Philosophy of Nostalgia: Affectivity, Media and Politics

DISSERTATION
zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades (Dr. phil.) des Fachbereichs Humanwissenschaften der Universität Osnabrück

vorgelegt

von

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Osnabrück, 2022

DOTTORATO DI RICERCA IN
Filosofia, curriculum Etica, Politica e Religioni (Università degli studi di Firenze)

CICLO XXXIV

TESI IN COTUTELA CON UNIVERSITY OF OSNABRÜCK

PhD PROGRAM IN
Cognitive Science (University of Osnabrück)

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Philosophy of Nostalgia: Affectivity, Media and Politics

Settore scientifico disciplinare M-FIL/03

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Anni 2018/2022

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Acknowledgements

The people I would like to thank are probably too many to list, but I will try anyway. First of all, I would like to thank Alessandra Fussi and Achim Stephan for supervising my work. Various other people have helped in numerous ways, either through philosophical advice or simply by listening to me rambling about nostalgia. In particular I would like to thank: Danilo Manca, Joel Krueger, Lucy Osler, Dylan Trigg, Gianluca Garelli, Maria Michela Sassi, Roberta Lanfredini, Imke von Maur, Gregor Hörzer, Sven Walter, Daniele Valentini, Paul Scütze, Friederike Kordass, Kirill Leschinskii, Rosario Giordano, Lucia Pernafelli, Silvia Montanari, Francesca Nani, Douglas Cairns, Luigi Filieri, Giulia Cantamessi, Carolina La Padula, Alberto Bracci, Rossella Paolicchi, Matthew Ratcliffe, Bernardo Baldini, Elena Baccoli, Silvia Trebini, Alessio Mulas, Gianmarco Botti. Finally, I would like to thank all my family and Patrick for all their love and for putting up with me while writing this thesis.

Introduction

> “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”
> F. Scott Fitzgerald[1]

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the eponymous Jay Gatsby is presented as a character obsessed with the idea of recreating the past. Written and set in the roaring twenties, the novel is narrated from the point of view of Nick Carraway, a young man who moves to Long Island to work as a bond salesman. His new neighbour is Jay Gatsby, a mysterious millionaire who hosts extravagant parties. In Long Island, Nick reconnects with the beautiful yet somewhat superficial Daisy Buchanan, his second cousin once removed. Daisy is now unhappily married to Tom Buchanan, who cheats on her. Nick, who befriends the enigmatic Gatsby during the novel, finds out that Gatsby and Daisy met in 1917 (five years before the novel's main events) when he was an officer in the American Expeditionary Forces. The two fell in love, but their relationship ended when Gatsby was deployed overseas. In 1922 Gatsby has now become a millionaire thanks to his bootlegging activity and hopes that his new money, possessions, and decadent parties will bring Daisy back to him. This can be easily seen in a scene with Nick and Gatsby from chapter 6:

> He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: "I never loved you." After she had obliterated three years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house—just as if it were five years ago.
> "And she doesn't understand," he said. "She used to be able to understand. We'd sit for hours—"

[1] Fitzgerald (1925/1999)

> He broke off and began to walk up and down a desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favors and crushed flowers.
> "I wouldn't ask too much of her," I ventured. "You can't repeat the past."
> "Can't repeat the past?" he cried incredulously. "Why of course you can!"
> He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.
> "I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before," he said, nodding determinedly. "She'll see."
> He talked a lot about the past and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was. . . (Fitzgerald 1925/1999, 70-71)[2]

Gatsby wants to regain something from the past and he firmly believes this to be possible, despite the words of Nick, which in the end will be proved true: you cannot, truly, - I would add - repeat the past. But what is this "something" Gatsby wants back? He wants Daisy back; he wants the relationship that ended abruptly a few years before. He wants Daisy the way she was, when she was able to understand. However, it is doubtful that the Daisy for which Gatsby longs actually ever existed.

Moreover, on a deeper level, Gatsby does not simply want Daisy back. Rather, he wants to regain himself; as Nick notices, he wants to "recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy" (Fitzgerald 1925/1999, 71). What Gatsby is missing is, first and foremost, a version of himself that never existed; a himself good enough, rich enough, belonging to the right social class (that of the self-made man, the personification of the American dream),[3] and capable of displaying this social identity. Gatsby believes that recreating the past is indeed possible, but he also believes that this return cannot happen through wishful thinking alone. Rather an active engagement with the present environment is needed. To regain the ideal past he never had, Gatsby shapes his image and his environment: he wears

[2] Quotes are from the 1999 edition.

[3] The American dream "is the belief that every man, whatever his origins, may peruse and attain his chosen goals, be they political, monetary, or social" (Pearson 1970, 638).

fashionable clothes (which indeed seem to impress Daisy in a famous passage of the novel),[4] drives fast cars and buys a mansion where he can host decadent parties. As Pearson (1970, 642) notices, "[l]ike Milton's Mammon in *Paradise Lost*, Gatsby is going to achieve his ends through sheer materialistic means". Even though the term "nostalgia" never appears in Fitzgerald's novel, "*The Great Gatsby* is undoubtedly a novel about nostalgia; it explores themes such as the impossibilities of recapturing the past, the role of myths in our lives, the shattered dreams of our youth, and the unrealized ambitions of the founders of America" (Salmose 2014, 68). It is not my goal here to determine what exactly is the relevance of nostalgia in either "the Great Gatsby" or its eponymous protagonist. I will not refer to this novel again in the rest of this thesis. Rather, my point in discussing this passage was to show how complex our relationship with the past can be when we talk of nostalgia. The longing for the past cannot be easily separated from the environment with which we engage in the present and from the hopes and desires that shape our vision of the future. Moreover, the representation of the present, past, and future we have when we are nostalgic can, at the same time, be deeply personal and inseparable from one's social environment; it can be profoundly "spiritual" even when it is necessarily mediated through material supports.

Currently, nostalgia is debated by experts in various fields, including philosophy, cultural studies, literary studies, media studies, psychology, sociology, and political science. Scholars in these fields hold that nostalgia is an important affective phenomenon that can structure diverse aspects of our lives. Indeed, we are witnessing the emergence of what Jacobsen (2020) calls 'nostalgia studies', an interdisciplinary platform from which to study nostalgia theoretically and empirically. Nostalgia studies are still in their infancy, so the contemporary debate on nostalgia is still fragmented and lacks consensus on many fundamental aspects of the phenomenon. This is mainly because nostalgia is a puzzling, multiform, and complex phenomenon, open to various, sometimes even contrasting, interpretations.

Nevertheless, it is possible to delineate some important features of nostalgia on which many contemporary scholars agree. Indeed, what follows is an outline of the state of the art of the current debate. One must remember that many of the points I will discuss in the introduction are problematic. I will discuss them in greater detail in the following chapters.

[4] "Suddenly, with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily. 'They're such beautiful shirts,' she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. 'It makes me sad because I've never seen such – such beautiful shirts before.'" (Fitzgerald 1925/1999, 59)

The word *nostalgia* was coined by Hofer (1688) as a translation of the German *Heimweh* (homesickness), which he defined as a sickness of the imagination and a longing for homecoming. Through the centuries, the word's meaning has changed, and today many scholars hold that nostalgia describes a bittersweet longing for a lost past rather than for a distant home (see Hart 1973, 398–399; Davis 1979; Hutcheon 2000, 3–18; Wilson J. 2005, 22–23; Sedikides et al. 2008). Nostalgia thrives on the irretrievability of the past; the impossibility of returning to that metaphorical 'home' enables a transformation and idealization of the past (Jankélévitch 1974; Hutcheon 2000). Indeed, nostalgia does not inspire longing for the past of the historical record. Rather, the past for which we nostalgically long is a fabric woven of selected and re-evaluated memories. This re-narrated past, which may so radically differ from the historical past that it comes to resemble myth, can play a fundamental role in forming and consolidating our identities (Davis 1979; Wilson J. 2005). For instance, in times of great personal or collective change, individuals and society as a whole rely on the nostalgic past as a solid foundation on which to anchor personal or collective identities. This can be a positive process (Davis 1979, Wilson J. 2005), but it can also foster a dangerous desire to return to a glorious past that exists only in the imagination of those who deceive themselves or others.

As I have already said, it is important to stress that nostalgia is a multiform and complex phenomenon, so much so that it would be more correct to speak of *nostalgias* rather than nostalgia. Indeed, the word nostalgia has been used to aptly describe: a medical or psychiatric condition, a longing for the past, an emotion, a feeling, a form of involuntary remembrance, a form of regretful memory, a form of imagination, a synonym for homesickness, an opposite of homesickness or something in between. In other words, when we use the term "nostalgia", we refer to a family of phenomena. However, the complexity of nostalgia is not only on the conceptual level but also on the linguistic one. Indeed, many languages have words that seem to refer to the semantic family of nostalgia and yet their speakers argue that in no way they can be translated into other languages. Boym tackles this problem head-on:

> "Curiously, intellectuals and poets from different national traditions began to claim that they had a special word for homesickness that was radically untranslatable. While German Heimweh*,* French *maladie du pays, and* Spanish *mal de corazon* have become a part of nostalgic Esperanto, the emerging nations began to insist on their cultural uniqueness. Czechs had the word *litost,* which meant at once sympathy, grief, remorse, and undefinable longing. […] The whispering sibilants of the Russian *toska,* made

famous in the literature of exiles, evoke a claustrophobic intimacy of the crammed space from where one pine for the infinite. *Toska* suggests, literally, a stifling, almost asthmatic sensation of incredible deprivation that is also found in the shimmering sounds of the Polish *tesknota.* Usually opposed to the Russian *toska* (even though they came from the same root), *tesknota* gives a similar sense of confining and overwhelming yearning with a touch of moody artistry unknown to the Russians enamoured by the gigantic and the absolute. […] The Portuguese and Brazilians have their *saudade,* a tender sorrow, breezy and erotic, not as melodramatic as its Slavic counterpart, yet no less profound and haunting. Romanians claim that the word *dor,* sonorous and sharp like a dagger, is unknown to the other nations and speaks of a specifically Romanian dolorous ache. While each term preserves the specific rhythms of the language, one is struck by the fact that all these untranslatable words are, in fact, synonyms; and all share the desire for untranslatability and the longing for uniqueness. While the details and flavours differ, the grammar of romantic nostalgias worldwide is quite similar. "I long, therefore I am" became the romantic motto." (Boym 2001, 12-13).

Boym makes an undeniably good point, mainly that these words are not unique at all; therefore, what these words share is not untranslatability but only a claim to it. After all, the desire for untranslatability and uniqueness can become markers of collective identity, which is deeply connected to nostalgia. Boym's position would be putting aside all these "untranslatable" words to focus on nostalgia itself. While Boym's argument is compelling, I do not completely agree with her. As I show in the first chapter, words that claim to be untranslatable, such as the Welsh *Hiraeth,* can be used to better reflect on the meaning of nostalgia and homesickness. However, in the current debate, these untranslatable words find little to no space, and scholars, to account for the complexity of nostalgia, have proposed some conceptual classifications rather than relying on this plethora of nuanced expressions.

One of the first classifications of nostalgia was introduced by Davis (1979). According to him, there are three orders of nostalgia: simple, reflexive, and interpreted. Simple nostalgia is a subjective and unexamined state that harbours the belief that things were somehow better than they are now. He characterizes this nostalgia as follows:

> "The celebration of now ostensibly lost values, the sense of some ineffable spirit of worth or goodness having escaped time, the conviction that, no matter how far advanced the present may be (and many are by no means prepared to concede any advance at all), it is in some deeper sense meaner and baser. The emotional posture is that of a yearning for return, albeit accompanied often by an ambivalent recognition that such is not possible." (Davis 1979, 20-21)

In the second-order or reflexive nostalgia, the subject starts questioning "the truth, accuracy, completeness, or representativeness of the nostalgic claim" (Davis 1979, 21). Since, according to Davis, nostalgia implies a revaluation of the past, as much as a devaluation of the present, in reflexive or second-order nostalgia, both the interpretation of the past and that of the present are questioned: "Was it really that way?", "Are things as bad as they seem?" (Davis 1979, 21). Moreover, it is important to stress that, according to Davis, first- and second-order (sometimes even third-order) nostalgias often present as intertwined and inseparable. Finally, in the third order or interpreted nostalgia, the subject "renders problematic the very reaction itself" they take distance from nostalgia and try to objectify it. In this nostalgia, the subjects analytically question nostalgia regarding its "character, significance, and psychological purpose" (Davis 1979, 24). As Davis puts it, the subject asks themselves:

> "Why am I feeling nostalgic? What may this mean for my past, for my now? Is it that I am likely to feel nostalgia at certain times and places and not at others? If so, when and where? What uses does nostalgia serve for me? For others? For the times in which we live?" (Davis 1979, 24-25)

Davis first introduced this classification in his *Yearning for Yesterday* (1979), a book that has become a milestone (and rightfully so) in the sociological literature on nostalgia for discussing the relation between identity and nostalgia.[5] While Davis' book is often quoted for good reasons, the classification I have just quoted does not deserve much merit. While many contemporary scholars cite it (see Wilson J. 2005, 121; Jacobsen 2020, 11-12; Ercoli 2016, 235-237; Bonnet 2010, 42, just to name a few), it is far from perfect. The problem is that Davis' classification could be applied to any affective phenomenon. Indeed most affective phenomena can be experienced in varying degrees of reflexivity. For instance, I can feel fear, I can question

[5] Davis first discussed this relation in his "Nostalgia, Identity and the current nostalgia Wave" (1977).

whether the thing in front of me is actually frightful, and finally, I can analytically deconstruct my fear and take an ironic stance towards it. In other words, Davis' distinction captures an obvious characteristic of affectivity but does not highlight anything specific about nostalgia. An apparently similar but much more compelling distinction was proposed by Boym (2001)[6]. She argues that there are two main kinds of nostalgia. The first is restorative nostalgia, which focuses on the *nostos* (which is classical Greek for "homecoming") and tries to recreate the lost home (Boym 2001, 41-48). Numerous conservative and identity political movements are based on this nostalgia[7]. It can even make references to a past that happened before the nostalgic person was born since it is so fixated on the idea of going back to the origins. Such a past will inevitably be so glorified that it resembles myth. (Boym 2001, 41-48). On the other hand, one could argue that restorative nostalgia manipulates not just history but also the individuals who experience this emotion. They mistakenly believe they are the defenders of tradition and truth, not fully realizing they are the victims of this nostalgia. (Boym 2001, 41-50). According to Boym (2001, 42), who cites Hobsbawm (1983), these traditions are frequently created and preserved through "symbols and rituals" that provide continuity with the past and the prospect of its full revival (Boym 2001, 41-48). The second type is reflective nostalgia, which emphasizes the *algos* (ancient Greek for "sorrow" or "longing"); the feeling ironically and melancholically delays the return home (Boym 2001, 49-55). The "ambivalence of wanting and belonging" is what makes this nostalgia thrive (Boym 2001, 49-55). In its interaction with modernity, it differs from restorative nostalgia. It welcomes its paradoxes rather than rejecting them and is also quite skeptical of the absolute truth that restorative nostalgia is so fond of (Boym 2001, 41-55). Instead of focusing on symbols and rituals, reflective nostalgia is more interested in details and fragments of memory (Boym 2001). It is often ironic and even humorous,[8] unlike restorative nostalgia, which takes itself seriously (Boym 2001). Boym thinks that the person experiencing reflective nostalgia not only is conscious of her affective state, but also engages critically with it (Boym 2001, 48-56). This nostalgia might resemble melancholy and can also serve as a catalyst for creative expression. This is, if anything, the nostalgia that is distinctive to authors and artists (in particular, Boym analyses Nabokov, Brodsky and

[6] I have already tackled Boym's theory in Massantini (2020).

[7] See also Bauman (2017).

[8] For some authors, the definition of the relationship between irony and nostalgia is vastly different. Hutcheon (1988, 39) identifies irony as an alternate phenomenon to nostalgia. She says that irony can manifest itself contextually with nostalgia, but, unlike Boym's (2001, 354) contention, the former cannot be a co-constituent of the latter.

Kabakov). In other words, as the label "reflective" implies, the key distinction between this nostalgia and its "restorative" sibling is that the latter is "self-aware" (Boym 2001, 48-56). Therefore, even though the past must always be changed in reflective nostalgia, it is never changed to the point of becoming myth. Instead, we might say that the person who feels reflective nostalgia plays with the past out of a bittersweet desire to reflect on what was beloved but is now lost rather than out of a desire to manipulate and control history or other people. Boym's (2001, 41–56) analysis demonstrates that nostalgia is crucial to our identity, both collectively and individually. Restorative nostalgia entails a full identification between the social group's history and future to which the subject belongs. In other words, the person who experiences restorative nostalgia thinks, "This is who we were and, therefore, who we should be" (Massantini 2020). In contrast, reflective nostalgia involves a proper contemplation and analysis of the significance of the past in our present. Reflective nostalgia makes one doubt their identity rather than affirm it. The person who experiences reflective nostalgia ponders the significance of her past and present selves.

While superficially similar, Davis' and Boym's classifications are very different. As argued above, Davis' distinction merely focuses on the level of reflexivity that the emoter can have, a paradigm that can be applied to any affective phenomenon. Boym's classification, instead, relies on two different attitudes that are unique to nostalgia: on the one hand, the illusion that you can repeat the past; on the other, the recognition that such a feat is impossible and the bittersweet engagement that can result from such melancholic realization. However, Boym's analysis is not free from criticism either. Indeed, a thing that can be criticized in both Davis and Boym is that their classifications are morally loaded as if nostalgia can be acceptable only when it can be a "catalyst for action" (Bonnet 2010), especially a resource for the production of progressive art (Ercoli 2016, 235-237) [9]. Bonnet best put this critique as follows:

> "[C]ontemporary reassessments of nostalgia are marked by the effort to differentiate good and bad forms of nostalgia. Such attempts at political and moral classification introduce a hierarchy of nostalgic forms, a division that implies that nostalgia is a subtle art which the ignorant can easily get wrong. Fred Davis set the terms of much of the subsequent debate by introducing the following scale: 'simple' nostalgia; 'reflexive' nostalgia; and 'interpreted' nostalgia (what he also called First, Second and Third Order

[9] This is a doctoral thesis that is currently being reworked into a book.

forms). The evolution from 'simple' to 'interpreted' is an ascent from unquestioning yearning to critical distance. The clear implication is that the more removed one's relationship is to the past the better. Svetlana Boym provides a similarly loaded contrast between 'restorative' and 'reflective' nostalgia. The former is 'an attempt to conquer and stabilize time', to imaginatively reconstruct a lost home, while the latter is 'ironic, inclusive and fragmentary' […]. These comparisons ask us to ironize the past in order to make it safe for political consumption." (Bonnet 2010, 42).

I think we can point out one more problem in Boym's classification. Boym (2001, 41) emphasizes that her distinction is flexible and that nostalgia typically takes on more subtle manifestations. She is more concerned in the cultural byproducts of nostalgia than the emotion itself, such as political movements, literature, art, and the development of urban environments. Her differentiation therefore falls short of providing a complete explanation for the common experience of nostalgia. People who are not artists, for instance, do not experience nostalgia for their childhood to the extremes of restorative or reflective nostalgia. A person who feels childhood nostalgia does not believe the object of her longing is retrievable. Such an endeavor would, if anything, be pathological. Nobody who has nostalgic feelings for their youth engages in the kind of introspective, almost melancholic reflection that leads one to interpret their history via art. Those who feel childhood nostalgia are actually in a middle-ground position. In other words, even if a person who feels childhood nostalgia were aware that she was experiencing nostalgia, it does not necessarily follow that she would view her feelings for the past and the images that generate those feelings critically. As we'll see in chapter 4, childhood nostalgia typically manifests itself as a time-limited, partial reliving of an idealized childhood, made possible by the nostalgic person's interaction with the material culture that links her to her past.

