

## A theoretical approach to vintage: From oenology to media

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### Abstract

The term 'vintage' is common in our modern-day vocabulary. The concept to which it refers is familiar in the fields of oenology and fashion studies but has also, more recently, appeared in those of media and cultural studies. However, a theoretical and historical exploration of its evolution prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century is still missing from much literature. This article is a first attempt to fill this gap by discussing patterns of vintage in contrast to retro and kitsch (notions with which it is often blurred). Vintage and its relationship with nostalgia and media are then analysed as part of the discourses and practices that engage with contemporary obsessions with the past. An examination of historical and more recent vintage patterns also leads us to discuss the uses and production of analogue and digital vintage objects. On a more general level this reflection on vintage within media studies might also be inspiring for other research or professional domains.

**Keywords:** vintage, media, nostalgia, digital, analogue

Research on vintage as both a term and a concept and its historical emergence in the field of fashion and flea markets in Europe and the United States is already well-established, particularly regarding the subcultural nature of vintage, its relation to hipsters, the difference between vintage and second-hand clothes, and its identification as a type of consumer practice.<sup>1</sup> Still, the term itself has not been theorised within a broader historical context predating the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A number of recent publications dealing with media, cultural memory, or 'pastness' phenomena in mainly Western countries engage explicitly or implicitly with vintage,<sup>2</sup> with some adopting the concept as their main focus.<sup>3</sup> However, in these

works vintage is frequently and arbitrarily associated with nostalgia, retro, and sometimes antique or kitsch, and historical approaches to vintage and conceptual definitions of it are lacking. From time to time the oenological origin of the term is mentioned but not developed in detail. The absence of a more thorough etymology of the term 'vintage' is also symptomatic of a further gap: the notion is missing as a keyword from the indexing of some major works<sup>4</sup> dealing with vintage, nostalgia, and retro cultures.

Vintage has become part of a common vocabulary in the media, scholarly works, and everyday life, but the background research for this article yielded several questions: what exactly happened in between the documented appearances of vintage in the fields of oenology and, later, fashion and furniture? Why is the term 'vintage' now also being used in reference to 'older' media content and media technologies? Today, vintage is mostly related to former times and accompanied by a nostalgic tone. I searched through various archives in order to verify this special link between vintage and nostalgia. The results turned out to be surprising and show the contrary. Until the 1940s the term vintage referred to the present or very close past. Consequently, I assumed that a reflection on vintage that aims to apply a theoretical framework to this omnipresent but conceptually-neglected notion needs historical considerations if more recent vintage patterns, especially in media studies, are to be understood. This article is therefore based on the consultation of more than 400 scientific, journalistic, legal, and economic archival documents that are related to the topic.<sup>5</sup> I discuss this archival work by referring to scholarly texts dealing with fashion and design, cultural memory, media, and *pastness* phenomena. Based on a semiotic, historical approach within media studies, I introduce the first incisive results illustrating different patterns of vintage as well as both the transformations the term has undergone and the stability it has exhibited. I aim to show that vintage is a multilayered phenomenon that depends on technical-aesthetic appraisals and special methods of production. Vintage also raises questions of authenticity and identity by navigating between playful, creative, and commodified iterations of nostalgia. By discussing the historical uses and significations of the term vintage and then its differentiation with retro and kitsch, I intend to develop a conceptual background for multidisciplinary research on vintage, particularly within media studies. The reflection will surely be useful for scholars who are interested in media history, theory, and archaeology, and particularly for those who study digital media.

