

NOSTALGIA AND ITS MANIFOLD (BE)LONGINGS

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Abstract: *In his seminal essay on the historical semantics of nostalgia "The Idea of Nostalgia," Jean Starobinsky (1966) foregrounds the complexity of the concept of nostalgia and contends that nostalgia is an unstable and shifty term. He implies that nostalgia – quite paradoxically – has both a fixing and spreading power. Starobinsky indicates that on the one hand, the concept of nostalgia immobilises that which it tries to represent, but on the other hand, that it inaugurates its own relentless motions to various, sometimes unlikely, discursive places. During such travels, nostalgia becomes attached to ideas or problems which initially had little bearing on its shape and resonance, but which later come to modify the character of the concept itself. Though Starobinsky focuses on nostalgia's mobility in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and has particular shifts or new attachments in mind, his fix-and-spread model of nostalgia seems well-fitted for a description of post-Romantic and postmodern fate of nostalgia. Nostalgia has been on the move, jumping disciplinary ships and traversing fields of study, which shows in the ever-expanding scope of contemporary nostalgia criticism. Thus, today "the study of nostalgia does not belong to any specific discipline: it frustrates psychologists, sociologists, literary theorists and philosophers, even computer scientists who thought they had gotten away from it – until they took refuge in their home pages and cyber-pastoral vocabulary of the global village." (Boym 2001: xvii) This paper focuses on contemporary nostalgia criticism and argues that the unstable and multifaceted character of the concept of nostalgia can be usefully theorised with the help of what Mieke Bal (2002) defined as "travelling concepts". Pervasive yet defying definition and classification, nostalgia travels between disciplines, individual scholars, historical periods, geographically dispersed academic communities. As a "travelling concept", nostalgia does not properly belong to one discipline or period, nor is it controlled by one discourse; rather, it frustrates attempts at attaching it to one type of study and – so to say - keeps delaying its disciplinary homecoming. This paper will offer a sketch of historical and interdisciplinary travels of nostalgia, outlining the ways nostalgia is (1) displaced from its initial dwelling (medical science) to Romantic aesthetics or, more generally, to discourses of modernity, (2) employed in such diversified fields as travel/tourism studies, ethics, historiography. Drawing on Mieke Bal's thesis, the paper will argue that the incessant travels of the concept*

of nostalgia and its cross-disciplinary appeal are energised by the concept's heterogeneous character. The flexibility of the concept of nostalgia as well as its displacement in relation to itself is an asset rather than impediment, thanks to which one can rethink and modify the taken for granted cultural narratives.

Key words: *nostalgia, travelling concepts, interdisciplinarity.*

In his seminal essay on the historical semantics of nostalgia, Jean Starobinsky (1966) foregrounds the complexity of the concept of nostalgia and contends that nostalgia is an unstable and **shifty term**. He observes, “as soon as the name of an emotion is brought to light, the word, through its very efficacy, helps to fix, to propagate, to generalize the emotion which it represents. Emotion is not a word, but it can only be spread abroad through words. At one extreme, and when certain words are at the height of their power, they reach a point where they include elements which have little relation to that word” (Starobinsky 1966: 81-82). As the name of an emotion, nostalgia – quite paradoxically – has both a fixing and spreading power. Starobinsky (1966) indicates that on the one hand, the concept of nostalgia immobilises that which it tries to represent, but on the other hand, it inaugurates its own relentless motions to various, sometimes unlikely, discursive places. During such travels, nostalgia becomes attached to ideas or problems which initially had little bearing on its shape and resonance, but which later come to modify the character of the concept itself. Though Starobinsky focuses on nostalgia's mobility in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and has particular shifts or new attachments in mind, his fix-and-spread model of nostalgia seems well-fitted for a description of post-Romantic and postmodern fate of nostalgia. Nostalgia has been on the move, jumping disciplinary ships and traversing fields of study, which shows in the ever-expanding scope of contemporary nostalgia criticism. Consequently, today “the study of nostalgia does not belong to any specific discipline: it frustrates psychologists, sociologists, literary theorists and philosophers, even computer scientists who thought they had gotten away from it – until they took refuge in their home pages and cyber-pastoral vocabulary of the global village” (Boym 2001: xvii).

The curiously undisciplined, undomesticated nostalgia, however, can be aptly described as one of “travelling concepts”, theorised and exemplified by Mieke Bal. Bal (2002) proposes to look at “the concept of *concept* itself, not as a clear-cut methodological legislation, but as a territory to be travelled, in a spirit of adventure.” (p. 23) Employing such exploration-based and risk-related metaphors, Bal argues that concepts are neither carved into tablets of stone nor completely nebulous. Though they are related to tradition, concepts are rarely used in a continuous, unmodulated way. They are flexible, which means “they travel – between disciplines, between individual scholars, between historical periods, and between geographically dispersed communities” (Bal 2002: 24).