The current debate presents even more classifications of nostalgia which I will tackle below. For instance, a popular distinction is that between collective and personal nostalgia. As I will show in chapter 5, the idea of "collective" nostalgia is problematic, as it is not clear what exactly makes nostalgia a “collective” experience. Another important dichotomy in the current debate is that of disease versus emotion. As we will see in greater detail in the next chapter, the word nostalgia was initially coined to refer to a disease. However, between the 19th and 20th centuries, nostalgia "became" an emotion. Therefore, the dichotomy of disease vs emotion today only exists in the field of history of ideas, whereas in all other fields, nostalgia is usually

defined as an emotion. However, defining nostalgia as an emotion is far from being unproblematic. Some authors (for instance, Trigg 2020, Kaplan 1987, Grainge 2000, Batcho 1995) use the word "mood" to refer to nostalgia. For clarity, we should spend a few words on the meaning of the word "mood" and how it differs from emotion. The philosophy of emotions and affective studies now lacks a precise definition of moods and emotions. However, there are some points on which experts can agree: moods are more commonly viewed as background affective states without any particular directedness, whereas emotions are typically thought of as being directed toward specific external objects. Additionally, moods typically linger longer than emotions (see Stephan 2017). Since nostalgia has been described both as an emotion and as a mood, for the most part, I prefer using the expression "affective phenomenon" as it is more inclusive. Moreover, the expression "affective phenomenon", unlike "emotion", can be used to refer to what Ratcliffe (2008) calls existential feelings, which I discuss in chapter 3.

Questionable classifications are not the only problem that scholars face when tackling the contemporary debate on nostalgia. Despite numerous studies, nostalgia still resists definition. This elusiveness partly results from the tendency of 'nostalgia studies' to focus on analyzing specific, well-defined phenomena (e.g., nostalgia in contemporary mass media, longing for an idealized national past) rather than on building a solid theoretical foundation capable of fully accounting for nostalgia. Second, many scholars agree on the possibility of distinguishing between autobiographical nostalgia and displaced nostalgia, that is, nostalgia for a past that one has never lived. Currently, displaced nostalgia underlies many important social phenomena, from nostalgia for the pop culture of the 1980s in people who are still in their 20s (Lizardi 2015; 2017) to nostalgia for imperial Britain in young Brexit voters (Campanella & Dassù 2019). The current debate, however, lacks a convincing explanation of how nostalgia can be independent of personal memory. Finally, recently published works provide excellent analyses of the social, cultural and political environment that fosters nostalgia. These works, however, lack a rigorous theoretical framework for describing the relationship between nostalgia and its material supports present in the environment.

Even though this work attempts to understand nostalgia from a philosophical standpoint, it also relies on research from other fields: psychology, sociology, cultural studies, media studies, comparative literary studies, etc. The multidisciplinary aspect of my research depends on two main factors: first, many interesting nostalgia analyses come from fields other than philosophy. Second, nostalgia itself, especially considering how it is experienced today

and the effect it can have on our political lives, requires a multidisciplinary approach to be fully understood. Indeed, the study of nostalgia cannot be compartmentalized; rather, nostalgia must always be analyzed in relation to its political and cultural manifestations. Nostalgia is never experienced in a vacuum but inhabits a specific social and cultural environment comprising institutions, technologies and interpersonal relationships. At the same time, one must explore the conditions that make such manifestations possible. To further analyze these points, I employ the theories of situated affectivity, which offer a rigorous and powerful theoretical means to examine the relationship between the emoter (in this case, the nostalgic person) and her environment. According to these theories, affectivity is a process involving the brain and body of the emoter; moreover, technology, processes or structures in the environment can support emotional performances and the development of specific affective repertoires (Griffiths & Scarantino 2009; Krueger 2014; Slaby 2014; Colombetti & Roberts 2015). In particular, the notions of mind invasion and the affective scaffold will play a central role in my thesis. The concept of the affective scaffold was introduced to the debate on situated affectivity by Griffiths and Scarantino, who posit that 'the environment plays an active role in structuring and enabling emotional "engagements," which [...] are scaffolded by their natural context of occurrence' (Griffiths and Scarantino 2009: 12). In other words, the environment—encompassing everything from language to architecture, material culture to political institutions (Colombetti and Krueger 2015)—not only provides a stimulus for the affective reactions of the subject but also contributes to the affective process by offering support that allows affectivity to be performed and developed in specific and reliable ways. In the case of nostalgia, important instances of affective scaffolding include interpersonal relationships with people who share part of our past (e.g., siblings, lifelong friends), identity-based political movements (e.g., nationalistic parties) and devices (e.g., computers and smartphones) that are capable of reproducing nostalgically relevant texts (e.g., movies, songs, books). The term "mind invasion", introduced by Slaby, refers to some of how it is not the decision of an individual to use an affective scaffold to pursue her goals, "but rather forms of pervasive framing and moulding effected by aspects of technical infrastructure and institutional realities" (Slaby 2016, 6). This concept can be used to aptly analyze how contemporary affective scaffolds of nostalgia can be systematically used to invade our minds for commercial or political ends.

I adopt a different approach than what is more prevalent in the situated affectivity literature. Scholars generally start from a theoretical model, usually inherited from cognitive

science, and then apply it to affectivity. Instead, I first try to analyze a specific affective phenomenon (i.e. nostalgia) by reflecting on the theories from cultural studies, psychology, sociology and philosophy. Then, I use situated affectivity theories to better understand the environment's role in this affective phenomenon. I believe this approach complements those more common to the theories of situated affectivity. I hope those interested in specific emotions (especially nostalgia) and situated affectivity find the methodology and results reported here useful. I focus on how nostalgia is "ordinarily" experienced today – that is, in a society deeply influenced by technologies that constantly allow quick access to an infinite amount of nostalgically relevant material. I take account only very briefly of people such as writers and philosophers, who have a peculiar relationship with their nostalgia and have experienced this emotion in a unique way through writing (e.g. Benjamin or Nabokov). While particularly interesting from a philosophical point of view, especially if we consider writing as a form of scaffolding of one's emotions, a literary work is also an idiosyncratic expression of the affectivity of the subject. Since each writer can express nostalgia in a very personal and unique way, analyzing the writings of authors such as Benjamin or Nabokov (see Jameson 1969; Boym 2001, 259-284) could mislead if interpreted simply as expressions of the author's affectivity and not also as works of art. Therefore, rather than analyzing how the nostalgic person creates texts and artefacts to express her nostalgia, I analyze the relationship between the nostalgic person and the potentially nostalgically relevant material in her environment.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. In chapter 1, I analyze different tendencies present in the current debate on nostalgia. According to some, nostalgia must be interpreted as a phenomenon primarily about time, so much so that nostalgia can be neatly distinguished from homesickness, which is the longing for a beloved faraway place. The other school of thought does not distinguish so neatly between nostalgia and homesickness and presents nostalgia as a longing for a time inseparable from space and vice versa. To better frame this problem, I present a digression on the history of the concept of nostalgia. This digression will also allow me to discuss the role that the very invention and "evolution" of the word "nostalgia" has had in our conception of it. In chapter 2, I analyze nostalgia as an emotion. More specifically, I investigate memory and imagination's role in personal, non-displaced nostalgia. First, I differentiate actual nostalgia from similar phenomena, such as involuntary memory, and then I analyze the processes of selection, revaluation and renarration of the past that take place in nostalgia. In chapter 3, I analyze nostalgia as a form of "desire for the whole". To discuss this expression, I present Plato's myth of the Androgynous and the notion of existential feeling (Ratcliffe 2008),

which will also require an analysis of nostalgia as an embodied feeling. I then use the results of this first part of the chapter to explain the relationship between identity and nostalgia, account for displaced nostalgia, and discuss nostalgia as a "philosophical feeling". In chapter 4, I explore how material culture and mass media can be used as scaffolds (e.g. supports) for nostalgia and how these supports can be manipulated externally by discussing Slaby's concept of *mind invasion.* In chapter 5, I analyze in what sense and to what extent nostalgia can be collective. I also show how nostalgia and its material scaffolds can play a major role in our social and political lives.[10]

[10] Part of the contents of this thesis were re-elaborated from my article (Massantini 2020).

Chapter 1

From Space to Time and Back Again: a Non-History of Nostalgia

> "[T]here is no return, because the re-entrance into a place is never also a recovery of the lost time."
> Jean Améry[11]

1.1 Space and Time in the Contemporary Debate

Is nostalgia about space or time? This is only apparently an easy question. As I will show in the following pages, scholars not only recently, but throughout history have discussed this issue extensively. This chapter examines three distinct schools of nostalgia theory. Some believe that nostalgia should be understood to be essentially a phenomenon about time (T-Theory), making it easy to separate it from homesickness, which is the yearning for a beloved distant location. An opposing school of thinking views nostalgia as a yearning for a period that is inseparable from space and vice versa and does not make such a clear distinction between the two (TS-Theory). These schools of thought, which divide the current debate, can be better understood in light of a theory according to which nostalgia has mainly to do with space (S-Theory). This theory was very popular in the 17th century, when the scholarship on nostalgia first started. Therefore, it is necessary to talk about the development of the idea of nostalgia in order to better contextualize these 3 schools of thought. This digression will also provide me a chance to talk about how our understanding of nostalgia has changed since the creation of the word itself.

[11] Améry (2009).

Why are space and time roles in nostalgia so difficult to discern? A good starting point to understand this could be examining how the word is used outside the specialistic debate. In the Oxford English Dictionary (online),[12] the first definition of nostalgia we find is "acute longing for familiar surroundings, esp. regarded as a medical condition; homesickness". The second definition, which admittedly is also the one that best represents the current use of the word, is "Sentimental longing *for* or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp. one in an individual's own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past." We can see how there is an ambiguity, as nostalgia can be used both to signify a longing for a place or for a time. In its first sense/meaning, "homesickness" can be used as a synonym, in the second, it cannot (except for metaphorical uses of the word homesickness). In other languages, the ambiguity is even stronger. For instance, in Italian, there is no one word for "homesickness", and the word "nostalgia" can be used to refer to the longing for a lost time as much as for a faraway beloved place, usually home ("nostalgia di casa").

The ambiguity between space and time that we can see in everyday language has been addressed in different ways by scholars. Indeed, even though it is not always highlighted well enough, the dichotomy of space/time plays a central role in the contemporary debate on nostalgia. I think that we can identify two main tendencies. According to the first one nostalgia has mainly to do with time (from now on, T-theory). According to the second one nostalgia always has to the with a past that cannot really be disjunct from a place (from now on TS-theory). Later on, we will see there is also a third school of thought that argues that nostalgia has mainly to do with space (S-theory), initially we will only focus on the first two schools of thought. Of course, each researcher has their own point of view, and there are many in-betweens, but the classification still stands valid).

For much of their histories, nostalgia and homesickness (Heimweh in German) have been conflated to some degree. Things changed in the 20th century, when "nostalgia has been revised as an emotion rooted primarily in temporality rather than in spatiality". Today, many experts of various disciplines agree on the point that nostalgia is a longing for a lost time rather than for a faraway place and that, therefore, nostalgia should not be confused with homesickness (see Hart 1973, 398-399, Hutcheon 2000; Boym 2001, Davis 1979, Wilson J. 2005, 22-23; Sedikides *et al.,* 2008, Van Tilburg 1996). Among philosophers, the one who has

[12] https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/128472?redirectedFrom=nostalgia#eid

stated more explicitly that nostalgia has mainly to do with time rather than space (T-theory) is arguably Hart (1973). While probably not the first to do so, he (368-369) outlines a clear distinction between nostalgia and homesickness. To him, in "homesickness one misses one's birthplace, parents, family, friends, home, neighbourhood, etc." Therefore, he defines homesickness as the longing for home, a place that "has something special that other places do not have". Nostalgia, on the other hand, is a longing for the past, for a lost time. He argues that:

> "What distinguishes nostalgia from the typical case of homesickness, e.g., the person away from home, is that homesickness can, in principle, be "cured". One can, in principle, go back home, and the pain will go away. The knowledge of this possibility is at least implicitly present in the experience of homesickness."

This point has been reiterated by various scholars, for instance, Hutcheon (2000, 8): "Time, unlike space, cannot be returned to—ever; time is irreversible. And nostalgia becomes the reaction to that sad fact." Finally, we must acknowledge that the field where the distinction between nostalgia and homesickness is most popular is psychology. This is a trend started by Davis, which continues in the work of researchers such as Wildschut and Sedikides.

T-theory, which distinguishes between nostalgia and homesickness, has its merits. First, the distinction between homesickness and nostalgia accounts for a distinction that we can actually see in the world. After all, a child that longs for home while at summer camp and who feels immediately better upon homecoming seems to have a completely different condition from the bittersweet unassuageable longing an adult can have for the good old days, a time that cannot ever come back and that probably never existed in the first place. Another good point in favour of this school of thought is that it strives to define the essence of nostalgia by identifying its formal object, which is a lost time. By stripping space from the equation, these scholars try to offer a rigorous account of nostalgia.

Because of these reasons I too in this work will defend the position that, ultimately, it is time that has prevalence over space in nostalgia. However, what this school of thought does not realise is that (very) rarely can space and time be completely separated. As a matter of fact, not everyone accepts such a clean-cut distinction between nostalgia and homesickness. Most

notably, Cassin (2016) and Trigg (2012)[13] are two philosophers who put a huge emphasis on place[14] and who therefore defend the TS-theory.

For the most part, we experience places and moments as tightly interconnected, and therefore the longing for one usually implies the longing for the other (TS-theory). This point was presented particularly well by Phillips (1985): "[t]he contrast between homesickness and nostalgia can be summarised around the notions of distance, to which both are related". Both homesickness and nostalgia are a longing, a desire to bring close what is distant. By following Straus (1963), Phillips argues that distance, which is what causes both nostalgia and homesickness, must be understood as a spatio-temporal unity. He argues that in nostalgia, the temporal prevails over the spatial and that in homesickness, the opposite happens. This means, to a certain extent, that each instance of nostalgia hides a homesick component, and each instance of homesickness is somewhat nostalgic (Phillips, 1985 65).

In (relatively) recent literature, the one who puts the most emphasis on space is, without a doubt, Casey (1987), who in a way can be considered the champion of TS-theory. By analysing Levinas (1964), he argues that nostalgia arises from a need to return to the same, and this same, more often than not, is a place, a homeplace, rather than a time. Casey (1987), of course, does not deny that we can be nostalgic for a person or for past times. However, he holds that when we long for them, they are always situated in a place. "It is exceedingly rare that we are nostalgic about something that is unplaced or placeless." (363). In other words, according to him when we are nostalgic, we long for "a world as it was once established in a place." (363) This is not to say that time has nothing to do with nostalgia. On the contrary, he says that in nostalgia we long for a world-under-nostalgement[15], a world that we long for precisely because it is lost in an absolute, irreversible past that has never been present. The past we are nostalgic for (i.e., the world-under-nostalgment), according to Casey, can be made present (represented) to our consciousness through memory and imagination, but it cannot be reduced to any isolated recollection (e.g. my childhood nostalgia cannot be reduced to the recollection of 1999 Christmas morning). At the same time, the world-under-nostalgment cannot be reduced to any

[13] I will discuss some points of these two authors later in this chapter.

[14] To be more precise, Cassin (2016) does not distinguish neatly between nostalgia and homesickness. Trigg (2012), distinguishes between homesickness and nostalgia, but acknowledges that nostalgia always refers also to space, and not to time alone.

[15] I will further discuss the notion of world-under-nostalgment in chapter 2.

specific place. So, for instance, the world-under-nostalgment of childhood nostalgia cannot be reduced to one's hometown or childhood home. Yet, it is evident that such important places must play a relevant role in nostalgia: they "in their discreteness act as instigators and points of support for nostalgia - i.e., as effective reminders of it" (Casey 1987, 378). Casey calls these types of places *places-in-particular* (e.g., childhood home, hometown and so on). Since they can be sensed and can be the object of perception and recollection, they can support nostalgia as effective reminders. However, places-in-particular are not enough, according to Casey, to account for the role of space in nostalgia. Indeed, without some kind of matrix that holds them together, places-in-particular would only be discreet pieces of space, unrelated to each other and incapable of creating a world; after all, according to Casey, the object of nostalgia is not a single memory or place, not the past self and not even the past as a whole, but a specific world seen through the lenses of nostalgia: a world-under-nostalgment. What holds together the places-in-particular of nostalgia is a *plenum-of-places*[16]. The plenum-of-places is "an encompassing whole made up of particular places in dynamic interaction with each other" (Casey 1987, 378). In other words, the plenum-of-places is a world that allows for places-in-particular not to be fragments of space isolated from each other but related in a way to form a world. Most importantly, it is in the plenum-of-places and not in the places-in-particular that we can see the traces of the past. As Casey says:

> "[I]t is primarily through the world-under-nostalgement taken as a plenum-of-places that the traces of what we remember are made evident. Such traces are all that we possess of the past world that solicits nostalgia. Whether expressed in things (e.g., ruins, antiques) or in persons, the traces of this world are precipitated in places conceived as localisations of the world-under-nostalgement. It is a matter of 'memory traces': not empirical signs of an indicated or signified past (this is what we recollect) but sheer traces of the pure passage of time. We are nostalgic about this passage itself, in its action of creating temporal distance and differences. But we are most of all nostalgic about the world that has vanished in this very passage, leaving not definite objects but traces in places." (Casey 1987, 379-380)

[16] The plenum of places must not be confused with the meta-place. The meta-place unlike the *place-in-particular*, is not sensed, it is rather the object of thought and reflection, it is place of all places; in a sense the *meta-place* is space itself.

According to Casey, the space of nostalgia cannot be a place-in-particular that we long for in nostalgia. Indeed, the place-in-particular could be not lost at all. It can be still there, ready to contribute to elicit our nostalgia. What we long for is a plenum-of-places, that is to say, a world that no longer exists. It is in the current plenum-of-places that specific places-in-particular present the traces of that plenum-of places that no longer exist (and that probably never did) for which we long: a world-under-nostalgment.

The point of view of TS-Theory, championed by Casey, is particularly interesting because it shows that nostalgia is always situated. Indeed, the fact that affectivity is always situated is a major theme of my thesis. Moreover, this second position might better account for the complexity of the phenomenon of nostalgia, as it is quite reasonable to say that in the world, the distinction between homesickness and nostalgia is not always clear-cut.

1.2 Contemporary Theories on Homesickness

Since the distinction between nostalgia and homesickness has gained more traction in the last few decades, it is necessary to analyse the contemporary theories on homesickness before moving on. Surprisingly, homesickness is a phenomenon that has not received much attention in the last decades and less attention than nostalgia. This is particularly troubling since homesickness is an important phenomenon that must be understood to tackle important issues that characterise our times, such as refugee crises and mass emigrations. In the philosophical debate, the notion of homesickness (or its German equivalent Heimweh) is often interpreted as a never-ending longing for a metaphorical or even metaphysical home, a condition peculiar to poets and philosophers. I will discuss this notion of homesickness later on in chapter 3. In this section, however, I tackle homesickness as it is generally intended in the everyday language, that is to say, a longing for an "actual" home one can return to. Since philosophers rarely analyse in detail homesickness in its everyday meaning, we must turn to psychology to find insightful research. For these reasons, we should call the homesickness I am going to describe "ordinary homesickness" to distinguish it from the more metaphorical type I briefly discuss in chapter 3.