## 1 Vintage patterns

By 'patterns' I mean stable and timeless characteristics which resurface and become subject to new forms of interpretation. Vintage is thus something that remains the same by becoming something else depending on each historical context in which it appears. In other words, while a semantic shift takes place over time a practical shift can also be seen, and this adds an appraisal of functionality and design to the sensory, material appreciation of quality (as with wine). Vintage has not lost all its historical meanings, but these are sometimes forgotten or blurred by new cultural domains. To identify vintage patterns it is useful to look back. Pierre Jurieu notes '[t]he harvest is already past; and the time betwixt the harvest and the vintage, is almost expired; and we are approaching to the vintage.'<sup>6</sup> The *Accomplishment* was written and published in French in the Netherlands in 1686. In this text, this Calvinist in exile in Rotterdam prophesises that true religion will be restored very soon in France, by which he means that the papacy will end. Referring to scripture, Jurieu's forecast is closely related to the terms 'harvest' and 'vintage'. For him both are reformation periods in the Church. He relates 'harvest' to something that can be positive or negative but that is now over, such as the corn harvest. 'Vintage', meanwhile, never appears as a positive element in the scripture:

but we cannot find, that any where the term vintage is taken in a good sense; and the juice coming out of the grape, has the colour of blood (...). For this reason, vintage always signifieth anger, wrath, destruction, shedding of blood.<sup>7</sup>

As Voltaire ironically describes, Jurieu's 'vintage apocalypse' did not take place.<sup>8</sup> However, the negative connotation of vintage does not appear in dictionaries. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'vintage' (as of 1746) is a noun that refers to 'the year or place in which wine, especially wine of high quality, was produced'.<sup>9</sup> The word itself has its origin in the old French word 'vendange' (meaning 'alteration', influenced by 'vinter', which is today usually translated as 'late vintage'), but in the beginning it described only the harvest period for grapes and seasonal wine and did not initially indicate high quality. Later, vintage wine was described as being exceptional and of high quality, and this is still the case today. The term is not applied exclusively to wine, however; absinthe<sup>10</sup> and champagne are also said to be part of the 'liquid' vintage.

Neither oenology nor Jurieu's apocalyptic and religiously charged prophecies are the main topic of this article, but both reveal vintage patterns

and their various cultural meanings. Jurieu's pessimistic understanding of vintage designates the brutal end of an era: vintage is, for him, like an endpoint that makes way for something else, namely the next harvest and vintage. The Calvinist also hints at the cyclical nature of former and current vintage forms: they come and go; some also remain. There are numerous examples of this in wine and in fashion. As mentioned, with wine 'vintage' refers to a special year, place, and grape. In fashion it refers mostly to a decade characterised by a specific style, design, and garments. Still, between wine and fashion we find something else. Reynolds indicates a transition from wine to musical instruments and early motorcars but does not mention the historical basis of this transition.<sup>11</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'vintage' also denotes 'the time that something of quality was produced', and this definition refers precisely to what happens when vintage starts to infiltrate social and scientific discourses other than those related to oenology.

In 1926, Neuter writes on horse breeding and mentions a special horse named Jérôme, deemed the best product of Belgium's 'vintage' year.<sup>12</sup> In his entomological research in the 1960s, Pont uses the term 'vintage specimen'<sup>13</sup> to describe a special mosquito found by Macquart in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. 'Vintage' is also a name given to a boat in 1824<sup>14</sup> and to a horse in 1903.<sup>15</sup> In a 1939 advert for a range of nail varnishes called Peggy Sage one of the products is called 'Vintage' (appearing alongside 'Hacienda', 'Goldrush', and 'Heartbreak').<sup>16</sup> The term is likewise used for photographs (early prints), industrial and handicraft techniques, calculation grids, motorcars, boats, planes, and machines. For example, in 1940, Martin describes new tax measures as being 'of recent vintage'.<sup>17</sup> In 1942, Angell criticises the Civilian Morale Agency by describing their World War I propaganda techniques as being of 'ancient vintage'<sup>18</sup> today. Other designations exist, such as for human beings that are well-known in a certain cultural, political, or scientific field. In 1899, a German philologist writes: '[i]s Goethe's poetry really so sure a stay as the philosophy which Goethe drank in, whether from the vintage of Spinoza or from the more recent crues of Kant and Fichte?'<sup>19</sup> The interesting thing here is that the metaphor of wine is used to qualify a philosopher's work, and that vintage is already situated as a past quality and not as a very recent one. In the January 1958 edition of the *Music Educators Journal*, the term 'vintage' is attributed to well-known musicians of a certain period. The index of psychoanalytical writings of 1956 honours Ernest Elvin Hadley as being 'of the early vintage of psychoanalysts'.<sup>20</sup>

