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NOSTALGIA, SITUATED AFFECTIVITY
AND MUSEIFICATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS: 1. *Introduction*; 2. *Nostalgia, memory and imagination*; 3. *Situated affectivity and affective niche construction*; 4. *Nostalgic niche*; 5. *Museums, mind invasion and nostalgia*; 6. *Conclusion*.

1. *Introduction*

In this article, we analyze how structures that are generally considered supports of memory and historical account, such as photographs and museums, can actually scaffold nostalgia. We aim to do so by expanding on the methodology introduced in Massantini [2020], which analyzes nostalgia through the lenses of the contemporary philosophical framework of situated affectivity. Conceptually, situated affectivity stems from the framework of *situated cognition* which, broadly, comprises the so-called ‘4E’ approach to human cognition.¹ The expression ‘4E’ refers to the fact that cognition and affectivity are inherently *embodied* (grounded in one’s *extracranial* body), and can also be *embedded* (reciprocally-determined by a specific environment/situation), *enacted* (dynamically and meaningfully disclosing a given environment/situation) and *extended* (ontologically transcending the boundary of an organism; co-constituted by the environment).²

The present study is concerned primarily with the situated nature of affectivity (especially nostalgia) in one’s interaction with the

¹ See Stephan & Walter 2020 for an introduction to situated affectivity and see Newen, de Bruin, Gallagher 2018, for a more comprehensive overview.

² Scholars in the 4E field hold heterogenous positions. For instance, while all support the idea that cognition is embodied, they however discuss whether it can extend into the environment (i.e., it can be co-constituted by the environment), or can be at most embedded (i.e., co-caused by the environment). Moreover only a few support enactivism.

environment. Any inquiry into our affective life cannot be reduced to mere investigation of underlying intrabodily processes, decoupled from contexts/situations in which affects emerge and develop. Rather, such inquiry should take extra-organismic contextual factors into consideration as well. Importantly, the claim here is not simply that affects are responses to various passive triggers scattered in the world, as that is a trivial proposition to defend. Instead, we are interested in cases where the environment «contributes to emotions in a way incompatible with traditional accounts» [Stephan et al. 2014, 71]. That is, we focus on cases where the environment asserts an active role in structuring and maintaining one's affective life, as well as in providing resources for external manipulation of one's affectivity by other persons [e.g., Griffiths & Scarantino 2009; Slaby 2016]. Situated affectivity has given birth to several theoretical frameworks, two of which will be particularly relevant in our present inquiry: the theory of *affective scaffolding and niche construction* [Colombetti & Krueger 2015] and the theory of *mind shaping/invasion* [e.g., Stephan & Walter 2020; Slaby 2016].

In section 2, we highlight some fundamental aspects of nostalgia, discuss its connection to memory and imagination, and outline some of its possible causes and functions. After a brief introduction of situated affectivity in section 3, in section 4 we proceed to apply the notion of affective niche to nostalgia. This is intended to show how one can actively use and even structure the environment to induce and sustain the feeling of nostalgia. We also show how the functioning of nostalgic niches may effectively lead to a renarration of the subjects' identities. In section 5, we show how one can employ nostalgic scaffolding provided by third persons by focusing on the case of museification. The aim is to see whether this can lead to unforeseen manipulations, and how it may resemble what Slaby calls *mind invasion*.

Frameworks of situated affectivity provide a conceptual toolbox, equipping one to study various ways in which affects can be intentionally invoked and maintained via external structuring. This is particularly relevant for nostalgia, as in the current debate the environment is often conceived as too static.

2. *Nostalgia, memory and imagination*

Nostalgia is a bittersweet affective phenomenon. On the one hand, in nostalgia the object (i.e. the past) is presented as tragically irretrievable [Jankélévitch 1974] and therefore as a source of pain. On the other, the past is also presented as an idealized time, the contemplation of which can be pleasurable. The way in which the past is nostalgically made present to consciousness is similar to recollection, but cannot be reduced to it. Here in particular we will focus on imagination, which plays a central, yet different, role both in recollection and nostalgia. To better understand this point we should take a closer look at Martin & Deutscher's [1966] *causal theory of memory* and at the reasons why many scholars now question it. According to this theory, remembering consists in a direct retrieval of a representation of some past event reliably stored in one's memory. In this view, for a memory to be genuine there has to be a tight causal connection between one's current representation and one's original experience of the remembered event. Such causal connection is supposedly provided via an uninterrupted, continued storage of episodic representations in one's memory.