During such journeys, meaning, value and reach of concepts are transformed, and consequently, concepts become “important areas of debate” (Bal 2002: 27), within which interdisciplinary work can be done. Travelling concepts like “hybridity,” “text,” “history,” “culture,” “genre,” to name only a few, foster discussion and help to “focus interest” (Bal 2002: 31). Their huge asset is that they do not leave us indifferent or neutral, but “promote a measure of consensus,” (Bal 2002: 27) encouraging the production of knowledge which remains wary of the deceit of dogmatism and free from the pursuit of false purity. Travelling concepts have “foundational capacity” (Bal 2002: 33), thanks to which they can start a new field of studies insofar as they both “harden” and “unharden” issues, i.e., describe and experiment with phenomena. By supplying new ways of ordering, by redistributing emphases, articulating problems anew, a travelling concept may refresh, reconfigure, productively destabilise a field of study. Significantly, the mobility characterising concepts affects those concepts themselves, triggering their own transformation and maintaining their analytical liveliness. Concepts travel “not just between disciplines, places and times, but also within their own conceptualisation [...] under the guidance of the objects they encounter.” (Bal 2002: 45-46) This is why the use of a travelling concept “should be encouraged, especially in areas where it is not self-evident, so that it can regain its analytical and theoretical force.” (Bal 2002: 26)

The rest of this paper will work through the claim that nostalgia is a travelling concept. As a “travelling concept”, nostalgia does not properly belong to one discipline or period, nor is it controlled by one discourse. Rather, nostalgia frustrates attempts at attaching it to one type of study and – so to say – keeps delaying its disciplinary homecoming (*nostos*). Travelling from medicine, to aesthetics and philosophy, later to social and cultural studies, as well as to broadly conceived postmodernist studies, the concept of nostalgia is “always in a process of becoming, a process that involves developing relations with other concepts situated on the same plane”. (Bal 2002: 51) Nostalgia's incessant becoming precludes the concept's proper domestication, and harbours its wanderings which on the one hand rehearse nostalgia's *longing* for an imaginary home-discipline, but on the other hand, bear witness to the impossibility of nostalgia's *be-longing*.

Initially, nostalgia was meant to capture a bodily affliction rooted in “*Heimweh*, regret, *desiderium patriae*” (Starobinsky 1966: 84), and belonged to the medical science. It was diagnosed by the seventeenth century physician Johannes Hofer, and denoted a disease that spread among people staying away from their homes: mercenaries, sailors, students, domestic help, servants and other. Hofer used two Greek roots *nostos* (meaning “return home”) and *algia* (meaning “sorrow”) to coin the “pseudo-Greek word” (Boym 2001: 3) describing an ailment whose symptoms included acute somatic disorders like nausea, brain inflammation, cardiac arrest, and high fever. The incapacitating symptoms were triggered by patients' absence from their native lands, and

became aggravated by sounds, tastes, smells, that is by “the minutiae and trivia of the lost paradise that those who remained home never noticed.” (Boym 2001: 4) Nostalgia proved to be contagious, causing an epidemic of feigned nostalgia that spread quickly among soldiers, who knew that (at that stage) nostalgia was believed curable, that the antidote was the patient's temporary return home, and who hoped to be released from service. As Boym (2001) puts it, “Hofer's felicitous baptism of the new disease both helped to identify the existing conditions and enhanced the epidemic, making it a widespread European phenomenon” (p.3). Once named and described, nostalgia entered international medical discourse and cut across medical taxonomies across the world, becoming inflected by national associations. In America, nostalgia connoted lack of manliness and hence, brought opprobrium upon the afflicted soldier, whereas in France or Switzerland, it signified a troublesome but patriotic phenomenon. Moreover, though nostalgia started as a disease of lower classes, it was soon transmitted to educated people.

At the end of the eighteenth century people began to be fearful of extended sojourns away from home because they had become conscious of the threat posed by nostalgia. People even died of nostalgia after having read in books that nostalgia is a disease which is frequently mortal. (Starobinsky 1966: 86).

It is quite striking that nostalgia – the disease of the displaced – is soon transferred away from the discipline it originally belonged to, and that its medical classification is replaced with other descriptions.¹ Observing the shift in theorising the emotion in the nineteenth century, one is tempted to conclude that nostalgia - whose immediate context was the period of wars and colonial mobility of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and whose “somatic revolt against forced travel, depopulation, emigration and other forms of transience” (Goodman 2008: 196) showed in patients through the immobilising marasmus -

¹Admittedly, the medicalised approach to nostalgia did not altogether disappear after the seventeenth century. While in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries nostalgia migrated to various discourses and underwent modifications, its pathology-related component stayed in the background, and became prominent again later thanks to the 1909 publication *Heimwech und Verbrechen* by Karl Jaspers. Jaspers studied the effects of strong nostalgic feelings experienced by very young girls sent to baby-sit for richer families. There was a case of an eight-year-old girl who was so nostalgic about her home that she first escaped from the house of her employers, and then – when she was brought back by her mother – murdered the baby she was supposed to look after. Another case analysed by Jaspers is of a young girl who smothered two of her protégés. Jaspers's account integrates nostalgia into court medicine, letting the term absorb the connotation of crime, murder and violence. Nostalgia becomes lethal not simply because it strikes at the body of the afflicted person, but because it makes its victim turn against others. Douwe Draaisma argues that long after Jaspers, scholarly publications on nostalgic yearnings for home belonged to court medicine, which changed only when the culprit of the described crimes disappeared, i.e., when children stopped being sent to work in an alien environment far from home. (2010: 174-175) Later in the twentieth century, the medical jargon that persisted in literature on nostalgia has been replaced – among others – with psychological terminology.

could not but keep on moving and changing its disciplinary addresses. The story of how, why and where nostalgia travelled from its initial dwelling is a point of contention. Starobinsky (1966) points out that with the development of bacteriology and pathological anatomy, the psychosomatic explanation of nostalgia was discredited. Also, the spatial dimension of nostalgia lost significance as the life-defining local, village environment was replaced by the complex and fluid urban environment.