Scholars who study homesickness do not adopt a unitary definition of nostalgia (Nijhof & Engels 2007, 710). However, it is possible to sketch a portrait of homesickness on which most experts would agree. Homesickness is generally described as a longing, that is to say, the

painful awareness of the absence of something we want and cannot have, in this case, home. Indeed, homesickness arises when the subject has left home (or, generally speaking, a familiar environment) and finds themselves in a new and unfamiliar place. Homesickness can depend on maladjustment to a new environment. As a matter of fact, people who have more trouble adapting to new circumstances are more likely to feel homesick. However, homesickness can also be caused by the absence of beloved people, places, objects etc. It is probable that both causes concur in arising homesickness. Homesick people are also usually tormented by ruminative thoughts of home, homecoming, loved ones, homeland and so on (Bontekoe et al. 1993, 229, Thurber et al. 2007, 192).

In psychological research, homesickness is usually not described as a mood *per se* but rather as *accompanied* by a "depressive mood and a variety of somatic complaints." (Van Tillburg et al. 1996, 899). So, if homesickness is not a mood, what is it? On this point, there is no agreement among scholars. However, when homesickness is experienced for a short and well-delimited period of time, it is generally referred to as an emotion[17] (see Nijhof and Engels 2007, 710). When the experience of homesickness is prolonged for a longer period of time, homesickness is defined as a condition. Some (e.g., Van Tilburg et al. 1996, Van Tilburg 1997) argue that it could even be defined as a syndrome when it goes on for very prolonged time (see Eurelings-Bontekoe 1997 179-180, Nijhof and Engels 2007)[18].

In philosophical terms, we could say that the target of homesickness is home and the formal object of homesickness is the missing home, but what is home? The apparently simple concept of home is actually quite complex and interesting. This is shown, for instance, by Ad Vingerhoets (1997, 5), who reports a personal conversation with Bremer, a clinical psychologist. According to Bremer, there are two types of homesickness: the cat-type and the dog-type:

[17] What speaks in favour of being an emotion is its clear intentional character at some specific object: the home. Therefore, we should not count it among the moods. Of course, if homesickness prolongs, the originally emotional character might expand into mood-like format in virtue of the depressive component.

[18] We must acknowledge that the study of homesickness as pathological condition is currently a fringe position; for instance in the current edition (the fifth) of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), the word “homesick” is present only once; that is to say in the section dedicated to the “separation Anxiety disorder”.

> "The cat-type involves a strong attachment to places and to the physical environment, whereas the dog-type emphasises strong bonds with persons. This terminology was chosen because cats are generally believed to develop strong attachments to their physical environments. After a move a cat may run away and attempt to return to the former home. Dogs by contrast reportedly generally show more signs of distress when being separated from their owner and they apparently seem to appreciate being reunited with their owners." (Vingerhoets 1997, 5)

This distinction, which at first can sound silly, can be quite insightful. It is easy to think that when someone is homesick, what they miss is not "home" in the sense of house. Rather they miss "home" in the sense of the space where relevant and durable interpersonal relationships take place. In other words, it is easy to think that when we are homesick, we long for the people we love. However, things are not that simple. Indeed, it is also perfectly understandable that one can be homesick for the place itself. Today it is perfectly possible for some relationships (especially non-romantic and/or non-sexual relationships) to be kept long distance. On the other hand, when we think of cat-type homesickness, we must acknowledge that the environment in which we live, our home, constitutes a collection of resources that we can use to regulate our mood and emotion,[19] and separation from these resources can be particularly stressful.[20]

Let us consider the following example. Tim is a young man who lives in a comfortable home; when he feels low, he prepares his favourite food and then reads a book from his library or watches a movie from his collection. Then at night, if he feels stressed after a hard day of work, he takes a long warm bath. Now imagine that Tim has been conscripted into the army. From the very first day of boot camp, he must face the fact that he will not have access to all these resources to regulate his mood: he cannot cook anymore and has to choose his food from a limited selection, watch a movie or to read a book becomes a rarity and he has to take short showers with other men. One could even say that boot camp is an experience structured to elicit homesickness in the recruit, who therefore must form new resources for mood regulation and

[19] I will further analyse this concept in chapter 4, using the theories of situated affectivity.

[20] You might miss your former environment even if you are together with loved ones, because certain routines, habits etc. are no longer doable (this would hold for all families who have to leave their cities/countries etc.). It is a different situation if you stay in your mothertown, perhaps as the single one of your family and all others have gone (but this sadness would not be called homesickness)

develop adaptability, self-reliance and comradery: qualities especially valued in the army. Of course, homesickness often presents characteristics from both the dog and cat types.

One last point I want to discuss is whether homesickness is an exclusively painful phenomenon. In the current debate, homesickness is usually described as a painful and depressive phenomenon, unlike nostalgia, which is often described as a bittersweet and even comforting feeling (Van Tilburg 1997, 36; Werman 1977). A possible explanation of the distinction in the hedonic qualities[21] of the two phenomena could be as follows. On the one hand, nostalgia is the longing for an impossible return and, therefore, must and indeed can be assuaged only through an imaginary return. This return, however, cannot be complete, and therefore rather than putting an end to the nostalgia, it simply transforms it from a painful to a bittersweet phenomenon. On the other hand, the homesick longs for a return that is possible. This means that upon homecoming, homesickness must dissipate rather than be transformed. I believe, however things are more complex and that, in some instances, homesickness can be both painful and pleasurable at the same time. Think, for example, of a homesick soldier who is on the battlefront and who receives a letter from home. At first, the letter might make him more homesick. By reading it, he would be reminded of how good it is to be safe at home, close to the people he loves, and of how horrible and terrifying it is to be fighting in the cold. At the same time, however, the soldier might also be reminded of what he is fighting for. Moreover, this newfound connection to home can support an imaginary return home. Rather than replacing an impossible homecoming, it simply precedes and anticipates a possible (maybe even imminent) one. The letter does not put an end to the homesickness (the soldier is still missing home) and might not necessarily introduce a new emotion. Rather it might transform homesickness into a bittersweet affective phenomenon. What is interesting here is that we introduce temporality in homesickness. Initially, the letter might painfully remind the soldier of the fact that he is not home. Then it could also remind him that the faraway home was pleasurable, and most importantly, he might feel a pleasurable hope for a future homecoming. Of course, should he believe his homecoming to be impossible, he would feel something more akin to nostalgia (or even despair) rather than homesickness.

[21] Hedonic qualities are the components of pleasure and pain present in the emotions (Deonna & Teroni 2012).

1.3 The Need for a Non-History

It is time now to critique T-Theory and TS-Theory. A good way to that is through a historical analysis (or rather non-historical, as I will explain what I mean with this expression). The clear-cut distinction between nostalgia and homesickness is actually an invention of the 20th century. For much of their history, nostalgia, and homesickness, for the most part, were two conflated concepts (Trigg 2020). The dichotomy of space and time that characterises the current debate is the product of a historical journey in which place has played less and less of an important role in favour of time. This change in the perception of nostalgia and its progressive emancipation from homesickness has a complex relationship with history. As we will see in the last part of this chapter, we could say that there is a reciprocity of determination between the history of nostalgia and *History* with a capital H. In other words, societal, political and technological changes (think of the rise of nationalist sentiments in 19th century Europe or the invention of faster means of transport) have contributed to the formation of the history of the concepts of homesickness and nostalgia, just as much as the introduction of these concepts have influenced history.

It is not by chance that some of the most influential works on nostalgia (e.g., Starobinski 1966, Illbruck 2012) mainly consist of a history of its concept and a reflection on how the history of nostalgia has been influenced by the history of Europe and vice versa. The strong relation between nostalgia and history is also attested by the fact that many scholars who intend simply to offer a pure phenomenology of nostalgia cannot resist delving into the history of nostalgia (see, for instance, Casey 1987, Hart 1973, Phillips 1985, Daniels 1985). If anything, it is only considering its history that it is possible to write a phenomenology (or, more generally, a philosophy) of nostalgia, even though historiographical research alone cannot fully account for the phenomenon.

As the title of the chapter suggest, this will not exactly be a history of nostalgia since it is not a precise and complete reconstruction of the changes that the concept of nostalgia has gone through. This is first of all due to the fact that a single chapter would not be enough,[22] as an entire book would be necessary, to fully analyse the history of nostalgia. Second, even

[22] The fact that this is a non-history also means that I will not include some philosophers who have greatly contributed to the development of the history of the concept of nostalgia. Rousseau is one of them, but I will discuss in later chapters.

though a complete history of nostalgia has not been written yet, much has already been written and adding to this field is not my primary scientific interest. Most importantly, my intent is not to contribute to the field of history of ideas. Rather I will only focus on some pivotal points in the history of nostalgia in order to better reframe this complex phenomenon. Finally, even though it does not offer a full history of nostalgia, this chapter intends to offer a "map" with which the reader can orient herself in the meaning that nostalgia and neighbouring concepts have had in history. This map also constitutes a foundation for the understanding of the subsequent chapters.[23]

1.4 Hofer: The Birth of a Word

Researchers who study nostalgia have a great advantage over those who study other affective phenomena since we have a "certain" date for the birth of the word "nostalgia"[24] (See Jacobsen 2020, Landwehr 2018), that is to say 1688, when the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer (Hofer 1688, Starobinski 1966) invented the term by combining the Greek words *nostos* (homecoming) and *algos* (pain, longing). This date is particularly important because it represents the introduction of nostalgia in the philosophical and scientific debate. Therefore, the case of nostalgia is a rare exception, as many of the emotions we study today have been debated by philosophers for millennia.[25] Hofer coined the scientific (thus, internationally recognisable) term "nostalgia" to identify the pathological sense of *Heimweh*, a German word that literally means 'homesickness', which Swiss mercenaries experienced on the battlefront, away from their beloved Alps[26] (Starobinski 1966). Because of its characteristics, which differ significantly from the nostalgia I describe in the rest of this thesis, I will call the phenomenon analysed by Hofer "nostalgia/Heimweh" or Hoferian Heimweh.

[23] In this work I will refer to ancient text, or in general texts written before 1688 (the official date of birth of nostalgia). This is not because I want to anachronistically impose a concept on to them, but rather because I want to use them to better reframe some of the problems I tackle in this thesis.

[24] A few authors, including Cassin (2016) and Phillips (1985), argue that the word was invented in 1678, but this position does not really find any support in any historiographical study.

[25] For instance think of the second book of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. In it the Greek philosopher offered detailed analyses of various emotions (including anger, friendship, fear, pity, envy and emulation), that are still considered at home in the contemporary debate.

[26] Hofer mainly talks about Swiss mercenaries, however he admits it can afflict other people too.

The selection of the two Greek words is quite interesting. By choosing *algos* Hofer immediately makes it clear that he is referring to an illness. Therefore, nostalgia must have physical symptoms, a cause and, hopefully, a cure. The choice of *nostos* is also very noteworthy. In Greek literature, *nostos* was the word used to refer to the perilous travels that the Greek heroes had to endure in order *to* come back home after the end of the Trojan War. The most famous nostos of all is that of Odysseus (Ulysses for the Romans), narrated in Homer's Odyssey. Indeed, even though Hofer does not talk of Odysseus, the Greek hero would later become for many the personification of longing for home[27].

Indeed, Hoofer defines nostalgia as the "sad mood" (tristis animus) originating from the desire to return to one's native land". At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that if we consider the current debate on nostalgia, we can identify two tendencies: one according to which nostalgia is mainly about time, and one according to which nostalgia is about a time that is inseparable from a place (or vice versa). Now, if we consider the debate on nostalgia as a whole, that is to say, since its official origins in the 17th century, one more school of thought has to be considered, the one started by Hofer, according to which nostalgia has mainly to do with space.

As said, since the nostalgia/Heimweh Hofer talks about is an illness, it also has precise symptomatology, which Hofer aptly describes:

> "What signs, moreover, proclaim the disease to be already present, are varied; especially continued sadness, meditation only of the Fatherland, disturbed sleep either wakeful or continuous, decrease of strength, hunger, thirst, senses diminished, and cares or even palpitations of the heart, frequent sighs, also stupidity of the mind – attending to nothing hardly, other than the idea of the Fatherland – to which the various diseases finally succumb, whether preceding or following the mood, according as the fevers are continual or intermittent, and sufficiently obstinate; nor can one satisfy the desire of the patient." (Hofer 1934, 386-387)

[27] When we talk of Odysseus and more in general of nostalgia and homesickness in literature, we must always keep in mind that the object of longing might be nothing more than a plot device. In other words, Odysseus' longing might be nothing more than a mechanism to make the plot move forward.

According to Hofer, the cure for nostalgia/Heimweh consisted in ingesting purges to liberate the body from its symptoms (388). Depending on the gravity of the illness, Hofer also suggests various other remedies, including bloodletting and hypnotic emulsion. Interestingly, according to the Swiss physician, frequenting many people can help take the patient's mind off the Fatherland, thus facilitating the healing, a position not dissimilar to our contemporary study on ordinary homesickness, which often says that engaging in social and recreational activities can assuage homesickness. However, in its most serious manifestations, Hofer's nostalgia/Heimweh is a mortal disease that can only be cured by the actual homecoming, indeed even only saying that the patient will be sent back home as soon as they are strong enough to undertake the journey home is enough to make the patient immediately feel better.

The fact that homecoming is the cure is the confirmation that, according to Hofer, we long for is a certain place. Does the question then become what causes this longing for place? Hofer identifies two orders of causes: the internal (or near) and the external (or remote) ones. For what concerns the remote ones, Hofer argues that they must all be situated in the body. Otherwise, they could not have "the strength to excite the mind again to seek ideas of the Fatherland" (Hofer 1934, 385). According to Hofer, people generally fell ill with nostalgia/Heimweh when deprived of attention, they become sadder and sadder, and if they continually think of home and are moved to desire to go back, they might eventually fall ill, especially if they have been debilitated by a previous condition (Hofer 1934, 385). This point is particularly interesting because it means that for Hofer, there is a longing for home that is not pathological and is only the prelude to the illness itself. Moreover, according to Hofer, the nostalgic patient must have been weakened by the recently adopted manner of living they are not accustomed to: the new climate, manners and food all contribute to invalidating the soon-to-be nostalgic (385-386). In this, Hofer's position is reminiscent of contemporary theories on ordinary homesickness, especially the cat-type, that is to say, the homesickness characterised by an inability to adapt to new environments that lack the resources and characteristics of the environment one is accustomed to.

For what concerns the internal cause, Hofer has no doubt: nostalgia is caused by "the quite continuous vibration of animal spirits through those fibres of the middle brain in which impressed traces of ideas of Fatherland still cling" (Hofer 1934). These in turn constitute an affliction of the imagination, an imagination tormented by the images of home.

As Illbruck (2012, 58) and (Starobinski 1966, 86-87) notice, Hofer takes the popular idea of *imaginatio lesa* from Thomas Willis, an English doctor of the 17th century who greatly contributed to the development of anatomy, neurology and psychiatry. According to him, memory and imagination take place in different parts of the brain. They are, in fact, different functions. From this, we can deduce that Hofer intentionally excludes memory from nostalgia. In this, Hofer's analysis is particularly insightful, as he understands that nostalgia has mainly to do with imagination.[28] O'Sullivan clarifies this point:

> "Imagination was not linked to a notion of the fantastical, but rather to the reconstruction of previously experienced situations; in the case of nostalgia, that of the home. In contrast to memory, understood as a uniquely human function relying on will and rationality, the imagination was theorised as one of the most active and powerful faculties, influencing all the operations of the soul and providing the impetus toward their fulfilment. Imagination was a basic and potentially powerful function, one shared with animals, where it was expressed as instincts, which were nothing but the imaginative revival of perceptions intimately connected with a particular situation. Hence, there was no contradiction in describing nostalgia as both a physical reaction to spatial displacement and a psychological disorder since both could be understood in terms of a disordered imagination. "(O'Sullivan 2012, 638)

At this point, we should ask whether the nostalgia/Heimweh Hofer talks about is nothing more than the ordinary homesickness of contemporary psychology. After all, the word nostalgia was initially intended as the translation for the German *Heimweh* (homesickness). As said, Hofer's nostalgia/Heimweh is a longing for space, just like ordinary homesickness.
However, as Starobinski (1966, 87) points out, things are not that simple, and the temporal component cannot be completely cut out of nostalgia/Heimweh the way it is cut from ordinary homesickness.

As a matter of fact, Hofer reports that generally speaking, the Swiss afflicted from nostalgia/Heimweh are young of age. Why is that?

[28] As I will show next chapter, Hofer was quite insightful in understanding that nostalgia has to do more with imagination than with memory.

> "Obviously because many of them have never left home before, have never been forced to establish themselves within a foreign milieu. It is hard for them to forget the loving care with which their mothers surrounded them. They miss the soups which they used to have for breakfast, the thick milk from their own valley, and perhaps also the freedom which they enjoyed in their own country...The modern psychiatrist should be thankful to Johannes Hofer for underlining straight off the role of this deprivation: the loss of childhood, oral satisfaction, of motherly coaxing." (Starobinski 1966, 87)

Starobinski is quite right in pointing out that Hofer's analysis is not quite as antiquate as one might presume. Even though the longing he describes is one for a place, this place is inextricable from a time, that of childhood. However, if this is true, Hofer's theory is threatened not to hold up. After all, if nostalgia/Heimweh is the longing not only for a place but for a place *and* a time, how could homecoming ever cure it? Surely, the patient could be back home, but being back to one's childhood is an impossible feat. Most unexpectedly, Immanuel Kant tried to solve this problem.

1.5 Kant: from Space to Time

1.5.1 Anthropology and Geography

A critical point in the development of the idea of nostalgia is Kant's discussion of the homesickness of the Swiss (das Heimweh der Schweizer) in his "Anthropology from a Pragmatic point of view" (from now on AP) and in his Physical Geography (from now on PG). Most commentators focus on the passage from the AP (see Casey 1987, Illbruck 2012, Hutcheon 2000, Ercoli 2016, Starobinski 1966, Boym 2001) and very little, if anything at all, can be found on the passage from the PG. This is probably due to the fact that while the AP has been studied by various important scholars, including Heidegger (Elden 2011), the PG has been disregarded by most for centuries, so much so that the first English translation of the text is from 2012. The passages from the AP and from the PG share most points; therefore, in this paragraph, I will mainly focus on the AP passage, as it is the one that has gained more philosophical weight due to both its collocation in a more theoretical book and to the work of later commentators. However, I will also refer to the PG passage to clarify some aspects of the Kantian position.

