. Characterised as “essentially bereavement counselling in the guise of mending” (Midgely, *The Times*, 2021), through engaging in conversation with people like ourselves, and people unlike ourselves, the programme provides a “kindness that is protective, not punishing of other people’s vulnerabilities” (Phillips and Barwick, 2020, p. 112), or of our own.

4.14 The depiction of repair: introduction

The last of the major themes identified in the larger thematic analysis of representative episodes (See Appendix A), repair and which binds together all the observed motifs, its importance indicated in the title of the show. Early introductory voiceovers (Series 1, 2017, Series 3, 2018) aligned the show against late-stage throwaway capitalism, promoting the restoration of items that “mean too much to be thrown away” (Series 3, episode 1). Later repair was associated with “keep[ing] things going” and “heritage craft skills” (Series 6, episode 1, 2020) invoking the romanticism of Morris’s Arts and Crafts movement, nostalgia, the pastoral and possibly acting as a defence against “capitalist accumulation” (Melas, 2020), justifying personal clearance activity during COVID-19 lockdowns. As Kaplan notices though, “[i]n the literature, it appears that once nostalgia becomes synonymous with a longing for a lost or idealised past it becomes classified as a variant of depression” (1987, p. 467). Depression is not usually the territory of lifestyle television.

The following describes the processes of repair on the programme and explores the presentation of the theme. I use three examples, Ross Brown and his grandfather’s sailors cap (Series 8, episode 14, 2022), Clare Funge and her mother’s jewellery box (Series 9, episode 3,

2022), and Gary Shaw and his father's replica WWII toy plane (Series 7, episode 31, 2021), all shot during COVID-19 restrictions, but aired afterwards, to explore the psychological significance of repair before examining its psychosocial importance.

4.14.1 The representation of repair

Repairs can require the skills of more than one artisan, often a "team" are responsible for a restoration, providing a sense of "community" (Starling, 2021), a family who will support each other. They may "take the mickey out of each other" (Kalia, 2019), but they praise each other's work, provide hoarded items, "nails manufactured decades ago to long obsolete measurements" (Starling, 2021), or make parts from scratch to ensure a successful outcome.

The process of repair is tactile. Although measurement and diligent research may be necessary, hands check surfaces for smoothness or joints for strength. Actions are shown in close-up and occasionally slow motion, emphasising the time and care taken. Tactility, patience, and absorption, recorded but also constructed through camera angles, sound and editing, combine to create the "magic" (Starling, 2021) and reassurance (Singh, 2021) commented on by reviewers, providing the mediated equivalent of a containing hug.

4.14.2 Worth and worthiness

TRS does not countenance an item's financial value, but deals in emotional 'worth', the affection for an individual, usually the family relative to whom the piece originally belonged. "[E]very item brought in [is] an extraordinary vehicle for storytelling" says Kirsten Ramsay" (Starling, 2021) (See Appendix C). This, theoretically, allows for a levelling of social class. Susan Stewart argues that material objects "provide myth of contact and presence" (2007, p. 133). The narratives they prompt, create a version of the people who once existed, as well as of the current possessor. As the centre of a story the item is no longer consigned to being "impoverished and partial" (Stewart, 2007, p. 136). Animated by the current possessor's memories, it not only "articulates [the] desire [of] reconciling the disparity between subject and object" (Stewart, 2007, p 136), which may be the mourned previous owner, but also forces "the memento [to become] emblematic of the worth of [a] life and the self's capacity to generate worthiness" (Stewart, 2007, p. 139).

The act of constructing a narrative, of telling the story of the object on air, would seem to create worthiness; the production team for the programme would have considered the item, assessed

the affective content of the narrative, and decided that it had merit, thus validating the lives lived for the current owner.

For a participant, the repair of the item centres care and attention upon them and the previous owner, whom they wish to remember, twice: while the repair is being carried out, and on the televising of the episode. The absence of the item during its reparation also creates attention.

4.14.3 Feelings on leaving an item for repair

Participants are regularly asked, either directly, or guided when giving a piece to camera, about their emotions on leaving their item to be repaired. Collecting a pair of undertaker's carriage lamps, Beth Haine (Series 9, episode 3, 2022), in her piece to camera, explains how the absence of her object led her family to talk "a lot more about the family history", "[look] through old photos and talk [...] a lot more about my grandparents, which has been lovely actually". Clare (Series 9, episode 3) explains that the absence of the unfinished box has meant that her mother has talked about the item and new memories of which Clare was unaware. McCarroll and Kirby (2023), argue that restored objects "reanimate and revive" (p. 1), but participants on the show indicate that the process of repair itself can achieve this.

The dilapidated state of the items makes them vulnerable: Lorraine Thomas's twin brother's donkey (Series 8, episode 1, 2021), is on the point of disintegration; Mashuk's grandmother's diary (Series 8, episode 4) about to lose pages, while clocks, to be worked on by Steve Fletcher, arrive at the point where components are about to give way. The stories participants tell about their items points to their own emotional vulnerability. Lorraine's twin brother Mark's "comfort toy" helped him, aged seven, grieve for his dead mother. He was protective of his twin sister; they were close. He died in a road accident when he was 21. Lorraine has kept "donkey" as a connection to her brother for decades. Albert (Series 4, episode 1) too, is vulnerable after the more recent death of his wife, while Nowzad (Series 5, episode 17), demonstrates the emotional loss he has suffered after fleeing incipient war in northern Iraq.

The vulnerability of their items allows participants to seek help for their repair. In doing so they share their "vulnerable selves" (Phillips and Barwick, 2020, p. 112), inviting care and protection of kindness (Phillips and Barwick, 2020). Participants shed their protective "independence and competitiveness, the goals of our culture" (Phillips and Barwick, 2020, p. 112) instead submitting to "belonging, community, patience, skill, history and most of all love" (Starling, 2021). Reviewers of the programme in playing up its "pure magic" (Starling 2021; Ross, 2022)

and “warmth” (Denhart, 2020), suggest it taps into the mood (Laws, 2020), desires, or imagined community of the nation as proposed by Anderson (2006).

4.14.4 Reparation

Klein (1998) argues that reparation is a strong unconscious impulse. “When a baby feels frustrated at the breast in his fantasies he attacks the breast” (p. 308). Equally, being gratified by it “he loves it and has fantasies of a pleasant kind in relation to it” (p. 308). The experience is one of love and hate towards an object, or family objects, whom the child loves and needs the most, which is carried throughout life. We try to keep detected impulses of guilt towards loved people in the background but are often contrite for feeling them. Creativity, a desire to repair, according to Klein, arises from impulses of destruction.

Creativity may not only be witnessed in artistic or self-sacrificing endeavours but in greater wisdom or tolerance (Klein, 1998, p. 360). To restore internal objects damaged in phantasy, one may try to repair one’s external world. An action which seems applicable to the participants featured on *TRS*.

The impulse for reparation does not always arise from love for an object, it may be obsessional, that is, characterised by “a compulsive repetition of actions of the undoing kind” (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 413), or manic, in which “the whole situation has to be belittled and the task made light of as if it can be accomplished by magic” (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 346). *TRS* cannot show the occasions a participant has attempted the repair of a material object (obsessional), nor does it allow a viewer, or a participant, to underestimate the physical work required for repair. For these reasons the programme concentrates largely on creative, restorative, reparation as exemplified below.

4.14.4.1 Ross Brown: Series 7, episode 31. Clare Funge: Series 9, episode 3

Ross presents his grandfather’s sailor’s cap. Torpedoed and bombed during the Second World War; the cap and his medals were the only things Ross’s grandfather kept from that time. The cap was passed to the six- or seven-year-old Ross sixty years ago but acquired damage from a green felt tip pen. Trying to conceal this from his parents, the young Ross used paper whitener to disguise the stain. Ross explains how proud he is of his grandfather, Alf, and his wish to pass the cap onto his grandson so that Alf’s service and that of his generation can be understood, but the reason for seeking repair at this time is not pursued in the introductory conversation.

It is possible that on an unconscious level, Ross believes he has damaged his grandfather and those in his generation who went to war. After decades of suppressing and repressing the damage, he has found a way of expiating his guilt through the creativity, and ordeal, of applying for, and appearing on the show. It may be that as he approaches his grandfather's age, with a grandson himself, he is preserving a loved person he has lost.

Clare, too, presents an object out of love and regard. The jewellery box, begun by her mother sixty years previously, has remained unfinished in a drawer as commitments to marriage and family took precedence. With her mother in failing health, Clare seeks to get the box completed, to be able to display her pride in her mother's creativity and, possibly, appease her feelings surrounding her belief that she may have muted her mother's talent.

Display is the aim of both participants, primarily to honour their relatives' achievements, although exhibiting the objects also draws attention to their attempts to put things right. Both are of an age where they might identify with their relatives, recognise the hurt they may have caused and are therefore helping themselves to come to terms with this. "Klein showed that the impulses of cruelty are turned to pity and remorse" (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 413). In repairing a damaged object in their external world, it is possible for participants to restore their internal world: the impetus for reparation is not only for their good objects, but also for themselves. This proposition may be more appropriate in the case of Gary Shaw who presents the replica plane from the Second World War.

4.14.4.2 Gary Shaw: Series 7, episode 31

During the initial conversation with Jay Blades and Steve Fletcher, who takes on the repair of the aircraft, Gary admits to having caused damage to the piece during a fight with his sister. He has attempted to have it repaired on several occasions, but no expert has been able to make the plane work. He has not told his father that *TRS* has agreed to take the item. It is to be "a surprise" when he "takes ownership" of what he has done.

Gary explains that the item provides a bridge between himself and his father, however, this repair could be seen in more obsessional or manic terms, in that there have been attempts to mend the plane, which may well have been "designed to placate" (Hinshelwood, 1991, p.413). A successful result may well carry "a note of triumph [...] which is humiliating to the parent" (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 413). It is not possible, though, to offer more than speculation.

4.14.5 Psychological significances of *The Repair Shop* and reparation

It might be a replica plane or a sailor's cap from the Second World War that is repaired by experts, but, as viewers and reviewers have realised, the effect, and affect, of restoring an item goes beyond making it work again or restoring its looks: *TRS* offers “emotional healing” (Midgely, 2021) and potentially therapeutic psychological experiences for participants and viewers.

As outlined in the literature review (Chapter 2), television and its programmes have been established as psychological objects (Silverstone, 1993; Bainbridge, 2019), a focus for “unconscious fantasy and emotional experience” (Yates, 2018, p. 1). It is therefore possible to explore the reparative nature of the object *TRS*. Bainbridge (2019) sets out how *Madmen* (AMC, 2007–2015) offers help to viewers “to explore links between their own experience and characters on screen” (2019, p. 1), providing solace as well as pleasure. Participants on *TRS* are real people, which may strengthen any possible identification between viewer and the experiences described on screen.

As detailed above, identification on a personal level may help viewers recognise similarities culturally. While it may not help to make “the nation one man” (Cardiff and Scannell, 1987, p. 157), gravitating towards “stories about their community, their world, their culture, their country” (Bellamy in Deloitte UK, 2024) does forge a feeling which may be understood to be akin to national identity.

Silverstone (1993) uses Winnicott's understanding of an infant's transitional object when writing about the psychological significance of television. The transitional object, as described by Winnicott (2005) is the first the child recognises as not part of itself, allays anxiety when its mother is not present, and helps to keep the inner and outer world separate but related. As one grows, the space between inner and outer becomes located in culture, in play.

Playing with *TRS* for a viewer may take the form of revisiting and reflecting on their emotional experience, experimenting “with a kind of ‘as if’ structure, presenting opportunities to rework ideas of self” (Bainbridge, 2019, p.20). When internalising the show as an object it is open for viewers to forge new perspectives on their lived experiences and relationships.

Bainbridge observes that viewers “are positioned so that [they] can move fluidly between different identifications” (2012, p. 159). With *TRS* there is a possibility to identify with the repairer and the repaired, to be caring and cared for. The frailty of their items releases participants to seek help for their own repair.

4.14.6 The depiction of repair: conclusions

TRS presents a repair as more than the mending of a damaged material item: it is understood, and featured often in the voiceover and conversations with the craftspeople, that the object has emotional heft within relationships with the living and the dead, that a repaired item can repair emotional damage and that the desire for restoration, however long it has taken to surface, is rooted in love. The perception that the impulse for restoration stems from aggression and destruction, which may occur through negligence is seldom recognised or communicated, thus indicating how the programme represses as well as restores.

Repair is a creative, tactile endeavour for the craftspeople involved. Creativity on behalf of the participants is less obvious until it is recognised that this may involve becoming “more capable of appreciating people and things, more tolerant in their relation to others [becoming] wiser” (Klein, 1998, p. 360), qualities which Klein associates with the process of mourning.

McCarroll and Kirby (2023), argue for two categories of items on the programme: direct evocative objects, invested with autobiographical meanings, and indirect evocative objects where the ‘affective’ content is directed more towards the third party rather than the object (p. 8). The objects discussed above are firmly in the first category. They therefore have a direct link to psychoanalytic processes underlying their renovation.

The image of a family audience seated around the fireside at home (Cardiff and Scannell, 1987, p. 161), which producers were encouraged to hold in the Reithian days of the BBC, has changed. *TRS* draws on traditional methods and crafts to carry out renovations, perhaps suggesting a return to older cultural values, however, the breadth of participants on the programme, even if perceived as narrow, indicates that the type of family and community and the values underpinning these institutions have altered. Once perceiving broadcasting as “holding together a great chain of social being, linking individuals to the centre of national life, town to country, region to region” (Cardiff and Scannell, 1987, p. 160), broadcasters now proclaim less specifically that “home grown content [brings] people together” (Davie in Deloitte UK, 2024). The stories told on, and by, public service broadcasting are not parochial “but only mean something to Britain” (Bellamy in Deloitte UK, 2024), and in this way build national identity. Thus, repairing old family items in traditional ways in an old barn in bucolic countryside speaks to, constructs, and consolidates, what is part of “our culture” (Bellamy in Deloitte UK, 2024).

4.15 Textual analysis conclusion

This section began by outlining the formula observed by *TRS* before moving on to analyse the title and introductory sequences of the show. This furnished key themes in the construction of the programme as consolatory television: nostalgia and the pastoral. Following this I undertook close psychosocial/psychocultural analysis of ten segments of the show from ten separate episodes. These exemplified recurring core themes: family, loss, love, memory, mourning and repair, as identified in the initial large analysis (see Appendix A). They were also representative of when the shows were aired, before, during and after COVID-19 lockdowns, between March 2020 and July 2021. Throughout this analysis I have been particularly interested in haptic visuality, the role and representation of touch in the show, and its bearing on the depiction of the identified major themes.

Key findings in this section, highlight the tension in which these themes, particularly loss, memory, mourning and repair are held. The repair of objects indicates optimism for the future, especially as many are to be passed on to grandchildren, although the survival of the items does suggest that memories of the participant will continue. However, looking forward means looking backwards, often involving sadness and emotional disturbance. For the programme too, renovating objects may require employing traditional methods that can recall nostalgic, fantasy versions of the past, encouraged by the set of the show. A possible longing for the past needs to be balanced with an optimism for the future for the programme to remain positive and hopeful.

My own analysis of *TRS* focuses on the way production decisions construct a particular ‘reparative’ consolatory narrative, with what I have termed ‘shadow objects’ (inherited objects with ambivalent or unpleasant feelings attached to them. See 6.2.1) banished from the show. Additionally, my own textual analysis calls attention to the way in which the English countryside is constructed by production decisions through interpolated shots of the barn, flora and fauna, and rural scenes as a pastoral idyll. I have suggested this reparative construction produces a Romantic vision of the countryside on screen and is used as a means to contribute to haptic visuality, the felt sense for viewers, of the show, birdsong, sunlight over fields for example, all of which harbours an implicit whiteness and middle-class sensibility.

Further tension is evident between repair and creativity. Klein, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), offers a psychoanalytic theory for the impetus for repair, grounded in destruction. Although damage is prevalent, artisans diagnostically dismantle items, the reasons for harm, the possibility of both loving and hating an object, are not investigated. The

programme, and the fantasy it promotes, does not allow optimism to be overwhelmed by its darker obverse.

Featuring family objects and stories, the show, nevertheless, has to ensure a widespread appeal, while also creating empathy for participants. Concentrating on the personal allows the viewer to recall similar life experiences, captured in the major themes of the programme. Creating an empathetic mood draws attention to the collective nature of experience while helping to construct a reparative atmosphere in which commonality outweighs difference in a drawing together of national kindred.

Touching an object touched and used by others, bringing participants, and artisans, closer to others' experience (Classen, 2005), is prominent on the show, suggesting touching objects is more than memory, becoming a "symbolic communication" an "identificatory link" with a lost object (Gerhardt, 2020, p. 85). In this way the programme eases uncomplicated mourning.

Using touch, consoling participants, coaxing a damaged object to work, obscures tensions. The focus moves away from reasoning to sensuous experiencing. Understandings are acquired and expanded through a somatic route, and the "simple self" takes precedence over "the complex self" which looks for meaning in one's actions (Bollas, 2006, p. 15).

The elements of consolation, and consolatory television, a stable family, physical holding and containment, touch and repair, are part of a fantasy made alluring by the programme's appeal to empathy through its attempt to evoke a version of the Reithian kinship through personal experience, nostalgia, and the pastoral.

Chapter 5: Findings and analysis. Part 2: Focus group findings and discussion

5.1 Introduction

Further to analysing the construction of tactility on *TRS* and the programme's depiction of key themes of family, loss, love, memory, mourning and repair, the study aimed "To explore viewers' emotional responses to the show and its appreciation within the larger post-Brexit and COVID-19 pandemic contexts", (Objective 4). Evidence for this aspect of the study was collected from three focus groups conducted during May 2023 and is supported by subsequent individual interviews with focus group participants in the following months.

This chapter outlines the format of the groups, providing particulars of the clips shown (for a more detailed description see Appendix B), before examining key points arising from the discussions. These centred on the construction of authenticity on reality television (Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Hill, 2005) as considered in Chapter 2, the stories told and emotion displayed, and the fantasies created, for example the nobility of work and classlessness, and the contradictory emotions of participants and viewers.

5.2 Focus group format

Two groups comprised three members, whilst the third involved five people. (See Appendix I). The groups were shown three clips from *TRS*, selected by the researcher as representative of the programme, two of which form part of the textual analysis above. Discussion took place after each excerpt. The first was of Albert (Series 4, episode 1, 2019) offering his GEC radio for repair. Following discussion his collection of the item was viewed. His visit had been filmed and transmitted before the COVID-19 pandemic. The second extract was of Mahbuba and her daughter Nadia (Series 8, episode 1, 2021) which was filmed with COVID-19 protocols in place. My intention was to show only the presentation of the chest for repair. However, all focus groups asked to see them collect their restored item. This desire demonstrates the constructed narrative of *TRS* in operation. Each item presented is a story within the larger narrative of the programme, pulling viewers into emotional engagement and creating anticipatory investment in the emotional denouement in which the repaired object and its owners are reunited

Finally, groups were shown the title sequence and the first participant of Series 12, episode 1 (2023). Maria Kirk, (who, like Albert, is not introduced by telling the audience where she is from), wishing her painting of the Madonna and Child, kept rolled up and hidden in her grandmother's coat, when she was taken into a forced labour camp during the Second World War with her two daughters, to be restored. This episode was filmed after COVID-19 restrictions had been lifted, and aired in March 2023. However, unlike episodes prior to COVID-19 protocols, the participant remained distanced. Given the limited time for discussion within focus groups, they lasted approximately an hour, this clip provided a distinct, easily noticeable, difference to the other clips.

5.3 Focus group findings and discussion

Makeover/lifestyle genre programmes evoke keenly felt emotions for viewers (Biressi and Nunn, 2205; Palmer, 2008; Gorton, 2009; Ellis, 2020). The following examines emotions elicited in focus group participants by *TRS*.

Key thematic findings and discussion across all focus groups, are organised in the two areas of authenticity and falsehood, which prompted consideration of “political messages” (Participant [P] 1, Focus Group [FG] 1), examined below. Ambivalent responses raised by the show are discussed towards the end of the chapter, where their significance within a psychoanalytical and psychosocial frame are explored.

5.3.1 Authenticity and emotion

Emotional authenticity, as recognised by Aslama and Pantti (2006), was a main concern of focus group participants. What was meant by the term was never clearly defined within the groups, though, through usage, it was understood as credibility. As Hill (2005) observes, those in the groups drew “on their own understanding of social behaviour in their everyday lives” (p. 74) to help in their determination of this. Much of the pleasure of viewing comes from audiences being able to “gossip, speculate and judge how ordinary people perform themselves” (Hill, 2005, p. 78). Gorton (2009) extends this pleasure by suggesting that “viewers watch the programmes [reality and lifestyle] to feel better about themselves [at the expense of others]” (p. 112). However, those in the focus groups did not voice doubts over the emotional trustworthiness of either the participants or presenters of *TRS*.

On Albert, participants agreed that “[y]ou warm to this bloke straight away, not putting on any airs and graces-absolutely genuine” (P1, FG1), while Jay Blades, the presenter, was judged as “very empathetic” (P7, FG3), because “he listens, he listens to what they’re saying” (P9, FG3). The evidence for which is “the way he responds to the guy who is telling the story” (P8, FG3).

Neither Albert nor Jay Blades were understood to be merely performing what Bonner calls “ordinariness” (2011, p. 56), indicating the programme’s success in presenting conversation between participants and artisans, and the artisans themselves as legitimate and natural, capturing the present experience of those speaking and projecting the “core of the self of the speaker” (Hill, 2005, p. 75).

For the participants, the programme achieves authenticity through its presenters and craftspeople performing tactile and empathetic actions that viewers themselves would perform. Asked about Jay Blades putting his hand on Albert’s arm when the older man is distressed, the response was that it was what a participant would do for someone “if I was in that position” (P6, FG2).

Focus group participants accepted the programme’s fondness for hugs and sympathetic social physical gestures as normal. “I wouldn’t watch a programme and expect people to touch each other [...] it’s really interesting that *The Repair Shop* uses it, definitely, and they do it so well, it actually flows with the programme” (P4, FG2).

Despite noticing that COVID protocols were in place in some excerpts, as *Repair Shop* participants and artisans stood apart, the curtailment of such gestures did not seem to affect the emotional warmth of the programme for focus group viewers. With Maria (Series 12, episode 1, 2023), who wished that she could hug everyone on receiving her restored painting, but to whom the gesture was not offered, the view was “there might have been a hug we didn’t see” (P3, FG1). The desire for viewers in my focus groups appeared to be that genuinely felt emotion was acknowledged, if it was not obviously recognised, they were capable of imagining it.

The programme builds success by creating similarities between its world and the world of the viewer, not only through recognised emotion with which it is possible to empathise, but also through the objects that it chooses for repair. Albert’s radio prompted lively reminiscences of similar objects within focus groups. “I would call it a wireless, because I’m of a wireless generation ... I mean we didn’t have a television until I was seven ... I was brought up on *Listen with Mother*” (P5, FG2). This was a radio programme broadcast on the BBC between 1950 and 1982. Aired early in the afternoon, it comprised rhymes and stories, originally designed for

mothers and children to listen to together. Another participant remembered the radio as a “box on the side ... I wasn’t allowed to touch it I don’t think” (P6, FG2), and another recalled “the first time you could actually take the radio out of your house ... you could take it with you ... if you went on holiday in a caravan ... because that’s the sort of holiday we would have ... the radio was a very important item” (P8, FG3).

The appreciation was that “if you recognise something you had at home you immediately buy into [the show]” (P4, FG2). This comment touches on the emotional tension between the focus groups’ reactions to *TRS*: the desire for authenticity but a simultaneous wariness about being fooled, pointing to the “messiness” of lived experience with objects that the programme often represses.

5.3.1.2 Authenticity and stories

The intention had not been to show the reveal of Mahbuba’s box, but to concentrate on the emotional anticipation built up, rather than its release; each focus group though, requested a viewing of the item’s return. It was important for the groups to witness the end of the story, to see how the chest looked, as well as witness the effect of the repair on Mahbuba’s daughter.

TRS, in line with most lifestyle shows, focuses on stories about real people and real events (Hill, 2005) as an emotional and organisational structure (as discussed in Section 4.1.2). The emotion occasioned by the chest for Nadia, Mahbuba’s daughter, was not questioned in the focus groups, however, the narrative of the acquisition and the value of the item was not readily accepted. McCarroll and Kirby (2023) identify two types of items on the show: direct and indirect evocative objects. The focus groups decided that the chest was an indirect evocative object, which is “more biographical than autobiographical” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 2), being used by Nadia to shape post-memories (Hirsch, 2012, p.22) “the radio belonged to them [Albert and Lynn]; this didn’t even belong to them ... the daughter cries about what she’s [Mahbuba] telling her this represents ...” (P4, FG2).

Participants also remarked on the physical object itself, noting altered perceptions:

“... it’s different isn’t it, because it’s not the actual box” (P10, FG3).

“... it’s not quite the same” (P8, FG3).

Mahbuba’s story shares a similar narrative arc with others on the show, exposition, rising action, dilemma, falling action, and through repair, resolution, it is told chronologically, yet is less successful in involving the viewers in my focus groups: they are less able to suspend disbelief. The reason may be that the story is shared between a mother and daughter, thus dividing our sympathies. The owner of the memory, or even the memory itself, is unclear “... it skips a generation” (P1, FG1), a narrative demand for which viewers do not feel prepared.

The unease over the focus of the story continues into criticism of the repair requested and delivered: “... it’s not the same box” (P1, FG1), while, equally, “... it’s probably better than it was” (P8, FG3). Suggesting that perceptions of memory will be altered and the history “got rid of” (P3, FG1). Nevertheless, the desire to watch the reveal of the repairs to Mahbuba’s box, highlights the need viewers have for a resolution and a happy ending: “... you want the people who brought the object in ... you want them to feel better about it ... you want them to go back with it ... perfect, their memories intact” (P4, FG2).

The viewers making up the focus groups perceived their role as an audience to be empathetic towards, not moral judges of, *TRS* participants; they were not to question the emotional value of participants’ items, but in suspending overly critical judgement, there is an expectation that the programme makers do not exploit the viewers’ role and their emotional involvement. If viewers have offered wholehearted commitment, they expect it to be reciprocal. Exploiting this understanding introduces irritation, dissatisfaction and prompts a search for falsehoods and didacticism.

5.4 Falsehoods

The emotion shown on the programme was accepted as genuine and credible, but the processes of television which captured it caused irritation and censure. ‘They’, implying the programme makers and production company, were condemned for milking people’s feelings, for making “a bit of a story out of it” (P11, FG3), rather than “repair ... they don’t have enough of that” (P11, FG3). Some focus group participants considered that a degree of emotional

manipulation was an essential element of television programmes and that viewers have been “trained” (P5, FG2) to understand how programmes work. (Hill, 2005).

Although aware of being emotionally directed towards certain viewpoints, many focus group participants were willing to “become immersed” in the programme (P5, FG2), or make a point of ignoring their objections: “... they get away with it because I really like the programme” (P4, FG2) and “I’m always reduced to tears” (P2, FG1) willingly suspending disbelief (Holland, 2003; Hamby et al., 2018) echoing Gorton’s observation that “viewers can be critical of these texts” and yet “find themselves emotionally moved by them” (2009, p. 110). Gorton also points to an “uneasy relationship for the viewer between their emotional reactions and their critical judgements” (2009, p. 110).

The use of ‘uneasy’ is insufficient to describe the responses of a minority of focus group participants. While some, as discussed above, could accommodate their diluted feelings about the programme and surrender to its emotional warmth, others were more resistant to, and resentful of, the ‘messages’ they perceived were being communicated.

The focus group participants who expressed irritation towards the programme producers, the television company, or the processes of television, prided themselves on their cynicism, their asking, “are we being manipulated here?” (P1, FG1). For these participants it became important to be alert to how they could be influenced through editing, camera positions, and music (FG1 and 2). The two most sceptical focus group participants also maintained, in individual interviews, that material objects, for them, held purely aesthetic or utilitarian purposes. Klein might associate this rejection of the emotional meaning of objects as avoidant, an “attempt to escape from the sufferings connected with the depressive position” (1998, p. 368). The concerns arising from the clips shown in the focus groups are discussed below.

5.4.1 ‘Political messages’ (Participant 1, Focus Group 1)

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), Bonner (2003) argued that “game shows, the lifestyle programmes, the chat shows and the diverse kinds of advice programmes” were “disregarded” and “dismissed” (p. 1) in academic study, before demonstrating their significance. Hill (2007) appreciated that audiences were “engaged in critical viewing of the attitudes and behaviour of ordinary people” debating “cultural and social values” (p. 9). The focus groups for this study did not debate the behaviour of *TRS*’s participants or artisans at

length but were attuned to the effect of choices made concerning the stories, objects, and visuals of the show.

Interpreting this vigilance psychologically it could be said to be a defence mechanism; distrust is projected outward to preserve confidence in the validity of feeling, or in the emotional atmosphere or fantasy offered by the programme. Projection implies a necessity for equilibrium, a need to guard against vulnerability. On a psychosocial level the popularity of *TRS* during the pandemic period (Ellis, 2020), and its initial broadcast post-Brexit, implies a recognition of the depths of social uncertainty, its impact upon individuals and our need for solace, comfort, and care. In this reading, the emotional environment presented on *TRS* in terms of individual emotional vulnerability, is what needs to be protected. Once recognised though, the views expressed by focus group participants upheld the observation that critical perception of manipulation often fails to dim viewing pleasure. They were wary of sentiment, “I’m a bit cynical about that (idyllic setting)” (P5, FG2), deciding that they were being manipulated to believe in ideologies, which, in their experience, were untrue, declaring it “a political programme” (P1, FG1). However, differences of opinion surfaced: “It’s a bit of a faux image” and “I think it makes people feel comfortable and safe” (Exchange between P11 and P10, FG3).

5.4.1.2 The nobility of work

The hour-long episodes of *TRS* feature filmed inserts depicting the countryside and occasionally begin with shots of the resident artisans supposedly arriving at the barn ready for work (see Section 4.1). These shots did not occasion any remarks until the interviewer made an explicit comment. Morris (2007) has observed that time and labour have been obliterated from makeover shows. Lack of comment from the focus groups on the time taken for repairs suggested that this was an expected and understood lifestyle television trope.

The ‘work’ of the artisans was interpreted as “everything is a pleasure ... everything nice, nothing horrible” (P6, FG2) and “it’s play not work ... it’s a pleasure” (P4, FG2).

The view was that the scenes of work harked back “to a long time ago” (P4, FG2) and painted a romanticised version of the past (Bonner, 2003), indicating the sway of the nostalgic and pastoral elements of the show (see Sections 4.2.1 and 4.3). The nature of the programme meant that focus group participants saw the craftspeople not as working but gifting, which allowed the artisans a great deal of emotional satisfaction, akin to blessing or sanctifying either the object

they were working on or the participant, the meaning was not clarified. In either case, the artisan is set apart and somehow blessed themselves, the glorified status may be applied to their craft or their television status, neither of which may be seen as work, as many would have understood it pre-pandemic.

Ideas about gifting, within the framework of *TRS* inhabits several theoretical fields. Maus (1966), from his anthropological work, suggests that gifts are prompted through self-interest, obliging repayment. Maus also proposes that gifts involve giving away part of one's nature, which may well operate in terms of bequests. There is no suggestion that the craftspeople feel any need for obligation when repaired objects are returned, but the programme genre requires certain behaviour and gratitude from participants, which may be construed as Godbout's (1998), gifts as social connections, mired in the "implicit and the unsaid" (pp. 4–5). The sense of Kleinian reparation of wrongs righted, pervades the show. It is not, though, the artisans who, from a Kleinian perspective, are gifting "the robbed contents of the mother's body, which must be returned from whence they came" (Stephen, 2000, p. 144), but, in this context, the gift receivers.

Two focus groups acknowledged differences between the fantasy, "[w]e used to be dedicated and loyal and steadfast" (P1, FG1), the romance that "it was just idyllic" and the exploitative reality, "sod the working conditions, sod everything", (P4, FG2). Both drew different "political messages" from the visuals. FG1 concentrated on the fact that steadfast loyalty no longer existed, which, it was implied, was a good thing, encouraging individuality, fairness and a lessening of outdated deference. FG2 interpreted the visuals as a possible ploy to get people back to the workplace after the COVID-19 pandemic. A further implication from this group was that the work of the artisans, through which one could "gain a great deal of satisfaction" (P5, FG2) and emotional reward, was not the lot of ordinary people for whom work was often necessary drudgery. This recognises the new Romanticism of the programme, creating a fantasy of meaningful and appreciated artisanal work. (Watts and Houtman, 2024).

As with the authenticity in emotion and narrative the focus groups' views on work were inconsistent: the artisans were seen as "dedicated" and "talented" (FG1), they occupied a position that was to be envied for the emotional rewards their work provided for them; rewards not available to the vast majority. At the same time, historically poor working conditions for artisans were also recognised, meaning that craftworkers on the show, could be understood to be an example of inequalities of labour or a modern fantasy eliding the two ideas.

5.4.1.3 “People like us”: class (Participant 8, Focus Group 3)

Discussing the bucolic setting of *TRS* in its Sussex idyll, a participant shared that she grew up “in quite an industrial town [...] I mean if you had it [*TRS*] in an old factory in the middle of Sheffield say, or somewhere like that, do you think the audience would be interested?” (P8, FG3 3).

This participant also voiced the opinion that the programme, like much lifestyle television, “is for upper-middle [classes] that’s geared for people like us”. Indeed, such shows give “working class people [...] surprisingly short shrift (Bonner, 2003, p. 33). The programme received some defence in that it showed “a range” of participants, while it was thought to be for “older people sitting on their own at home – it doesn’t matter what their background is” (P10, FG3).

Throughout the lifestyle genre, class is “rendered as invisible as possible” (Bonner, 2003, p.51), nevertheless, there remains the possibility that “ordinary television” (p.29) excludes viewers. Objects produced for repair on the show are largely of domestic use and origin, prized for emotional and not monetary value. However, as noted by Bourdieu, taste and consumption confer distinction (1984). In Series 12, episode 11 of *TRS* (2023) a bereaved step-grandfather asked for a mass-produced garden ornament to be repaired.



Figure 4 The grandfather's damaged garden ornament

It might have been easy to mock the item and the guest participants, and to feel shame for the emotion when the story of the item was told; the man’s step-grandson had died of an aggressive cancer at the age of fifteen, and this item was something that he had purchased for his grandfather with his own money. Not only is it possible to be shamed by the story, for sentiments of snobbery about the “worth” of the item, but also by the reverence with which the artisans treated the item and the respect which they extended to these, and all, participants. Where the opportunity for viewers to enjoy their “markers of nobility” of taste is offered (Bennett, 2010, p. xx), in this show, it is subdued by on-screen demonstrations of “love” and “caring” (P10, FG3), where artisans “put the value on the object of the people who brought it in” (P4, FG2). The lesson of the powerful, destructive nature of shame is taught through its opposites, empathy and connection, viewers are shown means “of coming together to heal” (Brown, 2012, p. 27), a feature of the wider psychosocial

reparative work of the programme. The show is constructing a Britain in which social class, hierarchies of taste, or social judgement are forestalled through focussing on shared emotional meaning to which all social classes can have equal access.

5.4.1.4 Immigration

Participants in the focus groups thought that the participation of Mahbuba and her story of forced migration (from Zanzibar) was carefully considered, and the views of sympathy and admiration in the face of hardship communicated by the presenters, deliberately placed. “[T]hrough their choice of participants, programmes such as these [makeover shows] make a considerable contribution to the changing ideas of what it is to be British at present” (Brunsdon, 2003, p. 13).

In the “bland and happy world” (Bonner, 2003, p. 163) of lifestyle television, where class has vanished into a matter of taste, still the predominant face is white and “different coloured skins [...] have meanings attached to them” (Bonner, 2003, p. 163), although this difference too, is deemphasised. Mahbuba’s experiences on reaching Britain after her deportation from Zanzibar in 1964 are not mentioned. A focus group participant [P1] suggested that a reason for Mahbuba’s inclusion on the show may not solely have been about the box she wanted repaired but, “a message to people who didn’t want to accept refugees, that this is actually a story, a personal story, so that you do understand [...] it gives the impression that we’re generous and open minded, we welcome people”. Her annoyance was directed at the hypocrisy inherent in this notion, “actually, what we wanted was for them to come over here and join the bloody workforce”. (P1, FG1).