These examples reveal different emerging vintage patterns. Vintage

sometimes becomes a proper noun, but it is employed mainly as a means of differentiation, to confer an assessment of quality that is based on a selection process which attributes a symbolic and/or pragmatic value to a particular item or person. Most of these apparently heterogeneous uses of the term 'vintage' still prevail today. In oenology a good vintage is the product of a special place and time. The term is even subject to legal protection; a 2009 regulation of the European Commission makes reference to 'protected designations of origin and geographical indications, traditional terms, labelling and presentation of certain wine sector products',<sup>21</sup> of which vintage is a part.

The original meaning, devoid of nostalgia, also exists in other research domains. Vintage models feature in scholarly fields such as economics, marketing, management,<sup>22</sup> and computer studies,<sup>23</sup> and the notion has even been used to describe changes in terrorist organisations.<sup>24</sup> To offer an example, Boucekkine, de la Croix, and Licandro discuss different cycles of vintage capital models from the 1960s to the 1990s, basing their reflection on the work of Johansen, who developed the first model. Johansen suggests that 'capital goods embody the best available technology at the date of their construction and the number of workers operating them'.<sup>25</sup> In capital stock a machine of vintage  $t$  means that in year  $t$  that machine started operating. Machines can be changed. Firms 'can choose whether to purchase the newest vintage machine or a machine of any older existing vintage: newer vintages are relatively more expensive to set up, but they are also relatively more productive'.<sup>26</sup> There has been a passage from 'vintage capital' to 'human vintage capital', a model that includes more precise technological, equality, and demographic issues. The aim of these new models is to evaluate a production process that considers machines and human beings in order to deliver the best possible production results in terms of capital. In other words, they include variations in production processes that have to be reconsidered in light of societal change, meaning mainly technological progress but also differing abilities within and across labour forces. With the diversification of methods of production and manufacturing, models of capital vintage change also.

The economic approach is of interest for a theoretical reflection on vintage within the humanities. Vintage capital is related to an economic value and to a human workforce, but also to technological progress. Most of the time a product, item, or technique forms the 'old' vintage when societal and industrial changes take place to introduce 'new', innovative vintages, even if there is not necessarily a substantial need for these. Vintage cycles emerge when a maturation process is said to be finished; this is

what can be termed 'progress'. This explains the two-sided character of vintage as a cultural matter which goes beyond economic equations of production. Vintage techniques or aesthetics, as seen in fashion and media, are always related to manufacturing or production processes; the quality of a product is usually judged as being vintage, which does not necessarily mean that the best 'vintage capital' model was used for it.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, a firm, fashion company, or media industry can turn a profit based on the best vintage capital model, but that does not necessarily mean that the products are of the highest possible quality or sustainability in terms of content and function. Here, it is interesting to consider that taste or aesthetic appreciation has often been part of labelling 'vintages', as the description of wine or cars demonstrates, but quality, functionality, and technical performance were much more decisive than aesthetics in the beginning. To name one example, in 1956, in his book *From Veteran to Vintage: A History of Motoring and Motorcars from 1884-1914*, Karlslake describes how the veteran car model becomes one of vintage, stressing that 'in the primitive era everyone is so vitally concerned with making a new object work that in some fashion or another they can give no thought to external appearance'.<sup>28</sup> Becoming vintage takes time.