Despite being short, Kant's account is very sophisticated, so much so that it is generally considered a milestone. Before analysing Kant's position in detail, however, we must contextualise it. Discussing the content of the AP and of the PG, especially in relation to the Kant of the three critiques (that is to say, the Kant most non-Kantian philosophers are familiar with), is no easy task. The AP was first published in 1798, 16 years after the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, while the PG was published in 1802, just a few years before Kant's death. The two books had a rather long gestation period. The PG was the result of 40 year teaching period (from 1756 to 1796) (Elden 2011, 1), while the AP is the result of 24 years of lecturing (from the winter semester of semester 1772-1773 until the year 1795-1796, which was the last year he taught at university) (Martinelli 2010, 2-3). Both geography and anthropology were fairly new subjects at the time, and Kant was one of the few professors in Europe who taught them (Elden 2011). Moreover, Kant saw the two subjects as tightly related to each other indeed, as Elden (2011) noticed Kant would teach them together and started seeing anthropology as a subject worth its own course only in 1795. Both the courses on anthropology and on geography were among the most popular offered by Kant, and their audience was quite heterogeneous. The success of these courses was in part due to the fact that they were way easier than the courses Kant offered on metaphysics and that they focused on popular topics (Martinelli 2010). Indeed, by his own admission, Kant's main interest was not that of addressing the "subtle" but "eternally futile" question of philosophy, such as the body-mind relation (Kuehn 2006 iix-ix). Rather, he intended to offer to his young students some knowledge of the world that would be useful in their adult life, and he especially focused on giving them some knowledge of the world outside Prussia, a knowledge that Kant would only gain from reading, as he never travelled outside of Könisberg (Kuehn 2006, Elden 2011).

The AP is studded with short analyses of peculiar phenomena that should serve as examples of the subject matter he is treating at the moment. The Heimweh of the Swiss falls in this category. However, these examples are often not well introduced and explained, and therefore they often seem like pieces of trivia rather than examples directed at supporting his points. As Kuehn points out:

> "Kant's Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View is a difficult book, and it is difficult precisely because it reveals a certain tension between particular factual observations and assertions that seem homely and trivial, if not downright false, and

somewhat muted suggestions that the whole enterprise is highly significant without a clear indication of what precisely makes it so significant." (Kuehn 2006, x)

Because of its crowd-pleasing content and lack of perceived philosophical rigour, the AP was not well received by many of Kant's contemporaries, most notably Schleiermacher and Goethe (Martinelli 2010). Despite all these problems, contemporary commentators see in the AP an important philosophical value. For instance, Kuehn (2006, xii) argues that even though the AP is not anthropology from an ontological point of view and therefore cannot lay at the very centre of Kant's philosophical concerns, it is anthropology from a cosmopolitan and pragmatic point of view: a peripheral yet important application of his thought. In other words, in this book, we will not find a rigorous transcendental philosophy. Here Kant is interested in describing the accidents, not the conditions of possibilities, that can cause the changes in human nature, which is seen as plastic and historical, rather than immutable (Kuehn 2006, Martinelli 2010). [29]

Besides the preface, the AP is divided into 2 parts: "Anthropology Didactic" and "Anthropological Characteristics". The first book of the first part – the one of interest to us, as it is where Kant briefly discusses Heimweh – is dedicated to the cognitive faculties (including imagination), of which Kant discusses the excesses, both natural and artificial, and the pathologies (Martinelli 2010 25). As Martinelli (2010, 26) notices, in the Anthropology Didactic, we find a psychology of the cognitive faculties and a pathology of the faculties, a *Unvermögenspsychologie,* that is to say, a psychology that analyses the systematic failings and shortcomings – Heimweh included - of the cognitive faculties in their everyday use both in the individual and collective context. This analysis, according to Martinelli, is of great importance, as it offers an *Elementarlehre*, a doctrine of the material we have to deal with in the pragmatic world. Since the space that Kant dedicates to Heimweh in the AP is really short, it is worth it reporting it in its entirety:

"The *Homesickness* [Heimweh] of the Swiss (and, as I have it from the mouth of an experienced general, also the Westphalians and Pomeranians from certain regions) that seizes them when they are transferred to other lands is the result of a longing for the places [Sehnsucht nach den Örtern] where they enjoyed the very simple pleasures of

[29] Of course this is not the only philosophically relevant point of the AP.

> life – aroused by the recollection of images [Zurückrufung der Bilder] of the carefree life and neighbourly company in their early years. For later, after they visit the same places, they are greatly disappointed in their expectations and thus also find their homesickness cured. To be sure, they think this is because everything there has changed a great deal, but in fact it is because they cannot bring back their youth [Jugend] there. It is also noteworthy that this homesickness seizes more the peasants from a province that is poor but bound together by strong family ties, than those who are busy earning money and take as their motto: *Patria ubi bene*." (Kant 2006, 71-72)

Immediately we can see Kant's analysis stems from that of Hofer. If Kant did not rely directly on Hofer, surely did the sources he used. However, Kant does not use the term nostalgia but Heimweh. This is not particularly worrisome; "nostalgia" might have been too technical a term, while the German Heimweh, which at the time was still considered a synonym of nostalgia, would have more easily been understood by the wide audience of the AP. According to Kant, Heimweh is still mostly a Swiss disease that afflicts young soldiers away from home. Indeed, Heimweh is caused by a displacement from the Fatherland, and it is *prima facie* a longing and a desire to return to that place, a longing that can mainly be cured by homecoming. Finally, according to both Kant and Hofer, the "internal" cause of Heimweh is a recollection of images of home. Despite all these similarities with Hofer, Kant introduces new points to the debate.

1.5.2 Longing for Home, Longing for Youth

According to Hofer, Heimweh is a form of *imaginatio lesa*, and the cure, therefore, must target imagination itself, for instance, by purging the body[30] or by substituting the tormenting image of a faraway home with a different image: the hope or promise of an imminent homecoming. Hofer, however, does not offer a precise reason why the actual homecoming cures the patient; all we can do is infer that once the patient is back, she does not need to imagine home anymore, as it is impossible to sense and imagine something at the same time. Kant, on the other hand, offers a psychological explanation of the cure. Surprisingly, what

[30] Hofer's account of Heimweh is built upon "The Autonomy of The Brain" in which the famous physician Thomas Willis present a materialistic account of the faculties of the brain (and of its afflictions). In light of this it is easy to see how in this framework affecting the body can affect imagination too. Most notably, this strong connection between body and mind stands strong even in works in which Willis adopt a more traditional (for the time) approach. (see McNabb 2014)

cures the young Swiss is not the relief of being back home, but the disappointment felt upon homecoming when the patient does not find the Heim of her imagination. The one afflicted by Heimweh can mistake the origin of disappointment. She might think that she is disappointed because everything has changed, but in reality, she yearns for youth. According to most commentators, Kant here is reframing the object of the yearning; his Heimweh is presented as a longing for a lost past (i.e. youth), thus distancing himself from Hofer, who argued that Heimweh has to do with space. However, things are more complex than that. The Heimweh Kant describes is provoked first of all by a spatial displacement (not a temporal one), so much so that the soldiers desire to come back to their Fatherland[31], the place where one could enjoy the simple pleasures of life.

They long for a place that is characterised by immaterial goods (people who suffer from Heimweh are usually poor, according to Kant) and by a strong attachment to family and friends. The home they long for therefore is a place of social belonging, of strong ties of family and friendships of the past[32]. What the Swiss soldier does not realise is that he was longing not simply for a place but for a past that happened in a place. It is clear that the true object of Kantian Heimweh is time (a time of peace, rather than a time of war) but this is a time that could not be localised anywhere else. Therefore, here in a way, the time and space of Heimweh are presented as not separable.

By reading the PG, we can clearly see that the Swiss affected by Heimweh mistake a subjective change for an objective one.

> "This change in themselves is also the reason why they all unanimously assert that, on their return, they did not find their homeland the way it was when they left it. Thus they regard a subjective change as an objective one since they are not capable of perceiving the former." (Kant 2012, 518 [245])[33]

[31] Vaterland is the term used in the PG, it is interesting to note that in this context Fatherland, that is to say the land where one is born, and Heimat, that is to say the place one calls home, coincide. Later on things will not be as simple.

[32] One could argue that the object of longing is not necessarily the social relationships we had in a specific time and place, but rather the *possibility* of having those relationships in the past. It was the fact that I was young in a specific place that allowed certain relationships to be possible and I long for those possibilities.

[33] A further point one might raise about this passage is that maybe they have not realized how much they changed due to being soldiers.

This point is of capital importance and helps us explicate a point that in the AP is only implied: ultimately, Kantian Heimweh is not merely a longing for a faraway place, nor is it simply a longing for a lost time[34]. Rather, Kant helps us focus on the fact that Heimweh is the result of a subjective change. While Kant does not explicitly say so, I believe this to be a change in the sense of personal identity, which in turn causes a yearning for a sense of continuity between the former and present self. In other words, from a subjective point of view, Kantian Heimweh is a longing for the return to a place we implicitly hope has remained the same. From an objective point of view, Heimweh is the longing for an identity of a previous self, an identity situated in a space *and* in a time.[35]

1.5.3 Sehnsucht

To fully understand the points made above, we must analyse Kant's use of the term Sehnsucht[36]. If for Hofer Heimweh was a "tristis animus", a sad mood, for Kant it is something deeper and more troubling. The concept of Sehnsucht is of capital importance for German romanticism and idealism[37], however here I will only focus on the meaning of this word in Kantian context. Kant defines Sehnsucht in the AP in §73:

> "Desire (appetitio) is the self-determination of a subject's power through the representation of something in the future as an effect of this representation. Habitual

[34] It is interesting to note that in this sense Kantian Heimweh is close to the concept of dog-like homesickness. The Kantian homesick believes that she is suffering from some sort of cat-like homesickness, as she believes that she is missing the place and indeed she feels disappointed upon homecoming because - she believes – the place has changed, but in reality, she misses, in a very dog-like manner – the relationships (and their condition of possibility, that is the carefree life) she once had there. On the other hand, the Heimweh described in the PG seems to share many characteristics of the cat-like homesickness. While the bonds of family and friendship play the most important role in Heimweh, Kant also discusses the common belief of his century that the longing for the fatherland was due also by the particular air the Swiss could enjoy in their fatherland. Not completely rejecting or dismissing this theory, Kant argues that a stronger cause of homesickness related to the place one longs for might be the fact that in that place and in no other they can enjoy freedom and equality.

[35] To be fair, as we saw above, the problem of time is not completely absent. In Hofer this theme is very much implicit and not directly discussed, as place plays by far the most important role. However, as I have discussed above, the Hoferian nostalgic seems to suffer from the loss of early childhood: the time of oral satisfaction and of motherly coaxing. The Kantian homesick, on the other hand longs for a later period in life (but still within the limits of youth), that in which strong interpersonal bonds are made. If Hofer's Heimweh is implicitly presented as a longing for regression to the maternal womb, Kant's Heimweh is explicitly presented as a desire to return to the social goods of youth.

[36] Kant calls Heimweh a form of Sehnsucht both in the AP (as noted in the quote above) and in the PG: "The homesickness of the Swiss is a yearning [Sehnsucht] or an endeavour [for a goal] [Bestreben] they know to be impossible." (Kant 2012, 518 [245]).

[37] I discuss Sehnsucht again in chapter 3.

sensible desire is called inclination. Desiring without exercising power to produce the object is wish. Wish can be directed toward objects that the subject himself feels incapable of producing, and then it is an empty (idle) wish. The empty wish to be able to annihilate the time between the desire and the acquisition of the desired object is longing [Sehnsucht]."

First of all, it is important to note that Heimweh is Sehnsucht, but not all Sehnsucht is Heimweh. Even though the notion of Sehnsucht appears quite sporadically in Kant and often in relation to Heimweh, the two are not synonyms. This confusion is also fostered by the fact that Sehnsucht is often translated in French with the term "nostalgie" (Helmreich). Sehnsucht is generally interpreted as the impossible wish of deleting the waiting between myself and a desired time in the future. We can better understand Sehnsucht if we look at the "Critique of the Power of Judgment". In a footnote of the second edition of the third critique, Kant also discuss Sehnsucht.

> "there are also desires in a human being as a result of which he stands in contradiction with himself, in that he works toward the production of the object by means of his representation **alone**, from which he can however expect no success, because he is aware that his mechanical powers (if I may so name those that are not psychological), which have to be determined through that representation in order to realise the object (hence mediately), are either inadequate or even aimed at something impossible, e.g., to make what has happened not have happened (*O mihi praeteritos*, etc.), or, when impatiently waiting, to make the time until the wished-for moment disappear. – Although in the case of such fantastic desires we are aware of the inadequacy of our representations (or their unsuitability) to be **causes** of their objects, nevertheless their relation as causes, hence the representation of their **causality**, is contained in every **wish**, and it is especially visible if this is an affect, namely **longing** [Sehnsucht]." (Kant 2006, 65-66)

As the commentators of the Cambridge translation specify here, Kant is referring to Virgil's Aeneid, Book VIII, line 560, "O mihi praeteritos referat si Juppiter annos" ("If only Jupiter would give me back/The past years and the man I was").[38] This point is particularly

[38] Translation by Robert Fitzgerald, Virgil: The Aeneid (New York: Random House, 1983), p. 249. 5: 178 5: 177.

interesting because it shows that in the context of Sehnsucht, we can speak not only of the empty wish of annihilating the time that has to pass but also of the time that has already passed. In the case of Heimweh, the subject does not realise this since she does not realise what she really longs for. In other words, Sehnsucht is the empty wish of annihilating spatiotemporal distances, not necessarily prospectively but also, even though less frequently, retrospectively. If this interpretation holds true, then Heimweh is subjectively the desire to annihilate the time between myself and my future homecoming, while objectively, it is the desire to annihilate the time that has passed between now and a former, happier past.[39]

1.5.4 Imagination

The last point we have to analyse in Kant is the role that imagination[40] plays in Heimweh. If one reads the passage from the AP on Heimweh out of context, they might not realise that ultimately Heimweh is the product of imagination. Indeed, even though Kant does not spend any words explaining exactly why, that passage is there to show how a specific function of imagination (i.e. sensibility's productive faculty of affinity) works or does not work properly. Kant is arguably the philosopher who has written the most articulate and ground-breaking account of imagination. In many of his works, especially the three Critiques, imagination plays a major role since it is involved in all of reason's fundamental activities. According to Kant, imagination is crucial in understanding our enjoyment of art and beauty, morality, temporality, the notion of synthesis, mathematics, consciousness and the unity of our experience (Ferrarin 2009, 7). Moreover, Kant's account is sometimes inconsistent, which makes fully grasping his theory even more complex. Because of these reasons, I will focus mainly on the function of imagination that produces Heimweh. A final disclaimer is that here Kant is not discussing imagination in its transcendental functions, the work on which constitutes some of Kant's most important contributions to the philosophy of imagination. Rather he is discussing imagination in its empirical function. This also means that whenever I use the terms space and time, I am not referring to the pure forms of sensible intuition but to

[39] Another point that I have to make about the footnote from the third critique, though philosophically less interesting, is that it helps us determine whether for Kant Heimweh was exclusively an illness (or at least formulate an educated guess on it). The footnote continues thus: "they [the fantastic desires]is of capi mind, in view of the impossibility, is inexorably allowed to sink back into exhaustion." From this we can deduce that fantastic desires such as Heimweh can start off as relatively innocuous affective phenomena and degenerate into illness the longer they continue.

[40] Despite what one might think, memory does not play a major role in Kantian Heimweh, indeed it plays a marginal role throughout the system (See Ferrara 2020).

empirical intuitions of times (moments) and spaces (places), such as my youth in that small village in Switzerland.

The first question we should ask ourselves is: why should Heimweh be a function of imagination? Why should it not be a function of memory instead? This question has multiple answers. Memory, which admittedly occupies a marginal role in Kant's system (Ferrara 2020), especially when compared to imagination, is described in the AP as a faculty that allows the subject to reproduce former representations voluntarily. Nothing could be further from Heimweh, though. As we have seen for Kant Heimweh is still, at least in its more severe manifestations, an illness, the subject is incapable of autonomously feeling Heimweh and rather than being able to recall home on a whim, he is tormented by images of home. If this was merely a matter of acting voluntarily or involuntarily, could we say that Heimweh is a function of reproductive imagination? After all, though hard to determine, voluntariness should be what distinguishes reproductive imagination from memory (Ferrarin 1995, 68; Ferrarin 2009 11). Reproductive imagination, intended as the empirical use of imagination to reproduce past intuitions, however this would not be enough to explain the experience of Kantian Heimweh, more specifically it would not be able to explain why upon homecoming one would not recognise home. As we have seen above, we subjectively delude ourselves that we do not recognise home, because it has changed, but really the change has happened inside the subject (of course the change can happen also externally, however it is the internal one that has more relevance). More precisely however two changes have happened, the first and more apparent is that in the meantime the subject has grown and now longs for youth, as discussed above. The second change is the formation of a new image of home that now torments the subject. What generates this new image is imagination in its productive function of inventing affinities. The first one to discuss the role of this peculiar imagination in Kantian Heimweh was Casey in his already discussed "The World of Nostalgia". His analysis still stands as the starting point of many contemporary works including Illbruck (2012) and Ercoli (2016). Let us see the core of his argumentation:

> "What recollection cannot accomplish by the mere assembling of particular memories, productive imagination achieves in forging a unity in which their affinity is expressed. Kant takes 'affinity' both in a formal sense as 'the unification of the multiple by a principle stemming from its [the multiple's] originary root' and in a quasi-chemical sense as the production of a third element from the reciprocal action of two pre-existing

> substances. Thus any world brought forth by such imaginative activity must embody both what is common to its elements and yet be something autonomous and irreducible to them. This is just what a world-under-nostalgement must be. On the one hand, it cannot be sheerly fictitious (Kant would say 'creative') but must incorporate one's sense of being in a given place as conveyed by memories; on the other hand, it is not the simple summation of these memories. Precisely as a world, it transcends what its own constituents can contain as a mere set of elements. Only a creative or productive imagination can forge such a subtle and complex result." (Casey 1987, 368)

As Casey shows, Kant's use of sensibility's productive faculty of affinity in Heimweh is quite intelligent. By referring to this concept, which alas is discussed only in the AP, Kant is able to hold together many of the contradictions of Heimweh. By being the product of imagination, we can see why, from a Kantian point of view, these images of home can arise spontaneously. We can also see why they are at the same time founded on previous intuitions, yet not all are reducible to them. So much so that upon homecoming, the intuition of the actual home and the home of Heimweh are not adequate one to the other. However, a problem still remains. If the image of home produced by imagination relies on previous intuitions of the actual home without being a mere reproduction and yet without exceeding in creativity, what rules does imagination follow? We know for sure that in Heimweh, in its productive faculty of affinity, sensibility must follow some kind of rule, otherwise it would not be possible for Kant to delineate such precise symptomatology that affects so many of the Swiss abroad. But what is this secret rule? What principle guides affinity? Why does affinity produce images of home that are considerably better than the actual place? After all, if affinity can spontaneously produce an image of home that relies on previous intuitions of home, why is this new image idyllic rather than hellish? To all these questions Kant does not really offer a convincing answer.[41] Despite this shortcoming, Kant's analysis still remains a pivotal point in the history of nostalgia. More than that, in a way Kant, rather than Hofer, represents the true starting point of any possible contemporary philosophy of nostalgia. In the two brief passages from the AP and PG (if properly read in context and the light of the rest of the Kantian production), Kant delineates most of the problems related to nostalgia: the complicated relation between time and space, the problem of subjective and objective changes that occur after leaving home and before homecoming, the subjective need to situate in space a longing that has mainly to do with time.

[41] I will try to answer these questions in chapter 2.

