



## Makeover welfare: *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops* and the cultural politics of second-hand under austerity

**Alida Payson**

Cardiff University, UK | [paysonAB@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:paysonAB@cardiff.ac.uk)

### ABSTRACT

This paper brings together literature on welfare, austerity and second-hand cultures with theories of the makeover to analyse the cultural politics of charity shops in the UK, and their real aftereffects. Based on an analysis of two television programmes, a 2009 BBC Two reality television makeover programme *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops*, and a camp, cult-hit comedy web series, *Charity Shop Sue* (2019), the article traces the politics of makeover culture in second-hand spaces. In the first programme, retail celebrity Mary Portas sweeps in to make over a shabby British charity shop, sweeping out old things, people, and spaces, to make way for new ones. Tracing how the programme not only valorises but causes changes across the charity retail sector, the article shows how a regime of the makeover of things, people, and places in charity shops relates to a regime of real-world austerity politics I call makeover welfare, in which makeover is offered instead of welfare. Yet despite efforts to enforce makeover welfare, second-hand things, people, and places resist and escape this regime. In the second programme, analysing the camp satire of *Charity Shop Sue*'s failed makeovers, I unpack second-hand's counter-aesthetic: a surprisingly durable second-hand politics located in unruly tatt, stubborn subjects, and rummage spaces. Further, because charity shops are important but overlooked instruments of welfare provision and governance, understanding their cultural politics opens up insights into how late capitalism is lived and felt.

### KEYWORDS

Cultural politics of austerity, makeover television, charity shops, welfare, second-hand cultures

### CITATION

Payson, Alida (2022), 'Makeover welfare: *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops* and the cultural politics of second-hand under austerity', *JOMEK Journal* 17, 'Second-hand Cultures in Unsettled Times', ed. Alida Payson, Triona Fitton, and Jennifer Lynn Ayres, pp. 136-157.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18573/jomec.233>

**ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION** 1 October 2022

## INTRODUCTION: AUSTERITY, CHARITY SHOPS, CRISIS AND REMEDY

In the introductory shots of BBC Two's 2009 reality makeover programme *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops*, as the camera skims past a very ordinary British town, a portentous voiceover

augurs familiar crises: “we’re in the middle of the worst financial crisis and environmental crisis in living memory. People want bargains, and they want to be a bit greener” (Episode 1 2009). Released in the immediate aftermath of global financial collapse, hollowing neoliberal promise, and rising awareness of climate catastrophe, celebrity retail maven Mary Portas swoops in to solve these crises by making over a shabby Save the Children charity shop. Over three episodes of bullying, cajoling, training, and redecorating, Portas restyles the charity shop’s things, people, and space: viewers witness a reality programme with surprisingly real political and social effects. Not only did *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops* precipitate other charity shop refurbishments across the UK, but Portas was subsequently commissioned by the UK Government to makeover the ailing British high street itself in The Portas Review (2011), with ‘Portas Pilot Towns’ that trialled her recommendations (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government 2012). Portas’s shop makeover programmes seemed to promise to makeover the economy itself. Along with making over shops and streets, *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops* works to makeover people and country, as a remedy for unsettled times. Since 2009, too, second-hand spaces like charity shops have attracted increased interest from government, industry, charities, and citizens (ven der Velden 2021; Kneese et al. 2022) as remedies for pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Charity retail shops selling second-hand clothes, furnishings, and objects, from party frocks and slumpy sofas to tea cups, books, vintage vinyl and plastic children’s toys, are ubiquitous in British cities and towns. Shops are familiar features of everyday life as sites of shopping, donating, and volunteering, but are also big business: the Charity Retail Association notes that shops pre-COVID-19 pandemic involved 250,000 people as volunteers, recycled thousands of tonnes of goods, and brought £270 million in revenue to charities (Harrison-Evans 2017, pp. 30-32; Paget and Birdwell 2013). While charity shops might not seem like stalwart arms of the welfare state, scholarship has pointed out the entanglement of charity retail in welfare provision and governance (Nickel 2016). Charity shops have long been a part of what scholars call the ‘welfare mix’, that mix of formal and informal relationships and organisations on which people actually rely for getting by (Henrikson, Smith and Zimmer 2015; Nickel 2016). But charity retailers are also enmeshed in welfare governance through direct services such as job training and their ‘shadow state functions’ (Maddrell 2017, p. 223): among them, ties with health, social care, taxation, policing and prison infrastructures (Horne and Maddrell 2002; Fitton 2013; Ayres 2019). This involvement in welfare governance is nothing new, but a historic, constitutive feature of second-hand charitable enterprises, rooted in 19th and 20th century Christian and colonialist endeavours to dispatch social inequities through charity (Horne and Maddrell 2002 p. 1-4; Le Zotte 2013; Gosling 2021). Yet the significance of charity shops to the politics of welfare provision and governance, especially as these have shifted under neoliberalism and austerity, has tended to be

overlooked.

Broadcast in 2009, in the aftermath of the financial crisis, *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops* presages how the UK government will respond to collapse and catastrophe: with austerity framed as thrifty makeover. Since the financial collapse of 2008, succeeding coalition and Conservative UK governments have enacted the harshest and most dramatic cuts to the welfare state since its post-World War II formation, with profound and uneven effects on people's lives and health (Bassel and Emejulu 2018; Tyler 2020). In the UK, these policies of austerity, such as excoriating cuts to health and social care, alongside punitive sanctions and privatization of services, have caused serious harm. Harms include rates of child poverty rising to nearly 40% (Tyler 2020, p. 167), deepening suffering and inequality (Pemberton et al. 2017), and tens of thousands of excess deaths (Allen et al. 2015, p. 908; Martin et al. 2021). The emptying of public welfare relief means people have turned to other forms of support for survival, such as mutual aid and a third sector that strains to fill the gaps (Izlar 2019). With need intensifying under the cost-of-living crisis, too, spaces like charity shops have, like food banks, become ever more important resources for some people for getting by and making do (Edwards and Gibson 2017; Edwards 2022). But the harms and force of austerity extend beyond tangible policies to cultural politics.

These policies of austerity have been licensed and driven by cultural narratives: powerful, emotive ideas of thrift, frugality, meritocracy, makeover, shame, and stigma against welfare 'scum', among others (Tyler 2008; Littler 2013; Jensen 2013a, 2013b; Coleman 2016; Tyler 2020, p. 190). As noted in a 2014 blog for the *Economist*, "thrift is in", not only for individual households, but for government welfare programmes (Nickel 2016, p. 174; Jensen 2013a). Austerity's narratives, in what Jensen (2012, p. 4) calls its 'new thrift culture', deny histories of oppression and make the cruelty of austerity governance credible, even warranted—a kind of common sense. This article starts from the idea, therefore, that understanding the political force of austerity requires understanding the cultural forms through which austerity's emotional social imaginary circulates (Payson and Moore 2022): among them, the cultural politics of charity thrift. It starts from the premise the "regimes of representation" and "regimes of value" of second-hand spaces (Gregson and Crewe 2003, pp. 51, 115) matter to the cultural politics of austerity, as well as to the realities of how people live in the economy of the present. In this approach, I develop the work of Patricia Mooney Nickel (2016) on the moral economies of charity thrift giants in the United States. Nickel (2016, p. 176) argues that charity retailers enforce an "ascetic of thrift" that governs through a coupled process of "degradation" (defining certain things and people as a problem in need of recuperation) and "rehabilitation" (by reselling castoff things, and training outcast people). The degradation and rehabilitation of things and people work through a "cycle of

consumption and discard [that] involves both material and moral transformations of value” (Nickel 2016, p. 185-186), or makeover.