Since then, however, such a static notion of memory has been challenged, and many scholars argued that there is no need for a causal connection in episodic memory. For example, the *narrative theories of memory* [Goldie 2012] show that in practice there is hardly any *pure* remembering: the intentional act of remembering is always already modified by imagination and affectivity. The role played in recall by imagination and affectivity is best exemplified in the distinction between *field memory* and *observer memory* [Goldie 2012, 49]. While in field memory a person remembers the past *from the inside*, i.e. directly from her internal perspective, in observer memory she remembers the past *from the outside*, i.e., becomes a part of the observed scene, the narrator and the protagonist at the same time. Goldie argues that observer memories are no less genuine than their counterparts. According to him, such memories are possible due to the work of imagination that helps one to objectivize oneself in remembering. Moreover, both field and observer memories can be subject to the influence of person's affective perspectives. For example, one can remember one's yesterday's failure at an exam through the emotionally-colored lens of shame or

disappointment. Memory is neither static nor an objective representation of the past; rather, remembering is a dynamic process that discloses the past in a chimeric appearance and that is always co-determined by the perspective from which we recall the past. Hopkins [2018] comes to a similar conclusion in regard to the interaction between memory and imagination. He advocates that episodic remembering is at a certain level phenomenologically indistinguishable from imagining, and thus defines episodic memory as «in key part, imagining the past» [Hopkins 2018, 46].

It is evident that in both nostalgia and memory imagination plays a major role. However, a mere recollection and a nostalgic experience differ in how imagination operates. In a non-nostalgic recollection imagination can bring in all sorts of changes (confusing dates, misplacing people, confabulating facts and so on) but can also have an epistemic function [Arcangeli & Dokic 2018].³ In nostalgia imagination is directed specifically at a renarration of the past as an ideal time. For instance, on the one hand, a recollection of our childhood can be unconsciously modified by imagination in various ways to the extent of generating false memories which are not necessarily happy ones. Through selecting, revaluating and weaving together memories nostalgia creates an ideal past [Massantini 2020]. More specifically, a nostalgic person feels that the past bears a specific relevance to her present identity; in the past the nostalgic person sees the foundation of her desired identity. A nostalgic person longs for the past because she feels that the present lacks something fundamental to her desired identity. The nostalgic person locates this fundamental thing in the irrevocable past.

Both nostalgia and the past it constructs are dynamically related to a wide range of moods and emotions. It could be argued that depressive and *ruminative* moods are ideal for promoting nostalgia. As a matter of fact, numerous scholars have suggested that nostalgia serves as a coping mechanism for certain affective states, such as depression or loneliness [Wildschut et al. 2006; Garrido 2018]. As it is in the case

³ Imagination can fill in the gaps in our episodic memory and thus provide knowledge about one's own past, as long as imagination is rationally constrained by the subject present perspective [see Arcangeli & Dokic 2018].

of anxiety, nostalgia can also be a reaction to a mood that is *opposite* to it. Davis [1979] first proposed this concept, in the so-called *discontinuity hypothesis*. He asserts that nostalgia develops as a coping mechanism during periods of existential crisis marked by deep worry. The discontinuity hypothesis and other approaches derived from it are problematic: they oversimplify nostalgia and turn it into a merely positive affective state, yet nostalgia can also intensify the sensation of longing and desperation that a person already feels [Trigg 2020; Garrido 2018]. Nostalgia is not always a psychological resource for well-being (though it can sometimes be), as it is a bittersweet emotion. Indeed, it would be more appropriate to say that nostalgia can be a source of wellbeing as much as a source of suffering. This is because, as the name nostalgia – which literally means *longing for homecoming* – suggests, this emotion is first and foremost a longing for a world that no longer exists. At the same time, we can consider nostalgia as an affective phenomenon that contains a pleasurable component that can compensate its more painful aspect. This is because nostalgia not only is very keen on showing us what we no longer have, but also creates an image of that lost time so idealized, warm and familiar that we feel comfort in indulging in its contemplation.