It is evident that the decline of the theory of nostalgia coincided with the decline of particularism in the provinces [...]. Looking back toward the home is no longer a torment; returning no longer has any beneficial effect. (Starobinsky 1966: 102).

Adopted by Romantic sensibility, nostalgia acquired the status of yearning for the lost ideal rather than for the lost homeland; consequently, nostalgia became incurable because unlike the longing for the place one can revisit, the irrational desire for the lost youth or childhood cannot be alleviated. A nostalgic “is not straining toward something which he can repossess, but toward an age which is forever beyond his reach” (Starobinsky 1966: 94). On losing its status of somatic pathology rooted in the experience of space, nostalgia gains temporal character and starts running parallel to the new experience of time as unrepeatably. This shift in the conceptualisation of nostalgia from “*maladie du pays*” (provincial ailment) to “*mal du siècle*” (a disease of the modern age) is also observed by Svetlana Boym (2001), who points out that “nostalgic manifestations are side effects of the teleology of progress.” (p.10) Boym explains that the narrative of progress disturbed the balance between the sense of the past – the past present as memory, the presence of the past, and the sense of the future – the not-yet envisaged today, the presence of the future. Progress privileged the future and neglected the past, but above all, it became a new global narrative dominating all spheres of human experience, and subordinating local conceptions of time to the universal clock-measured time. Progress as the spatial expansion, gaining momentum since the eighteenth-century, involved “moving from a bewildering diversity of maps to a universally shared world,” (Boym 2001: 11) and coordinating the local cultures within the supracommunal administrative system of the colonial project. The “side effect” of the altered understanding of time and space was the stirring of nostalgia, of yearning for the bygone, for the particular, for the national. Thus, in the nineteenth-century, the concept of nostalgia was treated as a “romance with the past” (Boym 2001: 11), employed by philosophers and poets, who sometimes politicised it for the sake of nation-building, and sometimes “explored nostalgic longing for its own sake rather than using it as a vehicle to a promised land or a nation-state.” (Boym 2001: 13) Significantly, nineteenth-century poets and philosophers were unable to stabilise nostalgia, and offered instead its “sympathetic mirroring”

(Boym 2001: 14) reflecting (on) human longing. Nostalgia at that point “remains unsystematic and unsynthesisable; it seduces rather than convinces.” (Boym 2001: 13) In the late nineteenth century, under the impact of Baudelaire, Nietzsche and Benjamin, the temporal structure of nostalgia grows even more complex, as nostalgia becomes associated with the longing for the present moment, for that which is too fragile to have any lasting quality. Nostalgia bespoke the desire for heterogeneous time, reducible neither to progress nor transcendence and residing in the “paradoxical dialectic of past, present and future.” (Boym 2001: 33) Before the twentieth century started, the ambivalently temporal character of nostalgia was firmly established.

A slightly different account of nostalgia's travels in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century has been recently offered by Kevis Goodman (2008), who compares the concept's discursive migrations to “a relay movement, a passing of the baton from the medical sciences to an emergent aesthetics.” (p. 198) According to Goodman (2008), the theorisation of nostalgia as a disease centred on the discussion of nostalgia's disturbed motions. The etiology of the disease lied in the paralysis of animal spirits which normally flowed vigorously through the invisible nerve tubes, but which during a nostalgic bout languored in the same, home-evoking nervous pathways. Significantly, nostalgia “was a disease of 'motions' in more than just the anatomical sense. It was also pathology of travel, a result of the compulsory motion *of* bodies, not just within them.” (Goodman 2008: 201, original italics) Hofer's identification of nostalgia and the subsequent medical interest in the disease coincided with the period of intense geographical motions (wars, migrations, exploration, politics of expansion). Hence, nostalgia's conceptualisation as a disease of kinetics can be seen as the transposition of larger historical motions into the body, as a desire to “map the world on to the body,” (Goodman 2008: 202) and to grapple there with the problem of voluntary and forced displacement. Goodman (2008) argues that nostalgia's registering of historicity – of “history perceived as motion” (p.199) – comes to inform Romantic poetry. In *Lyrical Ballads*, nostalgia resides not only in the frequently employed themes (travellers, people forced to leave their homes, for example in “Female Vagrant” or the “Rime”) but also in the principle of representation. Poetry communicates impassioned feelings through return to the same words or ideas, through apparent tautology, “catching our minds in the same repetitive motion, to induce or encourage thought's tendency to return to the same grooves, grooves which the period's science had rendered quite literally” (Goodman 2008: 207). The characteristics of nostalgia emerge in poetry, symptomatically described by Wordsworth as “history or science of feeling”. Defined in such way, poetry becomes a universal human discourse providing readers with affective cognition – with feeling as thought – which retains the historical ghost and traces or enacts its motions. “Wordsworth's conception of 'Poetry' as the 'science of feelings' thus intervenes where the medical writings on nostalgia had previously lodged: as an attempt at once to

register and to address the pathologies of motion” triggered by the larger historical motions of the period (Goodman 2008: 208).