Refracting, too, what Angela McRobbie (2004, p. 99) has called the violence of makeover culture, here I trace how the makeover of things, people, and place in charity shop popular culture relates to a regime of austerity politics I call makeover welfare. Moreover, I show how makeover welfare—in charity shops and beyond—reveals itself to be a paradigmatic political remedy for managing things, people and places marginalised by the present. Yet it is not the only aesthetic regime at work in second-hand cultures. Alongside *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops*, this article also examines the cult hit comedy web series, *Charity Shop Sue* (2019), set in a fictional Sec\*hand Chances charity shop in Bulwell, England, which satirizes makeover culture with camp abandon. Through *Charity Shop Sue* (2019), I explore how the second-hand offers a stubborn counter-aesthetic to makeover welfare. This politics is located in the unruliness of the rummage, of camp and tatt, and the stubborn care of the marginal.

To understand charity shop makeover television, however, we first need to understand the broader conjuncture of makeover culture and welfare governance. After addressing debates on the politics of makeover television, the article is structured into three sections: 1) the makeover of things; 2) the makeover of people; and 3) the transformation of space.

### ***Makeover television makes makeover welfare***

The ‘makeover takeover’ (Moseley 2000) at the turn of the millennium prompted a large body of scholarship on the cultural and political significance of reality makeover programmes as training for how to live in demanding and uncertain times (McRobbie 2004; Ouellette and Hay 2008, p. 18; Skeggs and Wood 2008; Orgad and Nikunen 2015, p. 229). For these scholars, makeover television is all about neoliberal governance: a promise that the good life will come through proper self-management. Makeover television makes a scene of the lives of people forsaken by state welfare support before proposing the makeover in its place. In fact, many of these programmes show explicit ambitions to reform the nation. With Victorian and early twentieth century charity ladies and social workers as their predecessors (Ouellette and Hay 2008, p. 471), celebrities like Portas (or Jamie Oliver) make over civil society through a mix of televised melodrama, branded corporate partnerships, entrepreneurial projects, and direct policy advising.

By dramatizing and normalizing the makeover of the welfare state, makeover television is not coincidental to austerity government, but instrumental to it (Ouellet and James Hay 2008, p. 472; Lewis 2008; 2012). Programmes use the tastes of the white, middle-class expert, as in the case of Portas, a stylish, self-proclaimed ‘queen’, to force target groups’ everyday

lives into bourgeois alignment, while making a spectacle of their inevitable failure (Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008; Skeggs and Wood 2008, p. 560). And the makeover has only continued to takeover, as programmes such as *Tidying Up with Mari Kondo* or *Queer Eye* (Netflix, 2019–2022), open up new, more emotionally tender but no less ambitious makeovers of things, people, and forms of government.

At the same time, other lines of popular culture satirise and resist the ‘makeover takeover’. Instead of bougie Mary Portas, for example, in *Charity Shop Sue* (2019), we have another redhead, a character played by Selina Mosinski. Sue circulates through a budget comedy web series set in a fictionalised charity shop, *Sec\*hand Chances*, and regular reels, stories, and videos on social media. Instead of Portas’s glamorous bourgeois polish, Sue serves irrepressible, brash and unabashed working-class femininity, with shellacked ‘90s hair, tight skinny jeans, and a signature red lip. *Charity Shop Sue* pokes fun at the ritualised degradation of makeover culture, with one failed scheme after another, as in Part 2: The Makeover (2019b); Part 3: The Refurb (2019c), Part 10: Grand Designs (2019f), or Part 16: It’s the new me (2019g). Where scholars critique standard makeover television as ‘regulating the abject’ of working-class femininity (Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008), *Charity Shop Sue* embraces the abject with a sequined, queer flourish. Hand-cam, pseudo-documentary-style pacing and humour mix with gross-out, over-the-top gags and camp music videos, to embrace the abject jouissance of second-hand things, people, and places (Kristeva 1982).

Sue has become a queer icon, too, with a large social media following, and appearances at Nottingham’s Pride, as well as a crowning role as a special guest judge in *RuPaul’s Drag Race UK*, broadcast on BBC Three and Netflix (Episode 7 2021). *Charity Shop Sue* has a very different cultural and political presence to Mary Portas. She is a different kind of queen, offering a different kind of regime. In fact, her digital presence and intertextuality with the RuPaul empire offers her an international, if subcultural, reach. Thus, the politics of *Charity Shop Sue*’s aesthetic signal an important counter to the normative politics of makeover welfare, and its violent “degradation” and “rehabilitation” (Nickel 2016, p. 176) of things, people, and places. This aesthetic refracts not only the distorted politics of makeover welfare, but the potential of second-hand cultures more generally, as jumbled, contradictory, liminal (Fitton 2013, p. 289; Maddrell 2017), and dirty, in the best sense of the word.

## MAKING OVER THINGS

Any makeover begins by ritualistically shaming and judging the ‘before’ (Skeggs and Wood 2008). *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops* Episode 1 (2009) begins by shaming things: picking over the things in the Orpington shop as old rubbish, tainted with the leaky abjection of other people’s bodies (Gregson and Crewe 2003, p. 157, 156–163). Portas and camera enter the

Orpington Save the Children shop to find the back room choked with bin bags of donations: she prods at these mysterious bags, what she calls the “dire donations” offered by the local community, as objects of both abject horror and fun (Episode 1 2009). By way of introduction, two volunteers instruct Portas to sort bags on the floor to avoid contamination with any bodily fluids “because there could be... something really dirty and grotty and not nice, moist” inside (Episode 1 2009). This attention focuses anxiety and frisson over the taint of other people’s bodies, as well as on practices to cleanse that taint away (Gregson and Crewe 1998, 2003; Fitton 2013; Le Zotte 2017). It connects shops with unsavoury waste, with dumped, unwanted things, pointing out that a single shop will fill two skips a week with unsellable waste, at a cost of £90. By degrading these unspeakable “moist”, “grotty” donations as the dirtiest kind of dirt, the programme licenses the makeover to come.

What the show expertly lumps together here are dirty, stained things with clean but dated tatt. These are things which are not abject at all, but simply not to Portas’s taste: the detritus and clutter of sherry glasses, decorative plates and polyester trousers. As Portas (Episode 1 2009) complains, the problem is that “This is a random old bunch of stuff. I can’t find any fashion among the frump”. She frames the problem not as a problem of waste, which might result in efforts to clean and repair donations, but of taste: things Portas deems frumpy or cheap. In *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops*, as in reality television devoted to hoarders, the problem of too many or the wrong things is solved by correctly applying middle class taste to parse objects into kinds: “skip (that is, throw away), keep, sell and charity” (Potts 2016, p. 109). To shame the wrong things, Portas tips a pile of the shabbiest donations onto the shining floor of the luxury Westfield Shopping Centre. To source better things, she first tries a door-to-door collection in Orpington (Episode 1 2009), but only gleans more of “what we already sell”, more “tatt”: a pair of pink polyester pyjamas on which Portas wipes her nose in sarcastic “disappointment”. To find better things, then, Portas goes corporate: she stages a D-Day donation campaign at the sleek offices of three publishing, tech, and drinks companies (Episodes 2 2009; Episode 3 2009). Here, charity shop volunteers unpack bags of expensive, barely worn clothes directly in front of donors, smoothing them with gasps of pleasure and gratitude. Trained by Portas on valuation and pricing, volunteers will mark up these brand-name garments so that they will not be, as Portas puts it, “thrown away”.