3. *Situated affectivity and affective niche construction*

Nostalgia can be better understood in the light of the theories of situated affectivity, according to which our affectivity is not a process bound to the brain alone – it also includes processes that take place in the rest of the body and the environment. Therefore, we should not consider the environment merely (or exclusively) as a passive trigger for our internal emotional responses. Particularly insightful is the work of Colombetti and Krueger [2015] who formulate the concept of *affective scaffolding* by drawing on the framework of the *scaffolded mind* introduced by Sterelny [2010]. According to Sterelny, cognition is inherently environmentally supported. This means that we can actively structure our environments in order to enhance our cognitive capacities. For example, we scaffold memory by arranging objects in ways that facilitate memorizing or recalling [Clark 2005], and use notebooks to

keep important information when our biological memory is impaired [Clark & Chalmers 1998]. Such epistemically motivated modifications of the environment lead to the construction of *cognitive niches* [Sutton 2016; Bertolotti & Magnani 2017]. A cognitive niche can be defined as a set of epistemically relevant resources, employed by human beings to meet their cognitive needs. Constructing a niche is typically not a one-way process: beyond serving its intended purpose, an established niche begins to exert reciprocal influence on subjects, giving rise to the so-called «feedback cycles» [Odling-Smee et al. 2003].

Extending this framework to affectivity, Colombetti and Krueger analyze how external resources are used to generate and regulate their affective states. They provide various examples of affective scaffolding such as carrying a handbag (e.g. with a talisman, love note or blemish cream) that «functions as a [...] self-styled collection of technologies specifically chosen for regulating affect» [Colombetti & Krueger 2015, 1163]. Due to the relatively flexible structure, affective scaffolding can be implemented through a variety of resources, such as drugs, diaries, smartphones, narratives, rituals, paintings, photographs, animals, other people, and so forth.

Akin to how cognitive scaffolding forms cognitive niches, the process of affective scaffolding engenders *affective niches*. Colombetti and Krueger define affective niches as «instances of organism-environment couplings (mutual influences) that enable the realization of specific affective states» [*ibid.*, 1160]. However, some scholars regarded the definition problematic, since it appears to emphasize the individual while overlooking the *collective* dimension of affective scaffolding and also pictures the individual as implausibly autonomous from complex (sometimes detrimentally invasive) influences of the environment [Slaby 2016; Nagatsu & Salmela 2022]. Conversely, collective affective niches emerge in the process of the dynamic interaction between individuals or groups. This renders the functionality of such niches increasingly varied, highly distributed and decentralized.

Openness to influences from affective scaffolds is partly determined by various factors, including: one's *trust* in their reliability, the level of the *individualization* or *incorporation* of scaffolds in one's self-narrative, the explicitness of one's intent to use the scaffold [Coninx & Stephan

2021]. The significance of the environment in the nostalgic experience has been discussed already. Trigg [2012], for instance, points out the vital capacity of place to «crystallize the experiences that occurred there» [Trigg 2012, 9]. Partly due to such crystallization of the lived past in *place memory*,⁴ the nostalgic person may be able to attend (albeit not fully) to an object of his nostalgia through the materiality of place one more time. Acknowledging the dynamic experiential (vs. static representational) character of place memory as well as its epistemic relevance for a person's self-understanding, Trigg conceives of place as «more than inert materiality» [*ibid.*, 6] and argues for its experiential understanding. We can go beyond Trigg's account by stressing the importance of particular ways in which (nostalgic) subjects can actively engage with the environment, overcoming its pre-givenness and instead endowing it with new (affective) meanings. In this endeavor, the framework of affective scaffolding could prove fruitful.

4. *Nostalgic niche*

In this section we analyze how nostalgic structuring can be achieved through the mediation of and dynamic interaction with external nostalgic niches. By *nostalgic niche* we mean an affective niche that either helps a subject to alleviate her longing for the past, or enables her to elicit and sustain nostalgia externally. Furthermore, we consider how the renarration of one's past, implicit in nostalgia itself, can be facilitated (not always intentionally) by such kind of affective structuring.

For the most part, nostalgia is described in the current debate as an involuntary affective phenomenon. However, sometimes a subject can resort to reliable external resources (scaffolds) to elicit and modulate nostalgic feelings. Consider the following example:

Julia, a young medical doctor, is overwhelmed with the pressure she is currently experiencing at work to the point where she forgets what it was all for, although she always found her work

⁴ According to Trigg 2012 place memory is a form of remembering in which place is both the context of memory and the very texture of the specific content itself.

important and meaningful. She comes home disheartened and opens a photo folder on her computer that contains photos from her college days. She purposefully created that folder right after graduation and since then has occasionally resorted to it in times of existential crisis. Not only that, over time she also refines the folder, adding content that makes her feel better and sometimes excluding material she added previously. The photos in the folder represent the time when Julia was full of hope and determination: it was then when she decided to devote herself to medicine.