Before I move to the twentieth-century conceptualisations of nostalgia, I would like to make some observations on Starobinsky's and Boym's interaction with the historical nostalgia as the object of their study, and comment on the influence the interaction exerts on the shape of their conceptualisation of nostalgia. If the studied object is – as Bal (2002) maintains – a “second person” (p.44) that guides analysis, Starobinsky's and Boym's theoretisation of nostalgia will bear the mark of such guidance. Starobinsky (1966) starts with emphasising the importance of the respect for the “historical distance, which gives to the past its quality of pastness” (p. 83) and which separates the eighteenth-century nostalgia from the late twentieth-century one. The historical nostalgia should be captured as it was rather than as it looks to us today. Then, however, he admits that “we can never recapture the subjective experiences of an eighteenth-century man as they were,” and by saying this he repositions his earlier claim that “it is possible [...] to avoid attributing the tenor of our present emotional states to men who lived in the past”. (Starobinsky 1966: 83) The scholar of nostalgia is both separated from and implicated in the historical reality of the past feeling; the ideal of total objectivity of a historian, like the nostalgic ideal of restoration of the past, is lost, but so is the belief that alienation from the past is complete. Starobinsky's account (1966), in other words, not only shows nostalgia as a migrating emotion but also indicates the internally displaced character of the concept of nostalgia: as he says, “the history of the theories of nostalgia will not be useless if it is capable of dislocating us somewhat” (p. 83). Writing on the historical nostalgia, we do not revisit *our* homes or *our* past, but neither do we stay completely detached or estranged from the object of study. On the one hand, an eighteenth-century nostalgiac can only be granted “the attention due to a foreigner, to an inhabitant of a distant country,” (Starobinsky 1966: 83) never at home in the current concept of nostalgia; on the other hand, while conceptualising this “foreigner,” the current concept of nostalgia loses its homey quality and gets displaced. Starobinsky's essay is seminal not only because it inaugurates the dynamic twentieth-century nostalgia studies, but also because it draws attention to the distinct possibility of slippage of the very concept of nostalgia as well as to its distancing-proximating character.

It is the concept's slippage and self-displacement that Svetlana Boym (2001) makes the cornerstone of her concept of nostalgia. Discussing seventeenth-, eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century nostalgia, Boym (2001) emphasises the elusiveness, ambivalence, unpredictability of nostalgia, its propensity to speak “in riddles and puzzles” (p. xvii) and to undo distinctions (between subject and object, the collective and the individual, past and present, time and space). Boym's concept of nostalgia grows out of nostalgia's resistance to a global, universalising narrative aiming to contain and stabilise its senses, as

well as from nostalgia's rootedness in mass culture and its contemporary pervasiveness. To conceptualise nostalgia, Boym (2001) attends to its confused movements directed neither simply towards the past nor to the future but sideways, into "sideshadows and back alleys" (p. xvii), tracing its "off-modern" character. As disorienting emotion, nostalgia requires both conceptual disciplining and scepticism about the possibility of indicating its exact locus. Thus, Boym (2001) distinguishes between two types of nostalgia – the restorative and the reflective – and points out that though they "might overlap in their frames of reference" and "use the same triggers of memory and symbols," they "do not coincide in their narratives and plots of identity." (p. 49) While restorative nostalgia is premised on the belief in the possibility and necessity of reconstructing the past, reflective nostalgia accepts the irrevocability of the past, stays ironically inconclusive, cherishes the fragment. The former has totalitarian, commercial potential; the latter is an instance of critical thinking whose predecessors include Baudelaire, Nietzsche, Benjamin. Boym (2001) splits her concept of nostalgia to account for nostalgia's protean character and to indicate that apart from the uncritical, sentimentalised nostalgia, there is a critical type of nostalgia, a longing for "unrealized possibilities, unpredictable turns and crossroads" (p. xvi). To conceptualise nostalgia as "containing the kernels of the future" (Boym 2001: 31) is to exorcise the ghost of those theories which compromised nostalgia as the epitome of postmodern amnesia and shallowness.

In the twentieth century, the significance of nostalgia was first observed and described in 1977 by Fred Davies, a sociologist. Davies (1977) reflected on the "nostalgia wave of the seventies," which he explains as intimately related with the "massive identity dislocations of the sixties." (p.421) For Davies (1977), nostalgia is always rooted in "the continuities and discontinuities we experience in our sense of self," with "constructing, maintaining and reconstructing our identities." (p. 419) Nostalgia assimilates change and attenuates the anxiety of rapid transformations by reassuring us of the past happiness and success. Because the sixties confronted the self with the threat of discontinuities and chaos, the self turned to nostalgia as a psychological defence which marshals its "resources of continuity" (Davies 1977: 420) and deflects danger. In the sixties, most convictions and authorities were shaken or rendered problematic, leaving individuals in need for a sense of certainty. Nostalgia offered itself as "a retreat, a haven, an oasis" (Davis 1977: 422) from the turbulence of the age. Seen from the point of view of social studies, nostalgia acquires a slightly different shape as it loosens its previously strong bonds with poetry and philosophy and becomes enmeshed with everyday life of Western societies in a strikingly new way. Admittedly, the ground for that shift is prepared in descriptions of nostalgia as a reaction to the "new society which the individual must live in," a reaction manifested in daily life, and emerging already in the nineteenth century. (Starobinsky 1966: 101) The same