1.6 From Illness to Sentiment/Emotion

1.6.1 Melancholy and Immaturity

According to both Kant and Hofer, Heimweh generally afflicts young, almost immature, men. This however is not an Hoferian invention as we can find a precedent in Burton's discussion of "banishment" in his "Anatomy of Melancholy", the most important text of the 17th century on melancholy

> "Banishment is no grievance at all, Omne solum forti patria, &c. et patria est ubicunque bene est, that's a man's country where he is well at ease. […] 'Tis no disparagement to be a stranger, or so irksome to be an exile. […] 'Tis a childish humour to hone after home, to be discontent at that which others seek; to prefer, as base islanders and Norwegians do, their own ragged island before Italy or Greece, the gardens of the world. […] Alexander, Caesar, Trajan, Adrian, were as so many land-leapers, now in the east, now in the west, little at home; and Polus Venetus, Lod. Vertomannus, Pinzonus, Cadamustus, Columbus, Americus Vespucius, Vascus Gama, Drake, Candish, Oliver Anort, Schoutien, got, all their honour by voluntary expeditions. But you say such men's travel is voluntary; we are compelled, and as malefactors must depart; yet know this of Plato to be true, ultori Deo summa cura peregrinus est, God hath an especial care of strangers, "and when he wants friends and allies, he shall deserve better and find more favour with God and men." Besides the pleasure of peregrination, variety of objects will make amends; and so many nobles, Tully, Aristides, Themistocles, Theseus, Codrus, &c. as have been banished, will give sufficient credit unto it. Read Pet. Alcionius his two books of this subject." (R. Burton, *Anatomy of Melanchony*, partition 2, sect. 3, memb 4)

In this passage, Burton seems[42] to condemn the peculiar form of melancholia that derives from being far away from home as something that is typical of immaturity. As Burton explicitly says "Omne solum forti patria" (every soil is a fatherland to the strong) and only a childish humour can be prone to long for home. This is easy to show in the case of proactive men, who leave home voluntarily in search of fortune or fame. Even in the case of involuntary

[42] Interpreting Burton's work is no easy task, for an introduction to this complex text see Starobinski (1984) and Radden (2017).

banishment, Burton argues that great men have found ways to take advantage of their situation. Similarly, to Kant, Burton seems to argue longing for home afflicts young people who ultimately have no other good than home and what is harboured there.

In reality, the connection between nostalgia (or Heimweh)[43] and melancholy goes way deeper than this. Hofer himself admits that nostalgic symptoms can also be caused by melancholy and that the symptoms of Heimweh are similar to those of melancholy (Starobinski 1966, 84), so much so that it is not completely inconceivable that Hofer might have considered nostalgia a form of melancholy. Melancholy is one of the oldest concepts in the history of western medicine. First used by Hippocrates, the term comes from the Greek *melania* (black) and *cholè* (bile) and indicates an imbalance in one of the four humours of the human body.

Since the times of Hippocrates, melancholy has developed a long and complex history, and through its stratifications (many of which had already happened by the time Burton had written his anatomy) melancholy became a word used to describe a complex and multifaced and sometimes even contradictory concept. Melancholy has been described as a temperament, a mood, an illness and an apathic condition as much as a motor for artistic creation. In this respect, melancholy and nostalgia had a similar destiny, as nostalgia too has been described as an emotion and as an illness, as a motor for creation and as a form of psychological regression.

An important characteristic that melancholy and nostalgia share is that despite the fact these concepts were born in medicine they are not considered illnesses anymore. Melancholy for instance has been substituted by depression (Starobinski 1966) even though it has played a major role in psychology at least up until Freud (1917). According to Freud, melancholy is a pathological way of dealing with loss, in which the subject is incapable of redirecting their own libido to a new object.

1.6.2 The Temporal Turn and a Slow Medical Progress

So far, we have seen that the concept of nostalgia was first analysed as an illness, however today calling nostalgia an illness would sound rather strange,[44] since nostalgia is now

[43] The reader should keep in mind that in this period Heimweh and nostalgia are still synonyms.

[44] A notable exception can be found in Werman (1977).

generally regarded in psychology not as a pathology, but as an emotion that can serve the positive function of preserving a sense of continuity in the identity of the self through time (see Davis 197, Wildschut and Sedikides 2006). Not only that, homesickness, as discussed above, is generally described as a negative condition, but not exactly as a pathological one. When did nostalgia stop being an illness and become independent from homesickness? Most importantly, why did this change occur? A very interesting theory (defended among others by Hutcheon 2000, 194) is that the move from the spatial to the temporal (initiated by Kant) allowed for the move from the pathological to the sentimental. This turn is also what has led to the contemporary distinction in part of the contemporary research between an undesirable painful and almost pathological homesickness and a bittersweet, comforting, and even helpful emotion/sentiment of nostalgia. These changes however did not happen overnight, by the end of the 18th century, when Kant writes, nostalgia was recognised as a fatal disease by doctors all over Europe (Starobinski 1966, 95), as Kant himself did, and the same stayed true throughout the 19th century. Kant and his contemporaries did not fully recognise the importance of this shift from the spatial to the temporal. At the same time, it would be reductive to think that the passage from the clinical to the sentimental was determined exclusively by a change of philosophical paradigm. Many other factors influenced this shift, including the fact that the word nostalgia would expand its meaning beyond its medical and philosophical boundaries. As O'Sullivan (2012, 643) notices, in the French language the first one to do so was Balzac (2008).[45] Of course, new discoveries in medicine, especially microbiology, also played a major role. As Starobinski notices:

> "As a result of progress made in pathological anatomy and in bacteriology, little by little nostalgia lost the important status which doctors of the Romantic era had given it; and simultaneously, as a military regime was established which was less harsh, as sailors received better treatment, as pay became more substantial, as bodily punishment was applied less frequently, the statistics of the English and French military hospitals revealed a progressive diminution in the number of cases of nostalgia." (Starobinski 1966, 99)

[45] As O'Sullivan (2012, 643) highlights, Balzac uses the term nostalgia to refer to various condition that can refer to a place (such as the longing for Brittany), but often do not and rather refer to an impossible longing for people, foods, or even for the absolute. In this sense this notion of nostalgia is still very vague and somewhat similar to Kant's notion of empty wish, that is to say a desire impossible to realize.

In other words, what was often called "nostalgia" started to gain new names such as tuberculosis. The fact that for centuries people would die of Heimweh – something that today would be completely inexplicable – finally had found a more scientific explanation.

1.6.3 Heidi

The new discoveries of medicine could not dispel the enchantment of nostalgia completely, at least not immediately and surely not in the popular consciousness, as attested by 1880 Johanna Spyri's *Heidi.* The novel, which has gained lasting popularity also thanks to its famous adaptions into movies and animated tv series, is about Heidi, a five-year old orphan who is sent by her ant Dete to live with her grandfather (The Alm-Uncle) in the Swiss Alps. The mountains very soon become Heidi's new home, her Heimat, where she forms strong interpersonal bonds with her grandfather, the young Peter and his blind grandmother. Three years later, Aunt Dete comes back for Heidi to bring her to Frankfurt to live as a companion to Clara, a paraplegic girl daughter of the rich Herr Sesemann. Here, despite befriending Clara and her kind grandmother, Heidi cannot really feel at home, due to new complicated social rules she has to learn and follow and especially due to the difficult relationship with the strict housekeeper, Fräulein Rottenmeier. Inevitably, after a while Heidi is struck by a deep and debilitating longing for her beloved Alps. The young girl grows weaker and paler and eventually starts sleepwalking. Upon discovering such a concerning manifestation, a doctor, a friend of Herr Sesemann, diagnoses Heimweh and prescribes homecoming as the only possible cure. Indeed, once back in Switzerland Heidi's Heimweh is immediately cured.

Now, this novel is interesting for various reasons. First, it shows a symptomatology, prognosis and cure , that is perfectly in line with a disease that was slowly leaving mainstream medicine. However, reading this episode merely as a severe case of homesickness would be a mistake. First of all the character of Heidi herself is rather complex. Apparently, she is an idealised child. She is at one time the stereotypical patient of Heimweh described by Kant and Hofer as she is young, Swiss, poor and while perfectly human, not completely civilised. Heidi however is not only the perfect subject of Heimweh, she is also, at least at some point, the perfect object of nostalgia too. Consider this passage from the novel:

In the dining-room he found Miss Rottenmeier surveying the table with a most tragic face. "You do not look very happy at my arrival, Miss Rottenmeier. What is the matter? Clara seems well enough", he said to her.
"Oh, Mr. Sesemann, we have been terribly disappointed," said the lady.
"How do you mean?" asked Mr. Sesemann, calmy sipping his wine.
"We had decided, as you know, to have a companion for Clara. Knowing as I did that you would wish me to get a noble, pure child, I thought of this Swiss child, hoping she would go through life like a breath of pure air, hardly touching the earth."
"I think that even Swiss children are made to touch the earth, otherwise they would have to have wings." (Spyri 2011)

Rottenmeier here is describing an ideal - almost angelic, as Herr Sesemann's remark highlights – a child whose purity, which should probably derive from here humble and bucolic origins, must have some kind of redemptive power. Not only that, Rottenmeier almost seems to be somewhat nostalgic[46] for this hypothetical condition of purity in which she thought Heidi to be (at least before actually knowing her). This point becomes even more evident in light of this passage from Kant's "Conjectures on the Beginning of Human history":

"The *third* wish, or rather the empty longing [Sehnsucht],[47] (for one is conscious that can never get what one wishes) is the shadowy image of the *golden age* so much praised by the poets, where we are supposed to be relieved of all imagined needs with which luxury burdens us, we are satisfied with the mere needs of nature, a complete equality of human beings, an everlasting peace among them - in a word, the pure enjoyment of a carefree life, dreamt away in laziness or frittered away in childish play: - a longing that makes the Robinsonades and voyages to the South Sea islands so charming". (Kant 2007, 174)

[46] In this sense both Heidi and Rottenmeier seem to be nostalgic, though in two very different senses. Heidi longs for a home she actually knew, Rottenmeier seems to be nostalgic for, or at the very least idealizes, a type of innocence that has allegedly not been corrupted by modernity.

[47] Here is another of the sparse occurrences of the term Sehnsucht in Kant. This time around the ambiguity between prospective and retrospective is stronger than ever: on one hand it seems that the subject might delude herself that she might get this state of beatitude in the future, later on (233) it is specified that this ipothethical state of bliss coincides with an imaginary state of nature that must be set in the past.

It seems quite evident that for Rottenmeier Heidi, at least before actually knowing her, was supposed to be akin to a character from the tales of Robinson Crusoe, a young specimen of a semi-civilised race, that is nothing less than an image of an originary state in which men lived without the imaginary needs that come from luxury. While naïf, Rottenmaier idea is not too far from the reality of the narration. Heidi used to live a simple life in the Alps, she would sleep in bed made of hay, eat mostly cheese and bread and enjoy long carefree summers with Peter and her beloved lambs.[48]

Finally, Heidi is important for two more reasons. First, she does not long for the land in which she was born and where she lived for the first five years of her life, rather she longs for the place that she calls home (Heimat), the place where she actively contributed in forming an environment made of relevant relationships (Heidi is always presented as a very proactive character, especially in the formation of interpersonal bonds). This is important because it shows quite evidently that home is not necessarily the place where we were born and raised, rather it can be a place that shapes us just as much as we shape it[49]. Indeed, Heidi represents a significant change in the environments in which she settles, be they her beloved alps or House Sesemann. Finally, once more we should not reduce Heimweh to ordinary homesickness as it is interpreted today. As always, even though Heidi is perfectly cured by her homecoming, time and irretrievability play an important role in this story. As Pfeifer (2019) argues, from a psychoanalytical point of view, one might argue that Heidi's Heimweh is also a way to spatialise and somatise the trauma of losing her parents at age five.

1.6.4 20th and 21st Century

1909 Jasper's *Heimweh und Verbrechen* (Homesickness and Crime), of which Illbruck (2012, 185-196) has offered an excellent interpretation, signifies the end of the tradition of great treatises on homesickness and nostalgia as pathological states first started by Hofer.[50]

[48] Not only that, the author recognizes some degree of redemptive powers that Rottenmeier so naifly attributed to the child. Indeed, Heidi turns her grandfather from an atheist into a fervent Christian and actively contributes to the healing of Clara.

[49] We could hypothesize that the object of longing is not home, or one's youth, but rather the capacity of forming and being formed. When I am an adult I considerably lose this freedom and potentiality of aspiring to become whoever I want.

[50] For obvious reasons, I have not discussed the vast majority of this tradition. The best and more comprehensive account of this tradition can be found in Starobinski (1966) and Illbruck (2012).

After this swan song (excluding minor exceptions) nostalgia completely loses its medical connotation; that is to say that medical research does not focus anymore on nostalgia. At most nostalgia is now seen as an "illness" in the metaphorical sense (e.g. a political illness). At the same time nostalgia is often viewed as the very opposite of an illness, as a psychological resource for comfort and well-being (see Davis 1979, Wilson 2005, Trigg 2012). Moreover, in the 20th century even if it is not possible to pinpoint the exact moment, nostalgia had differentiated completely (at least in many authors) itself from Heimweh-homesickness.

As seen above, what allowed for the distinction between nostalgia and Heimweh, at least from a theoretical point of view, was Kant. The Prussian philosopher deluded himself in thinking he was able to resolve all of the contradictions of Heimweh. But it was also this delusion that helped define homesickness and nostalgia as distinct to some degree. Indeed, from the point of view of Kant's reader, one can see why upon homecoming the delusion might cure my longing for a place, because I now can see that it is not what I expected and thus I do not want it anymore, but how can this let down ever cure the longing for a time (of which home was only a support, a symbol) if I do have the chance of seeing for what it really was? The only possible solution was that Kant was only partially right: the curable homesickness/Heimweh for place could be an illness, while the incurable nostalgia for time – one can go back home but cannot return to childhood – becomes an emotion. But are the conceptual shifts (both philosophical and scientific) that we have seen thus far able to account for the contrapositions with which we started this chapter. Answering this problem is rather complex, but luckily Starobinski might help us tackle this conundrum.

1.7 What We Can Learn from Starobinski

1.7.1 The Power of a Word

The first lesson that we can learn from Starobinski (1966) by reading his "The Idea of Nostalgia" is that words play a huge role in the formation and diffusion of new concepts, especially outside the boundaries of academia. The first question we should ask ourself when reading Starobinski is whether the coining of the new word “nostalgia” coincides with the generation of a new concept, or of a new phenomenon. Starobinski seems to oscillate on this point. It is fair to say, I believe, that by coining a new word one does not create a new phenomenon. In the case of Hofer, as Illbruck (2012, 6) notices, by coining a new term that is

almost a calque of the German *Heimweh*, the Swiss physician wanted to offer an explanatory model of a phenomenon that is already embedded in the Helvetian collective consciousness. Does this mean that the creation of the new word does not have any influence on the concept it refers to? This might be too much of a stretch for two reasons: first, though this is debatable, speakers of other languages might not have the word nor the concept to which the word refers. Thus, by introducing a new word, one can also introduce a new concept. This paradigm works perfectly well as long as we are talking of objects or phenomena that require a new word because they are indubitably new, as it is the case for new technology. So, for instance I require a new concept and a new word, let us say "computer", to refer to something that did not exist before in the world and I can then spread the word and with it the new concept. Could this model work for nostalgia, which is ultimately an affective phenomenon? The rise of a new word or concept could generate the rise of new effective phenomena only if we presume human nature to be mutable, a thesis which would require a dissertation of its own in order to be addressed properly. Do we then have to say that Hofer had no impact in the topology of our concepts with his new word? Quite the contrary. This is because Hofer did not invent a word to refer to the longing for home, as he already had that word (Heimweh), rather he invented a word to refer to Heimweh not as a poetical concept or mundane phenomenon, but as a phenomenon that is scientifically describable and curable. And this was quite new.

This in turn explains why after Hofer's discovery, Switzerland and soon after Europe was taken by an epidemic of nostalgia. Those who were "infected" were not the soldiers, but first and foremost the doctors. With this I mean that the new word imposed a new diagnostic paradigm: doctors now would see nostalgia everywhere[51], even where it was simply tuberculosis.[52] Moreover, soldiers would say they were nostalgic, because that would grant them a golden ticket back home.

[51] One could argue that this phenomenon still takes place today. A certain phenomenon might at a certain time receive more attention than before; this may have several reasons, for instance it may occur more often and people might be more open to recognize it. Think for instance of how the word “burnout” is imposing a new, though much debated and even controversial, diagnostic paradigm. Some think that before this phenomenon was called depression (see Bianchi *et al.* 2021). However, it can also be argued that burnout has other connotations – it is the perfect word for those who have worked hard, extremely hard and then lost all their energies”.

[52] We could see that after this epidemic a second one came. Once the voice among soldiers spread that being diagnosed with nostalgia was a golden ticket home immediately many soldiers started accusing (or maybe saying they were accusing) nostalgic symptoms. In this case the concept that was spreading was nostalgia-as-ticket-home and not nostalgia-as-an-affective-phenomenon (or nostalgia-as-a-disease).

Emotions tend to justify themselves and to perpetuate themselves. The creation of a new word apt to define a specific affective phenomenon does not create the affective phenomenon. In a sense the new word changes how we interpret the world because it offers a tool to categorize phenomena in a new way. At the same time, it offers a support for the process of self-perpetuation of the affective phenomenon. For instance, I would not say that I feel melancholically banished if the newly coined word nostalgia better refers to what is really important to me of my affective state. The word is also a support that allows me to focus more and more on being nostalgic. Once I know I am nostalgic I can focus more and more on what makes me nostalgic, so that I can indulge (voluntarily or not) in this bittersweet feeling.

The power of creating new words about the affective realm goes even further. While we have our judgment on whether new words and new concepts can create new affective phenomena, it is relatively easy to show that they can better support[53] them. For instance, new words offer better ways to express one's affective state, which is quite important since the expression of an emotion is a fundamental component of the experience of the emotion itself.[54] As we saw above, the idea of longing for home was already conceptualised by Burton, but there is a huge difference in the first-person experience of someone who says "I feel melancholically banished", which only an acute reader of Burton's *Anatomy* could understand, and saying "I feel homesick", which anyone would understand. This point could be better understood by briefly taking the example of the Welsh *Hiraeth*.

Hiraeth is a Welsh word, often considered to be untranslatable, but somewhat close to homesickness, nostalgia or even regret. In the "Antiquae Linguae Britannicae Thesaurus" (Thomas 1759), Welsh-English Dictionary, Hiraeth is defined as, an earnest desire or longing, the grief one takes after parting with friends, the eager desire wherewith we desire or expect anything. In "Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru" (University of Wales Dictionary), Hiraeth is defined as grief or sadness after the loss or departed, longing, yearning, nostalgia, wistfulness, homesickness, earnest desire, for what might have been (Durey 2010). At this point, especially after analysing Kantian Heimweh we should not be surprised by the richness and nuance of

[53] Starobinski goes so far as to say that the invention of the word and therefore of the concept changes the phenomenon itself. Here I prefer stating that it offers new and different supports, but not necessarily that it changes the phenomenon itself. At the same time new words and new concepts changes what we perceive and how we perceive.