Hence, there is no 'official' vintage model or theory in the humanities, despite the fact that different temporal cycles of fashion trends can be named, as in an attempt to do so by James Laver in 1937. He notes that the same outfit will be indecent ten years before its time, 'outré' (daring) one year before its time, ridiculous twenty years after its time, amusing thirty years after its time, and beautiful 150 years later.<sup>29</sup> Still, this model does not coincide consistently with people's taste. The difficulty in establishing a theory of vintage in the humanities may stem from the fact that taste, appreciation, or even subjective selection processes are difficult to put into equations. The discussion of some historical and theoretical patterns of vintage allows us to distinguish the notion more clearly from other phenomena as retro and kitsch. In the beginning vintage was primarily about sustainable quality and functionality rather than physical appearance. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century aesthetic perception, sometimes including a nostalgic view of an item as being of the past, became equally important. This 'change' may explain why the concept of vintage is often blurred with the notions of retro and kitsch.

## 2 Vintage, retro, and kitsch

The definition of vintage and retro frequently leads to the confusion of both, even in well-researched scholarly works. For example, Heike Jenss writes that

retro implies the construction of past images and historical looks which can be achieved with original objects as well as with new ones that look historic. It uses the potential of dress as a cultural signal of time and an important component of cultural memory, historic consciousness and imagery.<sup>30</sup>

Veenstra and Kuipers reframe this characterisation of retro to create their own definition of vintage: Jenss (2005:179) defines vintage as a “construction of past images...”.<sup>31</sup> The description itself is not completely inaccurate either for retro or for vintage, but Jenss does not mention vintage at all at this point in her text. Reynolds states that ‘vintage is about the original period garments, as opposed to brand-new clothes that rework old designs’,<sup>32</sup> while Guffey points out that retro appears in the early 1960s using past visions of the future that were not realised. She underlines the often unsentimental relationship between customers and current retro styles, describing this phenomenon as a ‘trendy detachment’.<sup>33</sup> In sum, retro items are new creations with designs that recycle the past in new ways and styles that bring forgotten visions of the future into the present. Today, vintage is mainly something that was created in the past and whose qualities remain in the present despite or thanks to signs and traces of the passage of time (material deterioration or colour changes, for example) but also narratives that locate and authenticate the item as being of the past.

In everyday life, but also in scholarly productions, and particularly in relation to nostalgia and sentimental expressions, the term kitsch appears frequently together with retro and vintage, but vintage does not automatically coincide with kitsch. As Moles puts it, kitsch is part of a sentimental, ‘aesthetic’ type of consumption which first appears with the emergence of the new middle classes of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, whose purchasing powers exceed their needs, while it later becomes a product of mass consumption.<sup>34</sup> To borrow Beyart’s description of kitsch, vintage has also to be approached as a ‘complex semiotic system’<sup>35</sup> that generates patterns and values in cultural life. ‘Vintage’ and ‘kitsch’ are equally related to the question of social distinction in a period of significant change, such as the Industrial Revolution. Elias emphasises the stable instability of kitsch’s ‘shape quality’<sup>36</sup> (*Gestaltqualität*). This means that kitsch objects are

aesthetically unfinished and incomplete. Valis' work on *cursilería*, a more complex form of kitsch appearing in modern Spain, also underpins the unfulfilled character of these objects which stand in for something that cannot be realised in 'real' life, something you want but are unable to achieve.<sup>37</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the notions of kitsch and vintage do not overlap in meaning, but today an old kitsch object – for example a candleholder with exorbitant design – might be of a certain vintage. Vintage is a 'liminal' phenomenon that navigates constantly in between the search for technical perfection and 'usefulness' (which is not the case for kitsch) and its symbolic functions as signs of social representation. The vintage patterns emerging from the heterogeneous social or scientific fields discussed above refer to a very particular time and place. I argue that this is the main difference between retro and kitsch. Identifying vintage as authentic requires precise temporal and topographical information: when and where was the item produced, and, if the information is available, by whom? These elements are key factors in 'authenticity' and are also essential for putting the quality of the item into perspective. Depending on this first premise all vintage patterns refer to a special selection process that induces taste, judgement, and appraisal related to manufacturing techniques and/or to aesthetics. This is not automatically the case for kitsch or retro. The latter may become vintage if their quality lasts over time, and vintage items can also be deemed retro or kitsch.