The makeover of things dramatized in *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops* refracts broader cultural regimes around the proper (and improper) management of both taste and waste. The glitter, clink and shine of Portas’s clothes, jewellery, boots, and furniture are at once “a sign of merit and its tangible reward” (Littler 2013, p. 63; Littler 2017). Her taste signals her expertise and authorises the violence and cost of her makeover with the promise of nice things to come (Powell and Prasad 2010). Addressing the camera in Episode 2 (2009), Portas caresses one



of her handbags, asking: "How can I put a Clemence Robiro £900 bag into a charity shop?... It would just be like putting this wonderful little gem in amongst rubbish." In the context of recession and subsequent austerity, the proper sorting of things becomes a savvy answer to a troubled economy, while the improper handling of things, such as people who collect odd things, who don't know junk when they see it, or can't bring themselves to get rid of it, becomes pathologized (Potts 2016; Littler 2013; Jensen 2013a). While her turn to charity thrift shows a savvy pivot to fit the tone of a straitened nation, her style still holds out aspirational promise (Hamad 2013). Yet, in consining things in charity shops to normative categories, and discarding the rest, such as the worn, shabby, or undesirable, Portas's reality programme misses several stubborn features of the importance of charity shops to material culture.

First, the thing makeover of *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops* sidesteps a fundamental, if hidden, role charity shops play in waste systems. In a 16 June 2009 story in the South Wales Echo, bargain £1 charity shop manager Jane explained: "The pounds 1 system shifts stock. We have volunteers who sort for Wales – and it's a hard job – but we need to make money by shifting stock." In fact, the "hard job" of "shifting stock" is a largely invisible but core function of charity shops. Charity retailers process an astonishing quantity and variety of goods: in 2015–2016, charity shops recycled or repurposed an estimated 331,000 tonnes of textiles, not to mention tonnes of recuperated kitchenware, white goods, furnishings, toys, music, films, and books (Harrison-Evans 2017, p. 11). Charity shop workers are part of a waste disposal chain, sorting and sifting through things, deciding on qualities such as "the dirtiness, i.e. condition, wear, reusability" and therefore the potential value of different items (Botticello 2012, p. 164; Botticello 2013; Broadhead 2021; see also Fitton this issue). Even on the intimate scale of a single charity, goods move among shops, with expensive donations moved to wealthier neighbourhoods charging higher prices, or sold online to collectors, while other goods are downshifted to bargain and £-per-kilo shops in lower-income neighbourhoods (Livingstone 2011).

Within this system, what is finally discarded as unsalvageable re-joins an elaborate, global movement of waste riddled with inequalities and dilemmas, what Nicky Gregson et al. (2016) call the 'dirty work' of the green economy. In fact, much of that passes through shops on its way to somewhere else: globally, two thirds of donated clothes end up commercially exported to the Global South (Norris 2015). Given these important 'back room' functions of charity shops as waste processors, and their tensions, Portas's attempts to makeover the things in charity shops might seem doomed or designed to fail. Her system, in fact, relies on more but more tasteful over-consumption, and being "a bit greener" (Episode 1 2009), but not too much. Portas's thing systems reflect trends in charity retail toward professionalised

practices of sorting, codifying and pricing stock (see Fitton, this issue). And in fact, a makeover welfare regime makes no attempt to solve the problem of tatty, unwanted things. Instead, it stratifies them into ever more rigid hierarchical categories, skimming the top for a lucky few while sending off the rest elsewhere.

Portas's efforts to stratify things, tamp out tatt, and pack the shop with £30 Linea jumpers and £200 Gucci bags succeed only in part. In the made-over shop, Portas despairs in a voiceover that "whenever the new manager's back is turned", the volunteers busy themselves "putting their tatt back out": a plaster hedgehog, a Cabrio calculator, a "naff" tie, a pink ceramic hippopotamus for 50p (Episode 3 2009). On the shelf, the hedgehog and the hippopotamus smile blandly, unperturbed by Portas's aims for them. Past bodies and past lives make their presence known, too. At a charity shop pop up at London Fashion Week (Episode 3 2009), a fashion editor tries on a vintage black jacket only to comment on its persistent smell: "This does have that eau de charity shop about it". Stratifying second-hand things underestimates their 'thing-power' (Bennett 2010): some unwanted objects defy reinvention, haunted by past lives, and others defy the bin, offering themselves to new lives. Where Portas's efforts to sort second-hand things tries to fix their value, such unruly objects and stubborn residues hint at other trajectories for second-hand things.

Such a hierarchical treatment of things also ignores the persistent allure of the second-hand rummage. As reviews of *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops* in 2009 commented, the shop makeover misses the pleasure of the charity-shop rummage and the "thrill of the hunt" (Bardhi 2003). A 16th June 2009 review in the South Wales Echo, for example, quoted a charity shop volunteer who disparaged "snotty" charity shops, and how "in high street stores there isn't the joy of rummaging. There's a lovely randomness about charity shops. You never know what you're going to find." This aesthetic of "lovely randomness" is part of what Gregson and Crewe (Gregson and Crewe 2003, p. 83) identify as second-hand "regimes of representation", in which value is open, for the making, such as in "the wardrobe, junkyard and attic". What is waste at one time, or to one person, as Michael Thompson (1979) argues in *Rubbish Theory*, might be transformed and revalued through time and/or labour at another. Things might gather and lose value around relationships (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015), as bearers of memories and emotions (Lovatt 2015; Owen 2021), or be "re-enchanted" as vintage, collectible, or through other cultural knowledges (Gregson and Crewe 2003; Podkalicka and Meese 2012; Balthazar 2016). The rummage embraces the pleasure and subtle politics of "scrounging" (Müller 2012, p. 447), picking through a jumble of waste for treasures of one kind or another, and in which value is unstable, idiosyncratic, and to-be-made.



Embracing the aesthetic of the rummage becomes for some shops and shoppers an aesthetic, moral and even political choice. Further, it is the openness of the rummage that powers the second-hand creative economy. People use the rummage for a variety of purposes, from cheap household provisioning (Neysmith and Reitsma-Street 2005, p. 383), as libraries and craft supply stores (Edwards and Gibson, 2017), as resources for constructing punk, grunge, 'indie', and queer styles (Le Zotte 2017, p. 215-216; Lifter 2019; McRobbie 1989); and as reselling depots, to trawl for vinyl records, photography equipment, books, clothes, ceramics, jewellery, etc. (Podkalicka and Meese 2012; Botticello 2012, 2013; Ayres 2019; Kneese et al. 2022). As these scholars note, such sifting, sorting, and revaluing of discarded or 'shifted' things requires expert knowledges and constitutes substantial cultural and economic production.

The counter-aesthetic of the rummage comes through in *Charity Shop Sue* (2019), where things flex their power through tatt, kitsch, abjection, and jumble. Instead of Portas's dark velvet sofa, for example, in Part 2: The Makeover (Charity Shop Sue 2019b), Sue bullies a shopper into buying a cherry red velour tracksuit as part of an impromptu (and unwanted) makeover. Sue says, velour went "out of fashion for a bit, but guess what, got a call from one of me contacts last night in Paris. Salut Sue, get this, velour's back." The scene pokes at the absurdity of Sue as a tastemaker, and at the kitschy instability of value in second-hand things. Instead of luxurious signs of worth like designer handbags, things in *Sec\*hand Chances* are gross, troublesome, and funny. In Part 6: Rot Test Challenge (Charity Shop Sue 2019e), Sue invents a quiz game to guess the origin of various stains and smells. Online guesses run from "Infected nipple ducts", "Mushy pea rot from the chippy" to "Nana vom rot? Gross". There is a love of the weird and kitsch, too: a musical tricycle toy Sue swears will "go" online, for example, or a bedazzled, silver polyester dress that will "get the bids" on eBay (Charity Shop Sue 2019e). Everywhere in *Charity Shop Sue* oddities are cherished, such as the uncanny porcelain dolls with tangled hair, porcelain shepherdesses and "Royal ladies" priced at £25. As in second-hand spaces everywhere, things are fetishized, valued and revalued, and imbued with "character" (Balthazar 2016, p. 449). But *Charity Shop Sue* not only fetishizes the wrong things, at the wrong price, for the wrong reasons, but proposes a queer counter-aesthetic fashioned out of such mistakes. As such, the satire proposes a re-valuing of trash and tatt.