The reparative attempts the show makes to construct a Britain where refugees are welcome and class distinctions are not a source for snobbery, are recognised, detected, and derided by participants who experience a world where the opposite is truer (Willix, 2023).

Other focus groups recognised Mahbuba’s different culture, discussing whether, had COVID-19 protocols not been in force, it would have been right to physically comfort “an older Muslim lady” (P5, FG2). Further sympathy was extended because she “left everything behind” (P7, FG3), an experience that had befallen a participant in FG3, although a sudden move within the British Isles was considered by the participant themselves as “not the same thing” (P8, FG3).

“Ordinary television” (Bonner 2003) may be working to show that race does not matter (Ouellette, 2013) and that racial equality has been achieved, which does not seem to be the

understanding of focus group participants – who were all White, nor is it the experience of Bernabo’s (2019) social media users, who criticised US television dramas for “rarely address(ing) race explicitly”. (p. 87). It may also be that “under the rules of sociability potentially disruptive issues cannot be raised” on ordinary television (Bonner, 2003, p. 161), and therefore assimilation is thought to be assumed by viewers. A reflection on racist attitudes, which would have had a place in the programme’s *Windrush Special* (Series 12, episode 7, 2023), was avoided in favour of celebrating the achievements of immigrants and framing experiences as courageous, resilient, and industrious. The comments within the focus groups indicate a sensitivity to, and irritation with, this optimistic and simplistic message as well as antagonism that programme makers expected them to remain unquestioning. Their own experience did not allow consent for such consolation or post-Brexit national reparation, or for elisions of recorded difficulties or ideologies, for example experiences of racism reframed by the *Windrush Special* (Series 12, episode 7), or not questioned with Mahbuba (Series 8, episode 1, 2021), or Nowzad (Series 5, episode 17, 2019). The discussions returned to divisions having to be acknowledged, not obscured through emotional experiences, for any national togetherness to be initiated. The implication is that a more uncompromising approach to our past, as taken by the National Trust, would be more welcome. In an article for *The Daily Telegraph* (2025) George Chesterton reports some National Trust members’ perception of the organisation’s drive to highlight land and property owner’s “historical links to the slave trade”. The move has led to accusations of “social justice activism” and a neglect of the “vital conservation work” by its Board of Trustees.

5.5 Ambivalent and contradictory emotions

Ambivalence implies that focus group participants experienced indifferent emotions about the following areas as presented on the programme. This was not the case, more that they held contradictory and “messy” (Bainbridge, 2019, p. 7) views within the groups and themselves. Such seemingly incompatible feelings centre around emotions connected with repair and the landscape in which the programme is set.

5.5.1 Repairs

Focus groups were keen to discuss programme participants’ possible anxiety surrounding the repair of their item, wondering, “What happens if somebody doesn’t like it?” (P3, FG1). The majority view was that repairs should “leave memories intact” (P6, FG2), as projections of parts

of loved ones or histories of relationships, may be lost (P3, FG1). It was accepted, though, that perception may be different because of “the personal attachment the individual has to the item” (P10, FG3). There was no discussion about pressures felt by artisans during renovations, who “are also nervous, hoping their nuanced approach proves the right one with the owner” (Farrington, 2022, p. viii) and their role in the “therapy” (P3, FG1), “dealing with people in trouble” (P5, FG3) making participants “feel better about their objects” (P6, FG2) and themselves, either materially or psychologically.

Besides the felt authenticity, or otherwise, of the repairs, the focus groups were doubtful about the rate of success enjoyed by the craftspeople, believing “things must go wrong sometimes” (P11, FG3). Considering the repair as a gift, the perception of the focus groups is that “people have to like it, in a way [the repair]” or they are sure that the production company will “edit out anyone who goes ‘that’s not how I wanted it’” (P3, FG1).

Focus group reactions demonstrate the knowingness of viewers and the contrariety at the heart of reality/lifestyle programming. One focus group participant observed that “you can be completely aware of (the manipulation) and still be immersed in something” (P6, FG2), a succinct summary of Gorton’s conclusion that “even those aware of the constructed nature of these programmes still enjoy their viewing experience, their critical knowledge does not always mediate against their viewing pleasure” (2009, p. 111).

The role of the viewer, whose life experiences have taught them that things can go wrong and therefore must not always go to plan for the artisans, is to acknowledge the probability of blunders, but suspend disbelief, and expect the expertise of the artisans to remedy any issues, not challenge their credibility (Bonner, 2003).

Because participants in this study were in an age range spanning mid-fifties to mid-seventies, many of this generation had been used to giving or receiving items from older siblings, having to look after things and value them. “In those days we did mend things” and indeed “still do” (P7, FG3), although in subsequent individual interviews study participants lamented that the complexity of items and the inability to source parts had made it difficult to do so.

Conversation around ‘mending’ illustrated a shift in emphasis between early episodes of *TRS* and more recent instalments and a changing narrative for the show. In pre-title sequences at the beginning of its run, voiceover criticism of our “throwaway culture” (Series 1, 2017) and our inclination to “bin stuff once it is broken” (Series 2, 2018), were featured. By 2019 the message had been modified to “keep[ing] things going” (Series 5), while by 2021 the emphasis had

shifted to “bringing history back to life”, the more emotional rewards of “the privilege of doing something for somebody that means so much to them” (Series 7, episode 3, 2021) and most recently, after the departure of Jay Blades, to craft, teamwork and “reigniting stories” (Series 14, episode 1, 2025).

A focus group participant indicated that the show encouraged people to present items that they had allowed to become “manky” (P11, FG3), were not particularly old or valuable, and had been put forward because “a lot of them are things that they [show participants] don’t know how to repair [...] you don’t know where to go or how to do it” (P11, FG3).

Lack of knowledge, therefore, encouraged people “to make a bit of a sob story out of it” (P11, FG3) to affect the repair. This was a minority view; the general position being that “items have value because of people’s memories” (P10, FG3), that these should be unquestioned, and that it was acceptable to seek the restoration of an item if that was what the individual desired, regardless of objective monetary or aesthetic value. The desire of most focus group participants was to accept the reparative premise of the show, to belong to a community of feeling.

Movement away from renovation for the practical re-use of an object, to renovation to prolong its emotional support alters the view of the act of repair. It is not sufficient for an item just to work again, its purpose is to “scaffold recall [...] bring memories back to life” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 1). The restoration consequently must be of a different order: it must fulfil the unconscious projections of the participant. This move takes the programme closer to Bratich’s argument that “the closest form to RTV [reality television] is the fairytale” (2007, p. 7). While he considers it is the transformational aspect of such programmes that place them in this genre, *TRS* also features a large pinch of wish fulfilment and the partial reorganisation or suppression of time, in that the repairs convince participants that they have gone back in time and possibly righted wrongs, or, as suggested by Klein (1998), provided care and reparation for themselves and their parents.

The programme goes some way to fulfilling the participants’ wishes, but, despite a happy ending, which the viewers need (FG2), it does not necessarily fulfil viewers’ fantasies. With its setting and themes, *TRS* may “chime with each of us, resurrecting a buried memory from childhood” (Farrington, 2022, p. viii), but, the gap between the general representation of the fantasy of the return to childhood and the specific fantasy of individual viewers causes areas of tension: there was some disappointment amongst my focus group participants that the programme does not produce the desired perfection for each of us. In this sense, *TRS* itself

becomes subject to Kleinian “splitting”, serving as both a “good” and “bad” consolatory television object.

5.6 Landscape

Similar tensions were evident in responses to the setting of *TRS*. The Weald and Downland Museum, in which the Court Barn, the set for the programme, is situated, is in The South Downs National Park. An area of outstanding natural beauty, to obtain such status, requires “it to be a good quality landscape of relative wildness [...] away from housing and having relative tranquillity where natural sounds, such as streams or birdsong are predominant” (Natural England, 2017).

The Downs are further protected “to make sure that the nature and wildlife are not harmed or destroyed”, which includes “restrictions on activities and developments that might affect a designated or protected area” (Natural England, 2017). The connotations are of privilege and safeguarding from the ravages of the modern world. (This develops the Romantic view of nature acted upon by Charles Waterton in securing his grounds to protect wildfowl, thus setting up a nature reserve in the early nineteenth century (Waterton Park Hotel, 2024).

Some participants termed the environment “slowed down perfection [where] you can always make a good shot of icicles can’t you?” (P4, FG2). Others considered that the barn created a “homely” or even “magical” effect, like “fairylane” (P2, FG1). References were made to the H.E. Bates novel *The Darling Buds of May*, a comic tale published in 1958, or television series (ITV 1991–1995), set in rural Kent and featuring the hedonistic, devil-may-care lives of the Larkin family. It was conceded that “it’s not so ramshackle as *Darling Buds*, is it?” (P5, FG2).

References were also made to Constable’s painting *The Hay Wain* (1821), depicting agrarian life in the Dedham Vale in Suffolk (now also designated as a National Landscape [formally known as an Area of National Beauty, or AONB]). These cultural references corroborate, and build upon, romantic views of the countryside and the life it supports, which are rooted in visions of a pastoral idyll and fuel “a persistent and falsely comforting” image (Fowler, 2020, p. 47), according to some. It is the “comfort” these images bring that for Fowler make rural England “a fiercely guarded site of belonging” (2020, p. 118), invoking a past and tradition that should make “those images impossible to hold onto” (2020, p. 47). Nevertheless, the image, embedded in Romantic nationalism founded upon “English folk culture” (Fermanis, 2016, p. 92) and an attempt to “create a kind of ‘universal’ national language” (Crocco, 2014, p. 59), is enduring.

Landscape does more than invoke a national past, within the focus groups it seemed to call forth a personal past that had less to do with 'where', and much more to do with 'who' and the unconscious. Interviewees recalled areas outside Belfast and in Lynmouth, but the family that they were with, in those places, featured as strongly as the "cows coming down the lane twice a day" to be milked (P8, FG3) or the "sound of a cricket ball on the bat [...] the sound of the wood pigeons, the waves, the ocean" (P3, FG1).

For the interviewee referencing *The Darling Buds of May* (P5, FG2) the chronology would suggest they were thinking of a time in their early childhood, a time which several other interviewees spoke of. Richards (1994) identified the countryside as a source of solace and regeneration, because, in psychoanalytic terms, "we find there an image of the lost object" (p. 61).

5.7 The lost object

The lost object, according to Klein, is "the mother's breast and all that the breast and the milk have come to stand for in the infant's mind: namely love goodness and security" (Klein, 1998, p. 345).

The countryside is therefore just one candidate to take on the role, although for Richards it "is one of the most powerful repositories in British Culture of the sense of loss" (1994, p. 62). For him, as for some focus group participants, it is connected to loss of childhood innocence and spontaneity: "[Y]ou didn't have any fear, you were just outside having fun [...] no kind of stress just a beautiful place, quiet, peaceful [...] even though we only went down in the summer, we were welcomed like we lived there" (P3, FG1).

To be missing this object may suggest that one has destroyed it, as with Klein's baby. When the infant is gratified with milk and security, all is right with the world. When their desires are not met, hatred and aggressive feelings ensue, so that "in his phantasies [the baby] attacks the breast" (Klein, 1998, p. 308). Believing that the angry destruction desired in phantasy has really taken place, "the baby finds support [...] in omnipotent phantasies of the restoring kind", that is, in putting bits of the mother "together again and repairing her" (Klein, 1998, p. 308), thus attempting to alleviate the "experience of grief" as well as "repair the damaged object both internally and in the extended world" (Richards, 1994, p. 62). Through the landscape, Richards argues, we seek to replace the lost good object; the "enfolding loving and nurturant mother" (1994, p. 61). Equally, in seeking the repair of damaged material items, it is possible to consider

that participants on *TRS* unconsciously seek the same lost object and a reprieve from grief for its destruction.

In a “messy” (Bainbridge, 2019, p.7) sense *TRS*’s setting, hapticity and its emphasis on making participants happy, either contemporarily or in the past, combines powerful elements to recreate “a strong feeling of responsibility and care” (Klein, 1998, p. 311) in infantile and parental terms. Participants on the show, and potentially in my focus groups, play the part of the good parent “behaving as our parents did to us. At the same time, we also play the part of the good child towards his parents, which we wished to do in the past [...] in phantasy we recreate and enjoy the wished for love and goodness of our parents” (Klein, 1998, p. 312).

5.8 The Repair Shop as object

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), television may be understood as a psychoanalytic object (Silverstone, 2007), while television programmes may be termed media objects of the mind (Bainbridge, 2019). The “use value” (Whitehouse-Hart, 2014) of media texts may be as an object type which “may or may not have transformative qualities” (Whitehouse-Hart, 2014, p. 167).

An infant’s transitional object, the soft object adopted by a baby as a defence against anxiety (Winnicott, 2005, p. 5), as well as an object which provides a “transformational act” in which “we inherit the tasks of our mothers and fathers “and provide “self-care” (Bollas, 2006, p. 24), is distinctly chosen by the individual. For focus group members, the object, *TRS*, was provided for them: it came not necessarily with their own projections, but with social and cultural undertones and nuances. Nevertheless, with its foregrounding of emotions it offers “therapeutic potential” (Yates, 2018, p. 4), not only “as a bit of a therapy session”, licensing “people [to] start talking about their things and going over it” (P3, FG1), for programme participants, but also for audiences. Viewers may engage in identification with “the personal ups and downs of [participant’s] life histories” (Yates, 2018, p. 4) or encouraged into empathy or reflexivity, revisiting past experiences “in order to better understand the present” or “explore selfhood” (Bainbridge, 2019, p. 299). *TRS* may operate in two further ways: providing a creative space for play, as described by Winnicott (2005) and by exemplifying or creating a mood as outlined by Bollas (2018).

Winnicott’s “potential space” (2005, p. 149), is an area that links “one’s experience of the lived environment and the capacity for creative activity and the search for self” (Bainbridge, 2019,

p. 300). Bainbridge suggests that *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007–2015) may offer viewers “a space for experimentation with a kind of ‘as if’ structure” (2019, p. 300), that is to imagine or ‘entangle’ one’s life with the characters in the show. The emphasis on the ordinariness of those on *TRS* presents a ‘what if?’ structure, in other words, reflection on finding oneself, or having been, in a similar position to a participant. The connection is to the people on screen, their attempts to work through anxiety and complex emotions, there is also the possibility of identification.

As discussed, focus groups invested in the feelings of participants, presenters, and craftspeople, accepting them as genuine. Mistrust became evident when the feelings of viewers were perceived to be directed towards certain social or cultural notions, which in the experience of focus group interviewees were not securely established; the idea that immigrants are warmly welcomed in the country for example. In literary studies it might be deemed that suspension of disbelief had been broken, psychologically it suggests that reflexivity is lost in favour of criticism.

A key idea for this study is that, at this particular time of upheaval, the Brexit vote, and the lockdown periods due to the COVID-19 pandemic, *TRS*, an example of what Ellis (2020) termed consolatory television, provided assurance and comfort for viewers. Not explicit in all focus groups, the idea was hinted at. The programme was described as “homely” in FG1, in FG2 as “something to have a cup of tea and dunk your biscuits with” (P5, FG3), another participant talked about it making people “feel comfortable and safe ... it’s about love, it’s about caring” (P10, FG3). To combat uncertainty the programme provided what was termed “escapism” (P10, FG3). However, homely, or *heimlich* for Freud (1919), “is a word, the meaning of which develops towards ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, pointing towards that which ought to have remained hidden” (p. 86), suggesting that *TRS* does much to repress or keep things concealed.

As an object *TRS*, taken up by so many during lockdowns, with “an audience of almost 6 million, 30 percent of those watching broadcast TV” (Ellis, 2020, p. 394), reflects a cultural mood of a specific time. Bollas (2018) describes a mood as a complex self-state, “as a person goes to sleep, he may fall into a dream, when a person goes into a mood, he may become his former self [... which ...] “may represent some child element in contemporary life” (p. 63). Bollas identifies generative moods in which “complex internal tasks [are allowed] time and space” (2018, p. 64) to be worked through, malignant moods block object relating and are “aimed at some Other [... to coerce them ...] into serving some self-function” (2018, p. 64). Using the coverage of the London 2012 Olympic Games as an example, Yates (2013), argues that

television can “both produce and reflect a cultural ‘mood’ that enables a form of working through to take place” (p. 17).

Setting aside “the herd instinct” as a “crude analysis of group behaviour” (2013, p. 17), Yates explains the effects of the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony on the prevailing mood of cynicism in Britain, maintaining that the nuance and playfulness of the event, the acknowledgement of “the multiplicity of voices that have shaped British identities past and present [worked] in a generative manner to evoke particular sets of memories, thereby tapping into the cultural idioms of British audiences” resulting in a “cultural reverie in which they experienced the ‘living through of a mood’” (2013, p. 18).

The themes promoted in *TRS*: family, loss, love, memory, mourning and repair, the elements most visible and affective on screen, evinced through tactility, and haptic care, the setting in bucolic countryside in addition to references to childhood, are all evocative settings of nostalgia. During Brexit and COVID-19 uncertainty, these offered a sense of connection and association to others. Such connection was possible through “shared family viewing” (Ellis, 2020, p. 393), but also through a recognition that everyone in the country was potentially enduring similar experiences. The patient repair of material objects by craftspeople and the haptic tactility afforded by close camera work, provided not only a symbol and an example of healing, but furnished the atmosphere for a generative and collective cultural mood.

5.9 Conclusion

The purpose of focus group discussions was to explore emotional attitudes towards *TRS* among its core demographic (Objective 4), in the cultural and temporal context of viewing in a post-Brexit Britain through the experience of COVID-19, in addition to acting as an introduction for study participants to the researcher before conducting individual in-depth interviews to investigate their views concerning inherited familial material objects.

Broadsheet newspaper television reviewers had posted very positively of the programme during this time: “it is also the rarest of TV gems: an uplifting hour about the power of memory and how even simple belongings can become important in our lives” (Kalia, 2019). “*The Repair Shop* [...] is one of Britain’s most successful TV shows and certainly its most uplifting” (Starling, *The Daily Telegraph*, 2021). “[W]eeping my way through the Christmas special of BBC’s *The Repair Shop* [...] I thought: wouldn’t it be great if we could take ‘Broken Britain’ to be fixed there [...]” (Ross, *The Times*, 2022).

As an “ordinary” (Bonner, 2003), “consolatory” (Ellis, 2020) programme, especially one that achieved large audiences during COVID-19 lockdowns, the feeling behind some of the negative responses in focus group discussions was, therefore, surprising.

Unfavourable reactions were not directed towards previously documented areas of criticism attached to makeover/lifestyle television, namely “emotional realism” (Biressi and Nunn, 2005, p. 5), “emotional excess” (Gorton, 2009, p. 108), or in debating “the attitudes and behaviour of ordinary people” (Hill, 2005, p. 9), which were accepted as credible and authentic. Instead, they were aimed at discourses surrounding work, class, and immigration. Study participants resisted the covert “nation building” of the programme, unwilling to concede that colour and class were as unproblematic as the show, along with many in the genre, indicates. Questions concerning lack of authenticity incorporated scepticism about the ease of, and motives for, repair of material objects, as well as use of the programme itself as an object of the mind. Groups recognised the show as therapeutic for the participants, but not consciously for themselves: the show was “homely”, “comforting”, and “magical” which could be restorative, but not as curative for viewers.

Some focus group participants were irritated when the programme did not fully provide what experience had led them to expect: a ‘real’ view of the areas of contention outlined. However, the pull of the narratives of those appearing, the potential for a generative mood, and the approximation to their ideal in all these areas, suggested that it still had the potential to be a psychological object amongst my participants. Given recognition of both restorative and disappointing properties, *TRS* itself (as above) does seem to have become subject to Kleinian “splitting” serving as both a “good” and “bad” consolatory television object.

Academics (Bonner, 2003; Brunsdon, 2003; Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Yates, 2018; Bainbridge, 2019) have pointed to how television, may assist in changing ideas about self, identity and what it means to be British now. Focus group participants, despite identifying several ‘messages’ that they believed the programme to be peddling, did not consciously attach great social, or psychosocial, significance to *TRS*. Nevertheless, as outlined above, the desire of most focus group participants was to accept the reparative premise of the show, to belong to a community of feeling.

Chapter 6: Findings and analysis. Part 3: Interview findings and discussion

Textual analysis of *TRS* comprised the first section of Findings and Analysis exploring the programme's construction of tactility and emotion (Objective 1), its depiction of key themes and its place within a post-Brexit, post-pandemic social context. The section of focus group findings and analysis examined recruited participants' reactions to the programme, upon which this chapter will expand (Objectives 3 and 4). However, the main concern of this chapter is the exploration of study participants' emotional and sensory relationship to material inherited and familial objects as explored in individual interviews (Objective 5).

The first section examines objects participants presented as worthy of repair. This is followed by an exploration of what I term 'shadow objects', items about which participants are uncomfortable, that they try to disregard or forget. The final section considers participants' ambivalent feelings about both types of objects. (See Appendix I for participant information).

6.1 Relational context

Interviewees were asked to bring two items to interview: one which, should it be damaged, they might offer to *TRS*, the other, an item about which they have more mixed, or ambivalent feelings, termed 'shadow objects' (theorised in 6.4 below). The interviewees, who had all previously participated in focus group discussions, were invited to choose where they would like their interview to take place. The majority selected my home, while others were interviewed in their own home or at a neutral venue.

6.1.2 Objects worthy of repair: much loved treasures

Projecting part of oneself into an object gives it meaning, "[c]onverting it into a tool for possible thought: the thinking that is special to the dream state" (Bollas, 2006, p. 22), thereby "furnishing an unconscious matrix for dreams, fantasies and deeper reflexive knowings" (p. 23). The material objects presented by study participants as worthy of repair, consciously hold meaning, providing shortcuts to particular memories that ripple out to generalised feelings, often prompting reflexivity.

Some items promoted a sense of pride in the family members who had previously owned them. P5 reminisced about his parents' relationship and fierce ideological battles with his father. Nevertheless, his contemporary understanding is evidenced in the emotional attachment to the survival of his father's watch and its working state. P5 and P6 stated their delight in their ancestors, although all participants enjoyed talking about their families and celebrating their links. Items offered proof of connection and could be seen as reinforcing identity, placing the participants in a significant lineage. Furthermore, objects provided a voice for "generations who [had] been silenced" (Heaney, 1993, p. 33).

Uses of objects written about by Bollas do not appear to be singular. 'Revisiting' the family encourages the possibility of creating stories which may, or may not, be true. P3 indulges in creating a possible romantic past around her grandmother's engagement ring, given that her grandfather died when her mother was three.

"I kind of thought there would have been a romantic day involved ... and the fact that she didn't get married until she was older said to me, she wasn't going to marry anyone ... she was a very, very independent woman and never married again, she never had a boyfriend as far as I know again [...] there could have been all sorts of reasons (she didn't wear it) ... maybe it's not as romantic as I thought, maybe he didn't die, maybe he ran off with someone ... you never know" (P3, FG1).

Such imagined stories add to the "energies" (Heaney, 1993, p. 34) of the objects, previous possessors, and play on one's sense of identity. P5 enjoyed placing herself within a strong national, cultural, and matriarchal heritage, for example.

P3, P5 and P6 presented items of jewellery which may be significant in that they are often highly personal to the original recipient, can be worn close to the body and can act as a "visceral bridge" to the dead, "a concrete reminder of (their) physical being" (Sussillo, 2005, p. 508). Sussillo recounts Freud's wearing of a tiny locket with his daughter's image and relating to a patient that she, "[i]s here" (2005, p. 508). The tactility of these items is passive; their physicality may be acknowledged without having to be constantly sought. P2 and P6 expressed a wish to pass their items on to their children or grandchildren, specifically in the case of P6 who wanted them to know that the piece belonged "to someone who was an ancestor", emphasising, according to Stewart, the significance of a blood relation "and family history at the expense of a larger view of history and causality" (2001, p. 137). Psychologically, it can be argued that the tie provides a sense of belonging "to a domestic and at the same time planetary world of pure human being" (Heaney, 1993, p. 37) or of being emotionally held, as outlined by Winnicott (1960), by empathy to and from the past, that is by the people who have experienced physical

and emotional occurrences similar to one's own contributing to a Winnicottian sense of 'going on being' (Winnicott, 1960, p. 586).

Objects not passed on, but gifted to my participants, evoke powerful emotional autobiographical memories (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023) often supplemented by the tactility of the item. P2's toy dog she chose was given to her at birth. Playing with it through her early years, its legs have become misshapen, however, it is enveloped in memories of the kindness of her mother's family and the sensuous pleasures and emotional comforts of visits to her grandparents. The object consciously evokes the "atmosphere" (Heaney, 1993, p. 34) of comfort and security which continues to exist in her affection and regard for soft toys she has accumulated later in life.



Figure 5 Participant 10's youthful sketch

For P10, the book of fashion brings back memories of her father and his nonchalant attitude to marking the birthdays of his children. It was given to her because he thought she would like it. During the interview, its pages were caressed, and the state of its cover regretted. As a child, this participant had used the book's illustrations to prompt her own fashion drawings, thus adding further tactile and creative responses to the item, which, like the toy dog, is a "powerful focal point of memory and shared narratives" (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p 2), confirming a sense of belonging.

One participant brought a shepherdess pincushion, now falling apart, given to her by her godmother. She seldom saw this family friend but liked her and wrote to her because she "felt a connection" (P11). However, she did not think the item suitable for TRS as she has "no sob story to tell", thus showing an acute awareness of the emotional format of the programme and its expectations. Indeed, she did not advance any memories or stories about the item, the person who gave it to her, or the time she received it.

Nevertheless, most items, in some way, encouraged memories, even the Mother's Day card sent in March 2020. P9 received this from her daughter just as the country was going into lockdown. The oversized card featured a photograph of her daughter and her grandchildren and the message *Looking forward to having some adventures and fun times with you in the coming*

months. It was eighteen months before they were able to meet again. The future of this item is undecided. It may become the focus for future memories for the participant and her family, or should the need for the memory fade, it may be disposed of. Rather than a purely personal memory that could secure its future, this item is also attached to a collective memory of a time of deep social and emotional disruption, which could potentially limit or enhance its appeal.

Two participants underwent difficulty in presenting items they may have wished repaired. P1 offered a raffia cricket that was purchased abroad at a difficult time for the family.



Figure 6 Participant 1's cricket

The participant did not elaborate on the circumstances of the purchase. The item is kept at the behest of one of her children. For the participant, the cricket's emotional projections no longer mean anything, indicating a maternal role in significant memory-keeping for the child. One participant (P4) brought nothing. "There's no object that I would keep, that I'd feel had any ... there's nothing that I consider is necessary to keep to, hold any memories [...] [i]f that thing [any object] was burnt or lost it would make no

difference whatsoever". No item he owned carried significant emotional autobiographical meaning, nor did he wish to add memories to an object or memorialise others (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023). The shortest interview conducted, the participant's broken sentences resist analysis, straddling "offering and withholding meaning" (MacLure et al., 2010, p. 498). They may indicate a reluctance to connect, fully, with others.

The formula for *TRS* dictates that items can only be treasured and suitable for repair, those with more ambivalent or darker significances must be eliminated in the selection process. Much of the work of the programme could be understood as repressive, enabling presentation of the collectively reparative. This allows no space for P7's item. Presented, initially, as beloved and worthy of repair and renovation, feelings towards it moved considerably in her estimation during our interview: sometimes the doll was appreciated and loved, sometimes not.

The youngest of four children, this participant, referencing Arthur Ransom's 1930s children's



Figure 7 Participant 7's doll

book, recalls her childhood as "*Swallows and Amazons* stuff". With very few material possessions in her childhood home: "... no carpets, no fridge or television [...] there was nothing to do in the house". Few toys meant that, like the characters in the Ransom book, she spent most of her time on outdoor adventures in the garden, woods or on the beach, keeping up with her siblings with little interference from adults. Her upbringing also points to what seems to be an assumption made by *TRS*: that most families will have had sufficient wealth to pass things on, rather than down. That is, items would be destined to be kept rather than worn, played with, or used until they were irreparable and unusable.

P7 does not remember how she came to have the doll. Her mother died when she was seven years old. She has a picture of herself with the doll, taken, she thinks, at about that time. Her ambivalent feelings about the doll appear understandable given such circumstances. The family home was sold within a month of her mother's death. She went to live with her father in a different part of the county. Her older brothers were away at college or work. It was unclear how her sister managed. When she was seventeen, her father died, leaving her to move in with neighbours. The family's possessions were divided among the siblings who could take them. At seventeen she lacked the wherewithal to keep anything: "... not one of them thought to put a couple of things aside for me". Within the last ten years, her mother's chair has been "offered" to her, and she now has her father's cribbage board.

For this participant, "[p]ossessions are about story and connection", being prompts to memories and narratives. The doll that she presented is "part of that life". She thinks that it was a Christmas present but cannot remember how she felt on receiving it. Neither does she have any idea who made the dress the doll is now wearing, nor how the doll's fingers were damaged. It is entirely possible that this information, linked to her disquieting childhood experiences and a need to behave as her father and older siblings required, has been completely repressed, along with contemporary disappointment and demands. By the end of the interview, she had reached the opinion that the doll, despite sustaining that damage and having no eyelashes "is fine the way she is". The toy is not cuddly, although she "must have shared my [P1's] bed". The participant did not give the doll away, although she "gave away a lot of toys", she felt that the

fact she kept the doll was “good”. However, who kept the doll initially remained unclear, as is the fact that apparently “many toys”, from a childhood with very few, were passed on. Furthermore, she would not want to “get rid of her now, although I will have to because the kids think she is ugly”.

The conversation surrounding the doll encouraged reminiscences about a childhood and young womanhood beset with emotional upsets and difficulties. Whereas other participants could more easily separate loved items from unloved or ambivalent inherited or childhood shadow objects, this doll seemed to fulfil both roles, continuing to do so. P7’s bond with the doll, no longer attractive, which ties her to an enchanting early childhood, but also to profound loss. In its present state the doll could be seen as working as a mnemonic transformative object, allowing her to access a state of a stored self-experience (Bollas, 2006).

As indicated, the participant has a photograph of herself taken with the doll when she was about seven.

Subsequently, in her seventies, she has rephotographed herself with the doll in a similar pose and against a similar background as far as possible.

Photography over decades of geographical locations is a recognised pursuit (Uhl, 2021, Schaffland and Schöning, 2023), of people, however, it is academically, if not socially, more unusual. The photograph of the participant as a child is a physical object, the newer image digital. Together, they have become an object whose existence has been shared with the participant’s friends, indicating it as a source of satisfaction for the participant.

As explained (Section 4.12.1), *TRS* displays personal photographs to “authenticate the reality of the past” and enhance a “material connection to it” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 6). The programme has not used re-photographs which call to attention a disruption in the linear flow of time, as does memory, but the recreative act seems to undermine a sense of authenticity of emotion, which, the show suggests, is evoked by material goods.

It is not in the scope of this project to offer analysis of the reasons or unconscious inspirations behind P7’s modern image. Speculatively though, exploration is recreating the image could point to resonances called up by the item, while mediatization could allow a distance from those plangent experiences, making them easier to manage. It might be argued that in being caught in this later image, the doll has undergone a form of repair: its decline has been arrested, and a version of it, much like a renovated item, will continue into the future. The image, or renovation, could provide a defence against the full force of the re-imagined experience, but

could also signal an attempt to make more tangible a link between a child and a lost mother, or an attempt to master the child-past.

The doll holds many complex projections. In Winnicottian terms, it may possess elements of a transitional object, allowing the grown up child to achieve separation from the mother, providing “a defence against anxiety” (2005, p. 5), enable her to reach a “neutral area of experience which will not be challenged” (2005, p. 17), or provide “a resting place” so that “inner and outer reality “may be kept “separate yet interrelated” (2005, p.3).

Winnicott stresses that transitional objects are not Kleinian internal objects but are employed when “the internal object is alive and real and good enough” which depends on “the existence and aliveness and behaviour of the external object” (2005, p. 13), but the death of P7’s mother may suggest that the doll is an adaptation of a transitional object.

The participant’s ambivalence about repairing the doll, may indicate a dilemma over repairing damage done to the mother in phantasy (Klein, 1989), perhaps, not being overly concerned about or pining for her (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 415).

6.1.2.1 Tactility of repair: worthy objects

The ‘repair-worthy’ items presented by participants had been ‘held onto’ in the sense that they could not be thrown away, their importance was thus assured. The idiom, though, has physical as well as emotional overtones. The participants’ sensory relationship with their objects (Objective 5) during their individual interviews is presented here.

Initially items were substantially handled. The exception was P1’s cricket, which once placed on the table, was only moved to improve the angle of viewing. The torn cover of P10’s book was lightly traced, and, as they were turned, pages carefully smoothed. P9’s photograph was touched when specific ancestors were being described and their position within the family explained. There was no single tactile response to jewellery people had brought. Damage was tactilely and gently demonstrated, seemingly to ensure that it was clear, and, perhaps, to try to soothe the participants’ feelings about it. P3, who was wearing her grandmother’s ring, played with it regularly while talking about her, but desisted when remembering other objects. P2’s toy dog was also handled in this way. The pattern of touch for P7’s doll, indicated her ambivalence towards it: damage was pointed out, the doll was talked to, made to sit up straight, picked up when she fell, becoming an unmistakable and sometimes distracting focus.

The touch of their objects employed by participants is best described as light, fond and affectionate, increasing emotional involvement and, in most cases, occasioning pleasure. Touching their loved material objects functioned as an entry point and connection to narratives of further memories which often referenced sound and smell. Writing of the benefits of touch for acutely ill elderly patients, Montagu (1986) references the nurse and author Cathleen Fanslow, pointing out “it is through the emotional involvement of touch that one can reach through the isolation and communicate love, trust, affection, and warmth” (p. 396).

Sherry Turkle’s contributors (2007) reference similar responses when writing about objects of mourning and memory, suggesting that material objects, while not a substitute for desired human physical contact, operate, through touch, to ease the feeling of the loss of loved ones in our body, our “somatic grieving” (Krasner, 2010, p. 21).

6.1.2.2 Summary of relational context

Study respondents point to four main conclusions concerning conscious links with family items. First, items may be linked to family pride, supplying a focus for accretion of memories and a fragile physical defence against not being remembered. Second, they can encourage the creation and rehearsal of narratives which, embellished or enhanced, nevertheless “Affords an imaginative connection with the past” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 2) and one’s place within it. Third, items focus memories and offer hope that in being kept and passed on they will scaffold memories for others. Finally, tangibly, and imaginatively, they supply connections to significant others in a participant’s life and provide a future memorial for them and the present keeper. The participant who has no objects acts consciously against the need or desire to “[a]nchor [...] affective content of various unrelated memories” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 13). For many participants, extending the familial, involved recalling times spent with their grandparents, without other members of their immediate family, the role played by material objects in recalling rich sensual and emotional memories particularly attached to this relationship and offers reasons why they may be particularly vivid.

6.1.2.3 Grandparents: feelings of security and peace

As discussed in Chapter 2, researchers have indicated that material objects can evoke memories and affects through narratives that would not be as forthcoming in a standard

interview format (Bell, 2013; Hannon, 2018; Mannay 2020). Objects provide a focus, “an imaginative connection to the past” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 1) with sensory vividness.

Memories are created by encoding information, storing it and being able to access and recall it. Material objects provide retrieval clues linking mental images and sensory encounters to seen objects allowing “instantaneous access to [a] significant experience” (Krasner, 2010, p. 40).

Experiences recalled do not always need to relate to specific incidents or moments, but to what McCarroll and Kirby term “a summary of events” (2023, p. 12) or a miscellany of emotional responses or unconscious “self-states” (Bollas, 2006, p. 19).

Contemplating childish memories as intense physical sensations providing recollections with distinctive meanings, may require considering memories of visits to grandparents rather than the memories being made vivid by the child at the time, it may be that the adult recalling them is enhancing their sense intensity. The question then becomes why such distinctive and highly coloured memories are required later in life.