Finally, vintage is a more all-encompassing designation or category if one considers its historical context. This does not mean that vintage items are better or worse than contemporary retro or kitsch ones, it simply means that vintage cannot be subject to the same interpretative templates. Vintage emerges when a particular manufacturing process (be it in an artisan's workshop or on a more industrial scale) produces or creates an item of lasting quality that is based mostly on high-grade production methods and techniques. In light of this, one may assume that vintage can easily trigger sentimental or nostalgic feelings about past places and times 'of better quality'. This is not completely untrue, though it warrants deeper exploration.

### 3 Nostalgia, media, and vintage

Of course one can like, use, or wear vintage, retro, or older items without being nostalgic for a former period or a special place. This is what vintage and retro have in common – they are often playful and, for some, only a



joyful part of the present. Sentimental and nostalgic expressions appear in sociological and anthropological studies on vintage fashion and flea markets as part of a subcultural approach, and a certain 'vintage nostalgia' also appears in discussions of vintage media forms, techniques, or content. Interestingly, vintage and nostalgia are not historically correlated. Vintage gained its symbolic and commercial value in the post-industrialisation era and was part of social distinction (or at least a technical-aesthetic selection process) until the early 20th century; later it reached its period of 'mass' commodification within neoliberal, globalised capitalism. An analysis of vintage shows that the phenomenon can be considered as a sort of crystallisation of social change, but the current temptation to make links between nostalgia and vintage do not fall in line with the initial rhetoric on the latter. The work in archives I undertook for this article revealed the relationship between vintage and a regretful feeling towards the past during the Second World War. To give one early example, Betjeman introduces his *Vintage London* in 1942 with the following words:

[t]he London shown in the illustrations to this book has ceased to exist. (...) Vintage London is of the past; it has disappeared altogether, swallowed a long time ago by gaping gullets of private property, big business and municipal 'progress'.<sup>38</sup>

A nostalgic tone can be identified here, but the archival research reveals that the direct linguistic bond between vintage and nostalgia emerges in the press and literature only at end of the 1960s, going on to explode in the 1990s (mainly in the press) in the field of vintage fashion. This illustrates a kind of sentimental bond with quality products and production methods of the past or simply with the past itself.

However, the historical evolution of nostalgia has already been detailed in scholarly works. Bolzinger traces the evolution of homesickness from Swiss mercenaries (revealed by Hofer in 1688 and named 'nostalgia') to young soldiers in the First World War.<sup>39</sup> Following this, nostalgia slowly but progressively infiltrates popular culture, politics, and marketing and is often accompanied by negative connotations indicating a regressive attitude to the past or its commodification. Jameson and Baudrillard,<sup>40</sup> for example, criticise contemporary nostalgic forms. By doing so both express a certain form of nostalgia. In other words, the postmodern critique is more crucial than ever as it encourages us to remember that even if the commodified or the digital surround us other critical ways of approaching social, political, and economic realities were, are, and have to be possible

in order to tackle the relations and entanglements of digital and non-digital worlds.<sup>41</sup> Without denying nostalgia's potential for exploitation recent studies discuss the topic in a broader context by revealing the importance of reassessing nostalgia as something more complex than it may initially seem.<sup>42</sup> Some of nostalgia's original characteristics still prevail in the form of homesickness, but that nostalgia now mainly expresses a sense of belonging, family, and identity. Today, then, nostalgia can be seen less as a passive state and more as something that we can actively practise in the form of 'nostalgising'.<sup>43</sup> Media produce nostalgic contents and narratives such as recent television shows like *Mad Men* or *The Boardwalk Empire*. Older television shows that are broadcasted again can also trigger the viewer's nostalgia for former times. Likewise, media are very often nostalgic for themselves, their own vintage forms, their structures, and contents. Birthday celebrations of television or radio channels that access their archives at this occasion are only one example. Furthermore, new media technologies (mobile applications in particular) become projection places and tools to express and perform nostalgia, not only for former aesthetics but also the media rituals of the past and their respective technical devices.