[54] Probably this point was most famously made by Merleau-Ponty (2012), when he shows how my slamming my fist on the table *is* my anger.

this word. However, to make things easier, we could say that we could classify all the concepts of the nostalgia family (nostalgia, Heimweh, homesickness, hiraeth, saudade, toska and so on) on a scale that goes from ordinary homesickness (that is to say a purely spatial longing) to pure nostalgia (that is to say a purely temporal longing) we could say that Hiraeth (just like Kantian Heimweh) would sit somewhere in the middle.[55] What is interesting about Hiraeth is that it abolishes the dichotomy space/time. In a way it is between homesickness and nostalgia. Nostalgia in its purest form is a longing for a lost time. Homesickness is a longing for a faraway home. Hiraeth is in a way a longing for a lost home. Indeed, what is relevant about Hiraeth is that it is a Welsh word, that is to say a word spoken by a small number of people who all have a common heritage located in a precise place (Wales). This means that when two Welsh speakers discuss the fact that they feel Hiraeth, it can be implicit that they are referring to Wales, and not just any Wales, but the idyllic green Wales that (never) was. Most importantly, Welsh speakers speak English, but they are not English themselves. In other words when using the word Hiraeth, a Welsh speaker is not simply communicating her affective state, but also her belonging to a specific collective identity situated in a specific place and in an imaginary time.[56]

Finally, Starobinski (1966, 81) argues that "As soon as the name of an emotion is brought to light, the word helps fixate, propagate and generalise the emotion." In light of what I have been arguing thus far, I think it would be more proper to say that as soon as the name of an emotion is brought to light, the word helps fixate, propagate and generalise the concept that frames that emotion in a specific way. Throughout this chapter I am showing how ultimately homesickness and nostalgia are intimately related and that for the most part we cannot experience one without in part experiencing the other too (though some exceptions exist, as we will see in chapter 3). What the contemporary words and concepts of nostalgia and homesickness do now is for the most part to let us focus more on specific aspects (temporal and spatial respectively) of an affective phenomenon that for the most part is unitary (again, in

[55] Hoferian Heimweh, on the other hand would sit way closer to ordinary homesickness.

[56] One further point one should make is that Hiraeth would seem to be some kind of a collective experience. Indeed, when one uses this term, she refers to her own experience of longing in a way that resounds powerfully in the hearts of the other Welsh who listen to her. For instance when an expat Welsh uses this term to refer for her longing for Wales (rather than using an English word), the other Welsh listening to her are also likely to start feeling Hiraeth because they doubly reminded of their homeland. That is to say they are reminded of Wales both by what she says (how much she longs home) and how she says it (either in Welsh or by using a Welsh word in an English sentence).

chapter 3 we will see significant exceptions). It should now be more evident that Hofer indeed initiated a significant philosophical journey by introducing the word nostalgia.

1.7.2 Social and Technological Changes

A second point that we can elaborate on by reflecting on Starobinski is that social and technological changes have deeply influenced the process of the formation of the two very useful concepts of nostalgia and Heimweh. Most if not all emotions can be supported by this kind of change (think for example of how social media elicits envy in very specific ways), this seems even more evident in nostalgia. This does not necessarily mean that nostalgia changes through time. What change are the affordances given to the conditions of possibilities of the emotion. For example, it is easier to feel homesick in an age in which motorised travel is commonplace. It is easier to feel envy when curated images of others are omnipresent, as it is in social media. But homesickness and envy were not born with motorised transport or social media. Rather the possibility of their expression has always been in human nature.[57] The same is true for nostalgia.

I will discuss the relationship between nostalgia and technology in depth in chapter 4. Here I will only discuss the role that societal and more importantly technological changes have played in the formation of the concepts of nostalgia and homesickness. As we have now shown at length, we generally experience space and time together not only in perception but often also in affective phenomena of longing. However, throughout history technological and societal changes have greatly contributed to districting the tangle of space and time. Before the invention of fast and affordable travel, it was quite common for most people to be born, live and die in the same village. To them life was experienced in a well contained unity of space and time. Technological and socio-political changes such as the advent of the train or the introduction of conscription can allow the possibility of travel and sometimes even impose the necessity of travel. In other words, if the condition of possibility of ordinary homesickness is travel, it is only natural that the analysis of homesickness could only arise in specific once

[57] The fact that a person has never felt nostalgia, does not mean that nostalgia is not part of human nature. The possibility of expression and therefore of feeling nostalgia, or any other emotion or mood, is connaturated to humans, not their actual expression. Therefore, we can say that envy, hate, depression, and so on are part of human nature even though there are people who have never felt these things because what we are referring to is the fact that the possibility of these affective phenomena is in them, not that these phenomena are part of their personal history.

travel becomes a more common experience. An even more interesting case can be made for nostalgia. Now, the condition of possibility of nostalgia is the passing of time and no societal or technological advancement could change that. What these can do, especially technology, is emancipating time from space. Especially through technology that reproduces media it is possible to evoke the past, without the need to be in the place where that past took place. So, for example I can use an instrument to play the songs of my region. This simple principle becomes exponentially more powerful thanks to the advancements of the 19th and 20th century. Think of the nostalgic possibilities offered by photographs, vinyl and movies. In light of this, it is very easy to explain why researchers have started focusing more and more on pure nostalgia by the turn of the 20th century, that is to say in a period in which an explosion of images and sounds from the past become readily available. The reproduction of the past was not bound to paintings, writings and artifacts, now sound and realistic images were produced and stored in industrial quantities. These unlike paintings and writing constituted a more direct and immediate connection with the past. Pure nostalgia[58] had always been inside us, now it was only easier to examine.

1.8 Odysseus

The theme of this chapter is analysing the relationship between space and time in nostalgia. Thus far we have seen that often space and time cannot be separated in our everyday experience of nostalgia. More specifically we have identified this time with a lost past, generally youth, and this place with home. But what really is home? To fully understanding this problem, we must consider one more point that will complete our non-history: Odysseus who in a way represents a page from pre-history of nostalgia. Odysseus (or Ulisses as the Romans called him) is arguably the most famous hero of all time, an important character of Homer's Iliad and the absolute protagonist of Homer's Odyssey. He is often cited as the personification of nostalgia and/or homesickness. Two of the most interesting interpretations of Odysseus as the hero who longs for homecoming have been offered by Jankélévitch (1974) and Cassin (2016).

[58] Just like ordinary homesickness should be intended as exclusively spatial longing, pure nostalgia should be intended exclusively as temporal longing.

Homer tells us that after fighting for ten years in the Trojan War, Odysseus and his comrades can finally come back to Ithaca, their home, of which Odysseus is king. Unfortunately, not all the gods are on his side, and his peregrinations through the Mediterranean will last ten more years. After various shipwrecks, Odysseus is finally a guest of Calypsos, a nymph who lives on the island of Ogygia. The two spend almost seven years as a couple; the nymph has offered Odysseus to become her husband and spend eternity together in tranquillity, but still he cannot forget Ithaca and his true wife, Penelope:

> But when they had their fill of food and drink, Calypso, the beautiful goddess, was the first to speak, and said: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, [205] would'st thou then fare now forthwith home to thy dear native land! Yet, even so fare thee well. Howbeit if in thy heart thou knewest all the measure of woe it is thy fate to fulfil before thou comest to thy native land thou wouldest abide here and keep this house with me, and wouldest be immortal, for all thy desire to see [210] thy wife for whom thou longest day by day. Surely not inferior to her do I declare myself to be either in form or stature, for in no wise is it seemly that mortal women should vie with immortals in form or comeliness." Then Odysseus of many wiles answered her, and said: [215] "Mighty goddess, be not wroth with me for this. I know full well of myself that wise Penelope is meaner to look upon than thou in comeliness and in stature, for she is a mortal, while thou art immortal and ageless. But even so I wish and long day by day [220] to reach my home, and to see the day of my return. And if again some god shall smite me on the wine-dark sea, I will endure it, having in my breast a heart that endures affliction. For ere this I have suffered much and toiled much amid the waves and in war; let this also be added unto that." (Book V)

Odysseus refuses Calypso's offer of immortality and happiness. After making love with Calypso one last time, the hero gets ready to sail back home. Even though Homer does not use the words homesickness or nostalgia (these words have no equivalents in ancient Greek), it is still quite clear that here Odysseus longs for homecoming. Jankélévitch (1974) describes Odysesseus' emotion as closed nostalgia, that is to say, a longing that can be cured by homecoming. In this respect closed nostalgia would seem similar to ordinary homesickness. However, we should be suspicious of such quick comparisons, after all, why did it take Odysseus seven years to finally decide it was time to leave Ogygia for Ithaca? Jankélévitch's (1974, 134-139) opinion is that he might have delayed it on purpose.

After many travels Odysseus finally manages to get back home, however both the island, its inhabitants and Odysseus himself have changed dramatically, for the modern reader it is evident that a true homecoming is impossible. Homer however is more concerned with the fact his family might not recognise Odysseus anymore, and as a matter of fact, the final part is constituted by numerous episodes in which, way or another, each person who was relevant in Odysseus past recognises him. According to Cassin (2016) the most relevant of these episodes is that of Penelope herself. The queen elaborates a plan to be sure that the man in front of her is truly her husband. In front of him, she asks the wet nurse to prepare him his bed – the one he built himself – outside of his nuptial chamber. Upon hearing these words, Odysseus becomes very upset, who could have moved his own bed? Only Penelope and himself knew that that bed was built by Odysseus himself by carving an olive tree (without uprooting) around which the nuptial chamber had been built. Upon hearing this lamentation, Penelope is sure that he is the true king. Cassin argues that the ideas of rootedness is at the very core of Odysseus longing. According to her, "love is *empedeon,* it immobilises us" (20) it makes us rooted:

> Odysseus complains of this when he is with Calypso: "There seven years I remained fastrooted [*empedon*]" (VII, 259). *Empedon* also describes the action of the net with which Hephaestus, having been cuckolded, ensnares Ares and Aphrodite: he "hammered out fastenings that could not be slipped or broken, to hold them fixed in position [*empedon authi menoien*]" (VIII, 275). But the "rootedness" is first of all, and this time without metaphor, that of the conjugal bed that weds nature and culture, the planted olive tree and Odysseus's *tekhn*e, his ingenious art and know-how as the master of the home. It is this coming together of nature and culture that makes one's home recognisable. "Rootedness": a properly nostalgic metaphor that is to be counted among all the other proper metaphors that the Odyssean *muthos*, myth and narrative, has transformed into a concept, for better and for worse. (Cassin 2016, 20)

However, the nature of Odysseus's longing is not simply rootedness, desire to be at home. As Jankélévitch (1974) notices, and Cassin (2016) would agree with him, Odysseus's closed nostalgia hides a desire that homecoming cannot really satisfy. As Jankélévitch (1974, 137) argues that Ithaca only represents a momentary homecoming of a never ending travel to home, because a metaphysical homeland requires a metaphysical return and an infinitly faraway homeland requires an infinite homecoming. According to Jankélévitch (1974, 138-

139) Odysseus is one of those nostalgics who is disappointed upon his return to home. In a way after years of homesickness he quickly gets sick of home, but unlike Kant's Swiss soldiers the disappointment of the homecoming does not cure nostalgia, rather it reveals a deeper longing, that probably precedes the longing for home, a nostalgia for the infinite, for the very condition of exile, for adventure.

Ultimately, adventure is Odysseus's destiny. At XI 119-137 Tiresias prophesizes to the Greek hero that his return to Ithaca will not be the end of his journey, soon after he will have to start travelling again, this time in land so far that its inhabitants do not know the sea. Indeed, Odysseus still longs for something: adventure, his true home. In the end, Ithaca represents a let down, which, unlike the Kantian one, is incapable of curing his longing. In the end his closed nostalgia (or Heimweh as Cassin calls it) hides an open nostalgia (or Sehnsucht as Cassin aptly calls it), that is to say an insatiable longing that does not merely represent a passage from the spatial to the temporal, more than that it represents a shift from finite desire to the desire for infinity. But if the duplicitous nature of Odysseus (which in the end is the personification of nostalgia itself according to the two French philosophers) is that of longing for rootedness and at the same time for infinity, why did he not accept Calypsos' offer of being forever rooted to her in Ogygia? A possible answer is that he longs for rootedness and for infinity, but not any rootedness nor any infinity will do. Odysseus longs for his rootedness in Ithaca because it is that rootedness that has nourished him and made him the man he is. At the same time he longs for the infinity of travel, of adventure, of discovery, because it is this precise infinity – and not the one that Calypsos can offer – that defines the man Odysseus wants to be, that is to say a man who is eternally curious and always wants to discover something new. Odysseus is truly at home when he is furthest from home, where he can learn something truly new. Not even the sea is, that vast non-place that has connected his peregrinations, is big enough for him. Soon even the Mediterranean will cease to be his home once he starts his journey towards the people who do not know the sea.

Chapter 2
The Past Made Present

> "No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me."
> Proust[59]

> "Je vis dans le passé. Je reprends tout ce qui m'est arrivé et je l'arrange. De loin, comme ça, ça ne fait pas mal, on s'y laisserait presque prendre. Toute notre histoire est assez belle. Je lui donne quelques coups de pouce et ça fait une suite de moments parfaits. Alors je ferme les yeux et j'essaie de m'imaginer que je vis encore dedans."
> Sartre[60]

2.1.1 Part 1: When Is the Past Made Present?

This second chapter examines nostalgia as an emotion and how it is articulated. The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part I focus on what elicits or facilitates nostalgia, with a primary focus on moods, temperaments and affective dispositions. I also dispel a common misconception according to which nostalgia is a form of involuntary memory and I show that at most involuntary memory could be considered as a phenomenon that elicits

[59] (Proust 1981 I, 48).

[60] (Sartre 1938, 215) "I live in the past. I take everything that has happened to me and rearrange it. From afar in this way, it does not do any harm, one would almost let oneself be caught in it. Our whole story is quite beautiful. I give it a few nudges and it makes a series of perfect moments. Then I close my eyes and try to imagine that I still live in it."

nostalgia. In the second part I further explore the relevance of memory in autobiographical nostalgia. I argue that in autobiographical nostalgia imagination, guided by the longing for a desired identity, uses autobiographical memory to shape an idealistic past through the processes of selection, reevaluation and renarration.

In this part of the chapter[61] I will tackle the problem of how (or to be more precise *when*) the past is nostalgically brought back to conscience. In other words, I will discuss when and why we start feeling autobiographical nostalgia. Before delving into the matter a few disclaimers are due. First, here I am discussing primarily autobiographical (or non-displaced) nostalgia, as I discuss displaced nostalgia in chapter 3 (though some of the observations made here are valid for displaced nostalgia as well). Second, here I analyze the way in which the past is *involuntarily* brought back to consciousness, as I dedicate chapters 4 and 5 to analyze the instances in which nostalgia is voluntarily evoked and structured (either by myself or by other individuals, usually through the use of scaffolds). The reason for these two choices is that nostalgia is often regarded by laymen as an involuntary affective phenomenon about one's own past and this idea has sometimes penetrated philosophical discourse (see Hart 1973 o Howard 2012). As said, in later chapters I will argue against this restrictive interpretation of nostalgia, more specifically in chapter 4 I analyze how nostalgia can occur through the interaction with media and material culture, while in chapter 5 I show how nostalgia can occur through the interaction with other people. However, before doing that, it is essential to analyze nostalgia in its more restrictive (and therefore less controversial) interpretation. A final disclaimer is that, for obvious reasons, what follows is an extensive but not exhaustive list of the types of instances in which we involuntarily start feeling autobiographical nostalgia.

2.1.2 Affective Shifts

First, I will discuss affective shifts[62], that is to say, I will discuss which affective states already present in the subject may give rise to the occurrence of individual emotional episodes[63] of nostalgia. In other words, I will discuss how the emotions and moods we feel can facilitate

[61] I partly already discussed the content of this chapter in Massantini (2020).

[62] Even though Mitchell (2021) uses this expression to refer to instances in which "moods 'crystalize' into emotions" and instances in which "emotions 'diffuse' into moods", I use this expression more generally to indicate a shift from an affective phenomenon to another.

[63] I borrow this expression from Goldie (2000).

nostalgia, I also discuss what role temperaments play in the occurrence of nostalgia and finally I will analyse whether nostalgia itself can be analyzed as an affective disposition.

2.1.3 Contiguous Emotions

The first instance of how we can start feeling autobiographical nostalgia (thus bringing the past back to consciousness) is when we are already feeling an emotion contiguous to nostalgia. As we have seen in the previous chapter, one of the emotions closest to nostalgia is homesickness, a person who feels this emotion is tormented by images of home. This rumination could progressively transform the emotion into something more akin to nostalgia. This happens when the subject's intentional object is not simply faraway in space, but also becomes far away in time, and becomes therefore unobtainable. Let us consider this example: Maria is a Spanish university student who decided to go to university abroad in Sweden. Far away from the sun, comfort and friends of her own hometown, day after day[64] Maria feels more and more homesick, she is missing both the material resources she relies on to regulate her mood (cat-type homesickness) and the interpersonal relationships (dog-type homesickness)[65]. In this homesickness she ruminates on what she is missing. As months go by, Maria realizes that her friends in the meantime are living their own lives. In Spain, independently of her, they are making their own experiences. The fact that she is not there with them sharing important life events (e.g. the first university exam, the first part-time job, going to live away from home for the first time) makes Maria realize three important implications. First, there was a time in which important experiences were shared with those friends, but that time is now over. Second, those experiences she missed cannot be relived in any way and no homecoming could bring back the time she could not spend with them. Third, the more she lives apart from her friends the more she and they are likely to grow apart. As these realizations sink in (either consciously or unconsciously) she no longer focuses on what is somewhere else, but on what is somewhen else, either in the past or in a time that could have been. At this point Maria feels nostalgia rather than mere homesickness, or at least a combination of the two. One might argue that Maria would feel other emotions as well, especially regret. Indeed, to better understand this example, it is worth to delve deeper into the differences between regret and nostalgia. These of course are related (though radically different) emotions, as they both are about the past,

[64] As Goldie (2000) notices, emotions can go on for days and indeed we should not conflate emotions and episodes of emotional experience.

[65] See chapter 1.

possible worlds and "if only…" fantasies (Akhtar 1996, 2017). Regret is a distressful retrospective attitude, for which we prefer things in the past to have occurred differently. In a way regret can be described as the impossible desire to go back in time and do something different to change the past and therefore the present[66]. One could say that regret is an emotion about possible worlds that only hindsight can see. To be more precise however, regret is fundamentally directed at specific episodes that involve and reveal our attachment to specific values (see Wallace 2013). Those who feel nostalgia, on the other hand, are not interested in specific aspects or episodes of the past; rather they long for an entire world they locate in the past. They are not interested in changing the past[67]. Instead, they want their entire imagined past to become present again, as is the case of what Boym (2001)[68] calls restorative nostalgia, or at the very least to indulge in the contemplation of that past, as it is more typical of reflective nostalgia. Another crucial difference[69] is that while regret is only painful, nostalgia can be bittersweet[70]. Since regret and nostalgia are closely related, it is easy to see how one could oscillate between these two emotions. For instance, when we feel regret for an event, we can oscillate to nostalgia for the time that came before that time. More in general for the things for which we feel regret, we can usually change focus and feel nostalgia for the time that was before the regretful event, however the other way around is not always possible (for instance I can feel nostalgia, but I cannot regret the fact that I have grown up)[71]. In light of this, we can see why Maria's example is interesting: even though the object of the emotion apparently

[66] Being a very complex emotion, not all instances of regret fall clearly in this definition. Most eminently, Wallace (2013) by reflecting on the influential work of Bernard Williams (1981) has explored in detail the interactions between regret and affirmation, that is to say the stance opposite to regret, for which we prefer things in the past to have happened the way they have happened. More specifically there are instances in which we can reckon an event to be regretful and yet not wish for things to have been different in the past (and therefore in the present).