The photo folder comprising the photos from her college past is Julia's nostalgic niche, i.e. an external resource she created to regulate her affective condition when necessary by eliciting and sustaining the feeling of nostalgia. Serving as a nostalgic niche, the affectively-loaded photographs remind Julia about the genuine motivations behind her work and through that, encourage her to carry on. Like a bridge between her past and present, the nostalgic niche allows Julia to maintain a particular conception of her sense of self through time, which, among other things, induces the feeling of security and preserves the sense of existential meaning. Julia, therefore, often finds the nostalgic niche to be generally beneficial for her psychological well-being.⁵

When she had first started making the album, and later when she revised it, Julia selected photos that elicit comforting nostalgic feelings in her. At the same time, she removes photos that would presently make her feel bad. For instance, when she first made the album, she included there many photos with her now ex-boyfriend. Yet, instead of eliciting comforting nostalgic feelings, those pictures now evoke in Julia feelings of sadness and anger about her ended relationship. Because these negative feelings do not comply with the purpose of the niche, Julia decides to remove them. Thus, when structuring her nostalgic niche, i.e. choosing which photos to include in her e-album and which not, Julia can determine (to some extent, at least) how her college past would be nostalgically seen by her in the future. That is, she is free to select

⁵ Massantini [2020] discusses a similar example in which looking at old photographs is described as «unidirectional material tool for emoting» [Stephan & Walter 2020]. The difference here is that Julia, unlike the example in Massantini 2020, *purposefully selects* the pictures *over time* to feel nostalgic.

particular fragments of memory from her college past and consolidate them into a new narration of that past. In effect, the nostalgic niche Julia has established not only serves to regulate her emotional state every time she clicks on the folder and dives into those pre-selected episodes. More than that, being a collection of specifically positive images, the nostalgic niche gradually renarrates Julia's nostalgic past. This is possible because the narrative we construct about our past is not a store of static representations but rather an ever-changing flow susceptible to being modified and rewritten. It is interesting to note that, because photographs are (typically seen as) objective depictions of the past, they are often treated by a subject as reliable sources, which may lead to further facilitation of the renarration.

Providing an idealized version of her college days, Julia's nostalgic niche can reinforce her nostalgia by making her past look particularly appealing. However, the niche can also have an impact on the way Julia perceives herself *in the present*. Modulated by nostalgia, Julia's renarration of her past subsequently alters her present sense of self. Ultimately, we see that while nostalgic niches can serve a function of synchronic (i.e. real-time) scaffolding of one's nostalgia, they can perform an even more substantial function of diachronic (i.e. stretched in time) modulation of one's representation of the past and, subsequently, one's perception of oneself *both* in the past and in the present [see Griffith & Scarantino 2009].

Julia willingly creates a niche to support an affective phenomenon (i.e. nostalgia) that is not only pleasurable, but also painful. After all we saw that Julia excludes some photographs because they now elicit unpleasant memories, yet she is more than willing to accept and even pursue the pleasurable component of nostalgia, despite it being inseparable from the painful one. Why doesn't she instead build a niche that supports exclusively positive feelings? Why would she chase nostalgic feelings, despite them also being painful? Those who tend to reduce nostalgia to a feel-good emotion might argue that in the case of nostalgia the pleasurable component simply outweighs the painful one, this however would drastically underestimate its complexity. Rather we think that nostalgia is always built on a loss. In its most radical sense this loss is the awareness that the past interpreted as a meaningful unity

is no longer available to us. The pleasurable component is caused by the realization that the past is not completely lost after all, but survives in the form of (reimagined) memories and, more importantly for our concerns in this paper, it survives in the form of media (such as photos) and material culture (such as the artifacts in a museum) with which we can engage and interact. When we build nostalgic niches we pursue a specific pleasure that helps us cope with the sense of loss, at the same time, this sense of loss cannot be fully overcome, because it is the condition of possibility of the pleasurable component of nostalgia itself (how can we feel relieved that the past is not lost after all, if we do not feel at the same time that for the most part that past no longer exists?).