shift is observable in theories discussing nostalgia's entanglement with mass culture, developed through the nineteenth-century "souvenirisation of the salon culture". (Boym 2001: 16) The concept of nostalgia worked out by social critics denotes nostalgia's grassroots-level character, its democratisation. Characteristically, nostalgia is conceptualised through the recycled medical description, as an indiscriminate "social disease," (Stewart 1984: 23) as modern "epidemic" or "malaise" to which it offers itself as a "palliative" (Lowenthal 1985: 4, 12). No longer afflicting only the select few or a distinct social group, nostalgia sweeps through the whole of the society, functioning not only as an emotion but also as a style. In 1977, Davies observed that

the profusion and variety of nostalgia styles and fads, one succeeding the other with seemingly even greater rapidity than women's fashions (this month a movie mania of the thirties, the next the auto drive-in concupiscence of the fifties, the month after the bobbed hair [...]) is a measure of how deep and wide-ranging, i.e., spanning much more than a single age, class or life-style group the identity disturbances of the recent era have been. (p. 422)

Under sociological scrutiny, nostalgia becomes a dimension of our collective life, related either to a genuinely experienced, uncontrollable emotion (a response to perceived discontinuity, a desire for authenticity) or to a freely adoptable and abandonable style.

The concept of nostalgia acquires a pejorative sense as nostalgia becomes associated with "kitschy absurdities," with the alienation of people from the present (Lowenthal 1985: 12, 13), with the lack of seriousness (Lowenthal 1985: 7), with some kind of non-ephemeral truths manufactured by the "throw-away society" (Harvey 1989: 292) and unwittingly maintaining commodity production. In a metacritical vein, nostalgia has been also associated with the elitist character of sociological criticism of mass culture. As Georg Stauth and Bryan S. Turner (1988) argue, social explorations of mass culture are confronted today with the absence of any stable system of shared values on which criticism could be predicated. Compensating for the absence, social critics derive their position from the nostalgic, backward-looking vision of the past. Nostalgically constructing the past as a period of integration of arts, values and community, the critics study mass culture as always devoid of that which Stauth and Turner (1988) label "the myth of premodern stability and coherence." (p. 512) For Stauth and Turner (1988), nostalgia as the underside of sociological conceptualisation of mass culture breeds non-egalitarian attitudes and as such is to be avoided.

Probably the best known instance of the negative evaluation of the twentieth-century nostalgia comes from Fredric Jameson's (1984) "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism". Jameson perceives nostalgia as a dimension of postmodernism whose constitutive features are the

new depthlessness, the waning of historicity, and intensity as “a new type of emotional ground tone” (1991: 6). In postmodernism, an active relation, a serious engagement with the past is replaced with “stylistic connotation, conveying ‘pastness’ by the glossy qualities of the image”; consequently, “pseudo-historical depth” opens in which the “history of aesthetic styles displaces ‘real’ history.” (Jameson 1984: 67) Since postmodernism repudiates all sorts of depth models (essence vs. appearance, latent vs. manifest, authenticity vs. inauthenticity, signifier vs. signified) and replaces them with multiple surfaces and intertextuality, the individual subject personal style (both of which depended on the concepts of alienation, anxiety) disappear. The postmodern subject is too fragmented to “do the feeling,” (Jameson 1991: 15) and instead moves through “free-floating and impersonal” intensities. In the absence of any individual style, the postmodern subject keeps evoking and manipulating past codes, idiolects and styles, which now do not merely redirect him towards history but *are* history. Jameson uses the concept of nostalgia (not “an altogether satisfactory word,” as he stresses [1991: 19]) to identify the main component of the resulting pastiche-based flatness and to indicate the mechanism of “the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion, and [...] the increasing primacy of the ‘neo’.” (1991: 18)

Jameson's text is important for a number of reasons. First published in 1984, it set the condemnatory tone for the subsequent discussion of twentieth-century forms of nostalgia. It was also a very good example of the nostalgic tone Stauth and Turner found so objectionable in criticism. As Linda Hutcheon (2000) observes, Jameson's repeated evocation of the loss of genuine historicity sounds strangely nostalgic. She asks, “Is Jameson's implicit mythologisation and idealising of a more stable, pre-*late*-capitalist (that is modernist) world not in itself perhaps part of an aesthetics (or even politics) of nostalgia?” (Hutcheon 2000: 203) Jameson's nostalgic motivation for bestowing on the concept of postmodern nostalgia so many negative features brings to mind Starobinsky's warnings about the necessity/impossibility of keeping the analyst completely detached from the object of study. Most importantly, however, Jameson positioned nostalgia and postmodernism as cognate terms, on the one hand making nostalgia permeate postmodern culture, on the other hand, allowing his concept of postmodernism to inflect the concept of nostalgia. The alliance between nostalgia and postmodernism proved extremely fertile. As a notoriously ambivalent, definition-defying phenomenon, postmodernism has the potential to reconfigure and modify the concept of nostalgia. Such reconfiguration is visible in Hutcheon's approach to the postmodern nostalgia, which drastically differs from Jamesonian attitude. Since she describes postmodernism as a deeply paradoxical phenomenon which demands rather than stifles critical thought and self-reflection, since she makes doubling the basic postmodern mechanism, there opens a possibility of reconceptualising

nostalgia and liberating it from the anathema of superficiality. Hutcheon (2000) foregrounds “a secret hermeneutic affinity” (p.199) between irony – the key component of postmodernism – and nostalgia. Both are structurally double: irony operates between the said and the unsaid, whereas nostalgia works through “historical inversion” (Hutcheon 2000: 195) in the course of which the ideal experienced as lacking now is projected onto the past and becomes the past. Once Hutcheon (2000) discovers a similarity between the “edgy” (p. 191) irony and the less interesting nostalgia, the latter loses its negative ring. Like irony, which lies in the eye of the viewer/reader rather than in the object, nostalgia comes to describe “the quality of RESPONSE,” and as such is “transideological” (Hutcheon 2000: 199), i.e., it can happen to anyone irrespective of their political persuasion. On Hutcheon's account, nostalgia stops being inherently conservative, repressive, reactionary, but starts to function in conjunction with irony.