Many participants on *TRS* present items that once restored transport them back to their childhood, as, for example Karen Walker who wanted her grandfather’s alarm clock repaired (Series 11, episode 1, 2023). The tick of the clock takes her back to being a young child, sitting on the end of her grandfather’s bed, waiting for him to wake up after a night shift so that they can go and play. Thinking of childhood sensations as adult embellished, means the memory is of most importance to the adult. From a psychoanalytic perspective, memory is always shaped retrospectively, being mediated by fantasy and affect.

Bollas proposes that moods, “complex self-states [...] may establish a mnemonic environment in which the individual re-experiences and re-creates former infant-child experiences”. For him, these states are important in the “ongoing negotiation with reality” (2018, p. 65). It is perhaps for this reason that as individuals approach different stages of their lives, they seek to recall previous phases so that the self may be fully integrated.

Childhood memories of grandparental visits were particularly evocative in the interviews. While it is possible that memories formed in early years are rich in sensual detail with heightened somatic responses, it is equally conceivable that imaginative recall of sense-rich environments could be an adult revision.

6.2. Feelings of reticence: ‘shadow objects’

Research participants were asked to present at interview an inherited item they loved but that required repair, which fits the format of *TRS*, as well as an item which they had kept, but about which they had ambivalent feelings: such items are referred to here as ‘shadow objects’. These are objects that participants are aware of, indeed still have, but which, for many reasons they may wish to ignore. *TRS*, as the focus groups and interviewees recognised, does not present items that evoke equivocal memories. For example, Maria’s painting of the Madonna and Child (Series 12, episode 1, 2023), rescued from Soviet troops advancing on Ukraine in the Second World War and kept secret by her grandmother for the length of her incarceration in a forced labour camp, is framed as a story of bravery and triumph over adversity. The painting is what McCarroll and Kirby (2023) term “an indirect evocative object” (p. 13) in that it is the focal point for memory concerning the original owner rather than an “autobiographical evocative object” (p. 3), which recalls a personal past. During interviews it became evident that two types of shadow objects existed: those that recalled uncomfortable personal feelings and those that, since their origin, have acquired a social or cultural stigma, which I refer to as ‘culturally shadowed objects’. Freud’s use of the German term *unheimlich* for the concept of something familiar and old, cannot help but create associations between these objects and the house and home. In surfacing, these items cause anxiety. Bollas probes the nature of the feelings that are aroused, suggesting that we are “held by the object’s spirit” on an occasion which has been selected for us (2018, p. 16).

6.2.1 ‘Shadow objects’: definition

The psychologist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung developed a concept of shadows. For him they were “a disowned subpersonality [rooted in] cultural indoctrination” and/or “familial repression” provoking “powerful feeling of distrust, anger, or fear” (Stevens, 2001, pp. 64–5).

I propose the term ‘shadow objects’ to refer to items bequeathed or ‘saved’ from the clearing of the familial home, whose whereabouts are known, their presences sensed, but which seldom, if at all, see the light of day, literally or figuratively. The resistance to my request to the study participants to present an ambivalent item at interview alongside their *Repair Shop*-worthy piece, speaks to the ‘shadow’ status of objects.

In theorising these psychologically difficult pieces, it is necessary to consider work by Freud, Jung, and Bollas. Jung (1969) contended that the personal shadow was “dark aspects of the

reasonably balanced Ego” (p. xx). Failure to consciously recognise projections constituting one’s shadow means “one dreams of a world whose reality remains forever unattainable” (p. xx). Jung writes of meeting “with projections” (p. xx) rather than making them. This statement is plausible when considering inherited familial objects, the projection may not belong to the inheritor thereby suggesting elements of hauntology (see Section 6.3.4.1).

Freud, however, attaches shadows not to people, but to things “long known to us, once very familiar” (1919/2018, p. 85). Inherited or familial objects fall into this category. For Freud shadows may be linked to the mourning process. The lost person or object can become internalised and persecutory, thus, the “shadow of the object falls upon the ego” (1917/2014). Fear of the uncanny implies that the subject may still be haunted by repressed material perhaps related to infancy, now projected onto objects. Exploring the German word *unheimlich* Freud points to its ambiguity: it means “familiar and pleasant”, but also “what is concealed and kept out of sight” (1919, p. 86). These objects create unsettling experiences: they cast shadows but are not necessarily part of one’s unconscious shadow. Obliterating these shadows entails consigning items to dark recesses of the home; a metaphor for the psychological relationship in which they are held.

Bollas understands objects as holding moods or states. Using part of Freud’s phrase, the “shadow of the object” in the title of his book (2018) where he explores the process of being attentive to shadows, and the origin of what he terms the “unthought known” (2018, p. xii). Bollas argues that a subject uses different objects to conjure specific psychological self-states as discussed in the literature review (Section 2.3.6).

Bollas says that the uncanny is the memory of an autogenic process “never cognitively apprehended but existentially known” (2018, p. 5). It is an experience beyond the subject’s comprehension that can be stored as a self-state, which is, for Bollas “often the stuff of moods” (2018, p. xv). The uncanny state is characterised as a “[f]usion” with the object, a feeling of “[b]eing held by the object’s spirit” with “a deep conviction that such an occasion must surely be selected for us” (2018, p. 16), it is, Bollas proposes, “an experience of being rather than mind (2018, p. 16). To encounter the uncanny is therefore, a pre-verbal experience with somatic implications of affect, implying the difficulty of conscious reasoning. Study participants were asked to bring two items to interview: one they would offer to *TRS*, if damaged, the other, an object they had inherited, but about which they were equivocal.

6.2.2 Personal 'shadow object'

Only one participant brought a shadow object to interview, it became apparent in conversations that, while initially denied, such items existed for others. Interviewees indicated that such objects might be in their lofts, although they were unsure, which, given their unconscious resonances, would be appropriate. P2 had "got rid of" anything from her den that did not make her happy. Photographs of previous husbands had been destroyed as she wanted her children "to see Mum happy". Feeling no compunction, she had been reminded that some of the images were of her daughter's father. P2 therefore passed on photographs of the wedding, "... tiny, little things". Such a response raises the question of who might lay emotional claim to objects. P2's course of action does not necessarily release her from the memories, it does, though, prevent daily confrontation.

P3 has not been able to wear her mother's necklace, originally because she thought it might upset her father, but latterly because "it doesn't feel right to wear it". She can put it on but feels the need to remove it promptly. She explains that she wants to retain the scent of her mother and prolonged wear might destroy that, additionally, "... stuff has energy" and the necklace does not "feel right".

For P9, the shadow objects, figurines passed on to her by her godmother, are suffused with social embarrassment. Having politely commended her godmother's pieces, she was horrified to receive them after her death when she was confronted with the consequences of her well-intentioned half-truth. One has been sold; the other is in her loft.

Not all shadow objects were hidden. P6's house is furnished with items made by her father. She would not have chosen any of them but finds it impossible to "throw something away when you know someone has struggled to pay for it" or made it. There is a "lack of respect in just getting rid of it", a sentiment which indicates an often-shared sense of obligation to the dead.

Three participants asserted that they had no items in their homes about which they felt ambivalent feelings. P5 tells of growing up in an impoverished London after the Second World War. The family had "no money, there was nothing to inherit". While he received his father's gold retirement watch, there was nothing for his half-brother. After his mother's death, her effects were distributed among people who were able to use them or given to a charity shop.

While *TRS* provides instances of everyday treasured items such as a sausage machine (*TRS* Series 5, episode 17), Marcus Harding's experience, who suggested that his family did not own items that would be thought of as bequests, accords with study P1 and P8. This conclusion, as

TRS indicates, depends on what projections objects hold for subjects as much as the subject's definition of nothing. Seamus Heaney and Sherry Turkle have both written of how inconsequential objects, "inert rubbish [...] thrown out of the way" (Heaney, 1993, p. 34), allow us to "read ourselves into a personal past" (p. 34) or connect us to the world (Turkle, 2007, p. 3). However, if objects lack such projections and meaning and are therefore forgotten or discarded, they become and offer nothing in a subjective or emotional realm, only retaining their utility.

P1 and P4 offered no ambivalent items as their conscious attitude to familial objects, indeed all objects, allowed them only a functional or aesthetic role. Items that stood to be inherited had been given away or disposed of. This seemingly straightforward attitude could be understood to result from unconscious promptings and fears of shaping influences of the past.

Conscious explanations for an absence of inherited familial items, other than there not being any as outlined above, were that material objects were not necessary to awaken memories of past times or deceased loved ones. With this reasoning it is possible to suggest that mourning for the deceased has been successfully accomplished, the loss fully recognised, the object uncathected and the ego free and uninhibited (Freud, 1917). However, the physical lack of items and the conscious denial of their holding any significance, may also point to a defence against painful feelings, haunting influences of the past, or uncomfortable mood states.

Painful and uncanny unconscious responses may not necessarily be connected to the person to whom the item once belonged. P1's mother's wedding ring, the only thing she had kept, was stolen in a burglary. What the item stood for in the mother-daughter relationship has been augmented by the trauma of the theft. Family continuity, the participant's acceptance of the ring and its familial meanings, has been broken, not by her, but by an event beyond her control. If the ring was not initially associated with a secret, its absence is linked to negative emotions of shame and anger, leaving P1 to bear repercussions of her past.

Bollas (2018) argues that we surround ourselves with objects that we use daily to release our "idiom" into "places beyond thinking" (p. 17) where we are able to forget our objective selves. It will not only be familial or inherited objects that allow this release, but such items may provide an echo or trace of "the unconscious system of care provided by our mother and father" (p. 17).

Seldom worrying about disposing of the wrong thing, P2 has kept items that are significant to her (birth) family, photographs of her mother and father and her grandfather's chair. At present, the latter is stored in her loft. This is a problem, although not a wholly acknowledged one. Modifications to the loft access mean that she fears it may be impossible to move it in future.



Figure 8 Becoming a shadow? P2's chair

The chair is not a shadow object. P2 has fond memories of sitting on her grandfather's lap when he used it. The positioning of his photograph in her image of the chair attests to her affection for the item and the person. As the difficulties surrounding moving the chair become accepted it is possible to understand it becoming 'shadowy'. Its pleasant memories could become overwhelmed by remorse at not being able to move it intact or ensure its preservation. The mood state associated with the item may become consciously and unconsciously, more ambivalent.

It would seem appropriate to consider that all shadow objects would be hidden away. However, interviewees occasionally had items about which they were ambivalent on show.

A psychoanalytic frame serves to alert us to the "shift [of] attention from rationality to contradiction, incoherences, ambivalence and nonsensical subjective experiences" (Johanssen, 2016) and emphasises the folly in offering anything other than subjective speculation.

During her interview, P10 commented about two items she had not brought with her: a doll given to her in childhood and her mother's things in the attic "not sorted out". The attic holds the possibility of the doll (discussed in Section 6.5), but also apprehension surrounding her mother's things, especially a basketful of materials that she "does not want" but will have to "brace" herself to let go. Her mother was a skilled dressmaker. The use of "brace" suggests a relationship of effort, an interpretation which is supported when the participant goes on to say, "I need to let them go". Although the material left was not to her taste, she has used some of it to make a quilt.

P3 keeps her mother's necklace in a container as she wishes to cling to her mother's fragrance. She felt "unable to wear it" when her father was still alive because she "didn't want to upset him". Now, after his death it still does not "feel right to wear it".

Although both items are hidden, the shadows cast by them appear very different. In the case of P10, it is possible to conjecture there is an element of rebelliousness in her consigning the material to her attic. Speaking lovingly, and at length, of her father, her mother was not

mentioned in the interview until the introduction of the subject of items with ambiguous connotations. Abandonment of the item suggests an unwillingness to take on the expectations introjected by the object. However, P10's use of some of the material to make a quilt might point to an attempt to assimilate experiences, to use a physical item to assist in a type of reparative phantasy, or indeed fantasy, in which her concerns and anxiety about her mother's death are in a creative way (Klein, 1998, p. 335).

For this participant, the space where the shadow object is stowed has itself become ambivalent; it may harbour the doll that is for her psychologically impossible to look for in case it is not there. The space is beset by unassimilated trauma, offering a further dimension to the potential of haunting. (See 6.3.4.1)

The feelings surrounding the caching of P3's necklace may appear more recognisable; the bereaved often retain close personal items of the dead to preserve a physical presence (Volkan, 1993; Turkle 2007). The desire to capture the aroma is the reason given for keeping the container of the item closed and the item therefore hidden. Additionally, the participant does not want to wear the necklace because to do so "doesn't feel right". Such a feeling may arise from the participant's imagined projection from her father or from her own projections. They speak to aspects of relationships within the family not consciously acknowledged or easily articulated.

Explorations above suggest that shadow objects are privately stowed in more difficult to reach areas of the house, providing an appropriate image for the ways in which they are dealt with psychologically. The house might act as a mental map of the mind for participants with the attic or loft representing the unconscious. P6 and P9 though, offered shadow objects that were on show. The participants' equivocation became evident through the way they talked about or acted towards these items.

P6's home is furnished with pieces handmade by her father, most of which are used daily. She is "not sure [she wants] a lot of it, but you can't throw something away when you know someone has struggled to pay for it because they were so hard up or because they made it ... it's a lack of respect just to get rid of it".

The photograph of her maternal family, grandparents, great grandparents, and cousins, taken in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, presented as a treasured item by P9, is destined to go on display.



Figure 9 Participant 9's copy of the photograph of her maternal family

That it had not, by the time of the interview, caused the participant to “feel bad”, she is proud of her ancestral family who lived in Howarth. There seems to be no conflict as there is with P6, prevarication in exhibiting the picture could point to an awareness of what Bollas calls an “unthought known” (2018, p. xv), within the family, a mood state communicated through the unconscious.

It is not possible to speculate whether the non-display of the photograph is a resonance

from previous family members. It is also interesting to consider if all children in a family would be haunted by inherited objects. Examining this aspect of haunting and inheritance, though, is beyond the scope of this project. P11 presented one piece and talked about others that have been hidden for two generations.

This participant has inherited “things my mother had in her pantry that [were] wrapped up all her life and never taken out”. Now, in a loft amongst inherited items from her husband’s family, it is as if they are doubly hidden, still wrapped and now almost buried; the secret shame is nearly obscured.

P11’s family lost their successful fisheries business, sited in Gdansk between the two world wars, after the collapse of fish stocks in the Baltic. In straightened circumstances the family moved to the northeast of Scotland. Not throwing anything away became a commandment. Complex family relations also saw items carefully labelled to make sure “... the other side of the family [did not] get it”.

The secret shame of reduced financial means and feared social disapproval has not only been carefully hidden for one generation, but conscious efforts have been made to safeguard the proof of the past status of the family. P11 feels “guilty about getting rid of stuff”, of transgressing the desires of her mother and grandmother as well as undermining the integrity of the family's past, present and future.

Hiding material objects may indicate their shadow nature, haunting, or unconsciously recognised conflicts between past and present, while providing evidence of transgenerational,

shame, secrets, or trauma. Openly displayed items suggest movement towards coming to terms with the unspoken even if it is difficult to assimilate.

6.2.3 Social and culturally stigmatised objects

To distinguish socially and stigmatised shadow objects requires a development of the definition used above for personal shadow objects. Personally, such items are material, encourage memories, create moods, or contain projections that are uncanny or haunting. These may be manifested as “hatred towards oneself” (Kremer and Rothberg, 1999, p. 2), social or “collective” (Jung, 1969; Kremer and Rothberg, 1999) shadow objects, or lack specificity. Aspects of the object are important, their “existence and influence may be persuasive without being obvious” (Kremer and Rothberg, 1999, p. 3), the font used in a book for example, and its previous ideological connotations socially difficult to visit or talk about, the full implications of which are collectively repressed, continue to haunt us and require collective responsibility and reparation.

The demographic of *TRS*’s core viewership is reflected in the interviewees for this project. Ranging in age from their fifties to their seventies, many had experienced clearing possessions of deceased relatives and were considering what was to happen to their personal inherited family goods. Certain items that for a previous generation were aspirational have become socially and culturally discredited: culturally shadowed objects. A fur coat purchased in Germany in the 1920s, in the current era of more widespread animal rights activism, sits at the back of a wardrobe; “It hasn’t been eaten by the moths and I’ve worn it once. I daren’t wear it in case someone chucks paint on it” (P11). Damage to the coat and the personal embarrassment at being seen to be culturally reprehensible, combine to create shame around this item for P11.

Another culturally shadowed object presented by P11 consists of copies of the works of the German poet Schiller (1759–1805) dating from the 1930s printed in Gothic, or blackletter, script, which, she has been told, “[n]o library will touch”. She has “[s]erious concerns about being labelled a Nazi sympathiser [if she] offers them to a German university” because of the Nazi glorification of Schiller. However, a biennial festival celebrating Schiller, and his ideas has been running in Mannheim since 1978 (NMT, 2025), evidencing a different appreciation of the playwright and poet.

Childhood books and toys considered racist today, such as *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (first published in 1899) by the Scottish author Helen Bannerman, ‘golliwogs’, as well as items made

from ivory are, for several interviewees, a cause for consternation. Having kept them for a generation they have “no idea what will happen to them” (P11) or “where they will go” (P9).

Socioculturally, prohibited items cause anguish for my participants. The recipients imply that they feel cultural shame for owning them and annoyance at having been left with a problem they do not know how to solve, one they should not be burdened with by either the bequeather or social mores. There is a sense of a personal slight, that the “worth” of their relative is diminished by this change of values.

The Teddy Bear Ladies who feature regularly on *TRS* (see Appendix C), have restored a variety of soft toys, a donkey, a dragon, and numerous teddy bears, but never a golliwog. A central character in a series of late-nineteenth-century children’s books, academic criticism of its “racialised” nature began in the late 1970’s, following animosity and distress from people of African descent (Varga and Zuk, 2013, p.649). They were dropped from its packaging by Robertsons, a marmalade manufacturer in 2001. (Gallery Oldham, n.d.) The company now associates itself with Paddington Bear. No ivory ornaments, the selling of which is illegal in the UK (DEFRA and APAH, 2022, Ivory Act 2018), have been repaired and fur items do not make an appearance on the show. Interviewees for this project were concerned about having been bequeathed such items, but do not know what to do with them. Caught between affection for the people who previously owned them, social opprobrium and their own guilt or shame, they stow the items away, keeping them hidden.

Although, collectively, we can recognise some of the psychological aspects of the splits or projections involved with these items, or what we might now consider the arrogance and elitism they have come to represent, we are not able to assimilate our shame. In 2020 The National Trust, the “largest conservation charity in Europe” (NT, 2023), upset some of its 5.37 million members by acknowledging “objects on its sites that [had] direct and indirect links to slavery and colonialism” (Young, 2020). Many were moved to anger, while a determined right-leaning cohort set about “[w]rest[ing] control of the National Trust” (Booth, 2022), to stop its involvement in “ephemeral trends and political activism” (Restore Trust, n.d.). The phantoms of Britain’s imperial past unearth “unexamined emotional responses, [and] an unnamed fear that new facts threaten old ones” (Fowler, 2020, p. 23). An idealised unconscious image of the object, in the case of The National Trust, Britain’s heritage, had become difficult to assimilate or introject on a social level. The National Trust, for example, through its association with the academic Corinne Fowler’s work on the links to slavery of many of its historic properties (2020), seems prepared to face ghosts that *TRS* is not.

The reluctance of the programme to show items that have become socially controversial confirms its inclination to repress collective shame and the shadow nature of the objects. Cathartic happy endings demanded by the genre and format of *TRS*, often successful on a personal level, inhibits speaking to transgenerational social ghosts (Tennakoon, 2023). (See 6.3.4.1). The *Windrush Special* episode (Series 12, episode 7, 2023) is framed as a celebration of “the contributions and achievements of members of the Windrush generation” (BBC, 2023b.) and focuses on the service and assistance provided by individuals to Britain after the Second World War, rather than the antagonism and racism people were met with. A British passport, a suitcase, a clock, and a radiogram are presented for renovation along with humbling stories of hard work and perseverance. Difficulties in finding accommodation, of accessing loans to buy property, of being accepted into local church congregations and being limited in the types of jobs that could be applied for, are parts of descendants’ narratives, but the social environment that encouraged these responses from the White population is not probed. Conforming to the need for an optimistic resolution, as with most lifestyle television, this provides a salve for the conscience of a society that has grown from the sanctioned racism of the mid-twentieth century to rhetoric surrounding illegal cross-channel immigration (Ashworth-Hayes and Hymas, 2025). *TRS* format does not indicate the extent of what David Olusoga refers to as “the parts of the past that it seems unhealthy to dwell on” (2017, cited by Fowler, 2023, p. 24) and does not confront social transgenerational haunting.

Material objects afford “an imaginative connection to the past which enables them to become powerful focal points of memory and shared narratives” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 1), they hold associations, affections, moods and projections, memories of loss and attachments. To have inherited or have kept objects that carry such deeply personal meanings and feel unable to declare or accept them because of social repressions must be especially difficult to accommodate.

P11, having been bequeathed a complete set of Schiller’s work and fur coats, has consciously become fearful and angry, although, for her, the social reaction to these items is understandable, if not entirely. Stewart has written of how mementos “become emblematic of the worth of [a] life and [...] the capacity to generate worthiness” (2007, p. 139). Thus, things with which her family are associated, which have become part of her and what connects her to the world (Turkle, 2007), need to be questioned by her, as does the “worthiness” of family members. Socially and culturally stigmatised shadow objects imply not only that items are of dubious emotional value, but, as these items are now hidden, secrets about the past will need to be

formed and kept.

6.2.4 'Shadow objects': conclusions

Most participants did not present an object about which they had ambivalent feelings at their interview, physically telling itself in terms of mixed emotions. However, when prompted they were able to talk of items that they had inherited from familial homes, for which they had no need, felt dislike, or were hostile towards, as, in two cases the thought of keeping items that were of no practical use was detestable. Not all items prompting ambivalence were hidden away. Those on display may point to a growing acceptance of familial expectations, or that even though items are seen daily, they are not unconsciously acknowledged.

TRS, as a lifestyle and consolatory television programme (Ellis, 2020), may not be expected to approach such issues, although selection of items for repair and personalisation of narratives ensures that any uncomfortable, rather than reparative, discourse surrounding racism, class, and environmental trust remains silenced and shame and trauma repressed.

Study participants who have inherited or 'treasured' such items from their childhood, are left with a complicated knot of emotions comprising guilt, shame, and anger, that they now feel, like the items, to which they have attached memories of loss or affection, need to be hidden.

After the period covered in this research (2020–2023), Jay Blades, the presenter of *TRS*, was charged with rape and controlling and coercive behaviour (Youngs, 2024). He did not appear on *TRS* from May 2024. Blades may, therefore, retrospectively, be understood as *The Repair Shop*'s shadow object, a former presence haunting the current show. As with my participants' personal shadow objects, and those socially stigmatized, he could be understood to be hidden away in the metaphorical attic: his absence is not alluded to on the show. Since his departure, an alternating group of the resident artisans' welcome participants to the Barn, strengthening the sense of community and equality within the workshop. Representing a period of upheaval and unpleasantness for the show, the silence surrounding his departure is a further acknowledgement of the repression *TRS* must undertake to continue in its reparative role.

6.3 Ambivalent feelings

6.3.1 Introduction

Study participants' responses to repair-worthy and shadow objects are, as indicated above, not clear-cut. Emotional relationships with inherited items generate 'messy', complex and complicated feelings. These may be similar to feelings in relationships with those bequeathing items or elaborated with "internal relationships between different aspects of [a] person" (Gomez, 1997, p. 2). Feelings of love, security, peace and consolation may be entwined with feelings of guilt and shame, ambivalence surrounding how an item may have come into a participant's possession, and indecision about the desirability of the item's repair.

Feelings of guilt or shame constitute a broad category which has most conveniently been subdivided into:

- i. Feelings of resentment or anger at the bequest of items the recipient subsequently considers bind them to a promise they begrudge.
- ii. Feelings of irritation at having to keep family possessions they did not want as their children could not store them.
- iii. Feelings of abhorrence over sentimentality, that is, a denial of emotional attachment to inherited, material objects and their associated memories.

P2, P7 and P10 were in possession of items that had not come to them straightforwardly. These included items that were believed lost, but which, decades later, have found their way back to the participant. Here they are designated lost and found items.

Indecisive feelings towards repair, were prompted by lack of knowledge about who to approach to repair the item or, the knowledge that the joy of repair would have limited resonance beyond the interviewee themselves.

6.3.2 Feelings of guilt and shame

Using the term "guilty", P3, P9, and P11 expressed animated feelings of shame or guilt connected with their inherited material items. P5 talked of "not feeling right" if he let his father's watch run down, while for P1, guilt became a "liability". Conversationally, these expressions intimated similar emotions and, although they have "much in common" (Miceli and Castelfranchi, 2018, p. 710) there are differences between them (Piers and Singer, 1971;

Tangney and Dearing, 2002; Stearns, 2017; Miceli and Castelfranchi, 2018) as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2).

Three participants had recent experience of events, moving house and the death of an elderly parent, that had compelled them to reassess possessions, and one participant had experienced both. Two other interviewees were actively disposing of items acquired over the years. The amount of what was generally characterised as “stuff”, was regarded as overwhelming. Disposing of it created dilemmas and resentment.

P11 recounted how her mother had inherited crockery that had never been unwrapped; that she herself had never seen uncovered and had not looked at since it had been passed to her. Other items in her possession had come from an aunt, who had parcelled them up and sent them specifically to her. She expressed annoyance as she did not consider there was enough room in her house to store the items and did not appreciate being “burdened” with decisions about the disposal of items her cousins were indifferent towards. She understands her “guilt” to derive from the notion that someone in the family might be able to make use of items entrusted to her. This is especially so as the family, once wealthy, became suddenly impoverished.

P9’s ninety-eight-year-old father died in January 2023, leaving his children with a houseful of objects inherited from the wider family as his home had the most available storage. One of seven siblings, P9 expressed relief that a younger sister had adopted the role of family historian. There was so much “stuff” that P9 believed there would be a point at which she would feel “overwhelmed by it all”. While she enjoyed reminiscing over some items, she did not want to feel obligated to keep them as she was “trying to declutter [... and ...] not leave too much” for her children to do.

Grown up children’s possessions were a cause for exasperation among interviewees. In P1’s case these are large art works. Parents felt encumbered by the responsibility for the items. Those whose now adult children had their own permanent homes were in the process of returning objects to them.

Two female interviewees, on moving house, had seized the opportunity to “declutter”. Tension was caused by their partners not doing the same. P3 and her partner had resolved the issue by her partner keeping his items in his shed. For P1, having pursued the matter as far as she felt possible, she had determined not to look in the loft too closely for items that her partner had retained. Neither interviewee professed to feel compunction for having expressed their feelings of annoyance on their respective partners. While P3 had kept some small items of sentimental

value, P1 expressed an aversion to anything “outside” herself that would be needed to evoke memories or “inside stuff”, that “represents stuff I don’t need”. P4 voiced a similar attitude, declaring that there was nothing they needed to keep memories: “If the item was burnt or lost it would make no difference”.

For at least three of the interviewees, it was important to look forward: looking back for a further two participants was grounds for an apology: P10 felt she “had to brace [herself] “to let things go”, while P6 did not want the things with which she had furnished her house but could not part with them as they were handmade by her father.

6.3.3 Beloved objects and participants’ embarrassment, “guilt” and shame

Arguing that feelings of guilt prompt the desire for reparation, and considering the language interviewees used, at a simple level for this study, academic literature would point to people being most concerned about restoring items, but as referred to, this is not necessarily the case. P3’s grandmother’s clock and P6’s jewellery, exist in a damaged state, while P9’s treasured photograph awaits a frame, which suggests that our relationship with bequeathed or family objects is not straightforward. The project interviewees provide illustrative examples of complex emotions and relations.

P9’s presented item was a copy of a photograph of her grandparents and great grandparents. Her first comment in the interview concerned how “bad” she felt that it was unframed. The room where she thought it might be displayed was being redecorated, and she was not clear what type of frame would show it off to best effect. “Bad” was applied to “not having got round to” the task. Her term called up the idea of shame. It is possible that she considered she had been dilatory in providing somewhere to display the photograph, to honour the memory of the family sufficiently. She had not lived up to her ideals or their imagined expectations.

P9 relates a story concerning figurines belonging to her godmother. Having admired them politely, she was aghast that they were left to her when her godmother died. She tells the story playing up the foolishness of succumbing to social niceties and being left to deal with the result. The tale is lightly told, stressing the comic, in keeping with ideas about embarrassment, focussing on self-presentation (Miceli and Castelfranchi, 2018). The audience for P9’s ‘mistake’, is limited to a small circle of family and friends, the bequeather unable to see her reaction. However, although she has sold one, she has not felt able to donate, hand on or destroy the other figurines: they remain in her loft as shadow objects, imbued with ambivalent feelings of rejection and obligation.

Embarrassment is cast as focused on self-presentation but P9, in keeping the items hidden suggests otherwise. They are a reminder that she has been discovered to be untruthful, no matter how acceptable the lie, which does not fit well with her unconscious image of herself. Her ongoing attempts to declutter, so that her children will not have to clear her house after her death, act as a reminder of her faux pas and her hapless self. Unlike a shame reaction it is not P9 who has hidden away, but the items that have been banished from sight. Concealing items does not repress the memory, it does, though, mean that shame does not need to be confronted daily, one's vulnerability does not have to be shared, and not disposing of them obviates the guilt in doing so.

P11 and P3 exhibit more recognisably shameful responses, although both are potentially "concealed" (Piers and Singer, 1971, p. 39) by anger. P11 admits to feeling "guilt", her word, to describe items passed onto her by her family. Many of the objects are unwanted; she talks about lacking space to keep them whilst feeling that once entrusted to her, she cannot throw them out or give them away in case a member of the family might need them. She explains the foundation of these feelings as being in the family's sudden impoverishment during the early twentieth century. Passed down with material items is the anguish of shame, an intergenerational trauma of poverty that also haunts the family's future (Abraham et al., 1994).

For P11, her designation as custodian of family goods and history is an unlooked for and troublesome responsibility. She is resentful. P11's anger does not appear to have been projected onto a particular object; rather it resides in her perception of incompetence and shame towards herself: she has let down the female line of the family, through whom she has inherited these objects, in not living up to keeping up the social importance and material wealth of the family. It is as if the family shame of impoverishment resides in these material items. They carry projections of past and present. Recognising her impotence, it is possible to speculate that feelings of disapproval have been projected onto ancestors. This may look the same as a negative evaluation of self, but projection releases the blame for her guilt to lie with others. Externalised blame and a degree of anger allow for the preservation of self-esteem and extend a "sense of agency and control" (Tangney and Dearing, 2002, p. 93).

Originally, I thought only of material items being passed down generations. However, during the interviews it became clear that some respondents had experienced items being passed up, best thought of as grown-up children leaving items precious to themselves in the family home. The expectation was that should the children ever express a desire for the object it will be returned to them having been carefully preserved by their parents. P2 has disposed of items or returned them to her children; P1 is keeping large artworks that her children cannot store and sees them

as a “liability”. This participant is caught between her own, her children’s and society’s expectations of a good parent and her desire for fewer encumbrances, she feels impotent and angry in the face of these competing appeals.

Piers and Singer (1971) outline how anger and rage can conceal “or overcome either guilt or shame” (p. 39). Aggression towards an object can lead to guilt and an inhibition of voicing or admitting to antagonism, thereby encouraging passivity, shame at compliance and possible overcompensation through guilt and anger.

P11 and P1 experience anger, projected outward, which is impotent against the responsibility being thrust upon them. There is a possible fight against introjection, against a parental and ancestral imago (Modell, 1999, p. 77), as outlined in the literature review (Chapter 2). For P11 the rejection is of the idealised family and family history. For P1, the renunciation is of a societal and cultural idealisation of how a parent should behave toward their grown-up children.

Interviewees for this study used the terms guilt and shame interchangeably. Piers and Singer (1971), Tangney and Dearing (2002), and Miceli and Castelfranchi (2018) argue that they are quite different emotions, although, “[o]ne can lead to the other and one can conceal the other” (Piers and Singer, 1971, p. 44). They share negative self-emotions, a transgression of ideals, either self-generated or introjected from parents or wider society, forming the superego. Psychologically, shame is rooted in the body: it is difficult to step back and understand the emotional experience. Tangney and Dearing (2002) suggest that shame means the subject cannot compensate for the harmful consequences of their actions, they are stuck with “a loathsome self” (p. 92). Guilt, however, “[i]nvolves a more articulated condemnation of specific behaviour” (Tangney and Dearing, 2002, p. 14), possibly a desire to amend one’s behaviour and an attempt to restore damage as suggested by Klein (1998) who, while viewing guilt as a response to aggressiveness, presented it as promoting creative and loving acts.

The responsibilities that study participants have taken on have denied them the unrestricted future that they wished for themselves. The physical space the items take up, even if displayed as in P6’s case where her house is furnished with her father’s handcrafted furniture, serve as a reminder of restraints and an everyday haunting. Such a sense of haunting (see 6.3.4.1) has associations with Freud’s exposition of the ‘uncanny’ (1919). For this participant, it is as if something that was homely, the furniture in her childhood home, has transformed into something inimical, or *unheimlich* in Freud’s terminology, in her adult home.

6.3.4 Guilt and no objects

The range of items interviewees presented was varied. Some had been passed on from family members; some had been given to them as children, other objects, recently acquired, had become precious in a short time. Only one had no such objects, saying “[t]here is nothing I consider necessary to keep to hold on to any memories” (P4). P1 offered a raffia grasshopper, which was now viewed aesthetically and not for the emotional memories it once held. These memories were not discussed.

These two participants shared the view that items should be used or have a practical ‘value’, once an item no longer had an instrumental function for the owner, it should be passed on to people who may benefit from it. Here are echoes of William Morris’ dictum of having “nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful” (1919, p.108). Neither participant had kept items from their family homes. While one had had to declutter prior to a move (P1), the other (P4) professed to being too lazy. They also reacted to the emotionalism of *TRS*, which P1 regarded unfavourably, while P4 considered it uplifting. Personal reactions to experiences must fall along a continuum of emotional value, for example, inherited objects may be used as a “point of entry into a common emotional ground of memory and belonging” (Heaney, 1993, p. 33) or, entirely instrumentally.

It is, though, possible to consider the inimical utilitarian reaction to inherited items as an overcompensation for guilt or shame or as a reaction to conceivable haunting (Good, 2021; Tennakoon, 2023). Miller (2008) cited the lack of material goods in the homes of his subjects as pointing to an impoverished social existence, implying a lack of creativity, imagination, and an inability to empathise. A lack of empathy can indicate shame and a desire to withdraw physically (Tangney and Dearing, 2002). The pugnacious delivery of the argument against keeping familial items, advanced by P1 and P4, might suggest over compensatory aggressiveness associated with inhibited guilt and shameful passivity as outlined by Piers and Singer (1971). The heightened reactions do not suggest that items have lost their meaning, or that feelings attached to specific objects “Have become diffused [...] spread out over the whole intermediate territory [...] between [...] inner psychic reality [...] and [...] the external world” (Winnicott, 2005, p.7), although this may have happened.

Letting go of objects, as when a child decathects from a transitional object, suggests that they are no longer necessary; mourning has reached a stage where one’s inner world has been rebuilt (Sussillio, 2005). This process implies healthy psychic development. Denying an object and its meaning seems of a different order, perhaps, as suggested here, of retreating from, or

repressing, possible haunting. This study does not seek to offer personal psychoanalytic interpretations but recognises possibilities for the presence of certain attitudes.

When exploring transitional objects, Winnicott was concerned with where the experience of the object existed: outside the baby, inside the baby or “at the border [...] an intermediate area of experiencing to which inner reality and external life both contribute” (2005, pp. 2–3). This space becomes “a resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated” (Winnicott, 2005, p. 3). Experiences within this space “allow us to have periods of rest from [this] struggle “which “continues to play the same role in successive stages of human development” (Rodman in Winnicott, 2005, p. xiv).

However, “[h]ealthy potential space can be fragile” (Macrury and Yates, 2016, p. 55) with use of particular objects disrupting the “capacities for relations between inner and outer experience” (Macrury and Yates, 2016, p.55). P1 and P4 relate to inherited objects in a particularly instrumental way, suggesting a “collapse” within the space, a movement towards one particular “pole”, indicating a “defence against fantasy”, and an inability to imagine or “feel alive in any full sense” (Ogden, 1992, pp. 219–20).