[67] As we will see in this chapter, the nostalgic person deeply changes and reimagines the renarration of her past, though this happens mostly unconsciously and should not be conflated with the impossible desire of actually going back in time to change things.

[68] See introduction for the difference between restorative and reflective nostalgia.

[69] Of course the list of differences between regret and nostalgia could go on, for instance, regret is often about things that were within our control, sometimes only in hindsight, as is the case in William's (1981) example of the agent's regret felt by a lorry driver. Nostalgia can be about times in which we had little agency (childhood).

[70] Fully determining why that is the case is no easy task. One could argue that in nostalgia in a way we can relive the past through memory and imagination, just as much as we can imagine alternative worlds in regret. However, while in regret we are tormented by the fact that things went the way they did, that we cannot change them and that the alternative worlds we imagine are impossible, in nostalgia, on the other hand, we might be sad that the past cannot come back (unless we are feeling restorative nostalgia), but at least we are happy that things were the way we think they were and we love indulging in the contemplation of this imagined past.

[71] When I feel nostalgia I believe that the past was better in some respects. More importantly, when I feel nostalgia I miss the possibility of inhabiting a plurality of future world.

remains the same (i.e. home, or to be more precise the affective resources, the relations and the opportunities of personal and psychological growth that we have at home), it undergoes a shift in the way in which the subject intentions it. More specifically, here we see the shift from the spatial (homesickness) to the temporal (nostalgia) that I have already analyzed in chapter 1, which in turn can evolve into an oscillation between the past as we think it was (nostalgia) and the present as we wish it were (regret).

2.1.4 Temperaments and Moods (Depressive Mood and Anxiety)

The mood we feel also plays a fundamental role in the occurrence of emotional episodes of nostalgia. As mentioned in the introduction, even though most scholars agree on the fact that there is a distinction between moods and emotions, they are still divided in determining the exact nature of the distinction. In the contemporary debate, moods are often described as affective states that can facilitate the occurrence of specific emotions (Mitchell 2021). Stephan (2017) speaks of emotion readiness of moods. Just as much emotions make us ready to act, moods make us ready to feel emotions. The occurrence of moods in turn is linked to various factors including previous emotions (Mitchell 2021), physiological causes, social group effects and existential lifespan issues (Stephan 2017) and temperaments. When we speak of social group effects, we refer to synchronic contagion effects that can take place even in accidentally combining groups, such as in crowd watching a soccer game (Stephan 2017). We can also refer to how the membership to a particular social group can account for certain chronic moods (Kagan 1994, Stephan 2017). For example, there are peer groups that cultivate specific mood repertoires through looping effects among the members (think of social atmospheres of intimidation that are typical of some subcultures and of some extremist political movements). When we speak of existential lifespan issues, we refer to the fact that persisting moods can be the results of reiteration of certain events. For instance, enduring depressive moods can be the results of decades of failures or social rejection (Kagan 1994, Stephan 2017).[72]

Temperaments are dispositions to recurrently feel moods of a certain kind (Deonna & Teroni 2009). For instance, a person with a choleric temperament is more likely to be in an

[72] Existential lifespan issues can generate what Bollnow (1956) calls the bedrock of life (*Lebensuntergrund).* As Stephan (2017) argues, this kind of feelings can start developing since childhood and can constitute the "basso continuo" of human affectivity. In a way they are never experienced in their pure form and yet are always present in our moods. In this sense they are similar to character traits or temperaments (Stephan 2017).

irascible mood, and when this is the case many things that are otherwise neglectable become possible objects or triggers of anger. When we are in an irascible mood even the slightest of inconveniences can be intended as affronts deserving our rage (of course, one does not necessarily need to have a choleric temperament to be in an irascible mood). By following this example, one could argue that the moods that facilitate nostalgia should be calm, depressive, "ruminative", which in turn are easier to occur in people with a melancholic[73] temperament. For example, someone who is in a depressive mood might see the present world as deprived of possibilities and therefore might be more inclined to feel nostalgia. Indeed, nostalgia can occur when one finds herself in a negative depressive mood or when feeling loneliness, and many have argued that nostalgia's function might be to provide a coping mechanism against such moods (Wildschut et al 2006, Garrido 2018). More specifically, as Garrido (2018) notices, "in people with tendencies to depression or maladaptive coping styles, nostalgic remembering may result in negative affective outcomes" and "nostalgia can represent part of both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies, depending on the personality and coping style of the individual." (see also Kaplan 1987, Iyer & Jetten 2011).

However, nostalgia can also be a response to a mood "opposite" to it, as it is for the case of anxiety. This idea was first introduced by Davis (1977/-1979). According to him nostalgia arises in times of existential crisis characterized by anxiety. As Davis (1977: 420) puts it:

> "1) the nostalgic evocation of some past state of affairs always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties or uncertainties even though these may not be in the forefront of the person's awareness, and 2) it is these which pose the threat of identity discontinuity (existentially the panic fear of the "wolf of insignificance") that nostalgia, by marshalling our psychological resources for continuity, seeks to abort, or at the very least deflect".

[73] Melancholy is a word that for the most part has fallen out of favor in the contemporary debates. Yet it can still be a useful term, especially if we use Lambotte's description: "[Melancholy is] understood in terms of the symptoms themselves which, first identified in antiquity, would nowadays be defined by a metaphorical displacement: mood and moral suffering, obsession and partial delirium, lovesickness and mourning, as well as the characteristic of genius, and the hyper-lucidity of a discourse reduced to a pathological authenticity." (Lambotte 2014).

This formulation has the merit of showing that nostalgia can be a response to a precise existential condition, as if nostalgia was an antidote to "opposite" affective moods such as anxiety. While it is important to highlight the consolatory power of nostalgia, we should not be as restrictive as Davis. Of course, this formulation is problematic because it is too restrictive as nostalgia can be felt even when one is not in such "desperate" conditions. More simply nostalgia finds a more fertile soil in those situations. Moreover Davis's analysis is problematic, because it oversimplifies nostalgia and reduces it to a feel-good emotion, while as already said nostalgia could also amplify the sense of longing and desperation one is already in (Trigg 2020, Garrido 2018, Iyer & Jetten 2011)[74].

2.1.5 J.P.'s Case: Nostalgia as Affective Disposition

In his influential book *The emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*, Goldie (2000) makes an interesting distinction:

> "I begin with an important distinction: between emotion and episodes of emotional experience; it is often not obvious from the way we speak ('I'm angry with James') which we mean. An emotion, I argue, is a complex state, relatively more enduring than an emotional episode, which itself includes various past episodes of emotional experience, as well as various sorts of disposition to think, feel, and act, all of which can dynamically interweave and interact. What holds these diverse elements together is their being part of a narrative. […]
>
> An emotion—for example, John's being angry or Jane's being in love—is typically complex, episodic, dynamic, and structured. An emotion is complex in that it will typically involve many different elements: it involves episodes of emotional experience, including perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of various kinds, and bodily changes of various kinds; and it involves dispositions, including dispositions to experience further emotional episodes, to have further thoughts and feelings, and to behave in certain ways. Emotions are episodic and dynamic, in that, over time, the elements can come and go, and wax and wane, depending on all sorts of factors, including the way in which the episodes and dispositions interweave and interact with each other and with other aspects of the person's life. And an emotion is structured in

[74] I will come back to Davis' discontinuity hypothesis next chapter.

that it constitutes part of a narrative—roughly, an unfolding sequence of actions and events, thoughts and feelings—in which the emotion itself is embedded. The different elements of the emotion are conceived of by us as all being part of the same emotion, in spite of its complex, episodic, and dynamic features. The actions which we do out of an emotion, and the various ways of expressing an emotion, are also seen as part of the same narrative, but not themselves as part of the emotion itself."

Goldie's position is interesting as he does not reduce emotions to either emotional episodes or to affective dispositions. Emotions according to him are a complex category that includes the reciprocal interaction between various aspects of our mental lives, most notably episodes of emotional experience and affective dispositions. In light of this, Goldie would probably argue that nostalgia is neither a single episode, nor the mere disposition to feel nostalgia, but rather a possibly long-lasting phenomenon which changes over time and that reveals itself through specific episodes. At the time of writing, Goldie's position was quite unique, with maybe the exception of Wollheim (1999).[75] As Goldie (2000) notices:

"Wollheim (1999) also distinguishes emotion and emotional episode, but he insists that emotions are dispositions (which possess 'psychological reality'). I agree that emotions involve dispositions, but his account, I think, leaves insufficient place for the narrative of past emotional episodes as being part of a continuing emotion."

Though insightful, Goldie's distinction has not made much of an impact in the contemporary debate[76], especially in the more "analytical" side of the debate. This is probably due to the fact that ultimately the distinction he introduces is not so clear-cut. Because of this, more precise distinctions have had the chance to make a greater impact. For instance, Deonna and Teroni (2012) argue that many scholars distinguish between emotions and affective dispositions.[77] Emotions are episodes, which means they are limited in duration (from as short

[75] See Stephan (2017) for the comparison between long lasting emotions and short emotional episodes.

[76] Goldie's work has been very influential in the debate of emotion. The most important contribution made by Goldie is arguably the method of analysing emotions in terms of narratives (2012), which has been accepted by a few scholars. However, some terminological and metaphysical distinctions such as the one discussed here did not make an impact in the field.

[77] To better understand Deonna and Teroni position, see also Lyons (1980, 53-57) and Mulligan (1998). Deonna and Teroni (2012) mention Goldie and Wollheim as two scholars who do not follow their neat distinction between emotions and affective dispositions. However, we can add that there are scholars whose theories do not neatly fall in Deonna and Teroni's categorization. For instance, Ben Ze'ev (2001) speaks of enduring emotion (such as love), which can even last a lifetime but cannot really be reduced to an affective disposition. Another outlier is Frijda (1986; 1994), who discusses "emotion episodes" which do not have the characteristics of short term emotional

as a few seconds to as long as a few hours). Affective dispositions, on the other hand, can stay with the subject for a long time, even for one's entire life. Deonna and Teroni (2012) distinguish between various types of affective dispositions. 'Single-track' dispositions concern a single emotion. For example "Mark is envious of the rich" can be given a dispositional read, that is to say this phrase can be read as "Mark is prone to feel envious of rich people". This does not mean that Mark feels envy all the time, but rather that given the right circumstances he is more likely to feel envy towards a rich person. Feeling envy during those precise circumstances (occurrent or episodical envy) will affect the way he behaves. Deonna and Teroni also call this kind of dispositions 'emotional dispositions'. Next, Deonna and Teroni call 'multitrack dispositions' also 'sentiments'. Sentiments, unlike emotional dispositions, can generate more than one kind of emotion. Typical examples of sentiments according to them are love and hatred. When we love we have the disposition to feel jealousy, happiness upon hearing good news about the loved one and grief, should her die. When we hate, on the other hand, we feel (among other emotions) glee when the hated one suffers and sadness when he triumphs. Deonna and Teroni also describe a second kind of multi-track dispositions: character traits. Unlike sentiments, which are usually directed at objects, character traits are directed to values. Examples of character traits are being kind-hearted, optimistic, honest, insensitive, being frivolous (Deonna & Teroni 2009; 2012, 8). People who have specific character traits are more likely to feel specific emotions: "the kind person will have a greater than normal tendency to feel, say, pity, gratitude, and affection" (Deonna & Teroni 2012, 9).

The contraposition between Goldie and Deonna and Teroni helps us reflect on three questions. First, can there be a nostalgia that lasts way beyond a single episode, maybe a lifetime? Second, how should we classify such a long-lasting phenomenon? Third, how should we explain the shifts between disposition and episodes (i.e. when and why a disposition generates an episode)? Let us consider the first question. Should we consider nostalgia exclusively as an occurrent state or also as a dispositional state? Saying that nostalgia *can* be described as an occurrent state is arguably not too controversial a statement, since it is

episodes, but rather "allow for gaps in the synchronization of emotional subsystems and are not an affair of split seconds" (Stephan 2017, 1484). Also, in Stephan (2017) we can see how describing emotion as clear-cut phenomena that have a limited amount of time is not necessarily the most productive approach, as we need to take into account long lasting (or enduring) emotions. Most notably, Stephan (2017) goes in the direction that what differentiates emotions from other affective phenomena (he focuses on emotions and moods, but similar arguments can be made about emotions and affective dispositions) should be their intentional structure, rather than their temporal duration.

undeniable that we can observe episodes of nostalgia. However, we should also consider the fact that nostalgia can be described as a dispositional phenomenon. To make my point clearer, to show in what sense nostalgia can be something longer lasting than a mere emotional episode, I will take into consideration a case study[78]. The example I will discuss here is that of John-Paul Annunziato (or J.P. for short)[79]. J.P. was born in the Bronx in 1978. In 2009 he lost both parents in a tragic accident. In that year he started collecting memorabilia from the '80s (the decade of his childhood), including board games, toys, magazines, Vhs and even McDonald's Happy Meal boxes. As J.P. admits in the interview released on his own website:

> "After their passing I became desperate to recreate my childhood. What started as a hobby quickly became an obsession and compulsion. I started buying anything that reminded me of my past, back when things felt safer."[80]

What started as a therapeutic collection[81] to cope with his loss and a way of grieving became even bigger an obsession in 2014, after an accident that left him barely mobile for 2 years. J.P. used to be a nursing home director, but later he ended up making his nostalgia into his full time job. Today his main working activity is showcasing on the internet his collection which includes more than 40.000 pieces and has cost him more than 100.000 dollars. When asked what he loves about the '80s so much he answers:

> "Are you kidding me? Where do I begin? The colors. The bright neon and fluorescent shades. The bold styles of rebellious clothing. The attitude. The toys that unlike the toys of today, actually required creativity and imagination. We were essentially the last

[78] Boym has already done something similar with Vladimir Nobokov, Joseph Brodsky and Ilya Kabakov, however I will not focus on these examples for two reasons: first, she has already done it, second since they are artists, we should consider the fact that they are also producing art for an audience. Therefore any analysis of their work should take this fact into consideration.. J.P. is not an artist, he is not a performer, this puts him in the condition of being more trustworthy then someone who writes for an audience.

[79] I have to thank Dylan Trigg for discovering this case. I heard Trigg discussing this case in Exeter in October 2019 at the workshop "Feelings of Belonging and Affective Spaces: Phenomenological Explorations". The main resources I used for this case is an interview (https://www.80sthen80snow.com/about-jp) released by J.P. on his own website, a New York Post article (https://nypost.com/2017/11/25/dude-like-totally-spends-100k-collecting-80s-junk/) and a story trender article (http://www.storytrender.com/35569/memorabilia-tragic-death-parents/)

[80] https://www.80sthen80snow.com/about-jp

[81] I will further explore the fact that his nostalgia is "supported" through a collection in chapter 4.

generation that played outside. We were the last generation that actually kept our clothes on. We were the last generation for a lot of things and because of that I felt a burning desire to remain living in that period inside my head."[82]

J.P. has admitted that a few times he regretted spending all this time and all these resources on this collection, but that now he is proud of bringing back a bit of the 80s. This collection still brings him comfort especially since he started sharing his passion on the internet. J.P.'s case is interesting for various reasons, so much so that I will get back to it also in chapter 4, where I explore this example once again through the lenses of situated affectivity.

J.P.'s nostalgia is rather complex and it is a condition that has characterized much of his life. So, it would be fair to say that nostalgia can be a form of affective disposition. If this holds true, then where does J.P.'s nostalgia fit in Deonna and Teroni's taxonomy? Can it be described as a single-track disposition (i.e., J.P. is nostalgic about the past, or J.P. is nostalgic for the '80s)? If this were the case, then when we say that J.P. is nostalgic for the 80's we are not saying necessarily that he is feeling nostalgia right now, nor that he feels nostalgia all the time, but rather that he has a disposition to feel nostalgia, that makes him experience episodes of nostalgic feelings that are frequent enough and strong enough to make him start such an impressive collection. Prima facie, this would seem to work, and we cannot rule out the possibility that there might be less complex cases of nostalgia that could be described as single-track dispositions. On closer inspection, we can see that J.P.'s nostalgia involves more emotions and complex affective shifts. First of all his nostalgia works as a coping mechanism against mourning[83] . Not only that, we have also seen how even though his nostalgia sometimes brought about regret, it also brought about very positive emotions, such as pride. Given all this information, one could argue that J.P.'s nostalgia can be interpreted as a multitrack disposition, a sentiment, to be more precise. One could also argue that, J.P.'s nostalgia can also be described as a character trait. As stated before rather than objects, character traits focus on values. According to Deonna and Teroni being concerned with values does not mean that something is evaluated as good or bad, but rather that in a certain situation a person with a certain character

[82] https://www.80sthen80snow.com/about-jp

[83] For the relation between mourning and nostalgia see also Impert & Rubin (2011), Akhatar (1996), Fodor (1950), Kaplan (1987), Werman (1977).

is likely to judge specific situations accordingly to their character. In this sense a person with a hypothetical nostalgic character will evaluate the present as lacking something in certain respects. If we go back to J.P.'s case, we can see how his nostalgia is very much concerned with values. First of all, J.P. seems to hold the past, and the 80's in particular, to be superior to the present:

> "We were the last generation that actually kept our clothes on. We were the last generation for a lot of things and because of that I felt a burning desire to remain living in that period inside my head."[84]

Not only that, the past seems so valuable, that J.P. feels the need to build a life project around this value, that is to say to bring back the 80s (at least partially) through sharing his collection on the internet. Deonna and Teroni are well aware that distinguishing between value-directed (i.e., character traits) and object-directed dispositions (i.e., sentiments) is not always easy, yet they argue that the distinction stands:

> "sentiments and character traits still differ, but the difference will be one of degree. Perhaps the most plausible way to develop this idea is to say that, when the values concerned are such that they can be found across various objects and situations, we will speak of character traits. When this is not the case, we shall be more tempted to speak of sentiments. Since both options make sense in their own way of the place of emotional dispositions within the proposal, this should count in its favour" (Deonna & Teroni 2009, 373)

How should we apply this method to J.P.'s nostalgia? As far as we know, his nostalgia is totalizing, so it is not hard to believe that the value of the superiority of the past can be found across various objects and situations of his affective life, from media to toys all the way to sexual mores. Therefore, it is not controversial to say that his nostalgia can be described as a character trait. Such a statement however is problematic. First of all, as I have already shown, J.P.'s nostalgia is also clearly directed at objects, after all the manifestation of his nostalgia is

[84] https://www.80sthen80snow.com/about-jp

first and foremost a collection of memorabilia. So, at the very least it seems plausible that his nostalgia can be both a sentiment and a character trait. From the point of view of Deonna and Teroni one could argue that there are multiple types of nostalgia (e.g. a nostalgia akin to a character trait and a nostalgia more akin to a sentiment, but also nostalgia as episodic and nostalgia asdispositional). The fact that Deonna and Teroni's theory strives for precision, while at the same time allowing for nostalgia to be classified in more than one way is problematic. This does not mean that we have to throw away their taxonomy altogether. However, it seems more apt to describe affective phenomena (or nostalgia at the very least) statically, but not dynamically.