#### 4 Nostalgia for the analogue and for the digital

Vintage enters a new era within the emergence of digital cultures. Two types of nostalgia can be observed simultaneously in this context: nostalgia for the analogue and nostalgia for the digital – namely the first vintage digital objects or programs. Analogue vintage items transport past times in their material aspects to the present day, as do Super 8 cameras, for example. In this sense vintage items are akin to a remnant or ruin that travels, circulates, and takes part in the present as a concrete materialisation of the past. Vintage does not need to be expensive to be 'real vintage'; its social, economic, and cultural meanings depend on the value and symbols that are attributed to them. Fake vintage items such as new Polaroid cameras or leather shoes looking old can also trigger nostalgia. However, they are produced in the present. Holtorf calls this pastness

the result of a particular perception or experience. It derives from, among others, material clues indicating wear and tear, decay, and disintegration.

These material clues, and thus the presence of pastness, can be created entirely in the present.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, this very kind of pastness also leads to a special vision of the past which we can seldom access physically and must therefore experience via representation (a *mimesis* of the past). This applies not only to the analogue objects Holtdorf refers to.

Programming and encoding non-digital media objects (such as a television device or cassette player) can simulate the modes and feelings of pastness, as for example in the form of skeuomorphs. This 'analogue nostalgia'<sup>45</sup> for earlier media forms or their 'remediation'<sup>46</sup> into digital media is a familiar research topic, as for example reflections on digital seriality<sup>47</sup> or digital retro photography.<sup>48</sup> Vintage media content in the form of narratives and styles can be reproduced exactly as if it were originally from the past. Using new techniques to make material look or sound old is no novelty. To name only one example, the *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) spin-off television series *Better Call Saul* (2015) is produced with new televisual techniques but simulates the typographic style of the 1990s in its opening – yet the story itself unfolds in 2002.<sup>49</sup> Vintage televisual codes are recycled in a playful and creative way in order to clearly situate the narrative before *Breaking Bad*, even though the latter is an older production.

A second form of analogue nostalgia concerns the technical process of making something new with old techniques, which is not unusual but less common, as it is often difficult to secure access to older media production techniques such as old cameras. One person to have achieved it on a professional level is the photographer Malmberg, whose 'collodian portraits' are shot using a 19<sup>th</sup> century photographic process.<sup>50</sup> This is a sort of instant reverse nostalgia, a form of time travel, and even if the past is thus, in Nora's words, 're-vitalised'<sup>51</sup> physically in the present, it remains a simulation, as the result is located in the present. This type of nostalgia for vintage techniques, form, or content also exists in other fields such as fashion, film, music, gastronomy, and the motor industry, where old vintage techniques are sometimes used to produce something new and new techniques are employed to create something that looks or sounds old. This double-sided feeling has sometimes been termed 'vintalgia', a special mixture of nostalgia and vintage.<sup>52</sup> Vintalgia does not necessarily involve the special aura of a single and unique piece in the sense of Benjamin,<sup>53</sup> as vintage items are usually initially part of a production line and then distinguished on the basis of a special quality that is induced by the manufacturing or production process. In this sense it is interesting to observe that vintage fashion consumers of the last 30 years try to find a 'special' piece to highlight their authenticity and individuality via the vintage item. Fischer calls this an 'authenticity discourse' that contributes to the con-

struction of an artificial aura within consumer practice that tends to stand in opposition to mass consumption by evoking ecological factors, quality, or historicity reasons for choosing vintage gear.<sup>54</sup>