In the postmodern, [...] nostalgia itself get both called up, exploited and ironised. This is a complicated (and postmodernly paradoxical) move that is both an ironising of nostalgia itself, of the very urge to look backward for authenticity, and at the same time, a sometimes shameless invoking of the visceral power that attends the fulfilment of that urge. (Hutcheon 2000: 205).

Jameson's (1984) and Hutcheon's (2000) conceptualisations of nostalgia are two extreme positions between which most current attempts at explaining nostalgia's popular appeal and cultural pervasiveness situate themselves. Thus, closer to Jamesonian paradigm, there are various attempts to theorise nostalgia in the context of travel/tourism studies and anthropology. It is quite striking that appropriated by those disciplines, the concept of nostalgia simultaneously revives and displaces its old association with voluntary and involuntary mobility. While in the context of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century medical science, nostalgia named the pathological reaction to forced displacement, in the context of **the twentieth-century tourism**, nostalgia describes a motivation for the freely **undertaken journeys**. Under the impact of the change in the studied object, the **concept of nostalgia undergoes an internal displacement** as it travels from being an effect of movement to functioning as a motivation for mobility. According to John Frow (1991), tourism is stimulated by the desire for authenticity which it – quite nostalgically – attributes to traditional and exotic cultures. “[N]ostalgia for lost patterns of everyday life and for auratic objects that seem to be inherently meaningful 'surely forms a powerful motivation even for fairly high-cultural tourism'.” (Frow 1991: 133) However, in marking something as authentic, tourism simultaneously spoils the place's/object's authenticity because the very act of marking introduces mediation and representation. What passes as authentic is actually a construction, and consequently, a tourist faces something which is always

“minimally, a sign of itself,” (Frow 1991: 130) and which has the quality of an image, of a representation resembling itself. A camera-equipped, image-craving tourist is a nostalgic, seeking the ever-receding object of her desire, mourning the inauthenticity of all repetition (Stewart qtd. Frow 1991: 136), flowing with the stream of commodified, depthless images.

Nostalgia's relation with spatial mobility is also revived in the work of Renato Rosaldo, an anthropologist, whose concept of “imperialist nostalgia” is a major contribution to postcolonial as well as to memory studies. Rosaldo (1989) focuses on the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century agents of European imperialism - “officials, constabulary officers, missionaries” (p. 107) – and on anthropologists, who often unwittingly act as executors of the colonial project. His interest, however, is attracted not merely by nostalgia as the somatised or poeticised experience of displacement afflicting those involved in colonial exploration of distant places. Taking into account the non-European context, Rosaldo (1989) exposes the structure of domination and exploitation underlying the seemingly innocent imperialist nostalgia. (Admittedly, he indicates that “[e]ven in its origins, the term appears to have been associated with processes of domination,” (Rosaldo 1989: 108-9) because nostalgia was first diagnosed in mercenaries and soldiers.) By attending to the results of the nostalgia-breeding global expansion (the results so far neglected by nostalgia critics), Rosaldo (1989) observes that nostalgic colonialists “long for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed.” (pp. 107-8) Like someone who after destroying natural environment turns into a nature-worshipper, a colonialist mystifies his complicity in brutal domination by invoking the harmless feeling of nostalgia. “The relatively benign character of most nostalgia facilitates imperialist nostalgia's capacity to transform the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander.” (Rosaldo 1989: 108) Explored outside its standard disciplinary contexts, Rosaldo's concept of nostalgia becomes coloured with the condemnation of the white man's arrogance and Western oppressive politics. Nostalgia's ideological character, moreover, leaves the strongest marks on the colonised people rather than on the colonisers.

Drifting away from Jamesonian pejorative conception of nostalgia, Stuart Tannock (1995) argues that nostalgia is too heterogeneous to be simply identified with conservative forces in society or attacked for its distortions and misinterpretations. He emphasises that the nostalgic search of continuity between the present and the past might be motivated by the desire either to find a relief from the lacks of the unredeemable present or to activate past resources in order to better confront and cope with present problems. Tannock (1995) distinguishes between the retreat nostalgia, which results in self-isolation, indifference towards the present, withdrawal into a private or collective Eden, and the retrieval nostalgia, which is determined to “comb the past for every sense of possibility and destiny it might contain – digging around central structures to find breathing-spaces of the margins” (p. 458). Nostalgia may be