The niche enables Julia to interact with her past the way she would not have been able to without it: by merely thinking about her college days *in general*, Julia might have failed to see how her past flows into her present in a meaningful and coherent way. In this we can also further clarify why nostalgia cannot be reduced to memory or the act of reminiscence. Indeed, the renarration of the past that nostalgia creates is always directed at locating in a wholly idealized past the foundation of our desired identity (in this case being a doctor). Instead memory and reminiscence, when not accompanied with nostalgia, can present a renarration of the past that does not necessarily idealize the past or present it as the foundation of a desired identity. For instance when reminiscing without nostalgia I can focus on my past failures, which are generally excluded in nostalgic renarration, since they are painful episodes that mine my identity, rather than reinforce it.

The past is constantly constituted in the present and in light of present expectations (e.g., fears, hopes, desires, life projects and so on). As we saw, in the case of Julia, this reconstruction is supported by the relationships she has with her photo album that she has carefully created. However, we also have to keep in mind that the photos in her album play an ambiguous role regarding discontinuity. On one hand, the photographs are not a reinscription of a past presence, they are rather an articulation of an absence, which therefore could induce a more melancholically painful nostalgia. On the other hand, the photograph offers a mediated connection to the past that works as a bridge between the subject and this lost time. As Massantini [2020] has already argued, while our memories can change

through time, the engagement with media from that time enables us to relate directly to that past in a way that remembrances cannot offer. Media provide the direct connection to and continuity with the past that a person who is nostalgic most longs for.

5. *Museums, mind invasion and nostalgia*

Museums and other forms of art space can influence or scaffold the visitors' affects and cognitions. For example, Gallagher and Crisafi [2009] claimed that museums can engender pre-established cognitive schemata which assume particular «cognitive extension» for their users beyond their own capacities. According to them, this is achieved by exhibiting art pieces in a particular order and thereby imposing certain cognitive patterns on visitors, i.e. structuring their perception when they walk through museum halls. Similarly, Richards [2017] presents museums as specific *engineered niches*. He also distinguishes several types of *technologies* that art-space engineering may employ to influence visitors, such as architectural, artefactual, cognitive, epistemic, pedagogical and institutional technologies. As a matter of fact, these technologies «form the conceptual basis for a niche-dependent normativity» [Richards 2017, 465], that is, they prescribe how one ought to conceive or experience a given piece of art. Extending on Richards' endeavor, Saarinen aims to broaden the analysis of museum functioning through describing «the ways in which art museums make us feel» [Saarinen 2021, 556]. Considering museum as a form of engineered *affective niche*, Saarinen draws on the taxonomy of affective scaffolding to demonstrate both the applicability of the framework to the artistic context as well as the heterogeneity of museums as affective niches.

But how can a museum scaffold nostalgia? A possible starting point to answer this question are accounts of social nostalgia, e.g. post-communist nostalgia, proposed by Dominik Bartmanski and Steven Ostovich. Bartmanski renders this kind of nostalgia not as a «merely private emotion or political reaction», but rather as a collective feeling. Furthermore, it has to be represented by symbolic material objects that are not to be taken as epiphenomena of nostalgia but are rather its *constitutive resources* [Bartmanski 2011, 215].

Focusing on the example of the so-called *Ostalgie*, an East German nostalgia for the communist past, Ostovich provides examples of consumer goods (e.g. bars of soap or egg cups) that bear the function of nostalgic scaffolds. Such goods are used by people to the day and are even collected in private museums. The nostalgia in those cases is claimed to be of political nature: despite often being inferior to the modern alternatives, those objects bear the hallmark of an idealized, desired past and at the same time are the expression of a protest against the capitalist present [Ostovich 2020]. As these examples show, some ordinary objects can apparently transcend their habitual functionality and acquire a socio-political meaning.

We view museums as social nostalgic niches where particular pasts become preserved and experiences get *crystallized*.⁶ Objects around us can, under duly maintenance, remain unchanged over time. In this regard, museums are the material manifestations of the past-worlds preserved in their genuineness and timelessness. But are the worlds that museums purport to preserve really genuine and authentic? We argue that the ways in which these past-worlds become (re)presented in museums are themselves always already renarrations of the past, sometimes even nostalgic renarrations.