Vintage items can also trigger another type of aura whose origin is located in the special relationship a person feels with a vintage item, no matter if it is analogue or digital. Scholars of 'new materialisms' suggest to 'recognize that phenomena are caught in a multitude of interlocking systems and forces and to consider anew the location and nature of capacities of agency'.<sup>55</sup> Objects have material and symbolic power of agency; they can thus become icons in whose narratives we believe more or less voluntarily,<sup>56</sup> and this is also the case for digital objects we are in relations with.<sup>57</sup> An old video game device or an animated GIF can have the same iconic and nostalgic potential as a car of the 1920s, or a fake vintage table from 2015. Nostalgia for the digital is a yearning for the early vintage digital culture, a longing for the human relations it created and the objects it produced – those on the computer screen, but also their devices. Follow two completely different such examples: Makepixelart,<sup>58</sup> which invites users to re-create the 1990s pixel-style for free but also uses this type of nostalgia for commercial purposes in order to sell applications;<sup>59</sup> and the recent pessimistic blog post of the Iranian-Canadian blogger Hossein Derakhshan. After six years of imprisonment he misses the Golden Age of political blogging, without the importance of 'likes'.<sup>60</sup> From social networks to blogs and websites, the nostalgia for the digital is actively expressed, practiced but also commercialised. In this sense it would be too blinkered to consider vintage, nostalgia, and their related narratives and techniques as mere commodities or simulations. They are ultimately part of our everyday lives, but we can play with and contest them. This active nostalgising, or at least playfulness with vintage media, grants us the possibility to reconsider the relationship between human beings and (digital) objects. It can also lead to an active engagement and confrontation with Freud's idea of *Vergänglichkeit*<sup>61</sup> ('transience' or 'perishability'). This fear and joy of the ephemeral and the irreversibility of time is certainly one of the reasons why humans undertake efforts to conserve layers of time by restoring, repairing, encoding, and copying objects of the past. Some people might even anticipate their nostalgia of the future by thinking of new devices that would be able to store and produce the nostalgic memories that have not yet occurred. Media, to be taken here in a non-deterministic way as 'technological devices', which are equally interwoven with production conditions and socio-cultural agency, uses, and practices, generate content and

form and are undeniably part of this struggle to create and make disappear, to remember and forget.

## 5 Perspectives

These historical and theoretical excursions into the concept of vintage patterns demonstrate both its stability over time and its evolution from its beginnings in the field of oenology to its subsequent roles in the fields of mechanical and industrial reproduction and the digital era. As is the case with many research topics, future work on vintage requires open disciplinary approaches that take into consideration its (im-)material aspects, its socio-cultural meanings and uses, and the circumstances behind its production in equal measure. For some time now media scholars, media historians, and, more recently, media archaeologists have been dealing with vintage media forms and techniques but have not engaged in explicit theoretical thinking about vintage itself.<sup>62</sup> This article might be a fruitful contribution to these domains by providing a modest basis for future research on digital and analogue vintage objects and techniques. I also hope that this could inspire reflections on various vintage forms, such as agriculture or manufacturing processes. In other words, by considering vintage as a more complex phenomenon our understanding of very heterogeneous fields may be enriched with these theoretical and historical thoughts on vintage and eventually lead to a critical debate on how to deal with 'progress'.

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## Notes

1. See for example Appelgren & Bohlin 2015; Sapio 2014; Veenstra & Kuipers 2013; DeLong & Heinemann & Reiley 2005; Palmer & Clark 2005; Jenss 2005.
2. See for example Farchy & Jutant 2015; Lizardi 2015; Niemeyer 2014; Reynolds 2011.
3. Albrechtsen 2014; Di Folco 2013; Abrami 2010; Chivers & Biddinger 2008.
4. Lizardi 2015; Reynolds 2011; Abrami 2010; Grainge 2002.
5. The following databases were consulted by first searching for the term vintage, then