triggered by the experience of the present as monolithic and suffocating, and directed towards the past perceived as stimulating. In a remark resonating with Hutcheon's belief in the transideological character of nostalgia, Tannock (1995) claims that "[t]he type of past (open or closed, stable or turbulent, simple or inspired) longed for by the nostalgic subject will depend on her present position in society, on her desires, her fears and her aspirations." (p. 456) Two other sociologists, Pickering and Keightley (2006), also reconfigure their concept of nostalgia so that it could accommodate both the nostalgic desire to return to the past and the "desire not to return but to recognize aspects of the past as the basis for renewal and satisfaction in the future" (p. 921). Exploring the reception-related dimensions of nostalgia, Pickering and Keightley (2006) criticise the postmodernist tendency to treat the viewers/readers of nostalgic representations as passive recipients incapable of more reflective reaction to ways nostalgia is mediated. Where Jameson never suggests that audience can be actively engaged in the reception of culturally mediated nostalgic images, they maintain that though the critical response to nostalgic representations is not standard, its significance should not be denied. According to Pickering and Keightley (2006),

we need to recognise the various ways in which people are involved in putting the situated past into some form of narrative order for themselves, or in critically negotiating mediated representations of the past for their relations to collective identities and experiences. (p. 925)

The non-critical, commodified, sentimentalised and often falsifying renderings of the past do not have to be legitimised by their recipients, and nostalgia as a marketable style or form of entertainment may exist in tension with nostalgia as actual experience. Nostalgia as affect and nostalgia as representational effect do not have to overlap.

A similar cautious optimism about the positive potential of nostalgia can be found in John J. Su's (2005) discussion of nostalgia in the contemporary Anglophone novel. Though he recognises the dangers lurking behind some uses of nostalgia (most notably, its exploitation for commercial and nationalistic purposes), he acknowledges that "even the most ideologically compromised forms of longing express in attenuated fashion a genuine human need," and proceeds to ask "the somewhat perverse question: can nostalgia ever assist ethics?" (Su 2005: 3) Su answers in affirmative, and his conceptualisation of nostalgia in conjunction with ethics is ground-breaking. Nostalgia is not defined as regressive and inhibitory, but figures as an exploration of "unacknowledged disappointment and frustration," (Su 2005: 14) as a return to "what could have been" (Su 2005: 12), as a knowledge-producing confrontation with "unkept promises of the past" (Su 2005: 87). Su rejects normative ethics in favour of narrative ethics which tries to work out ethical claims without relying on

categorical imperatives and functions as a process of negotiation among different visions of community. When ethics depends on the ongoing, redefinable intersubjective encounter in the course of which various engagements and responsibilities are taken into account, nostalgia with its evocation of the otherwise neglected pasts proves vital. “[T]he ethical value of nostalgia resides in its potential to open up epistemological investigations foreclosed by dominant cultural narratives.” (Su 2005: 87) By redescribing reality from alternative perspectives and presenting a wide range of historical possibilities (including those never actualised), nostalgia builds and perpetuates ethical relations. Thus conceived, nostalgia helps to overcome historical determinism which makes us think of the chronicled past as the only possible scenario, and of the present as of the necessary outcome of this past. Even in its origins, as Su (2005) argues, nostalgia possessed an anti-deterministic edge because it “provided a means of expressing resistance for individuals who otherwise lacked the power to change their circumstances more directly” and was “the only legal way for a soldier to be granted leave from military service.” (p. 4) In Su's concept of nostalgia, that potential to indicate which human needs are not being met and, consequently, to throw challenge to existing norms and systems of social relations denying the satisfaction of those needs, is crucial. Nostalgia neither builds a utopian vision in which everyone's needs are satisfied by one common system nor articulates solutions to the human needs. Instead, it summons “palpable images” illustrating our yearnings and enables people “to register the needs themselves. Once these images of disappointment are narrated, they can be further revised or redefined by others who share similar experiences.” (Su 2005: 175) On Su's account, nostalgia acquires a deeply ethical sense as it respects the non-universalisable, particular human needs and attends to the individual experience of loss and frustration. Seen in that way, the concept of nostalgia becomes an important non-judgemental tool for investigating subtleties and nuances of human life.

One of the most surprising travels of the concept of nostalgia is its migration to the field of historiography. Admittedly, the relation between history and nostalgia has been complex and conflicted. Associated with heritage culture rather than with history as such, nostalgia usually connotes the popular, potentially simplified, sentimentalised, commercialised image of the past. Because heritage culture – though reliant on history – responds to fluctuating popular interest, caters for and creates attractive rather than authentic images of the past and competes with other leisure pursuits to generate income, its status is best described as “a shop window for history”. (Davies 2004: 286) While history as a discipline pursues objectivity and detachment, heritage culture relies on emotional, very often nostalgic, bond between the audience and the past. That difference may be judged as indicating nostalgia's failure as well as its inability to live up to the requirements met by the serious, responsible discipline. The dissimilarity between history and heritage/nostalgia, however,

may be read through the prism of history's ossification and nostalgia's liveliness. According to Raphael Samuel (1996), nostalgia and heritage culture are condemned today because they constitute an attempt of non-professional people to encroach into the terrain of academic expertise. Nostalgia and heritage culture democratise historical knowledge, revive those aspects of the past which were neglected by professionals, and for those reasons are attacked by the academy. Samuel's approach, aiming at revalorisation and rehabilitation of nostalgia, preserves the dichotomy between history and nostalgia. In that respect, his proposition differs from Frank Ankersmit's conceptualisation of nostalgia, in which a full integration of nostalgia into the field of historical studies is attempted.