Museums are socio-political institutions that normally present collections of pre-selected objects from some past. The selectiveness inevitably makes the museum an arbitrary representation of the past, a historical renarration. This renders museums epistemologically problematic, given their function to represent history. Moreover, the de-contextualization of artefacts in museums can generate a socio-political disorder and confusion [Boon 1991] and facilitate appropriation and alienation [Bjerregaard 2006]. Some museums, according to sociologist Roman Abramov, are products of «nostalgic and market fetishization» and represent nothing less than «a local version of retromania» [Zavadski et al. 2019, 314]. To see how these concerns about past museification are related to the subject of nostalgic mind invasion, consider the following situation.

⁶ Foucault has shown how museums are spaces built on the idea of «constituting a place of all times that is itself *outside of time* and protected from its erosion» [Foucault 1986, 26].

Ivan is a man in his sixties whose mother recently died. Ivan was born in Soviet Russia, and every Sunday when he was 6, his mother would take him to a local amusement park where a lot of arcade machines were waiting for him to play. By now, the park has been long closed, but there is a Museum of Soviet Arcade Machines that not only exhibits the machines but also allows its visitors to play with them. Eventually, Ivan decides to come to the place. The arcade machines and the process of playing with them gradually took Ivan over and back to his childhood. After this episode, Ivan started coming over to the place to relive his childhood each time when the longing would become unbearable.

Ivan uses an affective niche (museum) in order to alleviate his sense of longing. Two clear distinctions can be drawn between Ivan's and Julia's cases. First, while Julia aims to invoke nostalgic feelings to maintain a coherent autobiographical story, Ivan feels a painful longing and seeks to ease its burden via external nostalgic scaffolds. Second, and more relevantly, while Julia has created her nostalgic niche (the photo album) by herself, Ivan exploits an already available niche structured by third persons. Hence, while Julia's niche is highly private, Ivan's nostalgic niche is inherently collective and only becomes individualized by him during his interaction with it. In other words, while Julia's nostalgic scaffolding and past renarration stemming from it are driven by her own engineering, in Ivan's case, both are ultimately the result of someone else's work.

Exhibitors develop a specific «visual language» that mediates the interaction between «the collector, her objects, and those who experience the collection» [Hawkins 2010, 648]. What is being exhibited (and how) is necessarily refracted through the prism of those who create the exhibition, e.g. museum curators [see Hawkins 2010]. The unique vision of the founders of the Museum of Soviet Arcade Machines becomes necessarily materialized in the Museum's structure and inevitably affects the authenticity of the presentation. The resulting renarration inevitably modulates Ivan's own renarration of the represented time. Moreover, it externally scaffolds Ivan's nostalgia for that time in a specific pre-established way. Of all this, however, Ivan may remain totally unaware. Because Ivan's example presents

several differences from Julia's example, we are required to adopt more concepts than niche construction alone. One of these, *mind shaping*, is defined as «the external influence of others to steer the experience and behavior of a subject in a certain direction» [Coninx & Stephan 2021, 11] through the use of external scaffolds. In mind shaping we do not have a «user/resource model» [see Slaby 2016] in which subjects (users) can intentionally regulate their affectivity by actively structuring and engaging with their environment (as was the case with Julia's example). Instead, we have a model in which someone structures a resource (e.g. a scaffold or a niche) in way that it can influence affectively other users. While the person who structures the resource does so purposefully so that it can affect others, the users of the resource do not necessarily have to be aware that there are being "mind shaped". Mind shaping is neutral with regard to explicitly adverse intentions and behaviors of third persons that go against the goals and desires of affected individuals. However, describing museum engineering as mostly beneficial (e.g., enabling and enhancing our cognitive and affective capacities) might be too optimistic. When mind shaping is operated to the detriment of the subject and to the benefit of those who created or control the resource, we should speak of mind-invasion [Slaby 2016].

How can the Museum of Soviet Arcade be interpreted as a form of mind invasion? To answer this question we have to take into account the intent of museum curators to generate a nostalgia-eliciting environment that targets different audiences. For instance the nostalgic renarrations they offer can also invade the minds of those who have no nostalgia for the times they represent. One of the founders of the Museum writes the following about the motivation behind its opening: «We want our Museum of Soviet Arcade Machines to be a museum of childhood. [...] We want a place where people would like to come with their children. A place which works as a time-machine, so that a father who came to our Museum with his child can become a child himself for an hour or two» [Abramov 2018, 46; *our translation*]. In his article about the museification of the Soviet past, Roman Abramov provides an example of an 11-year-old girl who, having visited the Museum of the Soviet Past, left the following comment: «I used to think that the USSR sucks, but it is actually cool!» [Abramov 2013, 108]. According to the author, a

change in the perception of the Soviet period is not rare among children and teenagers after they visit such museums. Abramov views this as an outcome of a «strong nostalgic impulse» reflected in the ways the Soviet period becomes museified. Interestingly, he claims that the actual intention behind certain forms of museification of the Soviet past is «not factualization of the past but rather the nostalgic mythologizing through reflective nostalgia» [*ibid.*]. The notion of reflective nostalgia was proposed by Svetlana Boym. According to the typology outlined in her book *The Future of Nostalgia* [2001], there are two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. While the former strives to seek the truth and follow tradition, the latter questions both and is «more concerned with historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude» [Boym 2001, 80].