- 'vintage and nostalgia', 'vintage and media', 'vintage and retro': Factiva, The European Library (historical newspapers), Gallica (French National Library), Blackwell, JStor, Routledge and SAGE, Proquest, Eur-Lex, and LexisNexis JurisClasseur.
6. Jurieu 1793, p. 244.
  7. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
  8. *Dictionnaire historique des événements remarquables*, Paris Ladvoat, 1824, p. 393.
  9. To make the distinction with other languages, in German one would say 'Jahrgang', and in French 'millésime'.
  10. Lachenmeier; Nathan-Maister; Breaux & Kuballa 2009.
  11. Reynolds 2011, p. 193.
  12. Neuter 1926, p. 44.
  13. Pont 1967, pp. 181-190.
  14. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, 8 May 1824. A boat navigated by Captain Fraser, most of the time to Porto (the relation to vintage Porto might be the reason here, but is not mentioned in the article).
  15. The name of a horse that ran Mühlheim an der Ruhr-Race in 1903, quoted by the *Berliner Börsenzeitung*, 29 June 1903.
  16. *Le Figaro*, 3 November 1939.
  17. Martin 1940, p. 62.
  18. Angell 1942, p. 165.
  19. Müller 1897, p. 654.
  20. Hill 1956, p. 384.
  21. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32009R0607> (accessed on 23 June 2015).
  22. See for example Chandrasekaran & Tellis 2008; Bohmann & Golder & Mitra 2002; Bradford & McGuckin & Stiroh 2001.
  23. See for example Mounier-Kuhn 2014; Heide 2014; Breeden & Ingram 2010.
  24. Faria & Arce 2012.
  25. Johansen, quoted in Boucekkine & de la Croix & Licandro 2011, p. 4.
  26. Hornstein & Krusell & Violante 2003, p. 5.
  27. Bohmann & Golder & Mitra 2002.
  28. Karlslake 1956, p. 5.
  29. Laver 1937.
  30. Jenss 2005, p. 179.
  31. Veenstra & Kuipers 2013, p. 356.
  32. Reynolds 2011, p. 192.
  33. Guffey 2006, p. 162.
  34. Moles 1971, p. 75.
  35. Beyaert-Geslin 2007.
  36. Elias 2004 (orig. in 1934), p.5.
  37. Valis 2012.
  38. Betjeman 1942, p. 3
  39. Bolzinger 2007.
  40. Jameson 1991; Baudrillard 1981.
  41. This approach of emancipation and agency is part of current scholarly reflections, as for example in Lambert 2013; Samida & Eggert & Hahn 2014; Hui 2012; Keightley & Pickering 2012; Alexander & Bartmanski & Giesen 2012, Erkki & Parikka 2011; Cool & Frost, 2010.

42. See for example Lizardi 2015; Angé & Berliner 2014; Niemeyer 2014; Atia & David 2010; Keightley & Pickering 2006.
43. Sedikides et al. 2015; Niemeyer 2014.
44. Holtorf 2013, p. 431.
45. Schrey 2014.
46. Bolter & Grusin 2000.
47. Maeder & Wentz 2014.
48. Bartholeyns 2014.
49. <http://www.amc.com/shows/better-call-saul> (accessed on 10 June 2015).
50. <http://www.robertmalmberg.com/> (accessed on 8 June 2015).
51. Nora 1984.
52. See for example <https://fr.pinterest.com/nattybaby84/vintalgia/> (accessed on 10 June 2015).
53. Benjamin 2008 (orig. in 1935).
54. Fischer 2015, p. 62.
55. Coole & Frost 2010, p. 9.
56. Alexander & Bartmanski & Woodward 2013; Lambert 2013; Bartmanski & Giesen 2012; Latour 2007; Appadurai 1986.
57. Hui 2012.
58. <http://makepixelart.com/free/> (accessed on 3 August 2015).
59. <http://makepixelart.com/free/download.html> (accessed on 3 August 2015).
60. <https://medium.com/matter/the-web-we-have-to-save-2eb1fe15a426> (accessed on 3 August 2015).
61. Freud 1916 (orig. in 1915).
62. See for example Natale & Balbi 2014; Erkki & Parikka 2011.