## MAKING OVER PEOPLE

To achieve her aims, Portas must makeover not only the things in the shop, but the people in it. Just as the show shames the contents of the shop as frumpy and abject, the first episode also shames the area manager, Nick, red-faced and clueless, and the 43 unpaid volunteers, most of them older women, some of whom have been at the shop for forty years (Episode

1 2009). Making over little old ladies devoted to charity is delicate work: while the labour force in charity shops has diversified, older women remain the majority, echoing the charitable Victorian 'angel in the house' (Harrison-Evans 2017; Poovey 1988 cited in Horne and Maddrell 2002, p. 77). The shop volunteers, Portas notes apologetically, might be "really good, gorgeous, fun, fabulous people", but they have to surrender to her plans (Episode 1 2009). Portas therefore reframes the warm conviviality of the shop as unprofitable, and the sociable volunteers as "set in their ways": disorganised, non-hierarchical, fond of their habits and each other, and therefore backward.

Sorting among people as she sorts among the things, Portas works first to degrade, then to reform, then to discard and replace the people running the shop. Her own efforts repeat Victorian charitable cleansing of working-class values and 'containment' of ethnicity (Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008, p. 233; Brayton and Millington 2011, p. 185; Le Zotte 2013). As Portas (Episode 1 2009) muses to the camera, "I have to say I'm in a bit of a state of shock. I actually didn't know it was as bad as this. It just seems a bit like Paddy's market in a lovely way. A kind of social gathering for these old women." The offhand reference to Paddy's Market, an open-air market that ran in Glasgow for 200 years before closing for urban redevelopment 2009, links the shop with Irish and working-class cultures. Portas protests, of course, that she is not "some pompous little Londoner who's come down here to create this empire", as she puts it, and make the shop "relentlessly middle class" (Episode 3, 2009). Yet her makeover nevertheless cleanses the shop to instil an implicitly English, middle class, Protestant ethos of doing good by making profits. While recent research celebrates the sociality and care of some charity shops, as spaces where people may mingle across class and other social boundaries (Flores 2014; Edwards and Gibson 2017; Ayres 2019), such lively, "lovely" sociality is part of the disorder that Portas must makeover. Later episodes linger over volunteers grumbling over the cost of the refurbishments, and over handfuls of resignation cards and goodbyes from volunteers voicing their objections (Episode 3 2019). Framed as necessary for survival, however, the departure of the old volunteers becomes a necessary clearing out to make way for new kinds of people.

Shop volunteer Graham's failed makeover into shop manager encapsulates the critical tensions and violence of this forced transformation. Ready and willing, he started volunteering in the charity shop to keep "busy", as he explains, after being made redundant, and disabled by tinnitus. As Nickel (2016) theorises in the context of American thrift giants such as Goodwill and the Salvation Army, charity retail works to remake things and people through first the "degradation" of second-hand goods and marginalised or impoverished people, followed by their "rehabilitation" as saleable and employable, "work-ready" commodities. In the first episode, over a pint, Portas muses, "you've got a wonderful style

about you, Graham" and flatters him into an "opportunity": to trial as her unwaged volunteer shop leader in hopes this might lead to a paid shop manager role (Episode 1 2009). Almost immediately, Graham disappoints. Portas explodes over a lacklustre Christmas window display, swearing at him and kicking a bin basket, precipitating Graham's tearful resignation. In a confessional to the camera, Portas (Episode 2 2009) explains:

You just want to support those people and say come on. But he's, it's too scary for him. And my worry is, he's going to go back. You know he's only in his mid-fifties. And I want him to go forward. He's had a tough time, and I thought this would give him the boost in his life to go forward, but he can't do it. Shame.

Portas, aligning herself with the viewer through direct address and use of "you", attempts to "support" Graham and "those people" who have had a "tough time" "to go forward". She not only frames his lack of paid work and disability as a personal failure, but the failure of "those people" more generally to keep up, and to submit to being made over into new types of workers. In the aftermath of the financial crisis, Graham serves an example of the failed worker whose unemployment is his own fault.

As scholars of reality makeover television point out, the failure of people like Graham to get his transformation right makes for salacious viewing (Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008; Skeggs and Wood 2008). Even if Graham seems to measure his life differently, as someone who prefers things, as he softly insists, to be "quiet" and "calm", never "cross" with others, Portas frames this orientation as cowardice, a "shame" (Episode 2 2009). The programme thus sticks shame to him and to anyone else who has had a "tough time" and won't or can't embrace the kind of hustling paid employment that Portas commands, stigmatizing him (Tyler 2020). His shame is a moral crisis, rather than a structural one. His failed makeover becomes a slight of hand trick that "defends the logic of neoliberal capitalism by scapegoating vulnerable groups" (Allen et al. 2015, p. 909; Vander Schee and Kline 2013). Because, of course, his status as the problem, and his failure, are baked into the genre of the makeover, both expected and inevitable (Rich 2011). These reality discourses license and rationalise real harms. Since 2009, as a result of austerity's cuts, benefits sanctions, and mandatory workfare, disabled people in the UK like Graham have lost an average of £2000-£3000 in annual income, with £9 billion cut from welfare support and one in three people losing their Disability Living Allowance altogether: these changes have caused acute distress and the foreclosure of disabled people's protected rights to an independent life (Wood 2012; Goodley, Lawthom and Runswick-Cole 2014, p. 980). Such cuts and losses expose the real injuries of makeover welfare as a regime, a reality occluded by Graham's quiet retreat on screen.

Once degraded as a 'shame', Graham's future and his life can be discarded, like the sociable if unprofitable older women who volunteer, and replaced with a very different subject: Jo,

hired on as the shop's new manager. Blonde, young, stylish, energetic, Jo models a new kind of thoroughly professionalised manager, a passionate striver committed to change, business, and display. As Jo says (Episode 2 2009) in her interview for the post, "I'm not someone who can sit around and do nothing. That's just the kind of person I am. I can't sit. I have to be changing, and doing displays... Things have to look nice." Unlike Graham, Jo has to be in perpetual motion. Jo's hustling professionalism and making sure things "look nice" reflect real, widespread trends in the charity retail sector (Parsons 2002; Parsons and Broadbridge 2007), but she struggles to make over her workforce in the way Portas would like, as many of the dedicated volunteers drift away. The pressure to replace and renew people, to balance making profits with relationships and care, also causes Jo, and many other charity shop managers, significant stress (Parsons and Broadbridge 2007, p. 552; Harrison-Evans 2017, p. 49). Further, in rejecting the "kind of person" who can't keep up, the makeover of people in the shop space reflects and propagates a broader politics of makeover welfare.

The remaking of people in makeover welfare, as evidenced by *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops*, is tightly connected to charity retail's actual roles in welfare governance. Charity shops in the UK have direct ties with health, social care, and prison and probation services. As other public services and spaces disappear under austerity, they often function as part hospital, part prison, part unemployment office, and part community centre. Shop workers might include people placed in the charity shop as part of a social prescription on the NHS for mental health, or as part of a support plan for a disability (Mind 2022). Shop workers might also include carceral workers serving court-ordered unpaid Community Service Orders and Licensed Prisoners on day release from prison (Horne and Maddrell 2002; Maddrell 2006; Fitton 2013; Harrison-Evans 2017, p. 32-34; Maddrell 2017). All of this work operates under the premise of work as reparative, but elides the violence of these systems (Wacquant 2010). Under austerity, for example, court-ordered community service in sites like charity shops has expanded under the aegis of reducing incarceration and its harms. Instead, "exacerbating rather than resolving social harms" (Heard 2015, p. 2, 5), the policy has only imprisoned more people, and for longer sentences, often for breaches of the very community sentences that were meant to keep people out of prison in the first place.