6.3.4.1 *Haunting*

The dislike of “sentiment” and inherited objects could also indicate a defence against the possibility of being haunted by the past, of having the future restricted as suggested by Freud (1919). This worry is recognisable in literature where past deeds have repercussions in the present and the future, Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* (1985) is an example. In contemporary cultural theory ‘hauntology’, a term first introduced by French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his 1993 book *Spectres of Marx*, has taken on sociological and psychological overtones so that it “can be used to theorise a variety of social, ethical and political questions” (Blanco and Peeren, 2013, p. 2), it can also be used to think about subjective ‘haunting’, as here.

Good (2021) has written that nobody can avoid ghosts, everyday lives are built around them, events, “supposedly over and done with” (p. 13) repeatedly return and demand repair, at the very least disruption of the present by events of the past requires acknowledgement. Blanco and Peeren (2013) warn “that not everything that returns or is repeated is necessarily ghostly” (p. 17), however, unwelcome, unbidden, and distasteful recollections, prompted by material objects are worth exploring.

The disruptive qualities of hauntology of transgenerational phantoms (Abraham et al., 1994) are powerful, for what comes back to haunt are the concealment of secrets, the “gaps left within us by the secrets of others [...] the tombs of others” (Abraham et al., 1994, pp. 171–2), the unsaid and the shameful (Tennakoon, 2023). With the “nullified possible future [...] what haunts is not what is gone, it is what was expected to come” (Goode, 2021, p. xv). It is in the sense of a potentially lost future and an attempted hidden past that I employ the term here (see 6.4, below). Study participants were not anxious to take on the role of family historian or curator of family artefacts. In P1, the thought prompted anger and resentment, leaving her in thrall to shames of the past. For P6, using furniture made by her father was a source of irritation. P1 and P4 attempt to refuse to shoulder an emotional burden accompanying material objects. They have not consciously encoded them with meaning or emotion, neither are they attentive to “a common [...] ground of memory and belonging” (Heaney, 1993, p. 33), which, they imply reduces the possibilities of the future being inhabited by the past. However, such a refusal may be burying secrets that could beset a future generation (Abraham et al., 1994). Their anger could defend against unconscious knowing. Being haunted by inherited familial objects implies rejection of ancestors’ expectations: accepting items might suggest ease in accepting familial continuity.

6.3.5 *The Repair Shop* as an object of the mind

TRS is itself an object (see 2.3.7). Those who deem it overemotional, or not to their taste may well be rejecting the societal projections that it is thought to hold, in the way that familial objects and ancestral expectations may be refused. *TRS* does not hint at secrets or silences; for artisans, no repair is too onerous or time consuming; participants are aware of their item’s past, are open in their grief and their love for the departed family member or friend and are grateful to have their memories encoded in the item reinstated (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023). Ambivalent objects are banished from the world of the show. They are repressed.

The programme ignores the “prohibition against the expression of grief” (Volkan, 1993, p.5), although it is confined to “[u]ncomplicated mourning”, eschewing “[c]omplicated and delayed mourning” (Volkan, 1993, p. 10) or melancholia (Freud, 1917). Because of its genre, the processes of television, and possibly because of a desire to exemplify and recognise a domestic experience which will “unite the audience” (Morley and Robins, 1995, p. 66), the programme avoids what is left unsaid and “[n]arratives concerning unspoken transgenerational trauma” (Tennakoon, 2023, p. 2). Framing items as emotionally priceless side steps recognising financial

value, avoiding acknowledgement that while some families may have expensive and once-beautiful items for repair, others may have had nothing to pass on. Wealth, class, and exploitation are disguised in the barn's heterarchical system where artisans and owners are of the same social status, and the predominant currency is time and love. As discussed in Chapter 4, constructing a consolatory version of the nations is part of the reparative work of the show.

6.4 Feelings surrounding lost and found items

The formula for *TRS* requires the programme to feature items in the participant's possession, which, from the stories told has always been in familial circles. How people possess or do not possess objects is more complex than the show suggests: items may be lost, never to reappear; thought lost, but hoped not, or have come into the present owner's possession by a roundabout way that may influence its meaning.

Turkle (2007) credits material objects as engaging the "heart as well as the mind" and as "a source of inner vitality" (p. 309). The interviewees suggested that preoccupations can occur with lost objects, while a subject's relationship with a returned item may provide resonances and experiences beyond those provoked by the initial possession.

Recalling memories and emotions evoked by material items presented at interviews, research participants support Turkle's claim that material objects offer connection to "ideas and to people" (2007, p. 5). Furthermore, it is possible as an interviewer to apprehend those items, "elicit not so much a memory but a psychic constellation laden with images, feelings and bodily actualities" (Bollas, 2006, p.3), although often the texture of the experience was difficult to convey; gestures and unfinished sentences became a feature of conversations.

As has been demonstrated within this chapter, the selection of objects, both animate and inanimate, assist in "thinking ourselves out" and "promot[ing] inner experience" (Bollas, 2006, p. 3). What follows is an exploration of the possible consequences of no longer having access to material items, of losing them.

P1 was quite clear that she did not need material objects, "any of that stuff", to support her in appreciating or accessing her emotions or "doing something with the inside stuff". Presenting herself as, "in the moment, here and now", P1 professes no interest in inherited items or their emotional connections. Never experiencing misgivings over items given away or disposed of, she nonetheless regrets

“[t]hat some of those decisions to get rid of stuff, or to not have it, weren’t mine. When it’s my decision there’s no ... it’s a bit like that’s gone, finished”. The decision in question is a burglary during which “[t]hey took stuff that ... you don’t realise that ... that was my mum’s wedding ring and now it’s gone ... had they not done that I would still have kept that ... it would still be in the drawer” (P.1).

Klein wrote about babies destroying their mothers (a good object) unconsciously, in phantasy (1998, p. 308). Her thoughts offer an appreciation of how relationships with material objects may stand in for complicated family relationships. Once feared lost the baby experiences “feelings of guilt at having destroyed her [...] the child feels that her loss is a punishment for its dreadful deed”. (Klein, 1998, p. 285). From this guilt arises the desire to atone or repair. For Klein, love, guilt, and repair are intertwined. Phantastical destructive impulses directed at the loved object (the mother), provoke guilt and the desire to repair and restore the object. The desire remains throughout life with anxiety about a loved one's death becoming expressed in creative and constructive ways, which repair the object, thereby lessening the individual’s fear of their destructive impulses and making manageable the subject’s overwhelming sense of guilt (Klein, 1998).

The burglary may be experienced as punishment for the kind of phantasies of destruction described by Klein. Participant 1 feels anger at the loss of the object, however, abhorring sentimentality, she did not speak with any fondness or desire for any items previously belonging to her family. However, using Klein’s theories it may be possible to understand that P1’s talent as a sculptor and artist is her response to this loss.

P1 directs anger at the burglars who stole the ring. This anger could be considered a form of aggression. “In a good enough environment [aggression] becomes integrated in the individual personality as a useful energy to work and play” (Winnicott 1939, cited by Abram, 2007 p. 19).

As a baby grows it reaches a stage where ‘the capacity for concern’ emerges, some of its aggression “appears as a feeling of guilt [...] refers to the damage which is felt to be done to the loved person in the excited relationship [of infancy]” (Winnicott, 1975, p. 206).

Like Klein, Winnicott, goes on to suggest that “in times of helplessness [...] aggression reappears” (1975, p. 207). Winnicott understands aggression as necessary and creative, disappointment in the mother allowing the baby to separate from her. It is a vital part of infant development for the child to be able to evolve the capacity to manage this disillusionment. One manifestation of this process may well be anger: the child’s capacity for protecting what they love has been found wanting; the object, too, has been found wanting.

The lost ring, and the images and experiences it evokes remain, but are now overlaid with memories of the burglary. The ring could be said to have become a shadow object; the physical item has gone, the original resonances overlaid with anger, shame and possible regret. The residues of the object offer a spectral truth that cannot be fully tracked down, rather the vacuum of potential meaning haunts, the past, despite absence from the present, haunts. It has not been eliminated. Paradoxically, what is available is a fearful view of the future in which the dead “are expunged from the memory of those who live on” (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1947, cited by Frosh, 2012b, p. 259). The loss of the ring in some ways explains P1’s attitude to physical items, which implies that emotional investment in them will be punished, it is therefore best to remove them oneself even if the result is unsettling.

P10 is not sure whether a doll that she treasured as a child was packed up and moved to her present home. A 1960s Italian-made Bettina doll, a European equivalent to Barbie, P10 will not search for it in case she cannot find it, telling herself that she “has to let her go”, while at the same time wanting the doll whole and suggesting her as a candidate for *TRS*. The pain of confirming the loss is greater than suspecting it.

P10’s missing Bettina doll offers a different view of loss, a liminal denial: awareness that the doll might not be where she thinks it is, but a disinclination to confirm her suspicions. The participant’s mother bought her the doll for Christmas. A friend had the same doll. Together they would dress them and make up stories. P10 has been in her present house:

“[a]bout ten years now ... and I don’t know where ... I remember packing her ... but I did have a friend ... she’s a bit scatty and she was helping me moving things, so I’m thinking, did she do something silly where she put it in the wrong ... she kept moving things. I want to hold on to the memory that [the doll] is there somewhere” (P10).

She chides herself for not being able to let her go. However, she too, has failed to protect her doll. This seems not to have resulted in anger, but sadness, and a possible splitting between “good” owner and “bad” friend (Klein 1998) In this way it is possible for her to accommodate the two potential outcomes; the doll being in the loft or missing, and her unconscious act of abandoning the toy as well as the expectations that she has “to let her go”.

If objects connect to ideas and people (Turkle, 2007, p. 5), the loss of objects, in both cases thrust upon the owner, intensifies but also extends the connections with the introduction of shadows and uncertainties.

6.4.1 Feelings for lost material objects

To assist in exploring emotions raised by lost objects, I will examine ideas concerning grief, prior to considering the loss through an object relations framework.

The psychoanalyst Volkan (1993) writes: “Loss, even misplacing one’s car keys, strikes at our illusion of control and predictability. When we lose drastically, our primitive fears of abandonment and helplessness unconsciously reactivate” (p. 14).

In both P1’s and P10’s reaction to the loss of their items there is a note of helpless resignation as well as anger, which is another common reaction to loss (Volkan, 1993). P1’s anger could be directed at the burglars or herself for harbouring a hint of sentimentality. The rest of her interview highlights the need for items to be useful. If they have outlived their practicability for her, it is important that they are passed onto someone who could use them, or that they are destroyed. For P10, the reluctance to search for the doll could be anger at her friend, or a defence against anxiety; the doll’s psychic presence is of such importance that its material absence cannot be verified.

Winnicott’s ideas concerning object relations and object use may be helpful. Within psychoanalytic terminology “object” applies to both people and things, Winnicott’s writings indicate that for him, objects are mostly animate. An object in a subject’s control is understood as part of the subject – it is not separate. A “not me” object is not under the subject’s control. It is a separate phenomenon. To be able to use objects the subject will have considered that they have destroyed it. If it has survived the damage inflicted by the unconscious, the object has value for the subject who can then use it to “contribute into the subject according to its own properties” (Winnicott, 2005, p. 121). Winnicott theorised a transitional object, one that allowed a baby to begin to recognise its subjectivity and assist in its separation from its mother: this object provides a defence against anxiety. In the usual way, as a child grows, the need for the transitional object decreases until it becomes decathected.

Neither the ring nor the doll is a transitional object as Winnicott would recognise it. However, they could be understood to function in a way to soothe anxiety. They take a role in the process of mourning, easing the transition from having access to the deceased person, P1’s mother, or experience, P10’s childhood games, to its unreachability. Should that object be taken away, through the burglary or the house move, it is as if the subject has destroyed the object; it is of no use. As with the original transitional object, the objects here are corporeal, and from a selection of other available objects, have been unconsciously chosen as “a container of the individual’s projections” (Bollas, 2006, p. 4).

For participants in this study, material items were seldom associated with one experience, desire or emotion, as indicated by Bollas (2006), many provoked ambivalent emotions. Appreciating that objects, both people and things, can be “good” and “bad” and not just split off parts of a whole, is an important developmental stage in Kleinian psychoanalysis.

“Ambivalence [...] enables the young child to gain more trust and believe in its real objects and thus in its internalized ones – to love them more and to carry out in an increasing degree its phantasies of restoration of the loved object” (Klein, 1998, p. 350).

Being able to entertain contradictory ideas, an admission of ambivalence, is characterised by Phillips and Barwick (2020) as a wholeness, of not really knowing what is wanted. For them this implies vulnerability requiring sympathy, empathy, and openness, or “[k]indness [which] has now become counter-cultural [...] in capitalist culture” (p. 113). It is these characteristics that are apparent on *TRS* and suggest a personal and national search for wholeness.

The individual response is complicated by the object’s now ‘shadow’ nature, which distorts the original experiences and associations and compromises mourning. The subject’s anxiety may now be additionally linked to their inability to keep the object secure, or their destruction of it.

6.4.2 Loss of character

Bollas developed Winnicott’s work to suggesting that transformational objects “like psychic keys open doors to unconsciously intense- and rich- experience in which we articulate the self that we are through the elaborating character of our response” (2006, p. 17).

With these objects as shadows, it is possible to consider that parts of the self are less accessible or of lesser intensity. Winnicott insists that, “the infant assumes rights over the [transitional] object” that should not be questioned. Beyond deciding that the object must have a “vitality or reality of its own” (Winnicott, 2005, p. 7) he is not concerned with its physical nature. Bollas considers the structure of the objects unconsciously chosen “help us to think the different parts of ourself” (2006, p. 35). It is not possible to suggest why we choose, or choose to keep, the objects we do, but their presence “transforms our inner experience” (2006, p. 4.). The question concerning the impact of their loss and further negative repercussions is equally difficult to determine.

6.5 Found objects

In writing about how subjects choose objects that enable self-care, “through which we inherit the tasks of our mothers and fathers” (2006, p. 25), Bollas considers how objects are found by subjects when they become necessary to one’s “idiom”. It would be fanciful to imply that material objects lost to an individual may be ‘found’ at a time when they can be used, but not whimsical to suggest that subjects are only able to recognise their psychological significance and make use of them at certain times.

P3’s grandmother’s ring was chosen by her elder sister when her grandmother was bestowing some of her jewellery when the sisters were in their late teens. Decades later the ring was passed to P3 as the sister no longer wanted it. Consciously the ring evokes P3’s grandmother, a strong, independent woman who married late and did not remarry when her husband died early in their marriage. The security and emotional warmth of childhood holidays are prompted by attention to the ring. P3 recalls the freedom of life in a small village, acceptance by villagers, proximity to the sea and little responsibility. It also encourages imaginative conjectures about her grandmother’s life, her grandparents’ relationship, and why she did not remarry. The ring provides a creative outlet; an opportunity to ‘play’ with romantic stories about what might have happened. It is as if this material possession facilitates entry to a potential space (Winnicott, 2005) or the subject’s “own private dreaming” (Bollas, 2006, p. 19) where they may be “lost in self-experiencing” (Bollas, 2006, p. 31).

Bollas argues that “objects inspire and prompt us in contrasting ways”. They may do so sensationally, through the senses we use to enjoy them – sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste; structurally, “a bicycle is structurally different from a basketball, and using each promotes a different experience”; objects can store self-states and become mnemonic, evoking associative projections, many inherited or retained childhood items operate in this way. (2006, p. 34).

Both Winnicott and Bollas consider that there is significance in the objects chosen by a subject: for Winnicott, a child’s transitional object cannot be questioned; for Bollas, the unconscious chooses the object most necessary for the required self-experience. Bollas suggests that the subject and object interact and become entangled with one another. In combining these two ideas it is possible to suggest that the subject keeps a specific material object in order to evoke a lost person or time. A transitional object is “a symbol of the union of the baby and the mother. It symbolises the union of two now separate things” (Winnicott, 2005, p. 130).

I would argue that the inherited or retained material object works in a similar way. It might well be that becoming available to the subject after been lost, the desire to use the object becomes more compelling.

The items lost and found are similar: rings and a doll. Bollas considers the structure of the object significant to the experience it offers. P3 wears her grandmother's ring and fiddles with it continually, although she is unaware of this. Structurally, jewellery offers a potentially intimate mnemonic experience. An engagement ring, or a wedding ring, would be purchased for a particular person, and usually worn by them alone. Its symbolic romantic meaning is enhanced by its display of wealth. It is both conspicuous and inconspicuous. Sensationally, a ring leaves a trace of tactility and viscosity for the wearer, while it calls on others to appreciate it visually only. A ring, therefore, is simultaneously private and public.

As P3 talks, the self-state and associative projections held by the ring are clarified. It conjures "a happy place", a state that is "idyllic" and "a lovely warm place to be", an environment of care and safety.

Dolls hold different sensual and structural prints: they have a smell as well as a tactility and viscosity. Symbolically the toy conjures femininity and maternity while offering some scope for imagination, as with P10. P3's grandmother's ring and P7's doll have spent considerable time with other family members, before finding their way to their current owners.

P7's doll was returned to her by her older sister decades after she had moved away from her home area. P7 has ambivalent feelings about the doll, changing her mind during the interview about whether about its suitability for repair. P7 often touches the doll during conversation, in an effort to stop her falling over, although this points out what is wrong with her. The structure of the doll might allow P7 to return more fully to childhood experiences, a desire which her re-photographs imply.

6.6 Summary

The section above concentrates on a category of objects that generate complex and ambiguous emotional responses for participants in this study. Loss of items, perhaps indicating a successful attack in phantasy, represents a restoration that cannot be made. However, having existed, it has left a psychic impression which can provide uncomfortable and haunting resonances.

Bollas writes about the structure of a basketball or a bicycle. The objects presented for this study are personal rather than general. Their structure may allow their survival until their meaning becomes clear for the subject: they are small enough to be kept and not require a large amount of storage. Their structure can, equally, contribute to their loss.

Objects 'returned' to owners or re-found, provide access to moods which can enhance self-care and enrich self-experience. 'Found' items may be discovered at an appropriate time for the subject, the nature of their 'finding' contributing unconsciously to their meaning, if not a subject's emotional responses.

6.7 Feelings towards repairs

Viewers of *TRS* may perceive that the country is overwhelmed by older owners desperate for their damaged possessions to be repaired and validated as extensions of the self. Such impressions speak to the psychological work that the programme, either consciously or unconsciously, may perform for its imagined community of nation as audience. It demonstrates determination in evoking an ethos of physical, emotional, and psychological continuity, collectivism through shared emotional experiences, and reparation.

The interviews conducted for this study indicate a less wholehearted conscious personal embrace of these ideas. Finding someone with the expertise to complete the potential repair of an item was perceived as difficult, while recognising that the item may not be well received by a future recipient was discouraging, indeed the question of where and to whom items should be, or were, disposed was voiced. Furthermore, there was ambivalence towards how a repaired item may look and an awareness that the owner's relationship with the item might be changed.

Renovating a material object may betoken a psychological repair. In psychoanalytic terms, Klein understood that subjects felt a "[p]rofound urge to make sacrifices in order to put right loved people who have in phantasy been harmed or destroyed" (Klein, 1998, p. 311). Thus, the relationship between the current owner and the previous owner is altered. The current owner potentially plays "[t]he part of a good parent, behaving as our parents did to us – or as we wanted them to do. At the same time we also play the part of the good child towards [...] parents, which we wished to do in the past" (Klein, 1998, p. 312).

It could be argued that the physical repair of an item indicates that the care "tasks of our mothers and fathers" (Bollas, 2006, p. 25), have been neglected in the past.

Nine of the eleven participants in this study had little difficulty in presenting an object at interview that could, hypothetically, be repaired on *TRS*. Exploring attitudes to the repair of these items produced several reasons why a repair had not already been conducted and would probably never happen. This section considers conscious, practical suggestions for delay, before offering conjectures of possible unconscious influences.

The four interviewees who expressed a desire to have their object repaired were practically held back by not knowing where to take the item. The *Repair Cafe 15* website (Repair Café (EN), n.d.) states there are 328 such locations in England, although the concentration of the service is on prolonging the useful life of commonplace appliances such as coffee makers and laptops and sharpening knives and scissors. The cafes indicate a desire to move away from “a throwaway culture” (Blades in Laws, 2020), a measure which is advocated in early voiceovers for *TRS*. The ethos of mending, prevalent among participants of this study, is different from repairing “cherished family heirlooms” (*TRS*, Season 3, 2018). The programme’s use of ecological principles is discordant; it is an attempt to capitalise on a movement that is tangential to the emotional core of the show. No participant in this study professed a wish to have their object repaired for utilitarian purposes; the experiences, emotions, and memories evoked by objects are of a completely different order.

Nearly half of the study participants talked of growing up in households where “hand me downs were normal” (P7), shoes “were always at the cobblers” (P8), sheets were turned to move thinning fabric and people “were less sentimental about repairing because there was no alternative” (P7). They continue to mend where they can but lament the fact that many things have become too complicated to understand and fix.

Like participants on *TRS*, the interviewees for this study were considering their future and the future of their items: unlike them, study participants’ attitudes to repair differed. House moves and COVID-19 lockdowns provided participants the opportunity to declutter. Slightly fewer than half had done so because they “didn’t want [their children] doing all of this” (P8). It was not clear if participants were referring to the physical act of clearing possessions, which would take time, difficult to find in busy lives, or the possible emotional burden of house clearance. The implication was that most study participants did not want to encumber their children with either. P4 was an exception to this, stating that laziness prevented them from doing anything until “reality kicks in” at an unspecified time.

A further reason for non-repair was that participants were unsure how their children would react. They did not appear convinced that, even restored, treasured items would not be

disposed of. P7 admitted that she will have to discard her doll as “the kids think she’s ugly”. P6’s jewellery is being passed to her young grandchildren now as she fears it will not be fully appreciated by her son. P2 would like her toy dog repaired, P11 her shepherdess pincushion, but, as no mention is made of bequeathing items, the repair would be personal, which, for these participants hints at a lack of purpose for the item.

Over years, most objects suffer wear or become damaged, this may not be particularly true of loved objects introjected with unconscious associations, nevertheless, items presented by participants in this study have survived decades with minimal deterioration. Slight damage may be the reason that many do not seek restoration of their piece. P6 knows her jewellery is not as it once was, but to others it would appear good enough. Repairs of this item may lead to forgetfulness of the stories of family disagreements over ownership, which would impoverish the item. P10’s book with its ripped cover, could lose its tactile element if it were repaired and P3’s grandmother’s clock could lose associations with her son who caused its current damage.

McCarrol and Kirby (2023), submit that as “objects scaffold and support memory [...] the deterioration and decay of objects may be detrimental to memory” (p.2). Krasner proposes that, “objects allow a quick, instantaneous access to a significant experience [...] by touching the object that was touched by an important event, one can be reinfected with the past” (2010, p. 46). Removing scars of damage reduces the tactility of that past, diminishing the connections, the stories, and the changing sense of self that experience can impart.

Two study participants indicated that if they did have their objects repaired, they would not want them to be perfect: the clock “looks nice old, not shiny”, for P3 it only needs to tick, while P10 wanted repair to work with an item “not changing what it once was”, or the memories it held.

6.8 Psychoanalytic conjecture

As indicated above, interviewees for this study were ambivalent about seeking repair for their items, citing the busy-ness of life and the difficulty in finding appropriate craftspeople to carry out the restoration. P11’s partner had previously had items repaired by The Teddy Bear Ladies who feature on *TRS* (see Appendix C). Her response to the repair was not enthusiastic: “they did what we wanted” implies dissension, the introduction of a financial transaction altering the relationship with the craftsperson. The above reactions suggest reticence in getting repairs done may come from a lack of knowledge about what is possible.

For Klein, reparation begins with destruction, it is, though a creative act “bound up with concern for the loved one” (1998, p. 335). Frustrations against parents allow an infant to destroy them in phantasy. Feelings of guilt and despair arise from injuring “parents whom at the same time we love[d]” (1998, p. 312). Wanting to make amends we “recreate and enjoy the wished for love and goodness of our parents” (1998, p. 312), simultaneously playing the parts of loving parent and loving children. Some participants felt overwhelmed with ‘stuff’, like P8 when disposing of her parents’ possessions. Four study participants had, therefore, begun ‘decluttering’ their homes as they did not wish their adult children to face the same task after their own death. This action could be understood as a reparative urge from parent to child: a reverse of Klein’s ideas. They could be understood to be acting as good parents to their children in taking the worry of being “disarmed by materialized memory” (Krasner, 2010, p. 41) from them, while being good children to their parents, in carrying out this final task, facing the “intensity of unexpected ghosts raised by soiled and useless items” (Krasner, 2010, p. 41).

The lack of desire for repair could signal that the participants do not need objects to remind them of their loved ones, they have been able to enshrine them in their own mind (Klein, 1988) or “created continuity” (Gaines, 1997, p. 549), that is, they have created a sense of “inner connection and meaningful connection” (Gaines, 1997, p. 550): there is no further need to repair damage.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore study participants’ emotional and sensory relationships with their own inherited or treasured objects (Objective 5). It examined attitudes to cherished items and the emotionality surrounding them, prior to probing ambivalent attitudes to shadow objects, that is, those hidden away, literally or metaphorically.

In line with previous studies (Bell, 2013; Hannan et al, 2018; Mannay, 2020) presenting a supposedly ‘repair-worthy’ object at interview, provided a doorway to further memories, contractions of time and space, allowed connections to the past, and to significant others. The process prompted the creation of narratives in which the participant could recreate the past and their role in it. Work by Kaplan (1987), Classen (2005, 2012), and Sweeney (2020), suggests that touch affords a richer and more comprehensive recall. However, while participants frequently touched their objects when talking about them, it is difficult to determine if their memories were heightened by the sensuousness.

The interviews, however, confounded *TRS* fantasy of familial objects being ‘cherished’, as relationships with objects were complex. While some participants were pleased with the tangible connections to others, recalling the importance of relationships, feelings were nuanced. For some, items could impose the burden of becoming a keeper of memory for other family members, enduring unwelcome projections.

Additionally, interviewees were asked to bring with them inherited objects about which they were ambivalent. Most participants could not persuade themselves to do this, although discussion revealed that shadow objects, as I have termed them, literally and figuratively hidden, existed. These items could be said to share elements with Freud’s uncanny objects (1919), although not all were personal, as participants struggled to accommodate the meaning of contemporarily morally or socially stigmatised items for themselves and previous owners.

Objects presented may have been ‘repair-worthy’, but most had not yet been repaired. Present owners’ reticence pointed to practical difficulties, and also emotional reluctance. The story of the item might change, the relationship between the past and the present owner alter, or the emotional and psychological projections held by the piece may be transformed. There was recognition that the psychological “self-care” (Bollas, 2006, p. 25) associated with the item, could diminish or disappear.

Chapter 7: Findings, analysis and synthesis

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis has been to explore the role of tactility and emotion in the BBC lifestyle show *TRS*, with the following objectives:

1. To explore the construction of tactility and emotion in *TRS*.
2. To explore the experiences of touch, and tactile meaning in *TRS* for audiences.
3. To explore the depiction of themes of family, loss, love, memory, mourning, and reparation in *TRS* including in their larger pandemic and post-Brexit contexts.
4. To explore audiences' emotional responses to *TRS* and its major themes, including in their larger pandemic and post-Brexit contexts.
5. To explore the participants' own emotional and sensory relationships to inherited objects.

A psychosocial approach admits consideration of the show's place within the "psychodrama" of Brexit (Hughes, 2019, p. 1) and its aftermath, as well as of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–23) during which this research took place. Textual analysis of the programme examining its construction of tactility and emotion (Objective 1), disclosed key themes, explored in terms of depiction and also in wider post-Brexit and pandemic contexts (Objective 3) through focus group and individual interviews which were used to corroborate or interrogate analyses concerning the show, and deepen understanding of its resonance at a particular historic moment (Objectives 2, 3, and 4). Individual interviews explored personal, emotional, and sensory relationships with inherited or familial objects, (Objective 5), further illuminating viewers' understanding of, and relationship with the show.

This chapter sets out to synthesise the findings from each element of research, textual, focus group and individual interviews, and to reflect on the interweaving psychological, social, and cultural significances. To begin, it will consider the show's construction of tactility, (Objective 1), moving on to its depiction of themes and their significance, socially and culturally (Objective 2 and 3), before considering responses to the programme (Objective 4). Exploring participants' own emotional and sensory relationships to inherited objects (Objective 5), indicated that interviewees' affinity with such objects was, unlike, the straightforward appreciation depicted on *TRS*, subtle and complex.

7.1.1 The construction of tactility

TRS invokes tactility through combining overview (optic visuality), and close-ups (haptic visuality). This provides the opportunity to “glance” (Ellis, 2002) as well as contemplate, creating a sensual and emotional relationship between the screen and the viewer (Waade and Jørgensen, 2010). Waade and Jørgensen, examine the use of haptic visuality in cookery programmes to conjure experiences of taste, while *TRS* employs it to connect viewers to the multi-sensory and emotional experience of object handling.

A further component of haptic visuality is its intimacy and the bodily proximity it evokes, “it is like being there ourselves” (Waade and Jørgensen, 2010, p. 88). On *TRS* the viewer is provided with close-ups of artisans’ damaged fingers and well-worn tools for example. The effect, or affect, of this aspect of tactility was not commented upon by my participants, however, the impact of being so close, even in mediated form, when social distancing rules for COVID-19 were in place and touch outside families living together was severely restricted, must be borne in mind, especially when the dearth of touch can induce “higher anxiety and greater loneliness” in some people (von Mohr et al., 2021, p. 1). Haptic visuality encourages immediacy and infers co-presence (Waade and Jørgensen, 2010), suggesting that the viewer could live in a constructed moment of a fantasy of community, both present and past.

7.1.2 Depiction of themes, analysis, and synthesis

Lifestyle programming concentrates on mundane domestic matters associated with, for example, home, health, and holidays (Bonner, 2003; Hill, 2005; Gorton, 2009; Ellis, 2020). The genre also comprises makeover television with its fairy-tale transformations (Heller) and consolatory programming promoting emotion, offering connection and declining challenge. (Ellis, 2020). *TRS* initially appears to sit happily within this hybridisation of genres.

It is, though, a programme attempting to hold opposites in balance, the tensions of which are noticeable in its concerns and structure. Its key themes, family, love, and memory are conventional for the genre, but are approached in atypical ways, loss, mourning, and repair are not customary concerns of consolatory television. The programme broadens the usual notion of family to include single parents, stepfamilies and same-sex couples. The Reithian family sitting around a fireside (Cardiff and Scannell, 1987), is dismantled and reassembled into something

more contemporary (ONS, 2022b), although certain “truths”, that a family is to be desired as it produces harmony and eschews problems, endure.

Love, while presented as a “compelling” (Brown 2005, p156; Brown, 2009) fantasy of lifelong, joyful, fidelity, is not, on the show, the preserve of heterosexual couples: same-sex romances are also represented, although celebrated within the extension of familial affirmation.

More typical is the presentation of memory. The programme employs imaginative (Keightley and Pickering, 2012) and autobiographical (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023) iterations of memory, a type of time travel, to enable looking backward, but also forward to how a repaired object may be appreciated by future owners, those to whom it will be passed down. The needs of the present, colour recollections of what has happened for participants (Boym, 2001), while the passing on of an object indicates a desire to be remembered by future generations.

Themes of loss, mourning, and repair are not prominent in lifestyle shows, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2). In *TRS*, the loss of country, or its impact, examined in two clips for this study (see Section 4.8), is considered from the personal or emotional perspective of the immigrant. The programme’s multi-ethnic presenting and artisanal team assist in the creation of a community of feeling, where personalisation of experience, obfuscation of differences, race, and class, for example, point to the show’s nationally reparative effort.

Barnes suggests that generally, in the UK, we shun grief and mourning so that we may pretend “that death doesn’t exist or at least is comfortably far away” (2014, p. 107). *TRS* is, therefore, unusual in accepting and presenting their emotional stages. However, tension is noticeable in what the programme does not show: what Freud called “melancholia” (1919) and Volkan, “complicated mourning” (2019). All objects and people on the show are loved, the repair of any item is the answer to “everything [...] thereafter [being] thinner, weaker”, or mattering less (Barnes, 2014, p. 100). The absence of ugly objects or complicated relationships may suggest a perfunctory approach, but the genre of the show demands a resolution, which, with melancholia “puzzling to us because we cannot see what is absorbing [the individual] so entirely” (Freud, 1917, p. 245) is not possible. The show therefore embodies and models only ‘healthy’ mourning where grief can be worked through.

7.1.3 Synthesis of responses to the programme

Focus group participants suggested discrepancies within the programme, which, in discussions, were founded on the clips showing stories of flight and immigration. While there

was dissent at what was repressed, with discussion of the fact that uncomfortable issues such as racism or class were neither alluded to nor confronted, study participants nevertheless felt reassured by the atmosphere set up by the show, recognising its calm, positive outlook, appreciating the safe experience that it provided. In terms of Object Relations theories, the show functions both as a “bad” and a “good” object for study participants.

The show’s evocation of the past through its use of the pastoral, works to create and reinforce solace and consolation, building a sense of “cultural nationalism” (Woods, 2016), attempting to unify and repair across potentially opposing groups. The countryside, or rather the fantasy of rurality, has historically been regarded as a source of consolation and soothing. The myth is exclusively White (Richards, 1994), however, the bucolic setting of the programme, Jay Blades, the Black British host, and the multi-ethnic craftspeople, indicates a reimagining of this ideal. The representation is one that can appeal to people holding different ideological views of Britain: Brexiteers, for whom “rural England is a fiercely guarded site of belonging” (Fowler, 2020, p. 18), favouring the governing of the state “by and for its own national people” (Stanley, 2022, p. 11); but also those who wish for “a country ready to embrace its fuller histories and the global connections of its people” (Fowler, 2020, p. 9). The programme’s use of setting, therefore, consolidates the tension between traditional and progressive elements, while also suggesting an attempt to reframe the meaning of the countryside. The subtleties, for example the use of Scottish and Welsh actors providing the voiceovers against distinctly English scenery, unnoticed by study participants, are part of the programme’s conscious, or unconscious, attempts at edging towards a more inclusive, genteel nationality as opposed to the rage and polarisation of Brexit (Macrury and Yates, 2021).

Some study participants could accommodate the attempts at a common national culture (Gans, 2003, p.18) through shared emotions, others were unhappy about being asked to concur with a fantasy that ignored class, race, social hierarchies, or political divisions. For them, such issues should be confronted. However, the desire to like the show, the affection for it, meant that animosity was directed at the faceless “them” of the programme makers, or the BBC, rather than presenters or show participants. This reaction indicates that the programme itself could be used as an object (Bainbridge, 2019), its good and bad parts split to save feelings for the show “being poisoned” (Frosh, 2003, p. 42) and its usefulness curtailed.

The fantasy that all inherited or familial objects are beloved, exposes further repression by the programme: study respondents exhibited more complex relationships with objects. Items presented as “repair-worthy” at interviews for this study did not seem imminently destined for

restoration. The main reason for tardiness being a lack of knowledge about where such services could be accessed. However, reluctance could proceed from several unconscious sources.

Objects hold introjected parts of lost loved ones, histories of relationships between romantic partners, children, or grandparents, as well as positive projections of past experiences and achievements. Repairing items may therefore provoke an unwelcome recognition or reassessment of introjections, in which case repair concerns the human as well as the material object. Klein theorised reparation as “a profound urge to make sacrifices, in order to help and put right loved people who in phantasy have been harmed” (1998, p.311). The reluctance to repair items may indicate a defence or an unpreparedness for the internal process of reparation.

The uncomplicated nature of the show suggests that material items for restoration represent an attempt in the external world to repair the damaged originator of “love, goodness and security” (Klein, 1998, p. 345) in the internal world. However, the relationships between the study participants and the reparation of their objects were often more problematic. As we have seen, some objects were not always straightforwardly acquired, some disappeared, only to be returned, on a whim, years later, adding complications and perhaps feelings of vulnerability to the relationship with the original lost object, its internal representation, and the desire to seek repair. Study participants revealed shadow objects, inherited or familial items which they had kept, but about which they felt uneasy or doubtful. These, usually domestic items, referred to by Freud as uncanny (1919), recalled something for the study participant that they would rather repress or against which they needed a defence. While such entanglements might provide rich emotional resources for lifestyle television shows, they are difficult to uncover and communicate.