Ankersmit argues that contemporary historiography leaves practically no room for a serious consideration of authentic experience of historical reality, either treating historical reality as the historian's construct or insisting on historian's self-effacement and reenactment of the past. To occur, historical experience requires a relationship - "a level (however defined)" (Ankersmit 1994: 196) - between the present and the past, which will not develop if we claim that historical writing brings into existence the otherwise nonexistent past, or that it presents rather than represents the past. Neither will it develop if there is a presupposition that the historical object should be studied objectively by a detached and neutral historian, who is supposed to have the same experience as this belonging to the past itself rather than his own, present experience. Ankersmit's theory of historical experience is premised on nostalgia inasmuch as nostalgia "is not the experience of a reified, objective reality out there, but of a difference (between the present and the past): since difference demands the presence of both present and past, it allows for this flowing together of subject and object". (1994: 32) Though nostalgia cannot provide a suitable context for discussing all historiography, it nevertheless acts as a "matrix" for the explanation of the most fundamental feeling about our location in space and time. "If we do effectively possess the capacity to experience the past in the truest sense of the word, it is the feeling of nostalgia that bears the clearest sign of such experience and is likely to be the most suitable point of departure for discovering the nature of that experience." (Ankersmit 1994: 197) On the one hand, nostalgia foregrounds the unattainability of the past, emphasises one's irrevocable estrangement from what is gone, and therefore, maintains difference between the past and the present. On the other hand, nostalgia maintains a deep relation between the present and the past insofar as it draws on the fact that when we look into the past we see "a former part of ourselves that in the course of time has acquired a certain independence with regard to ourselves. Part of ourselves was permitted to develop an autonomous existence and, apparently, we have withdrawn from it at some stage." (Ankersmit 1994: 32) Nostalgia seeks the past, without a hope of reliving it; it accesses the past not as a real, objectively existing object but as an image of ourselves turned into strangers.

“[W]hat we experience historically in nostalgia is not 'the past itself [...], but the difference or the distance between the present and the past.” (Ankersmit 1994: 202) As Ankersmit contends, the value of nostalgia for historical thought lies in its ability to extend the range of the studied phenomena. No longer limited to a reified, positivist concept of the past, or restrained by a transcendentalist understanding of the past, nostalgia-related historiography can focus on ways we experience the past, rather than only on the past “as such” or on the past as inferred on the basis of evidence. Nostalgia adds to historiography the so-far-missing dimension of authentic, episodic experience, which, as Ankersmit argues, is barred, among others, in narrativism, which favours that which is significant for the coherence of historical account and obscures the ephemeral or trivial images of the past preferred by nostalgia. Ankersmit's concept of nostalgia undoes the usually taken for granted opposition between history and nostalgia, and emphasises the difference-dependent structure of nostalgia. Congruent with Hutcheon's doubleness of nostalgia and with Su's un-universalisable ethical distinctions of nostalgia, historiographic nostalgia is rooted in the irreducible difference which protects nostalgia from being reified and reduced into a unified phenomenon.

In the foregoing, I tried to retrace routes along which the concept of nostalgia has travelled since the seventeenth century. Although nostalgia is one of over-arching concepts employed as if their meaning was immediately clear, my argument showed that nostalgia is quite difficult to pin down. Amenable to change, judged in disparate ways, moving between disciplines, nostalgia does not have proper usage. Like the notoriously undefinable concept of postmodernism it came to be associated with, the concept of nostalgia is tossed around by ever new players in ever new directions. The mobility of the concept does not allow scholars to feel secure in the use of it and calls for careful examination of nostalgia's many facets. Significantly, if it is not endorsed uncritically, the concept of nostalgia reinvigorates the field it enters, as well as undergoes some revitalisation itself. Thus, to speak of history or ethics in terms of nostalgia is to encourage those disciplines to attend to the reality of individual human relations and to non-totalisable needs. To make nostalgia an ethical or historiographic instrument is to invite corrections in the concept's seemingly inherent irresponsibility and falsehood. Exposing nostalgia's complicity with the imperial project questions nostalgia's alleged innocence and simultaneously, draws attention to an intimate, emotional grounding of imperialism itself. Brought into the studies of tourism, nostalgia helps to better explain a motivation for contemporary tourist mobility, while in this new context the concept of nostalgia itself reformulates its spatial-temporal grounding. Nostalgia is controversial enough to stir inter/intra-disciplinary debate – what Jameson glosses as nostalgia's contribution to postmodern depthlessness and loss of true historicity is challenged by Ankersmit's conceptualisation of nostalgia as a badge of authentic historical experience;

while sociologists usually account for the dimension of inauthenticity in nostalgia (separating complacently inauthentic nostalgia from its critical modes), a literary critic focusing on ethical character of nostalgia brackets off the problem of inauthenticity altogether. Neither neutral nor pure, nostalgia attracts interdisciplinary attention and constitutes “a discursive modality, which is active in many different fields.” (Bal 2002: 34) It is probably nostalgia's ambiguity that fosters the concept's many affiliations and in the end, contributes to its homelessness. Belonging to many fields of study, nostalgia does not become their property or possession; simultaneously, nostalgia's manifold belongings indicate that concepts are never free-floating labels but that in their travels, they are hardened and unhardened (Bal 2002: 34) – they (be)long, that is oscillate between the security of disciplinary determination and the need for turning outside the current disciplinary restrictions.

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