*Charity Shop Sue* makes satire out of the personal cruelty of makeover welfare and its obdurate failures. First, the programme shows up the cruelty of efforts like Portas's to get rid of the 'wrong kind of people'. When in the back room in Part 1, "with the business under-performing", Sue cajoles her volunteers "We've got to start thinking like salespeople, all right? Cause the thing is, you guys will be gone if you don't make an effort, ok? Only joking", and laughs her sinister laugh (Charity Shop Sue 2019a). When in Part 5: Panic Attack! (Charity Shop Sue 2019d) older volunteer Gloria hyperventilates in tears over her anxiety at being

filmed, Sue shouts at her, “You need to listen. Stop it, stop it now! Come on, calm the f\*\*\* down.” In fact, everyone refuses Sue’s attempts at makeover. Butch Kersh, for example, who came to the shop through the probation service, cracks Viki on the head while playfighting after playing “rot test challenge” (Charity Shop Sue 2019e), and regularly flies off the handle. Meanwhile Viki, implacable in her baggy clothes, lank hair, and knit panda-eared hat, refuses to move or be moved. In Part 16: It’s the new me (Charity Shop Sue 2009g), Viki appears transformed by fellow-volunteer Vera, in full make-up, walking the shop floor as a runway in a stretchy yellow tube dress—but Sue vindictively threatens her, saying “You should have come to me” for make-up advice, “it’s not the new you, darling” and ordering “I want that off”. As well as failed style makeovers, the programme mocks the rehabilitative job training function of charity shops: Sue regularly threatens Kersh with calling the police and “going back inside”, for example. In Part 16: It’s the new me (Charity Shop Sue 2019g), Sue invents a “steaming certificate”, so that “when they [volunteers like Viki] leave here, they have something to strive towards, and show other employers”—what Vera mockingly refers to as “A qualification, is it?”. Through its characters, who remain stubbornly themselves, however shabby and ridiculous, the programme satirizes the brutality of both makeover culture and makeover welfare.

### **MAKING OVER SPACE**

The third and perhaps most far-reaching aspect of Portas’s makeover project is to degrade and then rehabilitate not only the interior space of the shop, which she deprecates as “dead” and a shabby “dump”, but the place around it, a town where “there’s not a lot of money” (Episode 1 2009). Her spatial ambitions extend even further, to a country beset by post-crash recession, framed by a classed narrative of British high streets in ‘decline’ (Hubbard 2017). The shop space ‘before’ is familiar in its ordinariness: a small shop front, retrofitted from an earlier life as a corner shop or a greengrocer, perhaps, now with fluorescent track lighting, drop ceilings, and a back of bays for sorting piles of donations in bulging plastic bin bags. Each episode flicks between the homely shop and Portas’s own spaces: the lofty white rooms of her London apartment, with its floor-to-ceiling closets, her plush velvet couch, her modern kitchen island. At the latter, she complains about the Orpington charity shop under pools of golden lamplight that illuminate her friends and their glasses of white wine like a gilt-framed painting. The contrast in space degrades the shop and licenses the expense and investment of Portas’s redecoration, promising a kind of sympathetic prosperity.

In degrading the homely charity shop, Portas refracts a strand of public discourse in which charity shops are a signal of broader regional and national economic decline, marking the hollowing out of everyday life (Parsons 2002; Payson and Moore 2022). Charity shops sometimes occupy high street shopfronts that would otherwise be vacant, paying cheaper

rents, and reduced or no business rates (Horne and Maddrell 2002; Harrison-Evans 2017). Even as research by Demos (Harrison-Evans 2017) notes that charity shops may draw foot traffic to struggling high streets, contributing to their “recovery”, in studies of the news, charity shops lump in with tanning salons, betting shops, pound shops, and fast-food takeaways, as signals of economic deprivation and decay (Payson and Moore 2022, p. 8). Spatially and symbolically, then, charity shops juxtapose boarded-up shop fronts and dying places, and become linked with marginality more generally. This narrative of high street decline is part of a classed discourse that degrades working-class consumption and everyday life in favour of middle-class tastes (Hubbard 2017). Second-hand spaces like Paddy’s Market, to which Portas compares the Orpington shop, have also been seen as “dangerous”, “unruly”, liminal, and even potentially criminal, and therefore subjected to increased policing and control (McRobbie 1989, p. 30; Gregson and Crewe 2003, p. 14, 25; see also Hobbs this issue). Makeover welfare seeks to harness, regulate, and reform the marginality of second-hand spaces, and thereby to transfigure public spaces of consumption and being together.

In this context, the makeover of the charity shop is framed as a matter of death and life, and a morality play for good government. New shop manager Jo (Episode 3 2009) agrees on transformative power of a little redecoration: “Now the shop’s beautiful, you feel proud to work here. It’s not like a grotty old charity shop—it looks like, like some kind of West End shop.” Redecoration lifts the shop out place and time, out of the “grotty” provinces, where “there isn’t a lot of money”, to the theatre district boutiques of the West End at the heart of the colonial metropole. Makeover lifts the place out of the past and into modernity: the transformation of space is presented as an extension of sensible “good housekeeping” that ripples out from the space of the shop to the city and nation (Littler 2013, p. 63). The cameras follow workers and volunteers as they clean house: sweeping, stripping, sorting, and painting. The “good housekeeping” affects a kind of transubstantiation into what Portas describes as “this living shop”, “a buzzing environment full of life where people want to go” (Episode 3 2009). In studies of the shifting spatiality of second-hand cultures, geographers note the self-conscious association of retro second-hand shops with “trendy, happening, buzzing” neighbourhoods and urban identities, part of a “scene”, “the alternative” or “indie” areas, which are then permeable to gentrification and displacement (Gregson and Crewe 2003, p. 36; Lifter 2019). Portas’s makeover seeks to capitalise on this association with liveness and urban regeneration, whatever the aftereffects.

The televised makeover of space dramatized by Portas rippled out into real space. Mapping Edinburgh’s charity shops after the programme aired, Nicola Livingstone (2011, p. 130) remarked on widespread desire to emulate Portas’s efforts, through shop specialisation, redesign, and siting. This research also showed strategic, stratified clustering of charity



shops, with upmarket shops located in wealthier neighbourhoods, and bargain shops in more deprived neighbourhoods (Livingstone 2011, p. 122). Over the subsequent years, the programme precipitated a stratification of charity shops by shop type and by the wealth or deprivation of an area. Larger charity retailers in fact use an increasingly sophisticated array of tools in siting, specialising, and fitting shops, including retail forecasting and modelling based on demographic, shopper, and donor data (Broadbridge and Parsons 2003; Parsons and Broadbridge 2007; Alexander et al. 2008, p. 538; Harrison-Evans 2017). Such refurbishments and siting, or spatial makeovers, can harden geographies of inequality, further stratifying neighbourhoods by wealth and deprivation.

This widening specialisation and stratification shows up, for example, in the chain of boutique, expensive charity shops Portas founded called Mary's Living & Giving Shops for Save the Children. As a profile of Portas put it, these shops are "a new type of charity shop designed to inspire and work as creative community spaces", located in wealthy neighbourhoods such as London's Highgate or Bristol's Clifton (Cooke 2018). Portas points out, "I've got 26 of those now. Save the Children has made £15m from them" (Cooke 2018). At the same time, other sites have embraced affordability and openness, such as a community shop on a council estate in Norwich formed by a local group when the former charity retailer there could not turn a profit and had to close (Cawley and Reynolds 2021). This shop prides itself on being a community space, with a comfortable chair on the shop floor for people who are "not ok" to rest and have a chat. One space for one kind of place, and one for another. Yet when we return to the language of living and dead spaces of the televised makeover's before and after, the lived, felt consequences of such classed, economic stratification perhaps come into view.