A further example of the show’s denial of uncomfortable issues is the fate of categories of objects excluded from repair, which I have called ‘culturally shadowed’ objects. The programme’s participants, some comparable in age to my focus group cohort, would surely possess similar objects to those my contributors discussed, which, contemporarily, have acquired morally and culturally distasteful associations; items such as golliwogs, fur coats and children’s books advancing now dubious attitudes. These are physically stored in lofts and at the back of wardrobes, and when thought of, worried over. *TRS* suppresses these items, as do my participants, but for the show, the meaning is less immediately personal: there is no confrontation with feelings of shame, anger, a sense of the worthlessness of the family member who previously owned the item or, indeed, the participant themselves, these items are deemed

beyond reparation and excluded. The uncanniness of the item may lie in its ability to make us fearful of losing our identity that is rooted in a particular historical atmosphere.

7.1.4 Synthesis of responses to tactility

Respondents for this study did not volunteer comments about the tactility of *TRS*. When questioned overtly, their reflections were confined to the presenters' physical gestures of sympathy pre-COVID-19. However, the therapeutic nature of the programme was widely acknowledged. The careful listening, the hugs prior to pandemic protocols, intimate close-ups of craftspeople at work, and the suggested care taken over repairs, contributed to an environment that encourages hapticity and a sense of "physical holding [...] which is a form of loving" (Winnicott, 1961, p. 591). This sense was augmented by shots of the Sussex countryside surrounding the barn, evoking the pastoral, prompting nostalgia, and conjuring a sense of childhood freedoms and security, all of which might raise feelings of protection, reliability, and certainty in uncertain times. Certainly, my participants held the show in affection.

As covered in the literature review (Chapter 2), in a discussion with the psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu (Anzieu and Tarrab, 1990), Gilbert Tarrab raised the "tendency in psychoanalysis to sidestep the body in order to listen to words" (p. 61). Anzieu responded that because of "the mass media [...] long distance communications have become [...] automated", so that "physical and affective closeness is being unlearned" (p. 64). He believed in the need to relearn touch (p. 67), although experience had shown him that "one can touch with the voice" (p. 78). He described how he could imagine in silence that he "was making a bodily gesture of comfort to a patient in distress when verbal explanation was inadequate" (p. 74), and that that was "sufficient" (p. 78). It could be that the gestures 'imagined' by the artisans on *TRS* under COVID-19 protocols, were able to extend their effectiveness and soothing not only to programme participants, but also viewers.

7.1.5 *The Repair Shop* as a containing space during COVID-19

The haptic visuality of the programme, the affective and emotional response it may encourage in viewers could lead it to be used as a containing and safe space for lived experiences (Caldwell, 2017, p. 84) too difficult to process, particularly at a time of national uncertainty as with COVID-19. The pandemic brought with it "the vast and complicated nexus of stress, grief, loneliness, estrangement, abandonment, frustration and pain" (Cooper et al., 2023, p. 3) as well

as surveillance, “around 1 in 20 of the adult population had reported someone else to the police for breaking restrictions” (Spiegelhalter and Masters, 2021, p. 178). Shaming for pandemic “transgressions “would feature on online platforms (Cooper et al., 2023, p. 4), preying on underlying concerns about belonging at a tense time when being considered “unworthy” was to be “vulnerable and marginalized” (Cooper et al., 2023, p.2)

In this environment, the atmosphere created by *TRS* offered containment and reinforcement of a sense of solidarity that was precarious for some during COVID-19. One participant (P10) living on their own at the time, talked of “finding” the programme and being “reassured” by it. Furthermore, viewers experiences of loss, mourning and mortality, a concept which “no human being really grasps” (Freud, 1919/2018, p. 94), was approached. Through the care provided for programme participants and material objects, the show could offer hope, a notion bolstered further through the idea of the future, of passing items on to children and grandchildren. Not merely a link backwards as suggested by Classen (2005), the show indicated a chance at a “stab at eternity” (Cooper et al., 2023, p. 56).

When it was not possible “to be able to control, or be responsible for, what [was] good or bad in the environment” (Winnicott, 1960, p. 585), like Winnicott’s good enough mother (2005), in mediated form, *TRS* extended reliability and empathy through its processes and attitudes. Consciously, through the repair of items, and unconsciously through its constructed environment, the programme fostered continuity.

7.1.6 *The Repair Shop* and Brexit

Continuity was significant to many people after the UK majority vote to leave the EU in June 2016. Phillips (2019) argued that Brexit revealed political contradictions and divergences within the country, the complexity of which determined the referendum question was simplistic. Lack of information prior to the vote was accepted because people did not want to know what would be lost by voting either way and had neither imagined the possibility, nor the actuality of loss and the “potential for regret” (p. 111). Politically and culturally, people had no space for mourning what had been lost, to be vulnerable and weak: in a “neo-liberal capitalist culture” weakness is abhorrent. (p. 112). *TRS* recognises loss and its aftermath, and offers a way, through repair, by which loss, including displaced larger losses such as Brexit, may be acknowledged and made more bearable for participants and audiences. It is possible to suggest that the show, in repairing familiar domestic objects, dwelling on shots of the natural world, and constructing companionship indicated that what people had known or desired, continued to

exist, even if in modified form, providing an underlying stability in a period of national turbulence.

7.1.7 Study participant's sensory perception and appreciation of cherished material objects

Participants frequently touched the objects they brought to interview when talking about them directly. At other times, these items were acknowledged but not handled. It was difficult to determine whether the memories recalled were introduced by the tactile opportunity available, heightened, or if the “decay of objects [was] detrimental to memory” (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023, p. 2).

However, the presence of material objects provided a gateway to a broad spectrum of memories which, for half of my participants, evoked strong sensual memories, usually of childhood and often associated with grandparents. Sound, particularly, elicited feelings of warmth and belonging. P3 recalled the ticking of her grandmother's clock and the sound of bat on ball during outdoor village games, bringing back childhood summers, while P2 remembered her grandfather whistling as he made early morning tea, and P8 recollected the sound of cattle being driven down a lane to be milked. For P10 it was smell, especially that of her grandmother's cooking, which allowed her to recapture childhood experiences.

Anzieu spoke of being able to “touch with the voice” (1990, p. 78), and in this way it may be possible to consider material objects touching, or providing understated emotion, with their presence. This idea is discussed further below (Section 9.1.9). Whether the decay of objects is significant to their power to scaffold memory (McCarroll and Kirby, 2023) was difficult to corroborate, damage accrued was, for my subjects, a tactile draw and prompt.

7.1.8 Emotional and psychological appreciation of objects

As outlined, participants' responses to material objects were nuanced, ranging from cherished to haunted (see Section 6.4). Some items applied unbearable emotional and psychological weight, the shadow objects discussed in this study, for example. The shade of the past, came to haunt and disrupt the present (Lorek-Jezińska and Więckowska, 2017, Tennakoon, 2023), shaping their understanding of the here and now. Something which appeared to be “barely visible” or “not there” (Gordon, 2008, p.8) became a considerable presence. For some study

participants the volume of possessions, the number, and the attention they demanded, was oppressive.

Understanding this, some had used life events, the death of a parent, moving house, or COVID-19 lockdowns, to dispose of some of their own possessions, so that their children would not have to be “disarmed by materialized memory” (Krasner, 2010, p. 41). Another consideration could be that in casting aside their own items, people can afford the memories or projections held, appropriate significance and mourn fittingly, which cannot be achieved by others.

Bollas (2010) considered objects as evocative, generational, mnemonic or transformative, each promoting “a unique inner experience” (p. 35) for an individual, that can be apprehended in “sensational knowing” (p. 35). The objects presented for possible repair by the participants in this study had been singled out as holding emotional histories or projections. Individuals had chosen them to be kept and treasured, sometimes amongst an overabundance of personal or domestic items.

It is possible that the choice of this “keepsake” combines features of a child lighting on a transitional object (Winnicott, 2005), that is, an object that operates as a “defence against anxiety” (p. 5) as the infant comes to realise, they are separate from, and to, their mother.

7.1.8.1 Inherited or familial objects as transitional objects

Some items, for example P2’s toy dog, may previously have been experienced as a Winnicottian transitional object, yet its transitional meaning has altered over the years. Other objects may, in being kept, have assumed a meaning similar to a transitional object. As with the child’s choice, what an adult chooses to keep ostensibly for sentimental reasons, can only be changed by them (Winnicott, 2005, p. 7) must be accepted. A transitional object is to be “loved and mutilated” (p. 7), it is touched, but damage further to that already sustained is guarded against. Seeking repair of the item adds Kleinian theories of reparation to the item. The fate of the infant’s transitional object is to become deattached, the adult’s object, functioning in two ways, keeping a loved one close and perhaps defending against mortality, may become less prominent as reality is tested and the unconscious regains its incomprehension of extinction, feelings attached to the object, may, though, intensify.

7.1.8.2 Facing being alone

The death of a loved one can be a profound moment of being alone and of disintegration, a reliable presence is no longer available. It may be possible to consider the inherited, or familial object as a scaffold for the benign environment fostered by previous “good-enough mothering” (Winnicott, 1958, p. 417), the good internal object, or ego-relatedness to the deceased object. This is not the suffering of solitude but the supported and tolerable being alone (Winnicott, 1958, p. 416).

7.1.9 Summary

The initial focus of this study was haptic visuality – the visual grammar for evoking visceral tactility for audiences in *TRS*. Initial textual analysis identified key themes: family, loss, love, memory, mourning and reparation. The second phase research followed, using elicitation methods and face to face interviews, in which participants were invited to discuss their own inherited or familial objects.

Key additional emerging themes from the textual analysis were the show’s repetitive cathartic journey through mourning, and the avoidance of melancholia, as well as its use of the pastoral, in the cultural repertoire of Romanticism, to create a comforting fantasy of a rural artisanal gift-economy. These themes constituted a larger emerging theme of national reparative work, embedded in the subtext of the BBC and this show, attractive, perhaps as a salve for the audience in a post-Brexit era where national division had been excited and, during the subsequent experience of a national emergency in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, perceived attempts at encouraging a view of a common national cultural feeling were not well received by study participants.

In relation to the study’s psychosocial audience research, what arises is the complexity of *TRS* viewers’ reactions and the multiplicity and depth of participants’ responses to their own inherited or familial items. Despite the haptic visuality employed, respondents noted only the physical gestures of comfort on the programme, missing the tactility of objects presented for repair. The appreciation that the show could offer comfort and containment, especially during COVID-19, may point to television’s ability to “touch with the voice” (Anzieu and Tarrab, 1990, p. 78).

When talking about their own repair-worthy items, the participants in my study would touch them. Other inherited objects, perhaps through everyday familiarity might be rendered

emotionally invisible, that is they could be acknowledged without concomitant emotional upheaval. It is possible to suggest that objects, including the programme, may operate in a transitional capacity as a comforting object enhancing through ego – supporting introjection, the psychological ability to be alone (Winnicott, 1958).

Key findings from the in-depth interviews shed light on the repressive work, a corollary to the reparative work, of *TRS* itself, which removed “difficult” objects from view. A hauntology of such objects found they inhabited the lofts and psyches of my participants, the attic a manifestation of the unconscious, and included personal shadow objects. These objects could be associated with ambivalent relationships and demanding obligations to the deceased, as well as ‘culturally shadowed objects’, associated with guilt, shame, disgust among other difficult feelings, as inherited objects had become socially unacceptable.

In summary, my research has addressed each of my five objectives, uncovering, through textual analysis and discussion of selected episodes in focus groups with audiences, both the reparative and repressive work of *TRS* (particularly in a post-Brexit and COVID-19 environment). Audience members’ own relationships to inherited objects, were explored in the interviews. This uncovered further repressive work undertaken by *TRS* which banishes “difficult” objects and relationships from the screen and uncovered two kinds of inherited shadow object, those introjected with difficult or ambivalent personal feelings, and those culturally shadowed due to changing social mores, which evoked difficult emotions in inheritees, of shame, anger, disgust. Shadowed objects were frequently placed by participants in lofts: in the unconscious or uncanny parts of their houses.

Following reflective observations in Chapter 8, the conclusion to the thesis, Chapter 9, will summarise my original contribution to knowledge and suggest areas for further research.

Chapter 8: Reflective statements

8.1 Introduction

Two events motivated this study: either happening simultaneously, or years apart, such is the nature of memory. My mother died suddenly in 2002. Her house, my family home, was cleared and sold. Many of her things found their way into our current home. Beneath, is one of them. Having seen the box as a child, I knew that it contained a prayer book, the weight confirmed its presence. What it was meant that it could not be thrown away.

Over a decade later, I opened the box and the book, to confirm the especial thinness of the paper. I was emotionally confounded by the note, not understanding why it was there, or what my mother had thought when writing it; certainly, she had never told me about it.



Figure 10 Prayer book in a box

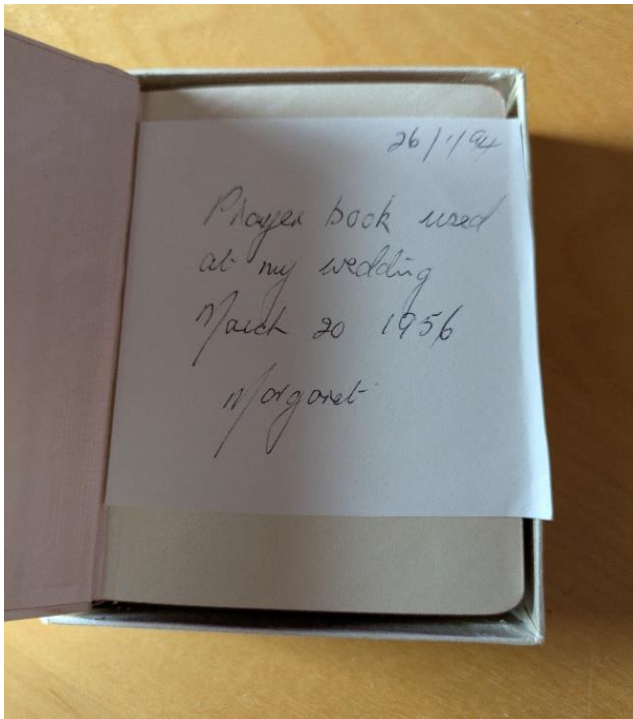


Figure 11 Prayer book 'inscription'

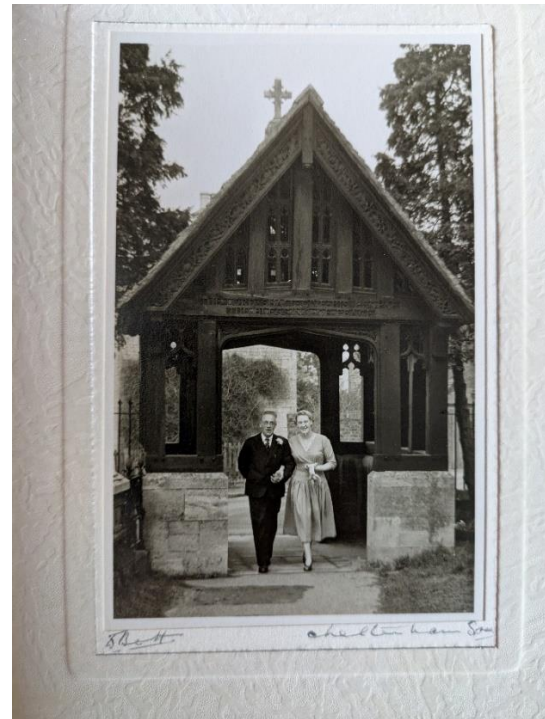


Figure 12 Wedding Day 1956

The second event was that being exhausted by work or travel, I allowed myself the indulgence of watching early evening television, discovering *TRS*. At a time of vulnerability, I was wrapped up and held for forty-five minutes for a few evenings, a feeling that recalled standing in my father's shed as a child, watching him make domestic items, experiencing the smell of wood shavings and an aura of unhurried calm. For me, the programme, like his work, instils calm which became significant during COVID-19 lockdowns. Aware that it had begun broadcasting in 2017, months after the divisive Brexit vote, I became interested in the reasons for the programme's growing success at a time of social and cultural anxiety. There was something "beneath the surface" (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009).

Originally, believing the tactility of the programme to be central to its success, the intention was to examine the show in terms of its representation as text. However, a change of university and supervisory team refocused the project. The element of audience appreciation was added, achieved through focus group discussions, with individual interviews allowing further insight into the significance of familial or inherited material items and how people understood and used them. I was reticent about this daunting yet rewarding and illuminating part of the study. My experience of leading focus groups and interviewing was limited, the process of recruiting, organising and running meetings felt intimidating. However, they illuminated ambiguities and emotional conflicts in the show, broadening its psychosocial meaning. Here, I begin by outlining

my reflections over the concrete experiences of the focus groups and interviews, then finish by addressing lessons learned from conducting the study.

8.1.1 Concrete experience

The study employs psychoanalysis as “theory and method” (Johanssen, 2016, p. 688). It adopts a psychosocial approach to interviewing, recognising complexities often lie beneath responses, and that the interviewer co constructs “the research environment” (Gilmour, 2009, p. 122).

Despite the reassurance that everybody likes to talk about themselves (P3), a matter of concern was whether people would volunteer. I began by recruiting friends, which then snowballed to involve people I knew only by sight. Teachers are encouraged to believe that they make the weather in the classroom (Ginott, 1975, cited by Hickman, 2016) a message which implies influence and the unavoidable “involvement of the researcher” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p. 55). This research is qualitative, which assumes an understanding that “researchers can use their subjectivity as an instrument of knowing” (Hollway, 2008, p. 227), nevertheless, there is the “wish to speak more confidently about the research findings” (Gilmour, 2009, p. 134) and not blatantly disclose vulnerabilities.

To facilitate interviews, participants were offered a choice of venue, their home, my home, or a neutral space. I was aware that each setting had implications, social expectations, and using them had consequences. Further insecurities surrounded interviewing professionally: was it right to share personal experiences with participants? Was striving for an equal relationship with them appropriate? Had I taken them for granted and failed to treat them “respect-fully” (Hollway, 2008, p. 238)?

While recording interviews became more usual, taking simultaneous notes without missing anything important became increasingly difficult the more engaging the conversation.

Recording observations immediately afterwards left me feeling that I had not noticed something important. Awareness of potential pitfalls did not mean that the line between researcher and curious and interested interlocutor was easy to hold, or always successfully maintained.

Creating the interviews with individuals meant that they were all different, even though they covered similar ground, that is the language of questions, their order of asking, and their supplementary parts changed to adapt to the interviewee.

Running focus groups prior to individual interviews, although conducive to organisational anxiety, was a useful way to introduce myself to participants, begin the research process with

mostly uncontroversial opinions, and to signal possible adaptations when approaching the personal 1-2-1 interview.

8.2 Reflective observations on the reflexive research process

Apparently simple, it required discipline and practice to transform ourselves from the highly visible asker of our questions to the almost invisible facilitating catalyst to their stories. Being almost invisible does not imply a belief in an interviewer who has no effect in the production of accounts (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000. p. 36).

It was not simple. I found it too easy to become involved in conversation. During interviews, “I worried that I had led the conversation and said much too much” (Reflective diary entry on interviewing P9, see Appendix I). Hollway’s observation that “we learn through identifications with objects” and that that is “the core of the idea that researchers can use their subjectivity as an instrument of knowing” (2008, p. 227). It is easier to appreciate in theory than practice and does not feel wholly applicable when one is trying to ‘get it right’, an unspecified standard wedded to my idea that to do otherwise would appear incompetent. From a career in teaching, I am consciously aware that interviews, like interactions in a classroom are “co-created” (Hollway, 2011, p. 433), nevertheless, saying too much means one is not listening carefully, nor, possibly, allowing participant’s stories to be told fully.

Remaining neutral with all participants was challenging, some I warmed to, with others, I was more defensive. This was particularly so with one interviewee, who, in not answering my attempts to arrange a meeting, arrived, for me, unexpectedly. Wrong-footed, I became a bad hostess, and an unprepared interviewer, residues from my own unconscious. Throughout the interview, I was annoyed “... it shouldn’t irritate me, but it does” (Reflexive diary entry).

Consequently, my reaction is coloured. I wondered if it was “a performative interview” (Reflexive diary entry). I suspect the encounter made me predisposed to question her account and withhold full engagement. I had no desire to be drawn in to ‘psychoanalysing’ her. As interviews proceeded, though, I became aware that I felt more comfortable ‘learning’ from participants, giving them authority, although I always felt caught between objectivity and over involvement. It took time to appreciate that all data was important.

This was the case with the objects that participants were asked to bring to interview. Most had no difficulty presenting an inherited or familial object worthy of repair. Only one offered an item which occasioned, for her, ambiguous feelings. In conversation, though, it became clear, that

such items existed for most participants, but remained disturbing enough to endure their banishment to lofts.

8.2.1 Methodological reflective observations

Small focus groups were advantageous. For this study, two of the groups had three participants, while the third group comprised five. The larger group, members of which knew each other, interrupted each other, making it possible, despite recording technology and contemporary notes, to miss, or misattribute, statements.

In groups where participants know each other, although they provide fluency, hierarchies have evolved, with members deferring to one another. The researcher's role becomes problematic: it is necessary to ensure that all voices are heard, while also guarding against submissiveness themselves. I had to fight against becoming a teacher, (Conradson, 2005, p139) as I had once been in my former career, potentially destroying the conversational dynamic and altering the role of all those present in the room.

The concern of the researcher influencing data collection, maybe matched by participants wishing to impress their own understanding on proceedings, which can be frustrating as responses may be performative. Individual dominance is "best avoided" (Stahl et al., 2011, p. 14), although participants raised useful questions of other participants, I would not have been comfortable asking, and provided lines of enquiry, especially with social shadow objects (Section 6.4).

Doing justice to the participants and their stories, teasing out who, or what, may be directing the narrative, is particularly hard. D.H. Lawrence's aphorism, "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale" (2019, p. 90), may be useful, although the ways of telling, receiving, and retelling the tale are all significant. While aiming to do justice to one's participants sincerely and honestly, it is only imperfectly possible as one can only be fully aware of one's own defences and biases. Some of my diary entries record my pleasure, "... she was an easy person to talk to. I admire her determination", while others are more censorious "... perhaps I didn't want to find out what he thought [...] did I treat him as an antagonist?"

8.2.2 Thematic reflective observations

Analysis drew attention to less anticipated elements within tactility, the pastoral, and personal relationships with material items. Considering tactility as central to the programme, it was

surprising to me that this, communicated through haptic visuality, was not voluntarily commented upon by study participants, especially just after a time of restricted social contact. I began to consider that the closeness and intimacy that can be afforded by television programmes, and the accompanying emotions or affects may be registered unconsciously as part of a benign Winnicottian environment extending beyond good enough maternal care (Winnicott, 1961).

I had not anticipated that the subject of the countryside would become divisive in terms of class and geography. P8, who grew up in an industrial town in northern England, questioned whether “the audience would be interested”, if the programme was set “in an old factory in the middle of Sheffield”. I had not, until this point, thought of *TRS* as alienating, casting it as comforting, containing, and entirely uncontroversial. The observation brought into focus fantasies of England prevalent in British culture and, during the research, it became apparent that participants had ambivalent attitudes towards the show. On an emotional level my feelings about the show have not changed, bound up as they are with childhood memories, it remained a ‘good’ object. However, this dimension became intellectually fascinating.

8.3 Abstract conceptualisation

Adopting a psychosocial framework requires concurrent objectivity and subjectivity. It demands that the researcher can listen and be empathetic to and with their subjects, whilst remaining analytical. Throughout, I was aware of shifting power relationships: as a researcher I had some standing, and yet, I was beholden to my participants for information, stories, and goodwill. During the interview process, and the analysis, I attempted to remain unobtrusive, however, the question of whether different aspects of my experience should be integrated or “distinct and separate” (Brown, 2006, p. 26) was unsettling. My reflexive, and reflective, journal articulates these feelings and yet they continued to be problematic. As the project advanced it became clearer that it was an attempt to try to understand myself (Brown, 2006, p. 26) and perhaps my own reparative needs.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The findings of this study make an original contribution to knowledge in three principal areas: the importance of touch, how that is created and communicated through haptic visuality on lifestyle television; the psychological and psychosocial influence of lifestyle programming; and subjects' own tactile and emotional relationship with inherited or familial items.

'Explore' is the directive verb for the aims and objectives of this qualitative study. It signals a forage into several contiguous academic disciplines as well as the attitude in which research was undertaken. I was unsure of what I might identify, but curious to discover why a programme about repairing family objects was affective and whether, its initial broadcast months after the Brexit vote, and its elevation to a prime-time slot during the first COVID-19 lockdown, was meaningful. Using an Object Relations psychoanalytic framework, the study adopted a psychosocial approach, bringing together aspects of psychology and sociology to better understand areas of individual experiencing in relationship to the world around us acknowledging "the profound irrationality of social life" (Frosh, 2012, p. 225).

This research enquires into the function of television in the everyday, (Silverstone, 1993, 1999, 2007; Bonner, 2003) but innovates by examining the role of a BBC-particular programme at a particular time of unprecedented social and emotional uncertainty. The study adopts a combination of methodologies allowing an extensive contemplation of emotion, tactility, television, and material familial objects. Close textual analysis of *TRS*, focus groups and individual interviews were all employed to substantiate understanding, not only of mediated experiences of touch provided by the show, but to examine responses to its major themes and to consider participants' own emotional and sensory responses to familial and inherited material items. This aspect of the study elicited equivocal reactions omitted from previous work (Turkle, 2007; Miller, 2008; Krasner, 2010; McCarroll and Kirby, 2023), thereby enriching appreciation of psychological relationships to distinctive personal material objects.

9.2 Findings: introduction

Here I set out my key original contributions to knowledge, in particular, my contribution to the study of haptic visuality in lifestyle television and to the psychosocial study of "media objects of

the mind” (Bainbridge, 2019, p. 3). Methodologically, my study is novel in that it enters the realm of psychosocial tactility through textual analysis, and audience research in focus groups and interviews, in a way which materialises haptic visuality on screen in *TRS*.

9.2.1 Haptic visuality and touch

Touch is central to this study. Socially, touch has become so proscribed that witnessing it in mediated form outside a television or film drama has become unusual. Viewers in my study seldom noticed touch or tactility without prompting. One interpretation may be that the sense is no longer important as an emotional way of relating to one another, it is not expected, although COVID-19 lockdowns indicated “how far a little of it could go” (Clarke, 2021, p. 16). It might also indicate that touch is so normal it does not warrant mentioning, although comments from study participants do not fully support this view. In mediated form, the lack of touch may suggest that viewers have become accustomed to relying on visuality for information about a participant’s or character’s feelings. Rather than intimacy, visuality involves distance. A consequence may be that visual images become more explicit to convey nuanced emotion. Classen (2005) writes that touch was considered a reliable corrective to the misconceptions of sight, if visuality is given primacy, it might be possible that this corrective is forgotten. An appreciation of touch encourages “imaginative intimacy” (Classen b, 2005, p. 278), be that of the past, or an empathetic response to others; visuality leaves us unpractised in the interpretation of touch, stranded alone in the present. However, greater awareness, consciously or unconsciously, of haptic visuality, may balance this deficiency as shown by this study’s participants’ appreciation of the homeliness of *TRS*.

The failure of my participants to notice or discuss the presence of touch, the show’s prominent register of haptic visuality, may be because it operates on an unconscious level, helping to create comforting and “reparative” feelings. However, when presenting their own items at interview, especially when talking about them directly, they would reach out to touch them affectionately, caressing or patting them. This study confirms suggestions by Classen (2005), Krasner (2010), and McCarroll and Kirby (2023), that touching an object opens an imaginative link with the past which reinforces or revivifies important clusters of relational meanings and emotions. My study contributes to knowledge of relationships with material objects in two ways. First, it identifies and examines the shadow or *unheimlich* nature of objects, (Jung, 1969, Freud, 1919) our ambivalence towards items holding introjections or projections too difficult to acknowledge, developing nuanced understandings of the *unheimlich* and hauntology.

Furthermore, it considers the physicality of this relationship, our need to banish such items from our senses into cellars and lofts.

9.2.2 The construction of tactility on *The Repair Shop*

The context of this study is the COVID-19 pandemic and government-mandated prohibitions on touch. It is interested in the impact this had on the programme, including the time lag in screening of episodes shot prior to restrictions, and on study participants.

This study's textual analysis of *TRS*, has revealed the programme's visual language of foregrounding touch and tactile surfaces as well as shot selection and juxtaposition to enhance haptic visuality, explaining the evocation of the sensation of touch through visual images (Objective 1). I have argued that the somatic affect of haptic visuality is expanded and complemented using diegetic and extra-diegetic sound. Work by Marks (2007) on intercultural film, and Waade and Jørgensen (2010) on television cookery programmes, has advocated that the use of haptic visuality enhances a sense of intimacy with, in the case of *TRS*, objects for repair and their composition and meaning, as well as a closeness to the artisan working on them and the work carried out. This study develops the understanding of the effect of a heightening of senses other than the visual and auditory, suggesting that more than a further attempt to increase viewers' emotional engagement with the programme, it introduces an environment of care exemplified by the diligence taken over the repair by the artisans which, by default, appears to be extended to the owners and previous owners of the item undergoing renovation. The textual analysis here confirms that lifestyle programming continues to adopt processes from other, or related genres, expanding its emotional and unconscious appeal, and in the case of *TRS*, encouraging a sense of national belonging to an evocation of a Romantic pastoral past.

Further to 'borrowing' tactility from film and cookery shows, *TRS* makes a feature of using images more associated with nature programmes, *Springwatch* (BBC, 2005–) or *Winterwatch* (BBC, 2012–) for example, inserting short sequences of shots of the countryside surrounding its location at The Weald and Downland Museum in West Sussex. These sequences of farm animals, butterflies, or benign rain, bridge an emotional change between one participant collecting a repaired item and another presenting one. They calibrate the emotional tone for the viewer and allude to how insignificant things such as treasured material objects, family and

emotion have a place in time and history. Such shots have no specific link to the main content or substance of the show but do much to strengthen connections between the programme and ideas and feelings surrounding tradition, the attraction of a pre-industrial, pre-technological existence and “virtue, restoration and escape” (Fowler, 2020, p. 76). Furthermore, connections with the countryside are “at their most intense [...] when there [are] fears of existential survival” (Fowler, 2020, p. 88).

This study shows how the programme evokes an intuitional response to the countryside, making use of historical, literary and emotive connections which many are understood to feel towards England in particular (Chase and Shaw, 1989; Dorling, 2019) that are often employed in consolatory television dramas, *All Creatures Great and Small* (BBC 1978–1990, Channel 5 2020–) and *Detectorists* (BBC 2014–2017, 2022) for example. This benign Romantic view of rural life is arguably taken at face value for its consolatory effect, with malign interpretations merely alluded to or repressed. Wealth, class, and race, the driving forces behind the Brexit vote in 2016 (Dorling, 2019), are seldom interrogated. The, specifically English, landscape is seen through a cultural filter (Jeans, 1974, cited by Pepper, 1996, p. 6). It is the “keeper of deep knowledge [...] with ideological work to do in the promotion of an English tradition and an English consciousness” (Chase and Shaw, 1989, p. 12).

Taken together, the audio-visual methods employed evoke tactility, encourage, and highlight emotional and experiential responses to the programme referencing the tangible present and the felt past over the uncertain future. This study shows how hapticity, the appropriate use of sound, combined with the evocation of the pastoral and the deployment of nostalgia, contributes to the creation of a Winnicottian environment of holding and containment. My object relations informed analysis of the show’s visual haptic grammar, provides an original contribution to knowledge, extending previous work on visual hapticity (Marks, 2007; Waade and Jørgensen, 2010; Zborowski, 2012) through introducing sound as important to haptic evocation.

9.2.3 Themes

After an initial viewing of all episodes of *TRS* from Series 1–12 (2017–2023) a systematic examination of every fifth programme was undertaken to recognise key themes. Family, loss, love, memory, mourning, and repair are the recurrent preoccupations of the show (Appendix A). Haptic visuality, as outlined in Section 4.5, combined with diegetic sound promoting intimacy, possibly supporting a somatic response in viewers (Objectives 1 and 2), is used to enhance the

emotionality of all themes, notwithstanding subtle dispositions in certain cases, the ex-kickboxer Helen Bannon, for example (Series 5, episode 22). The study suggested reasons for the depiction of these key themes within Brexit and COVID-19 contexts (Objective 3).

Chapter 4 makes the case for the significance of haptic visuality in the construction of tactility and emotion on *TRS*. It is the organising feature of the thesis. Themes running throughout the show, outlined above, are influential, providing the emotional architecture of the programme. Nevertheless, touch and haptic visuality are at the emotional heart of each theme. Marks writes of film embodying “cultural memory by awakening memories of touch and activating all senses” (2007, p. 221). My thesis argues that television, too, may prompt an activation encouraging an affective evocation of senses surrounding the major themes of the programme. Examples can be found in hugs and caresses that denote the security and support of family, and the passion of lovers. It is noticeable in the somatic recollections of the deceased, of lost childhood, and in the guilt of damage and the scrupulousness of repair.

The potency of touch is perceptible in the reluctance of my participants to bring an object with them to interview about which they have ambiguous feelings, conceptualised here as shadow objects. These objects, introjected with shame, guilt, and other difficult emotions, have become ‘untouchable’. Within *TRS*, the programme constructs haptic visuality by showcasing the tactile relationships of participants to their loved inherited items. For example, Julie Yates’ reluctance to touch her deceased husband’s signature, to concede the depth of her mourning; Nowzad Khurshid’s tentative tracing of the repair on his mother’s samovar, silently recalling his loss; or Barry and Bernadette Jarvis tangibly exploring their now-working jewellery box, a “symbol of [their] love” (Barry Jarvis, *TRS*, series 10, episode 3). The themes highlighted are embodied by touch and haptic visuality.

9.2.3.1 Family

The family influences the programme in four areas: the show’s construction and the significance of the viewing environment; the representation of the institution of the show; the significance of family material objects and the wider notion of family and nationhood, especially considering the programme being broadcast on the BBC, which bears the weight of its founder’s desire to draw the nation together, seeing it as an extension of family.

This research explains how understanding and emotional support provided by one's family is embedded in *TRS*. Using Albert Thompson and his daughter Lynn as an example, (Series 4, episode 1) one recognises the use of close-up snapshots to invoke the presence of Albert's wife Eileen, and the camera's observation of physical gestures from Lynn to consolidate the physical intimacy of family, represented as reassuring, sustaining, and containing. This study recognises how the presentation and repair of familial objects consolidates historical and emotional connectivity, suggesting that families exist not only in the present, but also in the past and future.

9.2.3.2 *Loss and displacement?*

To manage the momentousness of forced emigration, the loss of country examined in this study, *TRS* reduces it to concrete terms, the loss or damage to material objects and by extension, the loss of one's home and family, itself central to the programme. Rendering the abstract concrete, facilitates viewer empathy. The emotional toll on programme participants is made more poignant through the emphasis of aloneness, and lack of human contact. Helen walks to the barn alone, Nowzad's tale of displacement is accompanied by a tracking shot of the flight of a lone pigeon. Their isolation is emphasised through the physical gestures of support on offer, some appreciated, others not.

The emotional magnitude of the loss of this "abstraction" (Freud, 1917, p. 243), is further demonstrated through the show's participants' use of non-verbal language, especially touch: their hurt is beyond words. Boym (2001) writes of how "the deeper the loss the harder it (is) to engage with public mourning" (p. xv), articulating one's feelings would diminish it "to little more than a soundbite" (p. xv). This close textual analysis of *TRS* here lends credibility to this reticence as participants work hard to contain their emotions.

This study shows that, as with other unconscious elements approached by the content and processes of the programme, much is repressed: participants have been listened to, but not comprehended. Faced with the problem of loss, the recourse is nostalgic.