The notion of mind invasion, taken in the strong sense, assumes that the external (affective) influence can (or is intended to) be detrimental for the invaded subjects by going against their own aims and desires and/or hindering their personal development. Museification of the past can sometimes be based upon a political agenda. Difficult pasts may get hidden, rewritten, and otherwise distorted via museum spaces by political authorities in order to hide their crimes, build alternative historical narratives and foster desirable national identities. For example, in his book *The War that Never Ends*, Machcewicz [2019] discusses how such manipulation via museum space takes place in different countries, especially under dictatorial regimes. The seemingly innocuous and festive atmosphere of the Museum of Soviet Arcade Machines in our case can be seen as a particular mode of presentation of the Soviet past, especially when some ugly truths from that past remain untold. But garbing dark history in brighter materiality is not the only way to manipulate the past. In her paper on the museification of Gulag – the repressive labor camps in the USSR – Vera Dubina provides an example of how the Gulag Museum was stripped of its real, material space by authorities, and had to be relocated into the virtual space [Dubina 2019]. This seems particularly harmful for impressionable young minds, highly susceptible to the selective ways in which the museified past gets represented. Meanwhile, the politically motivated renarrations seem to be facilitated by the nostalgia of museum curators as well as

nostalgic visitors like Ivan: their own affective dispositions may become a convenient loophole for those who seek to manipulate historical facts, national identities and, consequently, people's minds.

6. Conclusion

In this article we tried to demonstrate the complexity of nostalgia and its functionality by describing its relation to episodic memory, affect regulation capacity and identity maintenance. By means of the frameworks of situated affectivity, particularly, the notion of affective niche construction, we have shown how agents can use external resources to alleviate their nostalgia or benefit from it via affective scaffolding of their environments. Moreover, we have illustrated how one actualizes the meaning-giving property of nostalgia by intentionally creating a nostalgic niche that would provide a meaningful and coherent story of one's life. This, in turn, allowed us to see how nostalgic niches themselves can subsequently manipulate agents' renarration of the past and thereby actively shape and maintain their sense of identity. We further extended our inquiry to a social dimension. With the notions of mind invasion and mind shaping, we have demonstrated how nostalgia can be institutionally mediated, specifically by the case of museification of the past. In doing so, we have shown how a museum space (far from being a neutral and objective representation of the past) can be exploited by third parties to (intentionally and non-intentionally) renarrate historical pasts and manipulate (national) identities of the visitors on nostalgic grounds. Meanwhile, the visitors can remain fully unconscious of the affective influence exerted on them. All this vividly portrays how tricky nostalgia is and how diverse and far-reaching its implications can be, both for an individual and for society.

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Keywords

nostalgia; situated affectivity; affective scaffolding; museification; mind invasion

Abstract

In this article, nostalgia is studied within the contemporary theory of situated affectivity, which promises to offer new perspectives both on the nature and functions of nostalgia. We first introduce the phenomenon of nostalgia by focusing on some of its aspects relevant for the present discussion. Then, we articulate basic provisions of situated affectivity to establish a context for further analysis. In particular, we use two frameworks from situated affectivity – (1) affective niche construction and (2) mind invasion – to account for different modes of interaction between nostalgic agents and their environments, with a specific focus on the case of museification. The first framework is used to analyze how the environment can be intentionally structured by nostalgic agents: either to alleviate their nostalgia or otherwise instigate and maintain it externally. Here, a special attention is given to ways in which affective niches actively scaffold agents' nostalgia and renarrate their past. The second framework is intended to show how the environment can exert its affective influence on nostalgic agents without their conscious awareness. Through the case of the Soviet past museification, we consider how the nostalgia of museum curators effectively leads to unforeseen historical renarrations and affects memories of (nostalgic) visitors.

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