This is especially significant because the spatial politics of makeover welfare propagated through *Mary, Queen of Charity Shops* and Portas's subsequent ventures became much more than a strategy for charity shops—it became a plan to regenerate the economy of the UK. As noted above, in 2011, Portas was conscripted to save the UK high street when the UK Government commissioned her to conduct The Portas Review (2011, p. 5–6). This is makeover welfare as a policy of 'urban makeover' for public infrastructure (Speer 2019). In The Portas Review, Portas outlined 28 recommendations for UK high streets. Based on her report, the Government then launched a competitive scheme called Portas Pilot Towns to 'revitalise' select areas. These towns ranged from, as the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2012) described them in a press release, "riot-stricken" Croydon to "ghost town" Margate and "derelict" Wolverhampton, with £1.2 million shared out in funding among them to makeover their high streets. A 2017 review of the scheme, however, in The Telegraph, proclaimed the policy venture a failure, with shop closures in the Portas Pilot

Towns comparable to the rest of the country (Morley 2017). In a profile, Portas admitted “hubris” in branding the towns with her name (Cooke 2018). But while criticising Portas Towns as a government PR exercise, she pointed to “ghost town” Margate as a new destination for second-hand shopping—hoping to ride the alternative or indie to prosperity, and hinting at credit for a change perhaps instead precipitated by opening of the Turner Contemporary art gallery. Meanwhile, the problem of entrenched regional inequality within the UK remains a pressing one, subject to repeated floundering government interventions (McCann 2020; Tyler 2020).

In *Charity Shop Sue*, as with things and people, space also luridly fails to be made-over, despite Sue’s grand schemes. In Part 3: The Refurb (2019c), for example, Sue crows about her dreams of winning a “comp” among the other shop franchises for a shop “refurb”. Luring the camera out of the back of the shop, Sue tours the brick alley rimmed with razor wire, littered with rubbish and smashed glass. She paints a word picture of “decking”, “a cocktail bar at the side”, with “slides coming down here” on the brick stairwell, “quite fast but it’s for the likkle babbies, yeah?”. As she says, smile tight and eyes shining, “So exciting... Got to have a little bit of a bleach down. You won’t even know what’s been going on.” She satirizes Portas’s aesthetic of a vibrant, buzzing place, the second-hand market—to “bring a little bit of community. We’re going to have stalls in there, Polish stalls, spice stall [...] Who knows, multicultural!”. Despite Sue’s ambitions, the shop’s look never changes. And the neighbourhood around the shop stays the beloved “shithole” it’s been dubbed from the beginning, with drinkers loitering out front harassing customers, women in leopard faux-fur jackets urinating out the back, and people leaving soiled pants in the changing rooms. The back rooms, back alleys and shabby public streets and spaces of *Charity Shop Sue*, too, insist upon a kind of persistent spatial liminality and marginality. Instead of a “proper West End shop”, Sec\*hand Chances stays its shabby self, with an aesthetic of regional pride of place instead of aspirational normativity.

## **CONCLUSION: MAKEOVER WELFARE, SECOND-HAND COUNTER-AESTHETICS, AND UNSETTLED TIMES**

Makeover culture, as shown in charity shop reality television, thus manifests as a regime of real-world politics, makeover welfare, which works by shaming and then rehabilitating things, people and places, and offering makeover in place of welfare. Yet despite efforts to enforce makeover welfare as governance, nevertheless second-hand things, people and places fail, resist, and escape this regime. I explore here how second-hand cultures offer a surprisingly durable counter-politics located in unruly tatt and rummaging, stubborn subjects, and marginal spaces. This matters in part because how second-hand sites like charity shops look, feel and work affects how things move through them, who belongs in

them, and what kinds of activities it is possible to do in them. As material spaces of making do, focal points of discourse around giving back, doing good, and 'just about managing' under austerity, and just as sites of being together, this article suggests that charity shops present a key site to investigate the politics and practice of how people live in the economy of the present. As such, this article contributes to ongoing debates on the kinds of charged social imaginaries that circulate in popular culture, and which fuel and chasten ongoing violent governance like austerity. Further, this article suggests that second-hand cultures, because of a richness and complexity obscured sometimes by their shabbiness or ordinariness, are a uniquely fruitful object of study to understand broader patterns in the politics of the present.

The cultural politics of makeover welfare and second-hand things, people and places explored in this article continue to be hashed out in public discourse, from reality television to welfare politics. Second-hand things continue to give trouble—in contests between the minimalist aesthetic of decluttering, for example, popularised by Marie Kondo, with both rebellious style maximalists and pathologized hoarders, as well as efforts to move toward zero-waste policies and economies. Both policy and popular culture have consequences for the governance of where and how people live with things (Owen 2021), each other, and in what kind of places. Who belongs in charity shop and second-hand spaces, who are these second-hand spaces for, and how should they meet different community welfare needs? Further, questions about second-hand spaces stick around also, how such spaces should look and be used, to where and how to remedy local and national economies. Charity shop culture throws up questions of waste and value, around labour and workers' rights, and around community needs and the provision of welfare. These questions matter for other second-hand spaces, too, especially as publics, businesses and governments turn to the second-hand for answers.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE**

Alida Payson is a lecturer in the school of Journalism, Media and Culture at Cardiff University. A lifelong thrifter, she recently finished a research project, *Charity Shop Country: Conviviality and Survival in Austerity Britain*, funded by The Leverhulme Trust.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author gratefully acknowledges the insights of both reviewers, which were essential to shaping this paper.

**DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

**FUNDING DETAILS**

The research was funded by an Early Career Fellowship from The Leverhulme Trust.

## REFERENCES

- Alexander, A., Cryer, D. and Wood, S. 2008. Location planning in charity retailing. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 36(7), pp. 536–550. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09590550810880570>
- Allen, K., Mendick, H., Harvey, L. and Ahmad, A. 2015. Welfare Queens, Thrifty Housewives, and Do-It-All Mums: Celebrity motherhood and the cultural politics of austerity. *Feminist Media Studies* 15(6), 907–925. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1062992>
- Appelgren, S. and Bohlin, A. 2015. Growing in Motion: The Circulation of Used Things on Second-hand Markets. *Culture Unbound*, 7, 143–168. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3384/cu.2000.1525.1571143>
- Ayres, J. 2019. The work of shopping: Resellers and the informal economy at the goodwill bins. *Business History* 61(1), 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2017.1369962>
- Balthazar, A. C. 2016. Old things with character: The fetishization of objects in Margate, UK. *Journal of Material Culture* 21(4), 448–464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183516662676>
- Bardhi, 2003. Thrill of the Hunt: Thrift Shopping for Pleasure. *Advances in Consumer Research* 30, pp. 375–376.
- Bassel, L. and Emejulu, A. 2018. *Minority women and austerity: Survival and resistance in France and Britain*. Bristol: Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781447327134.001.0001>
- Bennett, J. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822391623>
- Botticello, J. 2012. Between Classification, Objectification, and Perception: Processing Secondhand Clothing for Recycling and Reuse. *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, 10(2), pp. 164–183. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175183512X13315695424356>
- Botticello, J. 2013. Re-producing western goods for transnational markets: Case studies in rebranding and revaluing second-hand clothes. *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture* 4(1), pp. 39–50. [https://doi.org/10.1386/iscc.4.1.39\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/iscc.4.1.39_1)
- Brayton, S. and Millington, B. 2011. Renovating ethnic identity on Restaurant Makeover. *Social Identities* 17(2), pp. 185–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2011.558372>
- Broadbridge, A. and Parsons, E. 2003. UK Charity Retailing: Managing in a Newly Professionalised Sector, *Journal of Marketing Management* 19(7–8), pp. 729–748. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2003.9728235>
- Cawley, L. and Reynolds, A. 2021. King's Lynn: The community shop with a chair for those who “are not OK”. *BBC News*, 1 July. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-57496557> [Accessed: 12 September 2022].
- Charity Shop Sue. 2019a. Part 1: Sec\*hand Chances. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNYulUKwelo> [Accessed 20 May 2022].
- Charity Shop Sue. 2019b. Part 2: The Makeover. 2019. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M90Wh8EWMtQ&t=2s> [Accessed 20 May 2022].
- Charity Shop Sue. 2019c. Part 3: The Refurb. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLG-luiAknI> [Accessed 20 May 2022].
- Charity Shop Sue. 2019d. Part 5: Panic Attack. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMIg7s7ZGwI&t=119s> [Accessed 20 May 2022].
- Charity Shop Sue. 2019e. Part 6: Rot Test Challenge. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-Ec-PGBBMU&t=227s> [Accessed 20 May 2022].
- Charity Shop Sue. 2019f. Part 10: Grand Designs. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAJHtIvc0M> [Accessed 20 May 2022].
- Charity Shop Sue. 2019g. Part 16: It's the new me. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Izhti94qIFU&t=291s> [Accessed 20 May 2022].
- Coleman, R. 2016. Austerity Futures: Debt, Temporality and (Hopeful) Pessimism as an Austerity Mood. *New Formations*, 87, pp. 83–101. <https://doi.org/10.3898/NEWF.87.5.2016>
- Cooke, R. 2018. Mary Portas: 'It was a question of how do I want to work as a woman?'. 21 October, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/oct/21/mary-portas-interview-it-was-a-question-of-how-do-i-want-to-work-as-a-woman> [Accessed 12 September 2022]
- Edwards, D. and Gibson, L. 2017. Counting the pennies: the cultural economy of charity shopping. *Cultural*