9.2.3.3 *Love*

The environment constructed on *TRS* is one in which care and nurturing are to the fore. Love is the fundamental emotion on display; however, analysis has demonstrated the fantasies that may lie beneath the presentation of the emotion. The long-lasting nature of mostly heterosexual

romantic relationships presented on the show is seen as normative and particularly joyful, although same-sex partnerships are also occasionally included (Bonner, 2003, p. 110). This is especially the case in the heteronormative presentation of Barry and Bernadette Jarvis (Series 10, episode 3), where their intimacy and physical closeness, and their touching of the repaired jewellery box, seems to exclude others while radiating inclusive somatic joy. The programme's portrayal of widowed partners, Julie Yates (Series 4, episode 8) and Albert Thompson (Series 4, episode 1), suggests that the experience of love transcends death; although the partner is lost physically, the emotion, however painful at first, continues. The essence of that love is understood to be intensified by the item that has been repaired. Love is presented as a positive and heightened emotion that can excite, restore, and eventually heal.

Psychosocially, the unconscious role of the programme could be that in offering itself as an object to love it promotes beneficence that might have originally been directed towards the mother, thereby encouraging creativity in terms of kindness and empathy (Klein, 1989).

9.2.3.4 *Memory*

The type of memory prized on *TRS* does not value objective dates or time, rather, it is subjective, imaginative, is shaped by the present and the presumed future as much as by the past. *TRS* implies memory is abundantly sensuous and affective. Combined with its internal nature, memory is difficult to demonstrate, snapshots – as well as the object – are relied upon.

Participants touching the objects they present suggests that memory is sensually embedded (Marks, 2007), prompted, and registered somatically. Recalling events and feelings in this way emphasises how memory is episodic, fragmentary, and strongly linked to touch. While reminiscing about the importance of the item that has been brought in, and the connected memories, the viewer is invited to interpret the non-verbal language of participants' hands caressing the object, and of faces registering emotions.

The usually domestic, and often mass-produced, objects presented on the programme emphasise familial as well as generational memory. Prompting recognition from viewers, objects can, as evidenced by this study's focus groups, recover, and corroborate aspects of childhood. This research shows how subjective memory can become collective and celebratory. The desire for company, association, and relationship, highlights the particularity and commonality of memorable experiences and feelings. While *TRS* inhabits areas of

childhood and the communal, it also represses the negative aspects of individual memory: the repair of an item can only conjure the positive.

9.2.3.5 *Mourning*

For the programme, mourning is about the death of a loved one. It is grief's physical enactment displayed through tears, silences, and the need for physical contact and reassurance. In *TRS* emotions associated with mourning and grief are welcomed, which include names of those who have died are sought and spoken, condolences offered, memories recounted, manifest grief required and listening, and appreciation performed. As the TV participant collects their repaired item the dead are often conjured as looking down on the scene. Grief is not shown as photogenic, participants cry and turn their faces from the camera, but it does require, and is given, a tactile response, as with Suzie when repairing Julie's rocking horse (Series 4, episode 8). In close-up Suzie lays her hand on the signature she has uncovered, and then begins to cry as her husband died in a similar way to Julie's. She is consolingly hugged by her brother, a cast member of the show. The viewer is encouraged to become engaged with the experience through their own haptic understanding.

Nevertheless, lifestyle television mourning has limitations. This study indicates that no mourning, to use Freud's term, can be seen on television, in this genre, to be melancholic, this would imply it could not be mastered, that the repair of a special item could not occasion healing and optimism, the fundamental strand of the programme. Complicated grief, melancholia, is therefore repressed. This study suggests that the cultural context of *TRS*, its broadcast during a period of complex social grief, associated with, but not solely limited to, the pandemic helped viewers mourn cultural and social upheavals. As Raymond Williams work (1973) on the history of the countryside has shown, rural images have long been used to mask conflict and unhappiness attendant on social change and loss. In this domain mourning can be recognised through the sensory articulation and provision of a symbolic means of repair, through a sharing of vulnerability, and an empathetic and kind response (Phillips and Barwick, 2020).

9.2.4 Material objects: repairs and shadows

Through close-ups, the images of repair emphasise tactility. Viewers can observe more than would be possible if they were next to the craftsman, the intimacy is further enhanced through

comments directly addressed to camera. As with other themes discussed here, this study indicates how the programme suppresses more difficult aspects of repair. For example, it is not possible to know if items are turned away for being too difficult to mend. There is an underlying assumption that everyone possesses a material object that they wish to keep or hand down. This ignores those for whom poverty or flight has robbed them of items recalling their family's past life, as recounted by some study participants.

The impulse for repair and the processes involved follow the structure of Klein's ideas concerning reparation which focus on the need to put right the harm done to loved people in infant phantasy (1989). Klein writes of this being a creative process, which can be clearly identified through the work of the artisans shown on screen but may also be recognised through a participant's application to appear on *TRS* as well as their comprehending a need for repair both physically and psychologically. However, given the findings from my interviews and groups it may be suggested that despite the nostalgic longing for reparation as depicted on the show, there is also a disinclination towards repair of inherited or family objects. The latter may be symptomatic of a cultural move away from restorative creativity associated mending to one of obsolescence, or a recognition of the limits of what may be kept and mended. In examining this hesitancy through a Kleinian lens, this study provides a deeper insight into the reluctance for the psychological repair of parental relationships.

The research around shadow objects here, registers how material items can be so emotionally difficult or demanding to look at or acknowledge that they need to be concealed. Although asked, only one study participant presented such an item at interview, even though most interviewees admitted to possessing this type of object. This response echoes Freud's sense of the *unheimlich* (1919) and the hostility of Jungian shadows (Stevens, 2001). Domestic, familiar items, as presented on *TRS* can become subjectively negative and fearful, which may be a struggle to repress. This study introduces the concept of such items and demonstrates how they may be created through personal introjections or projections, as well as social repressions.

9.2.5 *The Repair Shop* as media object of the mind

This research has made the case for *TRS* as a media object of mind, culture and society, helping viewers to reflect upon their own experiences, thereby continuing and contributing to the work of Bainbridge (2014, 2019), Whitehouse-Hart (2014), and Yates, (2017), examining media and the inner world. It has identified viewers' abilities to adopt Kleinian splitting in their reactions, to protect what they understand as 'good' in the show as a consolatory object, from what they

characterise as 'bad'. The premise of *TRS*, the benevolence of a community of feeling, and the desire for reparation, is accepted, while aspects of the fantasies illustrated are rejected as unrealistic.

Individually, the stories told, and the repairs undertaken on *TRS*, a psychosocial object itself, may encourage viewers to work through their own experiences and effect unconscious repair. The programme could be understood to offer repair psychosocially. Appearing genuinely considerate, with the inference that those seen on the programme, as those watching it, can put themselves in the place of others, it could be argued as behaving like a good parent in offering beneficence and gratification. Considering the programme in this way may allow us to behave "as our parents did to us or we would have wanted them to [...]" at the same time we also play the part of the good child towards the parents which we wished to do in the past" (Klein, 1989, p. 312).

The psychosocial mechanisms of splitting points to areas of tension, or repression, inherent in the programme: the attempt to erase class, or the overlooking of migrant experiences in Britain for example. Repression can be understood as necessary for the programme to conduct its national reparative work of securing Reithian unity or "making the nation one man" (Reith, 1925, cited by Cardiff and Scannell, 1987). Such tensions, or messiness, evident within psychoanalysis, is prominent in study participants' attitudes to their own familial or inherited objects. Even items deemed "repair worthy" were still awaiting attention, while many admitted to material objects possessing ambivalent projections or introjections, stored in lofts or basements, consciously being ignored. These objects, styled as shadow objects in this study, may be the subject of personal repression, or cultural change as in the contemporary discomfort related to fur coats, or childhood toys now understood as racist, for example. The changing context of these items left some study participants feeling angry and ashamed.

9.3 Original contribution to knowledge

This research develops understandings of how an aspect of touch may be perceived on lifestyle television, previously explored by Waade and Jørgensen (2010) and Zborowski (2012), and how it may be conveyed through haptic visuality. It suggests possible effects and affects of the process within an object relations framework. This study has examined, in depth, an aspect of lifestyle programming rarely acknowledged. The evidence provided by this study, through a new combination of methodologies, makes it possible to advance ideas of how haptic visuality and tactility create a psychological environment of containment and care, supporting vulnerability, extending empathy, and encouraging reflexivity. By adopting an object relations approach, it adds to the work of Bainbridge and Yates (2014), Bainbridge (2014, 2019), Hill, (2005. 2014) Whitehouse-Hart (2014), and Yates (2013), widening the research focus on drama (Yates, 2007) into more mundane or ordinary television offerings. The application of the theory of Kleinian splitting offers an interpretation of how viewers may psychologically accommodate an appreciation of the emotionality of lifestyle programming and the fantasies it offers, with a conscious critical response.

This study's exploration of tactile and emotional responses to subjects' familial and inherited objects, extends knowledge of the 'messy' psychological relationships we have to such items. It has suggested ways in which we might use them, proposing an alternative to the view that all retained items conform with the fantasy of recalling emotionally rewarding memories. With its consideration of unconscious repressive elements of *TRS*, repudiated perhaps to indulge a wider reparative ethos, this study examines reactions to material shadow objects that may be considered *unheimlich* (Freud, 1919) or haunting, in providing concrete reminders of unresolved fears, troubling memories, or unexpressed secrets (Gordon, 2008; Good, 2021; Tennakoon, 2023). My research uncovered two kinds of shadow object; the personally shadowed, containers for difficult personal memories, and culturally shadowed, once socially acceptable items, such as ivory and golliwogs, now socially proscribed, leaving the inheritors with difficult feelings of shame, guilt and anger. This study has shown that people secrete such items, holding projections and introjections which their current owners cannot reject, but which they wish to ignore, in cellars and lofts. Thus, offering a link to the Jungian concept of the Shadow (1969) as the unconscious "hidden, represses, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality" (Jung, 1969, cited by Perry, 2015) and extending this concept to its relationship to objects. Such is the antipathy towards these items that they are often hidden in the furthest recesses of the house and seldom, if ever, see the light of day. Physical structures, participant's houses, become psychic realms with personal and social shadow objects inhabiting the loft-as-

unconscious. Further research could determine whether these objects indicate unsuccessful transgenerational mourning. These findings may well be of interest to those researching hauntology and the *unheimlich*, as well as those concerned with the emotional resonances of space within a residence (Bachelard, 2014).

This study examines and theorises a practical application of Kleinian reparation at a personal and national level. It proposes that the repair and care of loved familial and inherited objects may indicate an attempt at psychological reparation. It uniquely advances the idea that certain media objects may offer reparative possibilities of psychosocial reparation, extending beyond bringing people together.

This research also presents an original contribution to the study of *TRS* itself as a “media object of the mind” (Bainbridge, 2019, p.3), particularly in the period studied, as a show attempting national reparative work, post-Brexit and during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020–2022.

Academic articles on *TRS* have been published (Hyland, 2021; McCarroll and Kirby, 2023) but none have attempted a psychosocial study. Through textual analysis I have considered the repressive work that the show undertakes in order to construct a Reithian vision; Britain as a green and pleasant land, with the functional heterosexual family at its heart, where love and empathy, bathed in a Romantic nostalgic vision of the countryside, predominates, where social class is flattened, through a focus on the emotional rather than the material value of objects – and migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, the LGBT+ community, and Black Asian and other minority ethnic [BAME] Britons are included. Drawing on Corinne Fowler’s work *Green Unpleasant Land* (2020) and her new project, The Rural Racism Project (Hate Studies, 2018), it is evident that the show’s bucolic reparative grammar feels more comforting and inclusive for some viewers – White, middle class, and English – than others. Focus groups with my White middle-class participants, exposed some feelings of irritation at the harmonious vision presented, as it repressed conflict and difficulty, such as the *Windrush Special* episode’s focus on the fortitude of migrants and not their difficult experiences of racism on arrival to Britain. Nevertheless, for my participants, the show’s reparative grammar was mostly experienced as comforting and containing. The programme’s Romantic countryside nostalgia chimed with the memories of my 50+ participants, memories of the English countryside of their youth. The interviews (as discussed above in Chapter 6) uncovered another area of repression the show engages in to undertake its reparative work; namely, only loved objects inherited from loved people are included on-screen, yet all my participants’ homes harboured more ambivalent, emotionally difficult, inherited shadow objects.

9.4 Limitations to the study

This study augments debates concerning the emotionalization of television programming and its therapeutic efficacy (Lasch, 1992; Ellis, 2002; Richards, 2007; Richards and Brown, 2011). In keeping with other psychocultural research (Yates, 2013, 2018; Whitehouse-Hart, 2014; Giffney, 2021), it applies clinical psychoanalytical concepts in a non-clinical setting, believing them to provide useful ideas and language through which to examine reflective engagements with a cultural object and the interrelation between the emotional and unconscious aspects of experience (Giffney, 2024, p. 923). It demonstrates through focus group responses (see 5.8) and contemporary television reviews (Midgley, *The Times*, 2021; Singh, *The Telegraph*, 2021; Ross, *The Times*, 2022), the comfort the programme provided at a time of anxiety and loss.

“Absorption and immersion” (Giffney, 2024, p. 929) in a cultural object may offer more than emotional containment and a short lived and superficial respite. *TRS* and other “popular media presentations of damage and repair,” could provide “opportunities and incentives for ... individuals to learn from” others (Richards and Brown, 2011, p. 24). It might sustain us “emotionally and physically” (Giffney, 2024, p. 929) by providing spaces for autobiographical interpretive work, reflecting on compassion for self and others and a chance to work through experiences. In a non-clinical setting, in this research, a recognition of deeply felt responses to *TRS*, both on screen and in audience research, on the themes of family, loss, love, memory, mourning and reparation, and my researcher reflection on the opportunity afforded for deeper, longer lasting impacts is the only possible verification of this theory. To determine how deeply reparative work may go for any individual would require a longitudinal ethnographic, or autoethnographic, approach involving ‘viewing’ diaries kept over a longer period in addition to iterative interviewing.

A limitation of this study is its concentration on a small sample of the core demographic viewers of *TRS*, that is older, White, middle-class people, recruited by convenience and snowball sampling. The results of the study may also have been influenced by the relative absence of male participants. This meant that it was not entirely possible to determine whether the physical and emotional labour of house clearing when moving, or following the death of a family member, was viewed as being solely within the compass of women, nor whether family archiving of physical and affecting memories, was more expected of them.

The age of study participants excludes recognition of emotional and tactile relationships to familial items of younger people, and, as above, a further significant limitation was the absence

of participants of different ethnicities. Inclusion of these two groups may have altered the impulse for reminiscence, appreciation of nostalgia, and attitudes toward the countryside. The programme's understanding and use of tradition, the pastoral and its impact may well have allowed access to further, and different, interpretations as well as a development of ideas concerning the show's psychosocial and psychocultural implications for younger and BAME viewers.

9.5 Further work

Further research could continue to examine the principal areas explored in this study. Firstly, this study has begun researching the processes, effects, and affects, of consolatory television at a particularly anxious social juncture. Additional research could be conducted to determine if the fantasies of *TRS* are constant, or transient, becoming more necessary at distinct times. Equally, the role of ordinary television programming, in creating a containing space, or a holding environment, might well provide evidence of how, in a predominantly visual medium, senses other than sight may establish a psychological refuge from "the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated" (Winnicott, 2005, p. 3).

Secondly, having considered the Reithian notion of forging "a link between the dispersed and disparate" to the "symbolic heartland of national life" (Cardiff and Scannell, 1987, p. 157), further psychosocial exploration into the effectiveness of the creation of a national culture could be undertaken. State or international sporting events are understood to "create a shared public life" (Hendy, 2022, p. 92), but these are singular occurrences. "Ordinary television" (Bonner, 2003), a regular experience for a viewer, is more communicative of prevailing attitudes with the opportunity to be more persuasively inclusive. As above, if continued, this research with *TRS* could include a more diverse audience.

Methodologically, material objects are used to elicit memories (Bell, 2012; Hanna, 2018; Mannay 2020), but the impact of items towards which owners are ambivalent could be examined. The status of these shadow objects as kept, yet hidden is ambiguous, as is their accommodation physically, emotionally, and psychologically. It is possible as families become wealthier, more "stuff" (P9) comes within this category causing personal distress. Moreover, the effects of social and cultural change on the perception of items, making them 'currently shadowed' and current owners' relationships to previous possessors could do much to determine their psychological impact.

Finally, this study raises the question of the decision-making process surrounding the retention or casting off familial items. Several study participants felt the need to clear their own houses of stored items so that their children would not have to spend too long on the task after their deaths. This action limited the choices their offspring had of keeping emotional treasures. Further studies might explore a subject's choice of cherished keepsake object. Items presented and discussed for this study ranged from clocks and chairs to jewellery, with one item, a doll, which was not wholeheartedly liked, surviving. Surviving items appear mnemonic (Bollas, 2006; Turkle, 2007; McCarroll and Kirby, 2023), however, during this study, it became apparent that they can be more than this. Research might be carried out to validate and explore further psychological uses of inherited and familial items. Winnicott's theorisation of transitional objects (2005) used by an infant when separating from its mother, could, in part, be applied to possessions of a deceased relative. As with an infant, a mourner may choose an object appropriate only for themselves, employing it at times of anxiety and adjustment to their bereaved state. As outlined in this study with P6, the emotional sting generated by an item may lessen as the process of reality testing (Klein, 1998, p. 346) draws to a close. Research is needed to fully understand the therapeutic qualities of transitional objects generated by the end of a life and their assistance in helping a bereaved friend or relative to be finally alone.

Finally, our relationship with shadow objects identified in this study – the drive to keep them from taking up space in lofts, and the desire to clear things out, deserves more attention. With their origin in the Freudian uncanny, trailing a hint of hauntology (Gordon, 2008; Good, 2021; Tennakoon, 2023), they appear powerful drivers of ambiguous feelings, or, in the case of disposal, potential misunderstanding. It may be that parents are attempting to rid their surviving children of potential unconscious harm.

9.6 Concluding remarks

There are limited studies of *TRS*, (Hyland 2021; McCarroll and Kirby, 2023) and few on “ordinary” lifestyle television. This thesis expands the knowledge around television programmes by examining the ways in which haptic visuality and mediated tactility can work psychologically. It explores how mediated touch works to convey effective, and affective, consolation, recognising that even if not consciously appreciated, it can provide care and containment for viewers during a particularly volatile, anxious, and unique time, here during the aftermath of the Brexit vote in 2017, and COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020–2022. Furthermore, it has suggested that *TRS*, and potentially other lifestyle programmes, may be reparative, although it has uncovered the repression required to carry out such work. In addressing areas of common experience as key themes, a community of feeling can be shaped and aspects of difference diminished, by means of repression, if only momentarily.

The research develops work by Bainbridge and Yates (2013, 2014), Bainbridge (2019) and Whitehouse-Hart (2014), concerning the use of media objects and Kleinian splitting, as well as examining further how material inherited or familial objects are employed or ignored by their owners, suggesting an extension to the usual mnemonic understanding of material items. The particular mixed-methodological approach adopted, has allowed examination not only of the effect of the television programme, but also study participants’ own emotional and tactile responses to items that could potentially feature on the show. Furthermore, it has uncovered attitudes towards familial or inherited items that are ambiguous. I have called these shadow objects, although this concept owes something to Jung in that a feeling is repressed or consciously disowned (Stevens, 2001, p. 64). I draw on, and develop, Freud’s ideas of the uncanny (1919), the haunting qualities of shadow objects, and where they may be stored in a dwelling. The psychological origin of these items I identify as personal, arising from the intersection of difficult personal relations and wider dilemmas and complexities of culture and society. Finally, the study has advanced the appreciation of the messiness of our relationships with familial and inherited items, investigating their role as temporary or permanent psychological objects.

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Appendix A

The Repair Shop – Thematic Analysis

[OoA - order of appearance on the episode]

OoA	Items for Repair	Reason for Repair	Artisan	Emotion	Notes
Episode 1/1 – BBC 2 – 27/03/17 – 6.30pm – 29 mins					
1	Father's clock	Loss, mourning, family, love, memory	Steve/Jay	Tears/pride	No reveal, just given
2	Flying fish ornament	Memory	Will	Thanks	Value mentioned
3	Accordion - mother's	Memory, love, family	Roger, Thomas, Will	Joy, love, memory, legacy	Value mentioned
Episode 1/6 – BBC 2 – 03/04/17 – 6.30pm – 29 mins					
1	Jewellery chest - grandmother's	Family, memory, love, loss (burglary) reparation	Will/Jay	Loss, reparation, let grandparents down, joy	
2	Painting - where evacuated to	Memory, love, family	Lucia Scalisi	Loss - long time ago, tears	
3	Ceramic plate	Family, love, memory	Kirsten	Joy	
Episode 1/11 – BBC 2 – 10/04/17 – 6.30pm – 29 mins					
1	2-person piano stool - Grandmother's	Family, memory, love, responsibility, reparation	Jay/Will	Tears and hugs	Loss of what?
2	Daffodil telephone	Pass on plaything to grandchildren	Steve		
3	Magic lantern	To create family memory	Richard Rigby		Bought as antique
Episode 2/1 – BBC 2 – 12/03/2018 – 6.30pm – 29 mins					
1	Violin - family	Family, Auschwitz, memory, loss, reparation, love	John Dilworth	Crying - overwhelmed	
2	WW1 camera - Grandfather	Family, memory, love, loss	Brenton	Tears	Running out of family
3	Alvar Alto screen	Family, home, future, love	Will	Joy	
Episode 2/6 – BBC 2 – 19/03/18 – 6.30pm – 29 mins					
1	Steam gunboat	Family, memory, loss of time	Steve	Excited, pleasure	
2	Rosewood table	Family, memory, reparation (guilt)	Will	Tears, happiness	Collected 1st
3	Cuddly toy panda	Love, mourning, loss, memory, reparation (honour)?	Bear Ladies	Tears, hugs, nerves	
Episode 2/11 – BBC 2 – 26/03/18 – 6.30pm – 29 mins					
1	Peter Pan record Player	Family, memory, heirloom	Tim Weekes	Pleased	

OoA	Items for Repair	Reason for Repair	Artisan	Emotion	Notes
2	Chair	Memory, family, heirloom	Sonaz, Will	Pleased/proud	
3	Cash register	History, memory, childhood, family	Steve	None	
Episode 3/1 – BBC 2 – 13/08/18 – 6.45pm – 44 mins					
1	Watch - Netherlands	History, family, memory	Steve	Tears/recognition of courage	Taken back to Netherlands
2	Butter churn	Memory, love family, loss	Dom, Will	Hugs/tears	Last to be collected
3	LV trunk	Family, memory, custodian	Suzie	Surprise and pleasure	
Episode 3/6 – BBC 2 – 20/08/18 – 6.45pm – 44 mins					
1	Stained glass panel	Family, memory, reparation	Matt Nicholls	Pleased	
2	Sea chest	Family heirloom	Will	Pleased	
3	Art Deco lamp	Family, memory	Steve, Kirsten	Tears	
Episode 3/11 – BBC 2 – 27/08/18 – 6.45pm – 44 mins					
1	WW2 flying jacket	Family, memory, love	Suzie	Glow, looked to father	
2	Porcelain clock	Family, memory	Kirsten, Steve	Awe	
3	Typewriter	Family, memory, obligation	George Blackman	Shaking?	
Episode 4/1 – BBC 1 – 01/04/19 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Albert radio	Loss, mourning, love, memory, repair	Mark Stuckey	Crying, hugging etc	
2	Giant teddy	Memory, love	Bear Ladies	Speechless, happiness	
3	Skeleton clock	Family, love	Steve	Tears, speechless, hugs	
Episode 4/6 – BBC 1 – 08/04/19 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Music box	Love, memory, family	Steve Kember	Tears	
2	Slot Machine	Memory, childhood, family	Steve, Will	Joy, laughter	
3	Stuffed horse toy	Family, loss, memory, reparation, love	Bear Ladies	Joy	
Episode 4/11 – BBC 1 – 15/04/19 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Barber pole	Love, family, memory, childhood	Dom, Tim Weekes	Joy	
2	Writing slope	Reparation, mourning, loss	Will	Silence, welling up	
3	Painting	Repair	Lucia	Joy in item	Black Canadian, Nigerian painting
Episode 5/1 – BBC 1 – 18/11/19 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					

OoA	Items for Repair	Reason for Repair	Artisan	Emotion	Notes
1	Victorian piano stool	Surrogate family, loss, memory, mourning, loss, reparation, love	Will	Speechless, Cry, Hug	
2	Lagonda Speedometer	Memory, love, family	Steve	Joy	
3	Wicker Crib	Family, love, memory - more forward looking	Sarah Hatton	Joy	
Episode 5/7 – BBC 1 – 26/11/19 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Toy train made by father	Loss, love, reparation, memory	Steve, Lucia	Joy, Pride, Hugs	
2	Mum's scrapbook	Family, love, memory	Louise Drover, Chris Shaw	Silence, emotional	
3	Desk	Family, mourning, loss, love, reparation	Will	Daughter + father v emotional, tears	
Episode 5/11 – BBC 1 – 02/12/19 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Teddy	Family, love, memory	Bear Ladies	Joy, tears	
2	Banjolele	Memory, family, pride	Pete Wood, Will	Joy, excitement	
3	Tea chest	Love, family, memory, loss, mourning - dementia	Will	Joy, excitement, tears for father	
Episode 5/17 – BBC 1 – 10/12/19 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Sausage making machine	Family, memory, passion	Dom	Joy, excitement	
2	Postcard album	Family, memory, love	Chris Shaw	Over excited, hugs	
3	Samovar	Family, memory, loss, love, mourning	Brenton	Tears, speechless	
Episode 5/19 – BBC 1 – 12/12/19 – 4.30pm – 43 mins					
1	Homemade gramophone	Memory, family, love, respect, reparation	Mark Stuckey, Dom	Excited, joy	
2	Piggy bank	Reparation, family, love, memory	Kirsten	Relief, smiles, emotion	White Indian
3	Military helmet	Love, pride, family, memory, dementia	Brenton	Tears	
Episode 5/24 – BBC 1 – 10/09/20 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Clock	Family, memory, love	Steve	Happy, welling up	
2	Teddy bear	Love, loss, mourning, reparation, memory	Bear Ladies	Laughing, joyful	
3	Wedding viewer	Family, memory, loss	Brenton	Near tears	
Episode 5/26 – BBC1 – 14/09/20 – 4.30pm – 43 mins					
1	Trunk	Memory, love, family, loss, reparation	Will, Dom	Shock, tears	
2	Trophy	Family, loss, mourning, memory, love	Kirsten	Relief	

OoA	Items for Repair	Reason for Repair	Artisan	Emotion	Notes
3	Cycling toy	Memory, family	Steve	Joy, laughter	
Episode 5/39 – BBC 1 – 01/10/20 – 4.30pm – 43 mins					
1	Child's drum kit	Memory, loss - grandchildren	Pete Wood	Joy, amazement, excitement	
2	Converted oil lamp	Memory, family, love	Steve	Welling up	
3	Treadle fretsaw	Memory, Family, Shame, Reparation	Dom	Excitement	
Episode 6/3 – BBC 1 – 01/04/20 – 8.00pm – 60 mins					
1	Portrait of mother	Memory, loss, love, family, mourning	Lucia	Nearly crying/hug	Quest repeat: missing leather armchair
2	Door panel	Reparation, family	Matt Nichols	Shaking, happy	
4	Musical box	Family, Memory, Love, Loss, Mourning	Steve Kember, Will	Excited/tearful	
Episode 6/8 – BBC1 – 25/11/20 – 8.00pm – 60 mins					
2	Banana barrow	Memory, memorial, family, reparation	Dom/Greg Rowland	Joy, thrilled	
3	Wallet	Memory, loss, mourning, love	Suzie	Very very emotional	
4	Model fire engine	Memorial, family, reparation	Brenton	Joy, goosepimples	Quest repeat: Missing homemade radio
Episode 6/14 – BBC1 – 10/03/21 – 8.00pm – 60 mins					
1	Family-made iron gate	Loss, mourning, reparation, memory, love, family	Dom, Nick	Joy, hug, tears	
2	WW1 watch	Loss, love, reparation, memory	Steve, Suzie	Tears from daughter	
4	Arcade Game	Memory, Loss, Family, Love	Jeff Harley, Will	Jo, /pleasure	Item returned to home as man ill, Quest repeat: Missing rocking chair
Episode 7/1 – BBC1 – 15/03/21 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Matchstick ship	Loss, family, mourning, reparation, love	Will	Tears	Made under COVID
2	Machinist's chair	Family	Sonaz, Dom	Delight	
3	Nipper HMV dog	Memory	Kirsten	Pleasure	
Episode 7/6 – BBC1 – 23/03/21 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Dad's sitar	Memory, culture, love, family, loss, mourning, reparation	Kavraj Singh	Speechless, tears	Indian immigrant

OoA	Items for Repair	Reason for Repair	Artisan	Emotion	Notes
2	Spitfire flying jacket	Memory, family	Suzie	Pleased, Wears it	Made under COVID
3	Mechanical bird toy	Childhood, memory, family	Steve	Joy	
Episode 7/11 – BBC1 – 15/04/21 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Iron rocking chair	Loss, memory, love, reparation, family, mourning	Sonaz	Excited tears, hugs	Made under COVID
2	Bear automaton	Memory, love, family, reparation	David Burville	V. emotional "heart pounding"	
3	Cowbell	Memory, friendship, mourning, love, reparation, neglect	Suzie	Excited	
Episode 7/16 – BBC1 – 05/04/21 – 3.45pm – 44 mins					
1	Chair	Memory, family, reparation, custodian, shame, childhood	Will/Sonaz	V. upset, brain haemorrhage	
2	Fireman's helmet	Family, father, loss, love, reparation - to keep alive	Susie	Crying overwhelmed	
3	Coffee grinder	Family, memory, childhood summers	Dom	Crying	Italian
Episode 7/21 – BBC 1 – 03/11/21 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Chesterfield chair	Family	Sonaz	Delight	Made under covid
2	Box made by Grandfather	Memory, loss, mourning, love	Brenton	Excited, Tears	
3	Silver bracelet from deceased wife 1978	Loss, memory, mourning, family	Richard Talman	Excited, Tears	
Episode 7/26 – BBC 1 – 08/11/21 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Statue from house sale	Family, memory	Brenton	Tearful, speechless excited	
2	Board suitcase - Windrush	Memory, family, reparation, going back to Jamaica	Susie	Emotional - no crying	Windrush
3	Giraffe	Memory, loss, love	Will	Pleased	
Episode 7/31 – BBC 1 – 15/11/21 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Chair - bought to sell	Family, memory, loss, heirloom	Susie	Tearful	2nd Gen Immigrant
2	Letter press	Family, memory, loss, keep them alive, childhood	Dom	Tearful, delighted excited	
3	Model Stuka	Family, Reparation	Steve	Relieved, impressed	
Episode 7/36 – BBC 1 – 22/11/21 – 4.30pm – 44 mins					
1	Venetian Kiddish cup	Family, reparation, heirloom, culture	Kirsten	Excited, cries shaking	Jewish

OoA	Items for Repair	Reason for Repair	Artisan	Emotion	Notes
2	Bobbin hat - Grandfather's	Family, memory, love, social history	Suzie	Excited, history pleasure, joy, physical	
3	Toby Horse - wooden	Family, love, joy, possible heirloom	Will		
Episode 8/1 – BBC1 – 21/04/21 – 8.00pm – 57 mins					
1	Charles II portrait	Family, Memory, Love, Reparation	Lucia	Excitement, astonishment	
2	Grandmother's engagement ring	Family, loss, love, memory, history, reparation	Richard	Silence, tears	
3	Trunk (Mahbuba)	Loss, Culture, Memory	Brenton, Will	Love, excitement, hugs, tears	Immigrant Zanzibar
4	Toy donkey	Twin, Comfort, Memory, Loss, Reparation, Love	Bear Ladies	Love, wobbly voice	
Episode 8/6 – BBC 1 – 29/09/21 – 8.00pm – 57 mins					
1	Dolls	Family, memory, love, motivation	Bear Ladies	Tears, hugs, v. emotional	
2	Jazz drumkit	Family, memory, love, passing on	Pete Woods	Smiles, excitement, quiet	
3	Terracotta figure	Culture, history, loss	Kirsten, Steve	Delight, laughter	Culture
4	German toy chest	Family, love, loss, custodian, honour relative	Lucia	Excited/joy	
Episode 8/11 – BBC1 – 05/01/22 – 8.00pm – 57 mins					
1	Speedway boots	Loss, mourning, tribute, memory, love, family	Dean	Grief object	
2	Father's keyboard	Reparation, Legacy, Family, Loss, Mourning	Dave Burville, Mark Stuckey		
3	Father made clock	Family, Love, Reparation	Steve, Will		
4	Grandfather writing slate and diary	Memory, Tribute, Legacy, Family	Brenton, Chris		British Raj
Episode 9/1 – BBC1 – 14/03/22 – 3.45pm – 44 mins					
1	Handbag	Memory, family, reparation, loss, love	Suzie	Gratitude hope	Windrush
2	Grandfather's Noah's Ark	Memory, family, loss, love, mourning - mother	Will, Dom	Laughter, joy	
3	WW2 Doll	Memory, family - heirloom	Bear Ladies	Excitement	
Episode 9/6 – BBC1 – 21/03/22 – 3.45pm – 44 mins					
1	Grandma's diary	Memory, family, love, loss, reparation	Chris	Excited, happy, emotional tears, hugs	Immigrant

OoA	Items for Repair	Reason for Repair	Artisan	Emotion	Notes
2	Leather apron	Loss, mourning, memory	Suzie	Low key, tries it on	
3	Toy Monkey	Memory, companion, family, mourning, loss	Bear Ladies	Tears, cuddles	
Episode 9/11 – BBC1 – 28/03/22 – 3.45pm – 44 mins					
1	Garden statue	Mourning, grief, family, love, loss	Brenton	Method of control raw emotion	
2	Father's clock	Reparation, memory, family, loss, custodian	Steve, Will	Excited, tearful	Trinidadian
3	Painting of Grandmother	Love, family, custodian, legacy	Lucia	Speechless, tearful	
Episode 9/16 – BBC1 – 04/04/22 – 3.45pm – 44 mins					
1	Sound system	Family, Memory (mum), Loss, Love, Mourning	Mark Stuckey	Silent, smiling	Windrush
2	Musical telephone	Collector, post memory lighter, family, memory (mum)	Steve, Kirsten	Excited/touch	Steve's repair has to be redone
3	Western saddle	Family, pride, memorial, custodian	Suzie	Excited, touch	Friend of family, befriended
Episode 9/21 – BBC1 – 24/10/22 – 3.45pm – 44 mins					
1	Black doll	Memory, loss, gratitude, friendship, reparation	Bear ladies	Excitement - physical	
2	Mess dress wellies	Memory, family, love, custodian	Dean	Excited, tries them on	
3	German POW-made ring	Family, memory, love, tribute	Richard	Calm - constant looking at it	
Episode 9/26 – BBC1 – 31/10/22 – 3.45pm – 44 mins					
1	Wife's engagement, wedding rings	Memory, love, loss, family	Richard Talman	Mixed – tears, hugs	
2	Penny slot machine	Memory, family, custodian	Geoff Harvey	Excited, pleased	
3	Writing box	Memory, loss, love, making people real	Will, Chris	Excitement "wow"	
Episode 9/31 – BBC1 – 07/11/22 – 3.45pm – 44 mins					
1	Airforce cap	Pride, love, heirloom, reparation, family, loss	Jayesh	Red eyed, gratitude	
2	Toy Giraffe	Childhood memory of uncle, love	David Burville	Excitement, joy, gratitude	
3	Commemorative silver cup	Family, memory, loss, reparation heirloom	Brenton	Pleased, thrilled	
Episode 9/36 – BBC1 – 14/11/22 – 3.45pm – 44 mins					

OoA	Items for Repair	Reason for Repair	Artisan	Emotion	Notes
1	Corner shop sign	Childhood, work, memory, family, love, loss	Dom	Excited, love, joy	Immigrant's corner shop
2	Son's bracelet	Memory, love, loss, mourning	Suzie/Brenton	Excited, keeps holding it	
3	Dancing bear sculpture	Reparation, family	Kirsten	Anticipation, excitement	
Episode 10/1 – BBC1 – 11/05/22 – 8:00 PM – 57 mins					
1	Huge wooden clock	Heirloom, pride, memory, loss	Steve/Steve's Son	Excited/tears/shaking	
2	Toy pedal car	Loss, love, memory	Dom	Excited/emotional	Dead brother
3	Poly, toy dog in kennel	Pride, memory, love, family	Kirsten/Mark Stuckey	Emotion	
4	Rotherham Utd football cap	Memory, family, community	Jayesh	Excited – daughter in tears	
Episode 10/6 – BBC1 – 15/06/22 – 8:00 PM – 57 mins					
1	Great grandmother's kitchen table	Childhood, loss, love, family	Will	Physically doesn't know what to do with himself	
2	Clown Shoes	Memory, loss, love, pride	Dean Westmorland	Excited, touched straight away	
3	Diorama of racecourse	Memory, loss, regret, family, pride, reparation	David Burville	Hopeful, shaking	
4	Blue Teddy Bear	Memory, loss, transit. obj. love	Bear Ladies	Excited, nervous, emotional, smile on my face	
Episode 10/11 – BBC1 – 7/9/22 – 8:00 PM – 59 mins					
1	Olympic torch	Pride, memory, legacy	Brenton	Excited, speechless, tearful	
2	Cuddly toy	Love, loss, memory, transit obj	Bear Ladies	Excited, tears, happiness	
3	Juke box	Loss, love, memory, legacy	Mark Stuckey/Nigel Robinson	Excited, tears at music	
4	Bailie village sign	Community, Loss, Memory, Pride	Dom	Physically excited, emotional	
Episode 11/1 – BBC1 – 2/1/23 – 3:45 PM – 43 mins					
1	Grandfather's alarm clock	Love, loss, memory, family	Steve	Happy tears	Windrush
2	Horse ornament	Memory, love, family, loss, mourning	Brenton	V. tearful, joy at such a small thing	
3	Rugby League cap	Family, pride, fear of loss of family memory	Jayesh	Almost unemotional, V. happy	
Episode 11/6 – BBC1 – 9/1/23 – 3:45 PM – 43 mins					

OoA	Items for Repair	Reason for Repair	Artisan	Emotion	Notes
1	Huge toy lion	Memory, love, loss, family, possible heirloom	Bear Ladies	Emotional, hugging touching	
2	Till	Memory, reparation?	Steve/Dave	Steve excited/laughter	
3	Father's telescope	Loss, memory, memory through use	Ricard Briggs, Suzie/Brenton	Excited, emotional	
Episode 11/16 – BBC1 – 23/1/23 – 3:45 PM – 43 mins					
1	Set of Shire Horse bells	Custodian, honour, tradition, heritage	Suzie	Excited/shaking	
2	Chair	Loss, mourning, love, comfort "transitional object"	Sonaz	Speechless/mourning	
3	Toy car	Memory, friendship, family	Steve	Laughing/See it alive	
Episode 11/21 – BBC1 – 21/8/23 – 3:45 PM – 43 mins					
1	Gucci handbag	Memory, love to pass on	Suzie	Tears	
2	Toy tractor	Memories, loss, family, love, pride	Dom	Excited, joy, touch	
3	Scissors	Memory, loss, love, heritage	Jonathan Reid, Dom	Excited, nervous, touch, smiles	Immigration
Episode 12/1 – BBC1 – 22/3/23 – 8:00 PM – 57 mins					
1	Madonna and Child Ukraine	Reparation, proof of existence memorial, custodian	Lucia	Tears, hugs, excitement, Lucia moved	
2	Kayak made by father	Memory, family, love, link pass on	Dom	Excited, smiles, touch, laughing	
3	Calendar cavern	Pride, memory, love from public	Angelina Bakalaron	Touch, excitement. pleasure	
4	Office chair	Family, memory, love, loss	Sonaz	Laughing, smiles, touch, excitement	
Episode 12/6 – BBC1 – 14/06/23 – 8:00 PM – 57 mins					
1	Ventriloquist's dummy	Memories, buoyant	David, Kirsten, Bear Ladies	Talks to dummy, hugs	
2	Brass cornet	Pride, mourning, love, family, reparation, loss	Pete Woods	Excited, touch, pleasure	
3	Father's chair	Memory, family, love, loss	Sonaz	Excited, pleased, says emotional	
4	Grandma's ornithological notebook	Love, loss, family, mourning	Chris Shaw		

Appendix B

The Repair Shop clips used in this study.