- Trends* 26(1), 70–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2017.1275131>
- Edwards, D. 2022. Curating Charitable Objects: “Why bother? The nice stuff always gets nicked”. Second-hand Challenges Workshops: Community Welfare. 20 May, Cardiff University (Online).
- Episode 1. 2009. Mary, Queen of Charity Shops [Online]. BBC Two, 2 June. Available at: <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/00FE7AA0?bcast=32561230> [Accessed 17 May 2022].
- Episode 2. Mary, Queen of Charity Shops [Online]. BBC Two, 9 June. <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/010065EE?bcast=32616542> [Accessed 17 May 2022].
- Episode 3. Mary, Queen of Charity Shops [Online]. BBC Two, 16 June. <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/0101DB95?bcast=32671615> [Accessed 17 May 2022].
- Episode 7. 2021. RuPaul’s Drag Race UK. Series 3. BBC Three, 8 Nov. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09yzzg2z> [Accessed 20 May 2022].
- Fitton, T. 2013. *The “Quiet Economy”: An Ethnographic Study of the Contemporary UK Charity Shop*. PhD thesis, University of York.
- Flores, R. 2014. From personal troubles to public compassion: charity shop volunteering as a practice of care. *The Sociological Review* 62, pp. 383–399. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12118>
- Goodley, D., Lawthom, R. and K. Runswick-Cole. 2014. Dis/ability and austerity: beyond work and slow death, *Disability & Society* 29(6), 980–984. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2014.920125>
- Gosling, G. C. 2021. Fundraising and Thrift: The multiple meanings of second-hand charity retail. *Secondhand Cultures in Unsettled Times Symposium*. (Online) Cardiff University: 15–16 June.
- Gregson, N. and Crewe, L. 1998. Dusting Down Second Hand Rose: Gendered identities and the world of second-hand goods in the space of the car boot sale. *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 5(1), pp. 77–100, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09663699825331>
- Gregson, N. and Crewe, L. 2003. *Second-hand Cultures*. London: Berg Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.2752/9781847888853>
- Gregson, N., Crang, M., Botticello, J., Calestani, M. and Krzywoszynska, A. 2016. Doing the ‘dirty work’ of the green economy: Resource recovery and migrant labour in the EU. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23 (4), pp. 541–555. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776414554489>
- Hamad, H. 2013. Age of austerity celebrity expertise in UK reality television. *Celebrity Studies* 4(2), pp. 245–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2013.791056>
- Hansen, K. T. and Le Zotte, J. 2019. Changing Secondhand Economies. *Business History* 61(1), pp. 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2018.1543041>
- Harrison-Evans, P. 2017. Shopping for good: the social benefits of charity retail. Available at: <https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Shopping-for-Good-the-social-benefits-of-charity-retail-.pdf> [Accessed 17 May 2022].
- Heard, C. 2015. Community sentences since 2000: How they work – and why they have not cut prisoner numbers. London: Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. Available at: [https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/CCJS\\_ACE\\_Rep\\_Sept15\\_ONLINE%20FINAL3.pdf](https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/CCJS_ACE_Rep_Sept15_ONLINE%20FINAL3.pdf) [Accessed 17 May 2022].
- Henriksen, L, Smith, S. and Zimmer, A. 2015. Welfare Mix and Hybridity. Flexible Adjustments to Changed Environments. Introduction to the Special Issue. *Voluntas* (26), pp. 1591–1600. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-015-9622-y>
- Horne, S. and Maddrell, A. 2002. *Charity Shops: Retailing, Consumption, and Society*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203167458>
- Hubbard, P. 2017. *The battle for the High Street: retail gentrification, class and disgust*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Izlar, J. 2019. Radical social welfare and anti-authoritarian mutual aid. *Critical and radical social work*, 7(3), pp. 349–366. <https://doi-org.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/10.1332/204986019X15687131179624>
- Jensen, T. 2012. Tough Love in Tough Times. *Studies in the Maternal* 4(2), pp.1–26. <https://doi.org/10.16995/sim.35>