All clips are currently available on BBC iPlayer

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/b08l581p/the-repair-shop>

Series 4, episode 1 Albert Thompson's GEC radio 1.04.19

Widower Albert Thompson presents his broken GEC radio. He is accompanied by his daughter Lynn. On the walk to the barn, he holds her arm as she carries the box containing the radio. On arrival he shakes hands with Jay Blades, and, being out of breath, sits down to tell the story of how he and his wife purchased the radio prior to their marriage and how it accompanied them everywhere. The story is illustrated with black and white snapshots of the couple at this time. He points out how his nephew tried to mend the item, using three toothbrush handles as wave selectors. The radio stopped working two years to the day after she died as he is explaining this, Albert's grief is uncontainable, and he begins to cry. Blades reaches out to touch his arm in a gesture of support, assuring him that "it's alright" while Lynn puts her arm around him. Albert reiterates the importance of the radio in his piece to camera, before leaving.

Collecting the radio, Albert is shown leaning on Lynn, it is she who explains to camera how lost he has felt without it. He is greeted with a bear hug from Blades, and is overcome when he sees the radio, breaking down when he hears a particular tune played. He is comforted by his daughter and Blades as he listens, then explains what a good woman his wife was.



Figure 13 Albert Thompson and his daughter collect his radio

Series 4, episode 6 Julie Yates's rocking horse 8.04.19

Widow Julie Yates presents a dilapidated rocking horse that, in the past, she and her husband had renovated in the easiest way possible. Greeted by Will Kirk, she outlines the history of the horse, her children's reactions to it and the hope that it will be used by grandchildren.

Throughout this section she is touching the item. With a mixture of her narration and voiceover, her husband's sudden illness and death are explained. Snapshots of the couple are used at this point. Suggesting no particular desires for the way that she wants the horse to look after repair, she does request that a possible signature left by her husband during the first renovation, if found, is left. Although on the edge of tears she does not cry during the interview with Will, nor in her solo piece to camera.

The saddler, Suzie, does find the signature, and becomes emotional, explaining how her husband died of cancer, her unhappiness is such that her brother Steve, the horologist on the show, moves across to console her.

On collecting the horse Julie explains to camera how the restoration of the horse at *TRS* will complete what she and Paul would have done. She is determined that she will not get emotional, but appears delighted with the repair, saying that if her husband were there "he would shake your hands". She is, though, reluctant to touch the horse, and very reluctant to look under the saddle at the signature, she is shown it by Suzie. At this point she cries. There are shots of the artisans looking on and being similarly affected. The repair has brought the story full circle.



Figure 14 Julie Yates's reluctant to look at her husband's signature

Series 5, episode 17 Nowzad Khurshid's samovar 10.12.19

Nowzad visits the barn with his wife Karen. They have been married for fifty years. Nowzad recaps the samovar's history, its place in his family, it was his mothers and underlines its importance by telling of how it was the only thing he brought with him when he and his family fled Iraq. In his conversation with Brenton West, he stresses the samovar's importance in bringing back memories, however, he only touches it when outline damage and telling the story of how it got its dent. His recall of his siblings, his mother and his father provoke an emotional moment where he tries to compose himself.

On collection, he is emotionally moved on seeing the repair, although he forgoes Jay's consolatory gesture, preferring to relate that he will be using the samovar in two weeks' time when his grandchildren visit. In his piece to camera, he suggests that "my mother looking down on us now is happy to see [the samovar] in such good condition again".



Figure 15 Nowzad Khurshid demonstrating damage on his samovar

Series 5, episode 22 Helen Bannon's kickboxing trophy 8.9.20

Helen is alone when she visits the barn to present her broken and smoke damaged trophy. She was World kickboxing champion in 2011. She relates a story of injury, which meant that that was her last competition, an occurrence that has clearly affected her. To help her recover from this she adopted a dog. However, there was a fire in her flat during which she lost all her possessions, and her beloved dog died. One of the few things she rescued was the trophy. The

magnitude of the story and the feeling motivate Jay to offer a hug, which seems willingly accepted. She would like the trophy to remind her of a happy part of her life and provide memories in a flat where everything is “shiny new”.

Her collection of the trophy, a symbol of her moving forward in her life, seems low key. She is clearly pleased with the repair and delighted with the care taken over it as she gives Kirsten, the ceramicist who worked on it, a heartfelt hug, however, her responses are largely reasoned rather than emotional.



Figure 16 Helen Bannon receiving a hug having told of the death of her dog

Series 7, episode 31 Gary Shaw’s motorised toy war plane 15.11.21

Although transmitted after COVID-19 lockdowns had ceased, this episode was shot under COVID-19 protocols: neither Steve, who will repair the toy, nor Jay offers to shake Gary’s hand on meeting or leaving. The item arrives carefully wrapped. The toy was his father’s although it was not working at the time it was passed on to him. His father passed it to Gary. However, the plane sustained more damage during an argument a young Gary had with his sister; a snapshot depicts the two of them. Gary does not touch the toy as he presents it. Might this be an element of the COVID-19 protocols in place because Steve Fletcher certainly does “get his hands on it” when assessing the extent of the repairs needed. Gary talks about how many times he has attempted to get the plane repaired and how he will be “taking ownership” of the problems he has caused.

The collection also takes place under COVID-19 restrictions. Everybody is standing further apart than would be socially expected. Mid shots of facial expressions and bodily gestures are used to

temper the suggestion of restraint and provide an impression of closeness. As before, it may be that the restrictions in place demand that Gary cannot touch his item, his appraisal is visual although he says he has “looked carefully”. Gary’s explanation of what the fulfilment of his promise will mean to his father is accompanied by a picture of the two of them with, the implication is, the repaired plane. This item has not been repaired with original parts. To make it fly Steve Fletcher makes it clear that he has had to source and install a new, different engine.



Figure 17 Gary Shaw with his father and the repaired toy plane

Series 8, episode 1 Mahbuba Abdullah’s Omani chest 21.04.21

This episode, too, was shot under COVID-19 protocols. Mahbuba, who was exiled from Zanzibar as a child, arrives at *TRS* with her daughter. Leaving with “nothing”, the chest she presents was purchased subsequently in Oman as it reminded her of items that were commonplace in the Zanzibar of her youth. It has become the repository of Mahbuba’s history and something she would like repaired and restored so that she can pass it on to her daughter as she has nothing else from that time. Nadia, Mahbuba’s daughter, remembers it as a fixture of her childhood, but is upset that she has “no childhood photos of her mum” or that her mum “has no photos of her parents”. It is this, combined with a realisation that the chest is the only heirloom they have in the family, which prompts Nadia’s tears. Explaining what the chest looked like originally, Mahbuba touches the wood and traces the patterns of the studs on the surface.

On collection, Mahbuba and Nadia approach the barn holding hands. Mahbuba explains to camera how she has been thinking about the chest and the stories attached to it. On seeing the

renovation Mahbuba and Nadia immediately hug one another, with Nadia shedding tears as she touches the corner of the chest. Mahbuba likens the revived chest to “opening a history book”.



Figure 18 Mahbuba and her daughter, Nadia, collecting the repaired chest

Series 8, episode 14 Ross Brown’s Sailor’s hat 26.01.22

Ross arrives at the barn alone, carrying the hat in a brown paper bag. No handshakes are exchanged between Ross, Jay and Jayesh, the artisan hatter who will repair the cap, suggesting that COVID-19 protocols are still in place. Shots have been edited, though, to take away the suggestions of distance between those involved. Ross also touches the hat to illustrate damage before it is picked up and examined by Jayesh. It is not possible to know if these incidents occurred at the same time, or whether Jayesh handling the hat was edited in later.

Ross tells the story of his grandfather’s service during the Second World War, especially the occasion when he was torpedoed and bombed. The story is illustrated with snapshots of Ross’s grandfather, and the boat that was torpedoed on. Jay asks for the grandfather’s name and what Ross thought of him; he was in awe. Having been given the hat, Ross managed to stain it with green ink, about which he has felt guilty for fifty years. As a child, he used paper whitener to conceal the damage for his parents. His request is for the lining to still show wear and the handwritten name of his grandfather on the rim to remain.

Collecting the item Ross discloses that he wants to display the hat to honour the memory of his grandfather. He is delighted when the repair is revealed, touching the lining, and agreeing with Dominic Chinaea that it looks as if his grandfather “has just taken it off”.

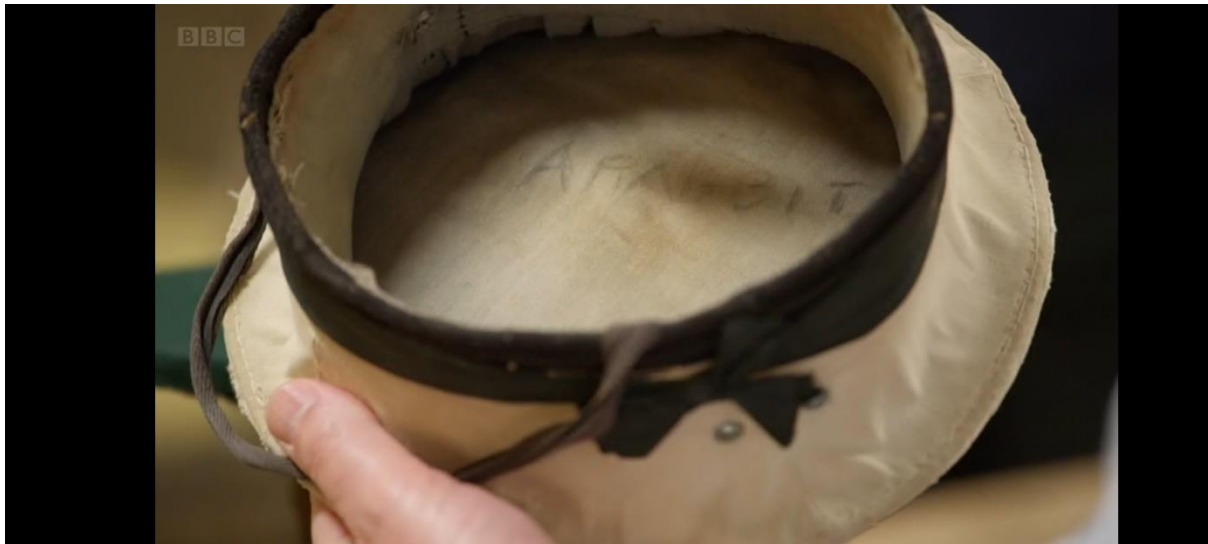


Figure 19 Ross's grandfather's unharmed handwritten name

Series 9, episode 3 Claire Funge's unfinished jewellery box 16.03.22

Covid shooting guidelines remain in place for this episode. Claire arrives at the barn alone. She is bringing with her a jewellery box her mother, now 84, began making at silversmithing classes when she was 21. After completing the first piece, Claire's mum, Christine, met her father and she ceased going to classes. The viewer is shown a photograph of a young Christine to accompany the early story, and several photos of a growing family as Christine put their needs before her own creativity. An ardent crafter, the family have always been proud of her achievements, the box, though, is something that has never been completed. Recognising that the box has lain in a drawer for over sixty years, Claire explains that she would like the box finished off as a gift to her mother who is in failing health. While talking about the box's history she does not touch the box, taken up with her narrative. As she explains what needs to be done though, she becomes more tactile, demonstrating what could be done to complete the box.

When collecting the item, Claire reveals that her mother has missed the box while it has been away, telling Claire things about her younger days that Claire had not previously known. Once the box is revealed Claire pulls it towards her, opening and shutting it, commenting on, and touching the work that has been done.



Figure 20 The completed jewellery box

Series 9, episode 6 Mashuk James' grandmother's diary/journal 21.03.22

Mashuk James arrives at the barn with his husband Paul. Their relationship is made clear in the introductory voiceover. The book is not wrapped as they come into the barn. After explaining what it is Mashuk is asked his grandmother's name, Lucy-Grace, and his relationship with her. As he talks, various photographs of them together confirm the story of closeness he is telling. Throughout, his husband Paul is shown nodding and smiling in agreement. He contributes by explaining that he met her, and, despite being from a different generation and culture, Lucy-Grace accepted them as a couple. Again, the viewer sees photographs to substantiate the story. Commenting on her open heart, Paul turns to Mashuk, to tell him that he, Mashuk, has inherited this from her. Touching the book gently, Mashuk demonstrates its fragility. He wants it to be repaired to a state where he is able to "read it every now and then [...] have a little chat with her". The final comment from Mashuk is that "seeing us do this will really make her happy".

The couple collect the repaired book four years to the day she died. Jay Blades suggests that it is "meant to be" and that all Mashuk really wants is to hold it. He agrees. On receiving the book Mashuk and Paul move closer together so that they may both look at it again, and smile at each other in seeming confirmation of what they are experiencing. As Mashuk speaks about his grandmother again, and becomes emotional, Paul puts his arm around him in a supportive gesture. The book is passed between them so that they both may touch it. In their piece to camera, Mashuk admits that he did not expect "how much it would mean to us to get it

restored”, while Paul concludes that touching the diary is like having a hug from Lucy-Grace again.



Figure 21 Mashuk and his husband Paul on receipt of the repaired diary

Series 10, episode 3 Barry and Bernadette’s musical jewellery box 25.02.22

Barry and Bernadette walk to the barn arm in arm, as they do so she is pointing things out to him. In the voiceover they are referred to as lifelong sweethearts. Barry carries the bag holding the jewellery box for repair. As he tells the story of the box he keeps his hands on it, she does not take her eyes off him. Barry was a soldier in Malaya in the early 1960’s, and, because Bernadette kept writing to him, he sent her the musical jewellery box. Unfortunately, it arrived in a battered state, so, in their fifty-eight years together Bernadette has not seen it working. When asked why she didn’t throw it out, she replies “you don’t throw summat away that is sent to you by somebody you love, do you?” She has used it ever since. Jay Blades and Steve Fletcher are shown smiling at the answer and seem completely charmed by the couple and the story of their first meeting which hints at a strong physical attraction. They work out that Barry was 22 when they met, Bernadette 17, which elicits a “We’ve done well, haven’t we lad?” from Bernadette.

They walk back to the barn arm in arm to collect the repaired box. The viewer has already seen an exchange between Steve and Jay when they say how excited they are about the meeting, which is characterised by joyful giggling. Barry explains that the box has been on display for the fifty-four years of their marriage and that it represents their lasting love for each other. He repeats this in their piece to camera at the end. Barry is asked to reveal the repair, which is unusual, although COVID-19 protocols are still in place for this series. As they look at, and

touch the box, the couple get even closer, pointing things out to one another. Bernadette spontaneously kisses Barry as she is so pleased. Participants and presenters are delighted.

In their piece to camera, Bernadette thanks Barry “because it’s so nice”, and articulates the “pleasure and feeling inside you” that material items can provide.



Figure 22 The joy of collecting the repaired jewellery box

Series 12, episode 1 Maria Kirk’s painting of Madonna and Child 22.03.23

Although this episode was aired considerably after COVID-19 restrictions had been lifted generally, there is still some evidence that certain protocols are in place during the shooting of this episode. The artisans/presenter may stand close together, however, programme participants are still placed a distance away. The painting, a large nineteenth century painting of the Madonna and child, is in the barn before Maria arrives. She is alone. It has survived being rolled up and hidden by Maria’s Ukrainian grandmother and her daughters when they were interned in a labour camp during the Second World War. The viewer is shown a studio photographic portrait of the three women, and then an image of Maria’s mother taken for the labour camp. Although the grandmother died in the camp, her daughters survived and passed on the painting to Maria who now feels as if she is a custodian, she dreams of returning the painting to her grandfather’s church in the Ukraine, pictured, which is still standing. She agrees that she doesn’t want to lose the damage as that would make it “just ... a painting”. Jay is the only person to touch the item.

To collect the painting Maria is wearing yellow, the item is behind a blue cloth, both referencing the Ukrainian flag. At the time of transmission, the war in the Ukraine had been active for nearly a month. Maria is excited but trying to keep calm. She indicates that she feels as if her mother is with her, as she had always spoken about the painting and how it had given the three women strength during their ordeal. She cries as she passes her hands over the painting. Thanking everyone profusely she says that she would like to hug everyone. No hug is forthcoming.



Figure 23 Maria Kirk's reaction to her restored painting

Appendix C

The Repair Shop – Cast

Name	Role	Appearances	
Jay Blades	“Foreman”/Presenter/Upholsterer	234 episodes, 2017–2024	
Bill Patterson	Narrator	275 episodes, 2017–2025	
Robert Pugh	Narrator	61 episodes, 2018–2021	
Will Kirk	Wood worker, Carpenter and Joiner	250 episodes, 2017–2025	
Dominic Chinea	Metal worker	221 episodes, 2017–2025	
Steven Fletcher	Horologist	210 episodes, 2017–2025	
Suzie Fletcher	Saddler and Leather expert	157 episodes, 2018–2025	
Brenton West	Silversmith, Antique photography expert	144 episodes, 2017–2025	
Kirsten Ramsay	Ceramicist	134 episodes, 2017–2025	
Julie Tatchell	The Bear Ladies, Soft toy expert	112 episodes, 2017–2025	
Amanda Middleditch	The Bear Ladies, Soft toy expert	110 episodes, 2017–2025	
Lucia Scalisi	Art restorer	74 episodes, 2017–2024	
Mark Stuckey	Radio and Electronics expert	56 episodes, 2019–2024	
David Burville	Organ and Mechanical toy expert	48 episodes, 2019–2024	
Sonnaz Nooranvary	Upholsterer	41 episodes, 2018–2024	
Chris Shaw	Bookbinder	41 episodes, 2019–2025	
Pete Woods	Musical instrument expert	33 episodes, 2019–2025	
Richard Talman	Goldsmith and Jewellery expert	28 episodes, 2018–2024	
Dean Westmorland	Cobbler	26 episodes, 2021–2024	

Steven Kember	Musical box expert	20 episodes, 2017–2023	
Julyan Wallis	Luthier	19 episodes, 2020–2024	
Tim Gunn	Bicycle expert	18 episodes, 2019–2024	
Jayesh Vaghela	Hatter	16 episodes, 2021–2024	
Matthew Nickels	Stained glass expert	15 episodes, 2018–2024	

<https://m.imdb.com/title/tt6685272/fullcredits/cast>

Appendix D

Ethics Approval



Research Ethics Checklist

About Your Checklist	
Ethics ID	48112
Date Created	12/02/2023 17:22:22
Status	Approved
Date Approved	04/05/2023 10:32:59
Risk	Low

Researcher Details	
Name	Hillary Stevens
Faculty	Faculty of Media & Communication
Status	Postgraduate Research (MRes, MPhil, PhD, DProf, EngD, EdD)
Course	Postgraduate Research - FMC
Have you received funding to support this research project?	No

Project Details	
Title	<u>Touching objects: a psychoanalytic analysis of BBC Television series The Repair Shop</u>
Start Date of Project	23/01/2023
End Date of Project	20/07/2023
Proposed Start Date of Data Collection	21/04/2023
Original Supervisor	Candida Yates
Approver	Christopher Pullen

Summary - no more than 600 words (including detail on background methodology, sample, outcomes, etc.)
The Repair Shop is a programme which was first aired on BBC2 in March 2017, occupying a late afternoon slot. It showcases the restoration and renovation of "cherished family heirlooms...bringing them back to life" (BBC Two 27 March 2017). The aim of this research is to explore how the representation of touch in the visual medium of television can act to evoke familial memories of comfort and consolation. It will examine the tactile and emotional encounters <i>The Repair Shop</i> creates for participants and audiences around the restoration of neglected, dilapidated and damaged material family items. The study investigates the cultural and social values precipitating the programme's success during lockdown, as well as pre and post covid restrictions in the U.K. The use of a psychoanalytic framework will allow for the appreciation of the motivation for renovation, the role of touch in supporting emotional security and the wider significance of the cultural landscape that led to the show's move to prime time on the BBC's main channel. Few studies have considered the role of touch in the validation or creation of family memories or its contribution to feelings of comfort and consolation; indeed few have paid attention to hapticity: Waade and Jørgensen (2010) provide an exception. This research seeks to connect debates in areas of television studies, touch, memory and psycho-cultural studies to develop a greater awareness of the ways in which television has the opportunity to affect participants and viewers of shows.

Close textual analysis of segments and episodes within *The Repair Shop* programmes will afford an examination of how physical touch is represented, how this representation creates an emotional connection to the past for participants and how emotional responses and experiences may be communicated to viewers. Focus groups and individual interviews will allow insights into the reasons for the success of the show to date and offer indications that will help to determine the cultural repair that is potentially embraced through the foregrounding of tactility on the show.

Nine episodes of *The Repair Shop* have been selected: three each from pre, during and post pandemic series. Each show features the repair of three or four items (depending on the show's running time). Episodes will be examined to ascertain structure, processes and rhythms contributing to the creation of emotion: segments within these shows will be analysed for exemplification and mediation of key themes of love, loss, grief, family and repair and the role played by the foregrounding of touch.

Additionally this research will analyse qualitative data gathered through focus groups and semi-structured individual interviews. In this way the project seeks to explore the significance of familial artefacts, the importance of touch in prompting memories, the recognition of the representation of touch on the programme and the psycho-cultural significance of the success of *The Repair Shop*. These discussions will allow consideration of the show as a psychoanalytic object of individual and cultural significance.

It is the intention to run two focus groups of up to six participant each. After these discussions I will conduct follow-up one to one interviews with members of the groups. The groups will facilitate collective talk about the show and its themes and allow the screening of segments. The interviews will grant more intimate discussion and include the presentation of objects the participants might wish to be repaired on the show.

Anonymised quotations and photographs of objects may be used in the study. Interviews and focus groups will be recorded, transcribed and stored according to university protocols as will images of objects.

Filter Question: Does your study involve Human Participants?

Participants	
Describe the number of participants and specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used	
This research will work with up to twelve participants aged over 50 who have a familiarity with <i>The Repair Shop</i> . Those born after 1946 (baby boomers) and 1965 (generation X) are where the programme is most popular and recognised (YouGov, 2023). 60-64 year olds are the wealthiest demographic by age group (www.ons.gov.uk, 2022). They are most likely to have inherited material objects from their families, have items to pass on themselves and to be considering their roles as repositories of family history (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 2002). The lower age imposes exclusions, as does geographical location as recruitment will be confined to areas which can be comfortably visited.	
Do your participants include minors (under 16)?	No
Are your participants considered adults who are competent to give consent but considered vulnerable?	No
Is a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check required for the research activity?	No

Recruitment	
Please provide details on intended recruitment methods, include copies of any advertisements.	
I intend to recruit participants from a local gym which runs sessions for the particular age group pertinent to the study. These potential participants are acquainted with one another which, I believe, will encourage and prompt memories. I am a member of this gym so am acquainted in a limited capacity with some of the people in these groups. The group meets twice weekly. Approaches will be made in person once ethical approval has been gained. I will make my role as a researcher clear. I intend to distribute participant information sheets and consent forms at this initial approach. The central themes of the project will be highlighted and the possible pain and upset of memories indicated in order that potential interviewees can make a clearly informed choice about participation. Consent forms will be collected in person where the group meets within the following fortnight and possible focus group meeting times arranged. I will make my university email address available to ensure that any questions and concerns may be promptly addressed.	
Do you need a Gatekeeper to access your participants?	No

Data Collection Activity

Will the research involve questionnaire/online survey? If yes, don't forget to attach a copy of the questionnaire/survey or sample of questions.	No
Will the research involve interviews? If Yes, don't forget to attach a copy of the interview questions or sample of questions	Yes
Please provide details e.g. where will the interviews take place. Will you be conducting the interviews or someone else?	
Individual follow up interviews to focus groups will afford more intimate discussion of the themes of the show, and those raise in collective discussion. They will also permit the showing and consideration of articles participants might wish to present to the programme. These interviews will take place in the participant's home, or rooms located on the gym premises where the potential participants meet regularly. I will be conducting and recording interviews, which will be transcribed promptly. In line with psychosocial research practises, field notes will be compiled immediately following the interview. Notes will promote the attention to affective states and enhance reflexivity.	
Will the research involve a focus group? If yes, don't forget to attach a copy of the focus group questions or sample of questions.	Yes
Please provide details e.g. where will the focus group take place. Will you be leading the focus group or someone else?	
As the participants of the focus group will be acquainted and recruited from a specific location, meetings will take place in rooms on the premises where those participating regularly meet. I anticipate that I may wish to meet on up to two occasions and will certainly wish to carry out follow up interviews with members of the groups. I will conduct and record the focus groups myself, transcribing the discussions promptly. In line with psychosocial practises, field notes will be made directly after the meetings. Such notes allow attention to be paid to the affective dynamics of the group and enhances the reflexivity of the project. Throughout the study the participants will be made aware that they may contact me through my Bourmemouth email address.	
Will the research involve the collection of audio recordings?	Yes
Will your research involve the collection of photographic materials?	Yes
Will your research involve the collection of video materials/film?	Yes
Will any photographs, video recordings or film identify an individual?	No
Please provide details	
Video and audio recording are for the purposes of transcription and observation only. None of the recordings will be put into the public domain. Photographs too, are for observation and description purposes and will not be put into the public domain.	
Will any audio recordings (or non-anonymised transcript), photographs, video recordings or film be used in any outputs or otherwise made publicly available?	No
Will the study involve discussions of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, criminal activity)?	No
Will any drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) be administered to the participants?	No
Will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potential harmful procedures of any kind?	No
Could your research induce psychological stress or anxiety, cause harm or have negative consequences for the participants or researchers (beyond the risks encountered in normal life)?	No
Will your research involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	No
What are the potential adverse consequences for research participants and how will you minimise them?	
It is always possible that memories can be painful. Potential participants will be alerted to this prior to taking part in the research, thereby allowing choice not to proceed. There is no intention to dwell unduly on hurtful experiences. During a focus group discussion or interview, participants will be asked if they need a break.	

Consent	
Describe the process that you will be using to obtain valid consent for participation in the research activities. If consent is not to be obtained explain why.	
I am a member of the gym from which I wish to recruit participants so am acquainted in a limited capacity with some of the people. The particular group I wish to target meets twice weekly. Approaches will be made in person once ethical approval has been gained. I will make my role as a researcher clear. I intend to distribute participant information sheets and consent forms at this initial approach. The central themes of the project will be highlighted and the possible pain and upset of memories indicated in order that potential interviewees can make a clearly informed choice about participation. It will also be made clear that research cannot take place until consent forms have been returned. Consent forms will be collected in person where the group meets within the following fortnight and possible focus group meeting times arranged. Potential participants can also request this information and the consent form electronically through my Bournemouth University email address. I will make my university email address available to ensure that any questions and concerns may be promptly addressed.	
Do your participants include adults who lack/may lack capacity to give consent (at any point in the study)?	No
Will it be necessary for participants to take part in your study without their knowledge and consent?	No

Participant Withdrawal	
At what point and how will it be possible for participants to exercise their rights to withdraw from the study?	
Throughout the study participants will be reminded of their right to withdraw. Participants will be able to exercise their right to withdraw up until the data has been coded and anonymized by contacting me via email.	
If a participant withdraws from the study, what will be done with their data?	
Participant data may still be used in collated form. Participants will be made aware of this when signing the consent form. Photographs can be removed and destroyed as can transcripts of focus group contributions and any individual interview transcripts up until the data has been coded and anonymized.	

Participant Compensation	
Will participants receive financial compensation (or course credits) for their participation?	No
Will financial or other inducements (other than reasonable expenses) be offered to participants?	No

Research Data	
Will identifiable personal information be collected, i.e. at an individualised level in a form that identifies or could enable identification of the participant?	Yes
Please give details of the types of information to be collected, e.g. personal characteristics, education, work role, opinions or experiences	
It will be necessary to collect participant's real names and contact details in order to map them to their objects and transcripts for the research and also in case any participant decides to withdraw their data at an early stage.	
Will the personal data collected include any special category data, or any information about actual or alleged criminal activity or criminal convictions which are not already in the public domain?	No
Will the information be anonymised/de-identified at any stage during the study?	Yes
Will research outputs include any identifiable personal information i.e. data at an individualised level in a form which identifies or could enable identification of the individual?	No

Storage, Access and Disposal of Research Data	
During the study, what data relating to the participants will be stored and where?	During the study the following data will be collected: names, contact details of participants in order to facilitate mapping of objects and transcripts and to facilitate withdrawal of data if necessary. Contact will be through my Bournemouth University email address. Recordings of focus groups and interviews, images and videos of objects for transcription and description. These will be stored on a password protected and encrypted University laptop. Transcripts of focus groups and interviews as well as images will be stored on University provided laptop. Once recordings of the focus groups and interviews have been transcribed and anonymised, they will be deleted as participants could be identifiable.
How long will the data relating to participants be stored?	The data will not be stored longer than necessary. Once the project completes, anonymised research data will be stored on BU's online Research Data Repository "BORDaR".
During the study, who will have access to the data relating to participants?	During the study access to data will be confined to myself and my supervisors.
After the study has finished, what data relating to participants will be stored and where? Please indicate whether data will be retained in identifiable form.	Once the project completes, anonymised research data will be stored on BU's online Research Data Repository "BORDaR".
After the study has finished, how long will data relating to participants be stored?	After the degree has been awarded, in line with University guidelines, there will be no need for data to be stored.
After the study has finished, who will have access to the data relating to participants?	After the study has finished participant data access will not be available outside the University.
Will any identifiable participant data be transferred outside of the European Economic Area (EEA)?	No
How and when will the data relating to participants be deleted/destroyed?	Data relating to participants will be securely disposed of, in consultation with IT Services in electronic format and placed in confidential waste bags should there be any hard copy data.
Once your project completes, will your dataset be added to an appropriate research data repository such as BORDaR, BU's Data Repository?	Yes

Dissemination Plans	
How do you intend to report and disseminate the results of the study?	
Peer reviewed journals, Conference presentation	
Will you inform participants of the results?	Yes
If Yes or No, please give details of how you will inform participants or justify if not doing so	
On completion of the writing up stage of the project I will offer participants the opportunity of listening to, and commenting on, a short presentation about my findings. The invitation to the informal event will be offered through email correspondence or face to face invitation	

at the gym.

Final Review

Are there any other ethical considerations relating to your project which have not been covered above?	No
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Risk Assessment

Have you undertaken an appropriate Risk Assessment?	No
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Attached documents

Focus group guide interview.docx - attached on 21/03/2023 14:44:24
Hillary Stevens Info sheet interviews 2.docx - attached on 21/03/2023 14:44:30
Hillary Stevens information sheet focus Group 2.docx - attached on 21/03/2023 14:44:38
Participant Agreement Form Focus Group 2.docx - attached on 21/03/2023 14:44:46
Participant Agreement Form interviews 2.docx - attached on 21/03/2023 14:44:57
Sample Guide for Semi Structured Interview 2.docx - attached on 21/03/2023 14:45:06

Appendix E

Participant information sheet



Ref & Version Repair 1:
Ethics ID: 48112
Date: 21.03.23

Participant Information Sheet – Focus Groups

The title of the research project

Touching Objects: An exploration of Touch and Memory in the BBC series *The Repair Shop*

Invitation to take part

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of this project is twofold: first, to explore the BBC television series *The Repair Shop* and the way it depicts relationships to emotionally significant family objects, and its themes of repair and renovation. This includes investigating audience perspectives on the show.

Secondly it will explore the memories and emotions people themselves invest in objects that have been passed down through their families.

The project will involve both focus groups and interviews. You are being invited to take part in both. This is the information sheet that explains the focus groups. Group conversations in the focus groups, of four to six participants, will take place first. Here we will view clips from *The Repair Shop* together. The focus group will last up to ninety minutes. Subsequent one-to-one interviews will last approximately forty five minutes to an hour. I will be asking interviewees to bring a significant object with them to the interview, one that might be taken onto *The Repair Shop* if invited, as part of our discussion of memory, emotion and family keepsakes.

Why have I been invited?

I am inviting people in the over 50 age bracket to participate in this project because *The Repair Shop* has proven particularly popular with people who have reached the stage in their life where they are inheriting family keepsakes. You will have rich memories of people and places that have become attached to objects in your possession. I would be pleased if you could share these memories, and the items that prompt them in a focus group. I would like to recruit a group of between four to six people who will be willing, initially, to spend approximately one to one and a half hours, collectively sharing their thoughts and memories. We will also be watching clips from *The Repair Shop* in order to discuss your thoughts and feelings on the way the show presents treasured objects and the memories and emotions associated with them and their repair.

Appendix F

Focus group participant consent form

Ref & Version: Repair 2

Ethics ID number: 48112

Date:21.03.23



Participant Agreement Form- Focus Group

Full title of project: (“the Project”) Touching Objects: An Exploration of the BBC TV series *The Repair Shop*

Name, position and contact details of researcher: Hillary Stevens PhD

hstevens@bournemouth.ac.uk

Name, position and contact details of supervisor: Professor Candida Yates

cyates@bournemouth.ac.uk

To be completed prior to data collection activity

Section A: Agreement to participate in the study

You should only agree to participate in the study if you agree with all of the statements in this table and accept that participating will involve the listed activities.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet Repair 2 and have been given access to the BU Research Participant Privacy Notice which sets out how we collect and use personal information (https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/governance/access-information/data-protection-privacy).

I have had an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop participating in research activities at any time without giving a reason and I am free to decline to answer any particular question(s).

I understand that taking part in the research will include the following activity/activities as part of the research:

being audio recorded during the project	
my words will be quoted in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs without using my real name.	
I understand that, if I withdraw from the study, I will also be able to withdraw my data from further use in the study except where my data has been anonymised (as I cannot be identified) or it will be harmful to the project to have my data removed.	
I understand that my data may be included in an anonymised form within a dataset to be archived at an appropriate research data repository such as BORDaR (BU's Data Repository).	
I understand that my data may be used in an anonymised form by the research team to support other ethically approved research projects in the future, including future publications, reports or presentations.	
	Initial box to agree
I consent to take part in the project on the basis set out above (Section A)	

Section B: The following parts of the study are optional

You can decide about each of these activities separately. Even if you do not agree to any of these activities you can still take part in the study. If you do not wish to give permission for an activity, do not initial the box next to it.

	Initial boxes to agree
Permitting photographs of my selected treasured object for the purpose of inclusion in research outputs	

I confirm my agreement to take part in the project on the basis set out above

_____ Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS)	_____ Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	_____ Signature
		_____ Signature
_____ Name of researcher (BLOCK CAPITALS)	_____ Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	_____

Once a Participant has signed, **please sign 1 copy** and take 2 photocopies:

Original kept in the local investigator's file

1 copy to be kept by the participant (including a copy of PI Sheet)

Appendix G

Interview information sheet



Ref & Version: Repair 2
Ethics ID: 48112
Date: 21.03.23

Participant Information Sheet - Interviews

The title of the research project

Touching Objects: An exploration of Touch and Memory in the BBC TV series *The Repair Shop*

Invitation to take part

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of this project is twofold: first, to explore the BBC television series *The Repair Shop* and the way it depicts relationships to emotionally significant family objects, and its themes of repair and renovation. This includes investigating audience perspectives on the show.

Secondly it will explore the memories and emotions people themselves invest in objects that have been passed down through their families.

The project will involve both focus groups and interviews. You are being invited to take part in both. This is the information sheet for interviews. Group conversations in the focus groups, of four to six participants, will take place first. Here we will view clips from *The Repair Shop* together. The focus group will last up to ninety minutes. Subsequent one-to-one interviews will last approximately forty five minutes to an hour. I will be asking interviewees to bring a

significant object with them to the interview, one that might be taken onto *The Repair Shop* if invited, as part of our discussion of memory, emotion and family keepsakes.

This project will be written up and completed in January 2026

Why have I been invited?

I am inviting people in the over 50 age bracket to participate in this project because *The Repair Shop* has proven particularly popular with people who have reached the stage in their life where they are inheriting family keepsakes. You will have rich memories of people and places that have become attached to objects in your possession. I would be pleased if you could share these memories, and the items that prompt them in a focus group. I would like to recruit a group of between four to six people who will be willing, initially, to spend approximately one to one and a half hours, collectively sharing their thoughts and memories. We will also be watching clips from *The Repair Shop* in order to discuss your thoughts and feelings on the way the show presents treasured objects and the memories and emotions associated with them and their repair.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a participant agreement form. We want you to understand what participation involves, before you make a decision on whether to participate.

If you or any family member have an on-going relationship with BU or the research team, e.g. as a member of staff, as student or other service user, your decision on whether to take part (or continue to take part) will not affect this relationship in any way.

Can I change my mind about taking part?

Yes, you can stop participating in study activities at any time and without giving a reason.

If I change my mind, what happens to my information?

After you decide to withdraw from the study, we will not collect any further information from or about you.

As regards to the information we have already collected before this point, your rights to access, change or move that information are limited. This is because we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. Further explanation about this is in the Personal Information section below.

What would taking part involve?

You will be asked to take part in an individual informal interview about the memories some objects you own might hold for you as well as their significance. You will be encouraged to show an item that you might take on *The Repair Shop* if you had the opportunity. In this interview, ideas raised in the focus group will be discussed in more depth and, given your permission, your object photographed and possibly videoed. Interview sessions will be limited to one hour.

Will I be reimbursed for taking part?

Beyond refreshments and cake, you will not be reimbursed for your time.

What are the advantages and possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits to you participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will shed new light on how family heirlooms are appreciated and understood culturally and that you will find taking part interesting.

Whilst we do not anticipate any risks to you in taking part in this study, memories can sometimes be surprising or upsetting. We will, therefore pause the interview at any point if you indicate that you would like a break.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

You will be asked about your thoughts and feelings concerning family and inherited objects, memories, repair and the significance you place on such items. Your opinions and ideas will shed light on the cultural significance these memories and artefacts hold, the comfort, or discomfort they might cause, and the way in which these objects subjects are understood socially.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

The interviews will be recorded. The audio recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and some anonymised quotations from the transcription of the recording(s) for illustration in my thesis and in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

Equally any photographs or video taken of the objects you show may be used for illustration in conference presentations and lectures without identifying you personally. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

How will my information be managed?

Bournemouth University (BU) is the organisation with overall responsibility for this study and the Data Controller of your personal information, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it appropriately. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest, as part of our core function as a university.

Undertaking this research study involves collecting and/or generating information about you. We manage research data strictly in accordance with:

- Ethical requirements; and
- Current data protection laws. These control use of information about identifiable individuals, but do not apply to anonymous research data: “anonymous” means that we have either removed or not collected any pieces of data or links to other data which identify a specific person as the subject or source of a research result.

BU’s [Research Participant Privacy Notice](#) sets out more information about how we fulfil our responsibilities as a data controller and about your rights as an individual under the data protection legislation. We ask you to read this Notice so that you can fully understand the basis on which we will process your personal information.

Research data will be used only for the purposes of the study or related uses identified in the Privacy Notice or this Information Sheet. To safeguard your rights in relation to your personal information, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible and control access to that data as described below.

Publication

You will not be able to be identified in any external reports or publications about the research without your specific consent. Otherwise your information will only be included in these materials in an anonymous form, i.e. you will not be identifiable.

Research results will be published in my PhD thesis and in subsequent research papers or book chapters in academic publications.

Security and access controls

BU will hold the information we collect about you in hard copy in a secure location and on a BU password protected secure network where held electronically.

Personal information which has not been anonymised will be accessed and used only by appropriate, authorised individuals and when this is necessary for the purposes of the research or another purpose identified in the Privacy Notice. This may include giving access to BU staff or others responsible for monitoring and/or audit of the study, who need to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations.

After the interview has been transcribed your data will be coded and anonymised prior to any publication of findings.

Further use of your information

The information collected about you may be used to support other research projects in the future and access to it will not be restricted. You will not be able to be identified in the data without your specific consent. To enable this use, the data will be added to an appropriate research data repository such as BORDaR (BU's Data Repository): [this is](#) a central location where data is stored, which is accessible to the public.

Keeping your information if you withdraw from the study

If you withdraw from active participation in the study we will keep information which we have already collected from or about you, if this has on-going relevance or value to the study. This may include your personal identifiable information. As explained above, your legal rights to access, change, delete or move this information are limited as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. However if

you have concerns about how this will affect you personally, you can raise these with the research team when you withdraw from the study.

You can find out more about your rights in relation to your data and how to raise queries or complaints in our Privacy Notice.

Retention of research data

Project governance documentation, including copies of signed **participant agreements**: we keep this documentation for a long period after completion of the research, so that we have records of how we conducted the research and who took part. The only personal information in this documentation will be your name and signature, and we will not be able to link this to any anonymised research results.

Research results:

As described above, during the course of the study we will anonymise the information we have collected about you as an individual. This means that we will not hold your personal information in identifiable form after we have completed the research activities.

You can find more specific information about retention periods for personal information in our Privacy Notice.

We keep anonymised research data indefinitely, so that it can be used for other research as described above.

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Contact for further information

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact my lead PhD supervisor Professor Candida Yates cyates@bournemouth.ac.uk

In case of complaints

Any concerns about the study should be directed to Professor Scott Wright - Faculty of Media & Communication Bournemouth University by email to researchgovernance@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Finally

If you decide to take part, you will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed participant agreement form to keep.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project.

Hillary Stevens PhD Researcher at Bournemouth

hstevens@bournemouth.ac.uk

Appendix H

Interview participant consent form

Date: 21.03.23



Participant Agreement Form - Interview

Full title of project: (“the Project”) Touching Objects: An Exploration of the BBC TV series *The Repair Shop*

Name, position and contact details of researcher: Hillary Stevens PhD
hstevens@bournemouth.ac.uk

Name, position and contact details of supervisor: Professor Candida Yates
cyates@bournemouth.ac.uk

To be completed prior to data collection activity

Section A: Agreement to participate in the study

You should only agree to participate in the study if you agree with all of the statements in this table and accept that participating will involve the listed activities.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet Repair 2 and have been given access to the BU Research Participant Privacy Notice which sets out how we collect and use personal information (https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/governance/access-information/data-protection-privacy).
I have had an opportunity to ask questions.
I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop participating in research activities at any time without giving a reason and I am free to decline to answer any particular question(s).
I understand that taking part in the research will include the following activity/activities as part of the research:
being audio recorded during the project

my words will be quoted in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs without using my real name.	
I understand that, if I withdraw from the study, I will also be able to withdraw my data from further use in the study except where my data has been anonymised (as I cannot be identified) or it will be harmful to the project to have my data removed.	
I understand that my data may be included in an anonymised form within a dataset to be archived at an appropriate research data repository such as BORDaR (BU's Data Repository).	
I understand that my data may be used in an anonymised form by the research team to support other ethically approved research projects in the future, including future publications, reports or presentations.	
	Initial box to agree
I consent to take part in the project on the basis set out above (Section A)	

Section B: The following parts of the study are optional

You can decide about each of these activities separately. Even if you do not agree to any of these activities you can still take part in the study. If you do not wish to give permission for an activity, do not initial the box next to it.

	Initial boxes to agree
Permitting photographs of my selected treasured object for the purpose of inclusion in research outputs	

I confirm my agreement to take part in the project on the basis set out above.

_____ Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS)	_____ Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	_____ Signature
		_____ Signature
_____ Name of researcher (BLOCK CAPITALS)	_____ Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	_____

Once a Participant has signed, **please sign 1 copy** and take 2 photocopies:

Original kept in the local investigator's file

1 copy to be kept by the participant (including a copy of PI Sheet)

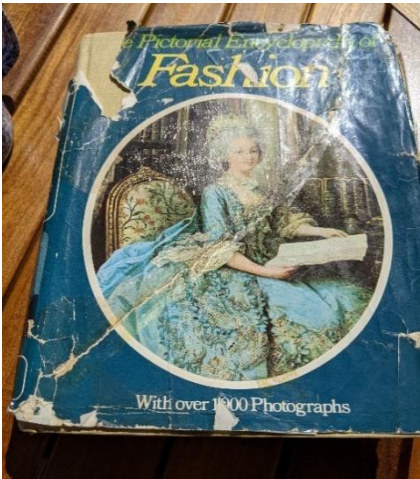
Appendix I

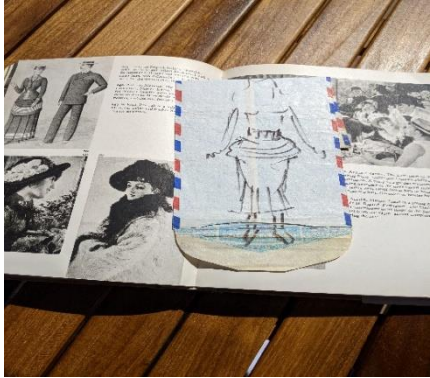
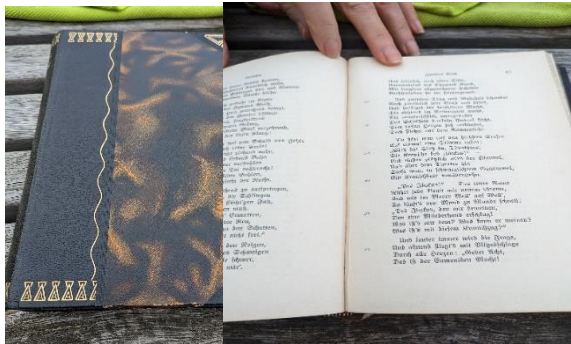
Participant description and items

Participant	Participant's item for repair	
P1– Female, retired primary teacher and university lecturer, mid 70s, married, two grown up children, both living away from home	Raffia cricket	
P2 – Female, retired dental nurse, mid 70s, married, grandmother, children with families of their own	Item a) Childhood soft toy, once brown, now blue	
	Item b) The participant's grandfather's chair. A possible 'shadow object' as, although loved, this has now become difficult to move from the loft	

P3 – Female, late 50s, working freelance full time, married, 2 adult children, one living away from home	Participant's grandmother's engagement ring	
P4 – Male, mid 60s, married working part time after retirement, from sports industry, two grown up children no longer living at home	This is the item the participant would save from a fire. It is a family piece from his wife's family.	
P5 – Male, mid 70s, retired secondary school maths teacher, doting grandfather. Married to P6	The watch was presented to this participant's father on his retirement from the company that he had spent more than 25 years with.	
P6 – Female, mid 70s, retired secondary school science teacher, married to P5	This participant's grandmother's ring: a source of contention in the family	

P7 – Female mid–late 70s, retired primary school teacher, grandmother regularly looking after grandchildren. Herself the youngest of four siblings, currently living alone.	Item a) The doll the participant had as a child, lost and returned to her later in life, as is the case with some of her father’s possessions	
	Item b) Images of participant with the above object, one contemporary with the doll as a gift, one recent.	
P8 – Female, retired nurse now in mid to late 70s, married. Her children have moved away, have successful careers in medicine and families of their own.	Personalised Mother’s Day card	There is no image of this item.

P9 – Female, retired primary teacher, mid to late 70s, married, her adult son has recently moved away from home. Her father had recently died.	Item a) Mounted but unframed family photograph	
	Item b) Second item from grandmother's home, reminiscent of childhood holidays.	
P10 – Female, mid 60s, professional artist, grown up family living away from home	Item a) Cover cherished object, present from her father	

	Item b) Drawing participant completed as a child which remains in the book.	
P11 – Female, early 70's. Academic, children with families living away from home. Grandmother. This was the only participant to offer a 'shadow object'	Item a) Pincushion, object for repair in damaged state ...	
	Item b) Interior and exterior of 'shadow object' offered by participant – copies of Friedrich Schiller's complete works, in Gothic script	

	Item c) Second ‘shadow object’ offered by participant – china passed down matriarchal line	
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Appendix J

Focus group interview guide

Focus Group Guide

Hillary Stevens – Sample questions for focus group

Welcome and brief introduction.

I will explain that the focus group will be in two sections. In one section we will watch some clips from *The Repair Shop* and discuss them, in the other we will talk about our own relationships to inherited or emotionally significant objects.

Brief introductions around group.

SECTION ONE The Repair Shop

We are going to watch three clips from *The Repair Shop*. I have chosen one that was filmed pre pandemic, one that was shot during lockdown and a more recent one.

Show clip 1 Albert Thompson-Series 4 ep 1

Show clip 2 Mahbuba Abdullah-Series 8 ep 1

Show clip 3 Maria Kirk-Series 12 ep 1

What sort of emotions do these three clips bring up for you? *There are no right or wrong answers.* I am interested in whatever you feel.

Prompts

- Emotions around the pandemic?
- Emotions around your own relationships with inherited/treasured objects?
- Emotions about the programme itself?
- Emotions about the participants and their relationships to the objects presented?

- What do you think about the way the programme presents people's relationships to objects? For example the way that the object are touched and handled? The way the objects are talked about by the participants/the craftspeople? The way the item is revealed at the end?
- What do you think about the way the programme presents the repair and restoration of objects? For example are repairs fixes or do they fulfil some other function?

Watching these clips, what vision of Britain emerges from *The Repair Shop* would you say? *There are no right or wrong answers.* I am interested in whatever you feel.

SECTION TWO Inherited and Emotionally Significant Objects

- What type of objects have you inherited or been gifted which have particular familial or friendship significance? Are there any that you particularly treasure?
- Can you tell us the story behind one such item? -*go round group*
- Has the inheritance of objects caused any family drama, positive or negative, in your families?
- Have you inherited or been gifted any objects which you have a more difficult relationship with? For example do you think it ugly, do you not have room for it, does it upset you emotionally but for various reasons you are unable to give it away? – *go round group*
- What are your views on passing on particular objects yourselves? Do you already have particular objects that you know you would like to go to particular family or friends?

Appendix K

Interview guide

Sample Guide for Semi-Structured Interview

This interview will follow on from a focus group.

Welcome, thank you so much for previously taking part in the interesting focus group discussion.

Now we will have the opportunity to speak in greater depth about a particular item you have selected and brought with you, one which is particularly significant for you.

I would like to remind you that I am recording this interview, for transcription purposes and that I will, with your permission, be taking a couple of photos of your chosen object. Can you please confirm that you have received the participant information sheet explaining this project to you and that you have understood agreed with and have signed the Participant Consent Form?

Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your family?

The object

- Can you tell me what your treasured object is and describe it?
- Can you tell me more about the story behind your object? For example, when you first became aware of it, what it meant to you then and perhaps what it means now?
- If it was given to you, who gave it to you? What was your relationship with them?
- Do you have memories of other items? Why do you think they might not be as significant as this one?

How you appreciate the object

- Can you tell me how it makes you feel when you look at, touch or use this item?
- What would be the best way to describe how you appreciate it? For example, do you enjoy looking at it, does its smell, touch or its sound bring back memories?
- Other than sight/sound/touch/smell, what is the most significant sense for you with this object? Can you explain?
- Who or what do you connect with the item most? Can you suggest why?

- Has the object always brought back these feelings or have they changed in the length of time you have had it? Can you explain how? Why do you think this might be?
- Does it happen to you what happens to this item in the future? Could you say why?

Touch and Comfort-transitional objects

- Do you remember your first soft toy/something you carried around with you as a toddler? Can you describe it?
- Do you remember it most through its touch or smell or something else?
- Do you know what happened to it?
- What objects do you remember being particularly emotionally significant in the houses you grew up in?

Repair and damage

- Does your object look the same as you remember it from first seeing, holding or hearing it?
- How has it changed?
- Has it suffered any damage?
- Would you like to have it repaired, or if the item got damaged in future, would you like to get it repaired?
- What is your thinking behind that?

The future of the object

- Is there anybody in your family/friends that you would like to pass this object on to?
- Could you explain why?
- Do you think this item might mean different things to other family members? What/why might that be?

Shadow objects

- We have talked about treasured items, but are there any that you feel ambivalent about or even hostile towards but still keep? What is the story behind this/these items?

Thank you so much for talking to me about memory and treasured/emotionally significant objects. Can we just close the interview by coming back to *The Repair Shop* for a little while?

The Repair Shop

- If you were a regular or occasional viewer of *The Repair Shop* can you tell me a little bit about your viewership, for example when do/did you watch it? Did you watch it with others or discuss it with others afterwards?
- When the programme ends what stays with you the most? Why do you think that might be/
- Are there any particular moments you remember more clearly than others?
- Why do you think the programme is particularly popular with older viewers?
- If you were not a viewer before taking part in this research, tell me a bit more about whether you will watch it in future. There is no right or wrong answer to this..

Thank you so much for your time.

Appendix L

Pilot Focus Group Transcript—illustrative extract

[First Focus Group.m4a](#) 11.05.23

This group was set up as a pilot, but the data has been used in the study. The discussion took place at P1's house. Tea and cake were provided. Transcripts of the clips shown are in red.

Transcript

	HS	Really good. Right. OK. So, I'm going to show you three clips as I said, and we'll stop after each one, and we'll have a chat about each one. Do tell me if you can't see because I'm not quite sure if this is as clear as it could be.
00:00:34	The Repair Shop (TRS)	Suzie I'm liking what I see
00:00:35	<i>The Repair Shop</i> Voiceover (TRS VO)	Say utilising expertise passed down the generations.
00:00:41	TRS	I'm going to teach you how to.
00:00:42	TRS VO	transforming priceless pieces of family history.
00:00:47	Albert Thompson	Ohh my goodness me.
00:00:48	TRS VO	<i>The Repair Shop</i> team will resurrect the items, the memories and the stories behind them.
00:00:54	Speaker 9	I'm gonna have to hug you.
00:00:57	TRS Pre title	Ohh look at ...
00:00:58	TRS Pre title	... that ohh thank you so much
00:00:59	TRS Pre title	You you can't see it because it tears ...
00:01:02	TRS Pre title	... in my eyes.

00:01:04	TRS Pre title	This is a very emotional job to do, but incredibly worthwhile.
00:01:29	TRS VO	In The Repair Shop today.
00:01:31	Mark Stuckey TRS	It's like a whodunnit, And I'm gonna find the culprit, the smoking.
00:01:36	TRS VO	Amanda and Julie grappled with a giant while Steve comes to the rescue of the rather special clock, and in the nick of time.
00:01:38	TRS	This is probably the biggest bear that we've ever worked on.
00:01:47	Steve Fletcher TRS	it is as bad as I thought.
00:01:49	Steve Fletcher	It was at. Any point this could have given way. And it would have been catastrophic.
00:01:59	TRS VO	But first into <i>The Repair Shop</i> today, widower Albert Thompson and his daughter, Lynn. He's hoping the team can help restore a beloved item that holds dear memories ...
00:02:09	TRS VO	... for him.
00:02:10	Jay Blades TRS	You must be Lynn.
00:02:11	Lynn	I am yes. Hello. Yes.
00:02:12	Jay Blades	How would you doin' Albert? Ohh you're alright.
00:02:14	Albert Thompson	A bit out of breath.
00:02:18	Jay Blades	Well, take a seat. You're more than welcome. What have you got here?
00:02:20	Albert Thompson	A dilapidated radio, an old GEC.
00:02:25	Jay Blades	Yeah, Mark, if you don't mind joining me.
00:02:27	Mark Stuckey	Yes, of course.
00:02:28	Albert Thompson	It's got quite a bit of history to it.
00:02:30	Jay Blades	Well Mark's our expert on radio. Hello.
00:02:32	Mark Stuckey	Mark. Pleasure to meet you both.
00:02:35	Jay Blades	You mentioned it's got quite a bit of history. Tell me about it then Albert.
00:02:38	Albert Thompson	Well, me and the wife, Eileen, first started courting. We've been courting about a year and then while I was

downtown, we saw these. I think it was in Booths, they used to sell all sorts. At that time there. And it was up there, and it was two pound fifty me and the wife clubbed together and, and, we bought it and we used take it all over with us, you know, like your car and get out of car go off beach when once we got on the beach and this were going. Everybody started to come towards us ...

00:03:12 Jay Blades So, this radio has been like the life of the party for a lot of people and also the family.

00:03:18 Lynn Used to go on holiday with us as well. It's had a good life.

00:03:19 Albert Yeah,

00:03:20 Jay Blades. It's had a good life, it's had a brilliant life.

00:03:23 Albert Thompson ... and it's lasted for years and years. And in 19, I think it were 1985 it just stopped. And we've got. I couldn't get it to go. And a nephew of mine fiddled about with electrics and that and he got it going. Those on there, my nephew, they're off of toothbrushes. They are. Those are 3 toothbrushes and, and, that's, that's what he did to get it going apart from that it's, it's right, I mean that's, that's the original on there. Right.

00:03:57 Mark Stuckey You can tell the amount of use the fact the handles always the first things to go.

00:04:01 Albert Thompson Yeah, I ... I don't have it in the greenhouse. And then like, two years ago, it stopped, and it was 2 years to the day when [unintelligible] passed away. She were an absolute ace. And, er I really do miss her, and it's never gone since. Yeah.

00:04:22 Mark Stuckey So, it's very precious to you isn't it?

Albert Thompson I just wondered if you can do anything with it and get it ... get it repaired so that ...

00:04:35 Jay Blades We'll get this sorted for you, how about that? Thank you for bringing this in alright.

00:04:39	Albert Thompson	Yeah. Means so much to me and my family.
00:04:42	Jay Blades	Yeah, of course I would.
00:04:43	Albert Thompson	Yeah, you will look at you will look after it won't you?
00:04:45	Albert/Lynn	Thank you. Bye.
00:04:48	Jay Blades	Take care now. Bye.
00:04:52	Albert Thompson	The radio to me, it means a lot. It was 1950s when we bought it. So yeah, it's been with us a long, long time.
00:05:04	P3	OK. Did you bring these tissues?
	P1	What's the toothbrushes? Ohh, I see.
	P3	The knobs.
00:05:17	HS	What do you think was most noticeable about the clip?
00:05:21	P1	I must admit, when I watch programmes like this somewhere maybe not so much the content, but like how the camera is placed so, umm, into the technical production of it rather than the content, and then after a time, because then it can't counterbalances and think 'are we being manipulated here?' and OK, so the camera's here and they must have moved it around there and ... so I am cynical.
00:05:52	HS	So what? So go on then. Explain your cynicism.
00:05:58	P1	Well, the kind of, the emotion of the bloke, who obviously is genuine and authentic and sincere and everything, but then in the, this is the first 5 minutes of the programme, and, and we were already like having our heartstrings pulled to, you know, like extreme And I think what? Ohh you know. Come on. Just go easy on the, you know, kind of like, emotional bit, just I, I don't like being emotionally manipulated.
00:06:33	HS	So don't apologise. I mean, how do you, how do you think they, you talk about the camera, how do you think about have done it?
00:06:42	P1	Oh, it's got about, about four or five different camera places, so they edit it down. I was interested in how they found this bloke who's obviously, again, he's, you

		know, you warmed him straight away. He's, he's not putting on any airs and graces and it's absolutely genuine Again, we think it's ... they've chosen him because of that. Everything is chosen, is a conscious decision on behalf of the director, obviously, so that they can maximise how the audience are feeling.
00:07:21	P2	Umm, I think it's because the objects have to be quite interesting. When it first goes in the barn, that's the biggest impact on me. It's fabulous from the outside, then when they go through, all the the, the boys and girls that are fixing. How did they find the talent? And it's for [unintelligible] and some just like radios to pieces, a teddy bear to pieces, don't they? Where can they find these people? Where did they learn those skills?
00:07:53	HS	Tell me a bit more about the barn. You were fascinated by ...
00:07:55	P2	The barn and the colour of it, the shape of it. The wood and I don't know whether it's an original one or whether they built it for the programme ... not just ... but it's gorgeous.
00:08:06	HS	Can you say a bit more about that, I mean you say the, the colour of the wood and the ...
00:08:11	P2	I just love it, I, I just ... I just like building. I like the colour of wood and I love the shape of the roof and I've seen it in the snow when it's been snowing and they put lights around it, all times of year. But, I do admire the talent. The stories are gorgeous, too. I love the stories. I'm always reduced to tears every episode because there's always something heartbreakingly gorgeous about the history of things that ... it's the talent that the lady that works the leather. The only thing I know about them is that one of them, my brother and sister. Might, might, might be the guy that takes the clocks to pieces and

		that lady and they're brother and sister aren't they? I don't know where they get this talent from
00:08:55	HS	What about the reaction of the presenters to when, when Albert sort of started sobbing? Did you?
00:09:02	P2	I would have just cuddled him. He's ... I don't think he's ... I don't know. There's something about him that holds ... he holds back a bit, doesn't he? If someone ... shows an emotion. Who, Jay. Hmm.
00:09:14	P3	They're probably used ... maybe they're used to it.
00:09:16	P1	It's part of the process and the ...
00:09:19	P3	But I noticed the barn as well. In the barn there was two things that I noticed most. It was the barn and the surroundings and it's like it's in the countryside and the noises of the ... you know ... the workmanship.
00:09:29	P2	Oh, no, no.
00:09:31	P3	And then the fact that when people see it, they always bring their hands to their face. Yeah. Yeah. Their hands are as close to the face. So, it's that kind of ...
00:09:36	P2	They do when they cover it. It looks like I remember. Yeah, yeah.
00:09:47	P3	We bring our hand to our faces. When?
00:09:50	HL	Yes, I do, but all the objects that, you know, they bring are kind of like everyday objects, so we're bound again. We're bound to, in the first 5 minutes, go 'I Had a radio like that. I I remember using a radio like that', so we connect straight away, don't we? We, we make a connexion with them, and we go ... and, and probably it starts a conversation at home. 'We had one of those didn't we', 'yeah, do you remember?' ...
00:10:13	P2	Yeah. Yes, that's right, I remember, there was a dog on wheels, and I had to call my sister. What did we call that dog? Dobbin.
00:10:26	P1	Yeah, I know. So very clever. Hmm.

Appendix M

Interview Transcript—illustrative extract

- P6: ... The tree thing, family history thing of course they all mean a little bit more.
- HS: Ohh, right. OK. So tell me about them. Oh, no, start with, tell me about your family, your family, and then we'll talk about those. So, tell me about a bit about you and your family.
- P6: Don't really know what to start. One brother who's died. Mother, Father, Fathers, one of was one of three two sisters. Mother had one sister, obviously they're all dead. Basically, family going back, miners, mainly miners.
- HS: In which part of Wales?
- P6: South, that's the South Wales.
- HS: And which part of South Wales? Just I'm just ...
- P6: Valleys, valleys. So M— near B—. OK, but my father's father, so my paternal grandfather, originally came from P—. From a little village called M—, right, which is ...
- HS: Right
- P6: ... on the coast, not overlooking the coast, just inland a tiny bit. But you could walk to the coast. It's lovely. And he was one of five children, I think maybe six. And presumably because there wasn't any work, he came to South Wales to work in the mines, and he lodged with my grandmother's family.
- HS: Oh, how lovely
- Participant6 With my grandmother's parents. So that's obviously how they met and they used to ... I can't work out how many times they went back, but they went back to live for periods of time in M— [with them].

HS: Right?

P6: Don't know why, but this scene on ... With this family tree history, you look up the censuses and the censuses and every, as you know, every 10 years and ...

HS: Yeah.

P6: So I can, you know, I've been able to trace quite a bit back and my great-grandfather on that side was a merchant seaman ...

HS: Alright,

P6: ... so that was what he did. So in some of the census is he's not there.

HS: And you start thinking ... why not?

P6: But it says for, you know, Seaman's wife or similar, Sailor's wife or similar. But I found the ships he was on, which is really nice and one of the times he was in dock in N—, M—, which is where I come from. And another time he was on a ship in L—. Those they just went round the coast trading or whatever.

HS: Yeah, but local rather than transatlantic ...?

P6: Yeah yeah, I would have thought so, yes. So that was quite interesting. And then I looked up this village M— on the website on Google, and it comes up. It's got a fantastic website. It's tiny little village, but all sorts of information about it, including photographs of the properties my grandparent ... great-grandparents lived in.

HS: How wonderful.

P6: It's brilliant.

- HS: What it's ... it's quite something cause I went back to see my grandfather's house in C—. I don't know why it meant so much to go and see it again. And why it meant ...
- P6: Oh, it does trigger a lot of memories, doesn't it?
- HS: Yeah, but do you ... you never went to the houses in ...?
- P6: No, no, because that that was that was my great-grandfather's, yeah.
- HS: Great-grandfather's yeah. Was... you said your father was a headmaster?
- P6: No teacher, senior, teacher then, if you like, metal work and woodwork technical drawing, that sort of thing, because he ... because his father was involved in a pit accident and had his back broke and was paralysed my father had to leave school early to earn money for the family. So, he went into the building trade and became a carpenter. But then the war came. He was in the RAF. And he worked as a mechanic on the aeroplanes. And then he seconded him out to train apprentices in G— in brake linings ... C— that was, which is where I grew up, and then he went from that into teaching by going to night school.
- HS: That's quite something, isn't it? The thread of self not self-help you know self-education goes through the whole Welsh ...
- P6: Yeah, definitely. And the most amazing thing is my grandmother's first cousins, my grandma's first cousins ... Two blokes, B— and G— and then there was a girl who was disabled of some description I don't know. Can't find out how. And their father was miner, obviously they were all miners, but one of the, one of the sons, B—, he was a solicitor. Hmm. And then he won a prize in the eisteddfod for his literature and poetry and was crowned a Bard.

Appendix N

Field notes

Focus Group 18.05
At
Here
Participants 4, 5, 6
concerned that [redacted] would be difficult and answer questions monosyllabically
concerned that [redacted] and [redacted] would argue. They didn't.
Holding it here was a different feeling, although they did not defer to me. Fewer intimate questions - cake certainly helps to relax - it allows an afternoon tea atmosphere
They too had brought things with them, which does make me doubly concerned that I have written something wrong in the notes - although it is too late now.
[redacted] did refer to one another, but only once or twice.
Picked up completely different things from previous group. Idea that the pastoral setting is 1950's - wonder why?

This group needed more prompting - perhaps because they do not know each other well i.e. [redacted] does not know Graham and Elena as well as the other group knew each other.

When describing own items used hands to outline shape, size where they were, how they were displayed.

More talking over one another in this one. Each worked well.

Was surprised by some answers and the open nature of discussion...

Participant 9
13th June - midday, her house - Interview
I don't know [redacted] in the focus group she sat next to me so that I couldn't really work on any facial expressions, on top of that I couldn't work out her voice when transcribing, so I don't really know her views. I feel under-prepared.
Being at an interviewee's house does make 'placing' them a little easier, however it makes the social aspect more difficult.
What to wear can become a worry. You want to appear professional and businesslike, but equally when you are asking for 'confessions' you need to appear friendly and approachable. Do you also need to share like experiences?
I want for Skirt + shirt, businesslike then, though. On the interview worried that I had read the conversation and said much too much. Yet again no difficult object. It is hidden away in the loft.
[redacted] father had recently died, so we talked about clearing out the family home. [redacted] is one of a large family, so she didn't find the job too easy, they had also started the job in lockdown. However, she felt overwhelmed by stuff, which had coloured her own attitude to what she had in her house.
Another interviewee who talked about
Spending summers with grandparents.
Clearing out as therapy.
Selling items, having them valued her attitude to this was never fully explained, but talk about how some books or items have gone as a fashion i.e. Gollum.
I very - not sure about whether she wants it - China figurines - being polite meant she was given them - now in the loft.
Therapeutic - depends what I'm throwing out.
Family archive - letters particularly - custodians.
Ditching or not forgetting, but not hanging on to.
Sorting photos into albums - digital display of photos.
Touching photos as she talks about people - frames of photos - changing how you appreciate the items.
The power furniture was not touched during the story.
beds, stone hot water bottle. - items taken into school - overwhelmed by amount of stuff.
Feeling that letting stuff go is a good thing.
Doesn't mind what will happen to things after she has died - items makes her feel secure.
Bridge - no though - about them - always surprised what her granny had repaired - what she herself had repaired - some pride in this.
Repair, fix, mend connotations - may just be words.
TAS - comfortable, especially the teddy bear ladder.
They are relaxed about it, pride,
Sat at an angle to each other - circular table.