- Jensen, T. 2013a. Austerity parenting. *Soundings* 55(13), 61–71. DOI: 10.3898/136266213809450248
- Jensen, T. 2013b. Riots, Restraint and the New Cultural Politics of Wanting. *Sociological Research Online* 18(4), pp. 36–47. <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.3158>
- Kneese, T., Palm, M. and Ayres, J. 2022. Selling in place: the home as virtual storefront. *Media, Culture & Society* 44(2), pp. 362–369 <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437211045348>
- Kristeva, J. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An essay on abjection*. Trans. Leon Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lewis, T. 2008. Introduction: Revealing the Makeover Show. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 22(4), 441–446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310802190053>
- Le Zotte, J. 2013. "Not Charity, but a Chance": Philanthropic Capitalism and the Rise of American Thrift Stores, 1894–1930. *The New England Quarterly*, 86(2), pp. 169–195. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43284988>  
[https://doi.org/10.1162/TNEQ\\_a\\_00275](https://doi.org/10.1162/TNEQ_a_00275)
- Le Zotte, J. 2017. *From Goodwill to Grunge: A History of Secondhand Styles and Alternative Economies*. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press. <https://doi.org/10.5149/northcarolina/9781469631905.001.0001>
- Lifter, R. 2019. *Fashioning Indie: Popular Fashion, Music and Gender*. London: Bloomsbury. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350126350>  
PMid:32449376
- Littler, J. 2013. Meritocracy as Plutocracy: The Marketising of 'Equality' Under Neoliberalism. *new formations: a journal of culture/theory/politics* pp. 80–81, 52–72. <https://doi.org/10.3898/NewF.80/81.03.2013>
- Littler, J. 2017. *Against Meritocracy: Culture, Power and Myths of Mobility*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315712802>
- Livingstone, N. 2011. The changing structure of charity retailers in Edinburgh's built environment. *Local Economy* 26(2), pp. 122–133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269094210397431>
- Loney, G. 2018. Remembering Paddy's Market nine years on from its very last sale, GlasgowLive 19 October. <https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/news/history/history-remembering-paddys-market-13039701> [Accessed 10 October 2021].
- Lovatt, M. 2015. Charity Shops and the Imagined Future of Objects. *Culture Unbound*, 7, pp.13–29. Linköping University Electronic Press: <http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se>  
<https://doi.org/10.3384/cu.2000.1525.157113>
- Maddrell, A. 2006. 'You just can't get the staff these days': the challenges and opportunities of working with volunteers in the charity shop – an Oxford case study. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* (5)2, pp. 125–139. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.105>
- Maddrell, A. 2017. Carceral transitions experienced through community service placements in charity shops. In: J. Turner and K. Peters. ed(s). *Carceral Mobilities: Interrogating Movement in Incarceration*, London, Routledge, pp. 221–235.
- Martin S., Longo F., Lomas J., and Claxton, K. 2021. Causal impact of social care, public health and healthcare expenditure on mortality in England: cross-sectional evidence for 2013/2014. *BMJ Open* (11)e046417, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-046417> PMid:34654700 PMCid:PMC8559090
- McCann, P. 2020. Perceptions of regional inequality and the geography of discontent: insights from the UK. *Regional Studies* 54(2), pp. 256–267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1619928>
- McRobbie, A. 1989. Second-Hand Dresses and the Role of the Ragmarket. In: McRobbie, A. ed. *Zoot Suits and Second-Hand Dresses*. London: Palgrave Macmillan [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-19999-0\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-19999-0_2)
- McRobbie, A. 2004. Notes on 'What Not To Wear' and post-feminist symbolic violence. *The Sociological Review* 52(2), pp. 97–109. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2005.00526.x>
- Mind. 2022. Social Prescribing. <https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/mind-cymru/social-prescribing/> [Accessed 2 November 2022].
- Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. 2012. Press release: Portas Pilots to kick-start high street renaissance. 26 May. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/portas-pilots-to-kick-start-high-street-renaissance> [Accessed 20 May 2022].
- Morley, K. 2017. Mary Portas' 'Save the High Street' scheme has failed as over 1,000 shops have closed. 8 November, *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/08/mary-portas-save-high-street-scheme-has-failed-1000-shops-have/> [Accessed 20 May 2022].



- Moseley, R. 2000. Makeover takeover on British television. *Screen*, 41(3), pp. 299–314, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/41.3.299>
- Müller, T. 2012. The Empire of Scrounge Meets the Warm City: Danger, Civility, Cooperation and Community among Strangers in the Urban Public World. *Critical Criminology* 20, pp. 447–461. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-012-9160-5>
- Neysmith, S.M. and Reitsma-Street, M. 2005. 'Provisioning': Conceptualizing the work of women for 21<sup>st</sup> century social policy. *Women's Studies International Forum* 28, pp. 381–391. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2005.06.001>
- Nickel, P. M. 2016. Thrift Shop Philanthropy: Charity, Value, and Ascetic Rehabilitation. *Cultural Politics* 12(2), 173–189. <https://doi.org/10.1215/17432197-3592076>
- Norris, L. 2015. The limits of ethicality in international markets: Imported second-hand clothing in India. *Geoforum* 67, pp. 183–193. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.06.003>
- Orgad, S. & Nikunen K. 2015. The Humanitarian Makeover. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12(3), 229–251. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2015.1044255>
- Ouellette, L. and Hay J. 2008. Makeover television, governmentality and the good citizen. *Continuum* 22(4), 471–484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310801982930>
- Owen, J. 2021. More Than Decluttering: Insights from attic project volunteers decluttering with older people. [https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/138465/1/More Than Decluttering-2021-02.pdf](https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/138465/1/More_Than_Decluttering-2021-02.pdf) [Accessed 20 May 2022]
- Paget, A. and Birdwell, J. 2013. *Measuring the social value of charity shops: Giving Something Back*. London: Demos. Available at: [https://www.demos.co.uk/files/DEMOS\\_givingsomethingbackREPORT.pdf?1385343669](https://www.demos.co.uk/files/DEMOS_givingsomethingbackREPORT.pdf?1385343669) [Accessed 17 May 2022].
- Parsons, E. 2002. People or Profits? The Challenges of Managing in Charity Retail. *The Institute of Retail Studies Working Paper Series* 2(1), pp. 1–20.
- Parsons, E. and Broadbridge, A. 2007. Charity, Retail or Care? Gender and Managerialism in the Charity Retail Sector. *Women In Management Review* 22(7), pp. 552–567. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420710825724>
- Payson, A. and Moore, K. 2022. The morbid romance of the good job: News and the emotional social imaginary in late capitalism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 25(5), pp. 1433–1447. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494211057133>
- Pemberton, Simon, Eldin Fahmy, Eileen Sutton and Karen Bell. 2017. Endless Pressure: Life on a Low Income in Austere Times. *Social Policy and Administration*, 51(7) pp. 1156–1173. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12233>
- Podkalicka A. and Meese J. 2012. 'Twin transformations': The Salvation Army's charity shops and the recreating of material and social value. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 15(6), pp. 721–735. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549412450635>
- Portas, Mary. 2011. *The Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6292/2081646.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6292/2081646.pdf) [Accessed 20 May 2022].
- Potts, T. 2015. Tidy house, tidy mind? Non-human agency in the hoarding situation. *Subjectivity* 8(2), pp. 102–123. <https://doi.org/10.1057/sub.2015.1>
- Powell, H. and Prasad, S. 2010. 'As Seen on TV.' The Celebrity Expert: How taste is shaped by lifestyle media. *Cultural Politics* 6(1), pp. 111–124. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174310X12549254318908>
- Rich, E. 2011. 'I see her being obese!': Public pedagogy, reality media and the obesity crisis. *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine* 15(1), pp. 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363459309358127> PMID:21212111
- Ringrose, J. and Walkerdine, V. 2008. Regulating The Abject: The TV make-over as site of neo-liberal reinvention toward bourgeois femininity. *Feminist Media Studies* 8(3), pp. 227–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680770802217279>
- Skeggs, B. and Wood, H. 2008. The labour of transformation and circuits of value 'around' reality television. *Continuum* 22(4), pp. 559–572. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310801983664>
- Speer, J. 2019. Urban makeovers, homeless encampments, and the aesthetics of displacement. *Social &*

- Cultural Geography* 20(4), pp. 575–595. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2018.1509115>
- Thompson, M. 1979. *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value*. London: Pluto Press.
- Tyler, I. 2008. 'Chav mum chav scum': class disgust in contemporary Britain. *Feminist Media Studies* 8(1), pp. 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680770701824779>
- Tyler, I. 2020. *Stigma: The Machinery of Inequality*. London: Zed. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350222809>
- Vander Schee, C. and Kline, K. 2013. Neoliberal exploitation in reality television: youth, health and the spectacle of celebrity 'concern'. *Journal of Youth Studies* 16(5), pp. 565–578, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2012.733812>
- van der Velden, M. 2021. 'Fixing the World One Thing at a Time': Community repair and a sustainable circular economy. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 304, 127151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.127151>
- Wacquant, L. 2010. Crafting the Neoliberal State: Workfare, Prisonfare, and Social Insecurity. *Sociological Forum* 25(2), pp. 197–220. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1573-7861.2010.01173.x>
- Wood, C. 2012. *For Disabled People the Worst is Yet to Come...Destination Unknown*. London: Demos. Available at: [https://www.demos.co.uk/files/Destination\\_Unknown\\_Summer\\_2012\\_-\\_web.pdf?1340294386](https://www.demos.co.uk/files/Destination_Unknown_Summer_2012_-_web.pdf?1340294386) [Accessed 17 May 2022].



Cardiff University Press  
Gwasg Prifysgol Caerdydd