As we have seen, J.P.'s nostalgia evolves through time: it started as a private coping mechanism against grief and, passing even through regret, has evolved into a highly social affective phenomenon that represents for J.P: both a source of pride and comfort. Moreover, from the point of view of Deonna and Teroni's theory one could argue, as said above, that there are more types of nostalgia. Thus, Deonna and Teroni's theory has proved to capture various aspects of nostalgia. However, we should take in consideration Goldie's theory to explain how the same disposition could generate the occurrence of episodes that are very different from each other, such as regretful nostalgia and proud nostalgia. Goldie's approach works better, as it enables to see the big picture. If we intend to analyze how isolated episodes occur, Deonna and Teroni's theory makes more sense. Their theory is quite static, on the other hand, Goldie's theory allows a more dynamic explation, which works very well in explaining long-lasting affective phenomena, as it is able to hold together in a complex narrative emotional episodes, dispositions, actions, thoughts, and bodily feelings.

Beyond Goldie, other authors can offer us important insight on how to better frame the problem I am discussing. For instance, the case of J.P.'s nostalgia is in a way reminiscent of what Ben Ze'ev (2001) calls enduring emotions. According to him, this kind of emotions may persist for a long time and generally involve a process of development over which the emoter shapes their attitude and behavior. Love is a typical example of an enduring emotion. Think how the love for a partner changes over the years and how the attitude and behavior we have toward a lover change consequently. Similarly, J.P.'s nostalgia evolves over a long period of time shaping the way he relates with himself, his collections and other people. Moreover, enduring emotions have both a dispositional and an actual nature. Affective phenomena such as love, deep grief or a nostalgia similar to J.P.'s are neither pure potentiality nor are they mere

collections of emotional episodes. Rather, they shape our affectivity by offering an affective framework that colors many aspects of our affective life and that sometimes are actualized in specific episodes. Stephan (2017) notices how some enduring emotions can stay with us even for an entire lifetime. This usually happens when we are not fully capable to regulate an emotion. For example, the loss of a loved one can generate a grief we can never fully regulate. Such a grief is not simply remembered, but rather manifests itself over and over through the years (2017).[85]

We can now go back to the questions with which started this section, and offer some answers, at least provisional ones. As we have seen, there can indeed be a nostalgia that goes beyond a single episode and that can even last a lifetime. Classifying exactly such a type of nostalgia (or nostalgia in general) is no easy matter. If we try applying Deonna and Teroni's taxonomy to nostalgia in general, we can see that many items of such taxonomy could be used to classify nostalgia. Moreover, one could argue that Goldie's notion of "emotion" can capture some aspects of nostalgia. Indeed, even though I agree with Goldie in many respects, I prefer using the expression "affective phenomenon" rather than "emotion" to refer to nostalgia.[86] This is mainly due to the fact that "emotion" has a more or less established meaning in the contemporary debate.[87] Indeed, throughout this dissertation it should become evident that nostalgia defies classification. The third question was on how we can explain the shift from disposition to episode, and more in general on how we can explain the occurrence of a specific affective phenomenon, in our case nostalgia. Here rather than following Deonna and Teroni, we could say that nostalgia can be described as a long-lasting emotion or enduring emotion[88], that sometimes manifests itself through occurrent or even frequent episodes. Thus far I have analyzed all the phenomena internal to the subject (e.g., dispositions and previous episodes that can facilitate the occurrence of nostalgia). In the following section of this chapter I will analyze

[85] The model of enduring emotions of course is not the only one. If we keep following the similitude with love, then we could argue that J.P.'s nostalgia could also be described as what Scherer (2005) calls attitudes. According to him attitudes are enduring affective believes and predispositions towards specific objects or people. Attitudes have a cognitive component, an affective component and a motivational or behavioural component. Love is an example of an attitude because rather than being a brief episode or a mere collection of episodes it implies long-term affective disposition.

[86] We should however keep in mind that nostalgia has usually a clearly intentional structure (as it represents a specific past), that is more typical of an emotion than a mood (see Stephan 2017).

[87] Moreover "affective phenomenon" can also refer to existential feelings, which I will discuss later.

[88] Or even a disposition that makes us easily feel occurrent nostalgia when we encounter the right triggers.

how external elements can trigger one's nostalgia, while in chapters 4 and 5 I analyze how the subject can actively interact with the environment to cause and regulate their own nostalgia.

2.1.6 Triggers

We have not seen yet how the past can actually be brought back to consciousness, especially in the case in which one is not already feeling an emotion, whose objects are simply intended in a new way. It is important to highlight that in this chapter the role of the environment is reduced to a mere trigger. This choice has two motivations. First, **t**his is because this is the way in which it is understood by the greater part of the contemporary debate on nostalgia, therefore by adopting this point of view it is easier to interact with contemporary authors. Second, even though interpreting the environment as mere collections of triggers is restrictive, such analysis is propaedeutic to more complex accounts. Therefore, the reader should keep in mind that this is only part of the picture and that the active interaction with the environment will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5. Thus far we have seen that already being in specific affective states can make it more likely for us to feel nostalgia. A popular idea is that nostalgia can be triggered by elements in the environment. The most famous and discussed example is that of involuntary Proustian memory. Now, this example is often misinterpreted as I will discuss in the next section.

2.1.7 Involuntary Proustian Memory

Proust is considered by many scholars who study nostalgia to be the champion of nostalgic recollection. For instance, Kaplan (1987) notices that Proust is improperly defined in psychopathology literature as the grand master of nostalgia. In Philosophy, amongst others, Hart (1973), Kaushik (2008) and Howard (2012) found part of their analysis of nostalgia on their reading of Proust's *In search of Lost Time*. Proust scholars however usually do not see Proust as a nostalgic author (see Stewart 1999, Lenon 2007). When scholars discuss the fact that Proust could be a nostalgic author, for the most part, they refer to the madeleine.

I will dedicate the rest of this section to discussing the famous episode of the madeleine and its relevance to a philosophy of nostalgia. Before doing that, a short introduction is due. *In Search of Lost Time* is a monumental novel divided into seven books published between 1913

and 1927. The novel is a fictional autobiography of Marcel[89], a man whose life closely resembles that of Marcel Proust himself. The whole book narrates the span of 50 years. For the purposes of my research I'll mainly focus on the first and last books of the saga, *Swann's Way* and *Time Regained* respectively. The episode of the madeleine is located at the end of a 40something page long overture. In this overture we find Marcel lying in bed in a space between sleep and wakefulness, revisiting various previous selves he has been throughout his life. Finally, he focuses on the memory of himself as a young boy in the town of Combray. At this point the narrator starts describing the various elements of his childhood in that small French town: the book her mother would read him, him waiting for her good night kiss, his neighbour Swann, who would unknowingly keep Marcel's mother from staying longer with the young boy at night. In these first 40something pages, Marcel is able to recall much of his childhood, but not all he would like to:

> "And so it was that, for a long time afterwards, when I lay awake at night and revived old memories of Combray, I saw no more of it than this sort of luminous panel, sharply defined against a vague and shadowy background, like the panels which the glow of a Bengal light or a searchlight beam will cut out and illuminate in a building the other parts of which remain plunged in darkness: broad enough at its base, the little parlour, the dining-room, the opening of the dark path from which M. Swann, the unwitting author of my sufferings, would emerge, the hall through which I would journey to the first step of that staircase, so painful to climb, which constituted, all by itself, the slender cone of this irregular pyramid; and, at the summit, my bedroom, with the little passage through whose glazed door Mamma would enter; in a word, seen always at the same evening hour, isolated from all its possible surroundings, detached and solitary against the dark background, the bare minimum of scenery necessary (like the decor one sees prescribed on the title-page of an old play, for its performance in the provinces) to the drama of my undressing; as though all Combray had consisted of but two floors joined by a slender staircase, and as though there had been no time there but seven o'clock at night. I must own that I could have assured any questioner that Combray did include other scenes and did exist at other hours than these. But since the facts which I should

[89] For simplicity I will call the main protagonist and first person narrator Marcel. Even though we can find sparse allusions that the narrator and main character are the same person that goes by the name Marcel (which ought not be conflated with the author) this matter and even the name of the main character are never addressed directly in the novel (Alexander 2009)

then have recalled would have been prompted only by voluntary memory, the memory of the intellect, and since the pictures which that kind of memory shows us preserve nothing of the past itself, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray. To me it was in reality all dead."
Permanently dead? Very possibly. (Proust 1981, I 46-47)

At this point the memory of Combray is reduced to just some details and pieces of the past. Indeed, Marcel fears that the rest of that past might be lost forever. Even though Marcel is not sure if part of that past is lost forever, he is certain of why he cannot recall the past as a whole and that is because here Marcel is using voluntary memory, which is the voluntary act of recollecting the past. As Proust shows clearly in the passage above, there are parts of the past that sometimes are not available to us despite our best effort. Marcel describes voluntary memory as the memory of intellect, a memory that is not really capable of preserving and therefore recollecting the past itself. The narrator comes back to voluntary memory much later, in *Time regained,* that is to say at the end of the saga:

"The images presented to us by the voluntary memory can, it is true, be prolonged at will, for the voluntary memory requires no more exertion on our part than turning over the pages of a picture-book. On the day, for instance, long ago, when I was to visit the Princesse de Guermantes for the first time, I had from the sun-drenched courtyard of our house in Paris idly regarded, according to my whim, now the Place de l'Eglise at Combray, now the beach at Balbec, as if I had been choosing illustrations for that particular day from an album of water-colours depicting the various places where I had been; and with the egotistical pleasure of a collector, I had said to myself as I catalogued these illustrations stored in my memory: "At least I have seen some lovely things in my life." And of course my memory had affirmed that each one of these sensations was quite unlike the others, though in fact all it was doing was to make varied patterns out of elements that were homogeneous." (Proust 1981, III 906)

Here the narrator goes over some advantages of voluntary memory. This kind of memory resembles a picture book that collects some of our previous experiences and that we can pick up and flip through at will. Not only that, but we can also indulge in the contemplation of the content of this book for as long as we want. Unfortunately, Proust does not discuss much voluntary memory throughout the novel, therefore we are naturally left with many questions.

One of the most important problems is arguably that this kind of memory has a fundamental defect, that is it does not save the past as a whole, but rather it makes a selection and such a selection runs the risk of being arbitrary (Fraisse 2019, 571), which is particularly relevant, since voluntary memory (and memory in general) plays an important role in the formation of the subject, both from a transcendental and an existential point of view. Fully analyzing this aspect of Proust goes well beyond the scope of this dissertation (see also Fraisse 2019, Vernière 1971). For what concerns us here, it is evident that there is something that escapes voluntary memory, that it cannot save and that therefore cannot be recalled at will, so much so that Marcel himself wonders if such a past is lost forever. As chance would have it, Marcel soon discovers that the past is not lost after all:

> "It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. And it depends on chance whether or not we come upon this object before we ourselves must die." (Proust 1981, I 47-48)

One day, completely by chance his mother offers him some tea and some "petites madeleines" which are little cakes in the shape of a shell. We have finally arrived at the famous episode of the madeleine, which I will transcribe in its most important passages:

> "And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory-this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was me. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I sensed that it was connected with the taste of the tea and the cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours, could not, indeed, be of the same nature. Whence did it come? What did it mean? How could I seize and apprehend it?

I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, then a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the potion is losing its magic. It is plain that the truth I am seeking lies not in the cup but in myself. […]

And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before mass), when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my aunt Leonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in the meantime, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks' windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent […].

And as soon as I had recognized the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated segment which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I used to be sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And as in the game wherein the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch and twist and take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, solid and recognizable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea." (Proust 1981, I 48-51)

Now the question is whether Proust is describing nostalgia. Many scholars who study nostalgia believe that he is. First, I will sketch some of Hart's (1973) most problematic arguments, as he is the most prominent philosopher who claims that the madeleine episode is ultimately about nostalgia. I will then show that rather than nostalgia, Proust is describing a different phenomenon, which is all the same relevant to the analysis of nostalgia.

I will focus on Hart's (1973) position, for a few reasons. First Hart makes a common mistake, which is conflating nostalgia and involuntary Proustian memory[90], second, Hart's paper is smartly written, so much so that it has become an influential piece of philosophy, and by critiquing it we can better understand both involuntary memory and nostalgia. Hart argues that Proust has given expression to the basic elements of the experience of nostalgia, indeed here rather than reconstructing the whole arguments made by Hart in his paper, I will focus on the use he does of Proust. Hart admits that he conflates involuntary memory and nostalgia, this means that sometimes he attributes to nostalgia characteristics that are proper of involuntary memory (and vice versa) and that sometimes he finds characteristics that are common to both phenomena. Let us consider the following passage:

> "Proust called attention to the distinction between "intellectual memory" and "involuntary memory" -- which we are calling nostalgia. The former is the normal sense of memory because the past is irretrievably past; it is, says Marcel, dead; there is here no genuine preservation of the past itself in a living way. This intellectual memory is at our disposal and in this sense voluntary. It is to be contrasted sharply with the involuntary experience which gives the past back in a lively actual way. For Proust's Marcel the involuntary memory is always in play at the magic instigation of some physical thing which is able to explode into the past world, so that in some way it is present to us as other than the "dead" past." (Hart 1973, 401-402)

An important point that Hart makes through Proust is that nostalgia cannot be recalled at will (unlike the past of voluntary memory), and is rather triggered physically. As already said for the purposes of this chapter we can take this point as valid, even though as we will see in chapter 4, one can shape her own environment to structure and evoke her nostalgia. A second point he makes is that nostalgia and involuntary memory (which for Hart are the same thing) "[give] the past in lively actual way" (Hart 1973, 401). While it is definitely true that in the Proustian passage above the past is presented in a lively and actual way, it is not easy to say whether the past is presented in the same way in nostalgia. Even though we can argue that involuntary memory and nostalgia are different phenomena, they share the fact that they present the past in a way that goes beyond voluntary recollection.

[90] Similar mistakes can also be seen in Howard (2012), Kaushik (2008) and more in general in authors that talk of Proust as if he is describing nostalgia in the episode of the madeleine.

Later on in his article Hart develops an interesting point about nostalgia/involuntary memory by relying on Proust:

> "In The Past Recaptured, Marcel tries to recall what the few moments of nostalgia in his life had in common. ...
> that I experienced them at the present moment and at the same time in the context of a distant moment, so that the past was made to encroach upon the present and I was made to doubt whether I was in the one or the other.[91]
> Proust describes here the most unique characteristic of nostalgia's temporality." (Hart 1973, 403)

Once again, at least prima facie, Hart's point rings true. He affirms that "the nostalgic world does not present a heterogenous context to the actual present, but rather 'in some way' includes it" (Hart 1973, 403). Now this point can be interpreted in at least two ways. The first, which is only implicit in Hart, is explicated in Trigg (2012), who notices the way in which the past is evoked nostalgically implies an overlap between the past and the present. The present cannot be fully taken out of the picture, the present becomes the canvas (or the condition of possibility) on which the past is painted. At the same time, the present is the horizon against which the past is painted as simpler, better and more desirable than the present itself[92]. I can never experience and at the same time exclude the present. Indeed, the present[93] always constitutes my horizon, the condition of possibility of all experiences, including those about the future (e.g. hopes, projects, fears, predictions) and about the past (e.g. memories, nostalgia, regret, acceptance, affirmation). A second way to interpret the idea that the nostalgic world

[91] Here Hart is citing Marcel Proust, The Past Recaptured, Andreas Mayor, trans. (New York : Vintage Books, 1970).

[92] This is not always necessarily the case, but there needs to be a difference and the past has to have something good that the present does not have.

[93] This temporal horizon is not constituted by isolated moments of present, rather it is always co-constituted by retentions of the past and protentions into the future (Hart 1973, 399).

includes the past is discussed more explicitly by Hart. He argues that the noema[94] of nostalgia/involuntary memory is not the product of "an actual recollection of the past as it was experienced" and is rather "an imaginative re-construction of the past" (Hart 1973, 402). Since this constitution is the product of imagination, Hart argues, it can also include the present and the future (in terms of hopes and wishes). As we will see later in the chapter this is definitely true for nostalgia, however the experience of Proust is quite different. It is evident that for Proust the present is somehow included in the experience of involuntary memory, however he does not offer any clear sign that imagination or the future play any major role in the experience.

2.1.8 The Meaning of Proustian Involuntary Memory

The question we should ask now is whether conflating involuntary Proustian memory and nostalgia is a fruitful position. I argue that it is not. In what follows I will show the meaning of Proustian involuntary memory. By analyzing the original text and by relying on some of his commentators (especially Fraisse 2019, Deleuze 2000, Lennon 2007, Stewart 1999, Hoy 2009) I will show that Proust is not really interested in describing nostalgia, but rather a different phenomenon, that of involuntary memory. To be more precise we can identify two different types of involuntary memory. The first is the act of involuntary recalling the past through a material trigger in the environment, this is not a particularly interesting phenomenon from a literary point of view and, as matter of fact, Proust does not devote much attention to it. The second, which is involuntary Proustian memory proper, goes well beyond the mere being reminded of something of the past, and is rather the pleasurable experience of briefly nihilating the time between the present and a remote past, thus giving the subject the sensation of having defeated time itself and therefore our mortality.

The true meaning of the episode of the madeleine is only revealed in book 7, *Time regained*, a few thousand pages after the first mention of the phenomenon. Here we find Marcel invited by the Guermantes, a noble family that plays a central role in the novel, in their house

[94] "The term "noema" refers to the objective correlates of intentionalities; it refers to whatever is intended by the intentions of our natural attitude: a material object, a picture, a word, a mathematical entity, another person." (Sokolowski 2000, 59)

for a party. There Marcel meets all the central characters of the novel who are still alive and finds them profoundly changed. Not only that, he also comes to understand that in a way they take with themselves the time of their entire life. It is at this point that Marcel has finally the realization that he should write a novel about his own life (and thus about all the people he met) in order to "regain time", that is to say to counteract through art the action of dissolution operated by time itself. The novel Marcel is going to write is of course *In Search of Lost Time* itself. Before this epiphany, in book 7 Proust discovers that time can also be regained through involuntary memory. Unlike art, which is forever, involuntary memory only briefly defeats the passing of time, at the same time, however, the experience of involuntary memory is what has made possible to write *La Recherche* in the first place, as it is through this experience that the past is disclosed to us in a way that goes beyond voluntary memory.

As said, Marcel right before the Party finally realizes the significance of the episode of the madeleine. At this point, he has a few experiences in rapid succession that resemble the episode of the madeleine: he steps on an uneven paving stone, he hears the sound of a spoon on a plate, he finds a copy of the book his mother used to read him as a child[95]. Through this sequence, Marcel starts reflecting on the meaning of the madeleine episode. What follows are the major passages of his realization

> "The truth surely was that the being within me which had enjoyed these impressions had enjoyed them because they had in them something that was common to a day long past and to the present, because in some way they were extra-temporal, and this being made its appearance only when, through one of these identifications of the present with the past, it was likely to find itself in the one and only medium in which it could exist and enjoy the essence of things, that is to say: outside time. This explained why it was that my anxiety on the subject of my death had ceased at the moment when I had unconsciously recognized the taste of the little madeleine, since the being which at that moment I had been was an extra-temporal being and therefore un-alarmed by the vicissitudes of the future." (Proust 1981, III 904)

Marcel realizes that in the episode of the Madeleine there is a coincidence between a sensation in the past and one in the present. As we saw earlier, Hart (1973) uses this point to

[95] I will go back to some of these in chapters 3 and 4.

argue that involuntary memory and nostalgia, which to him are one and the same phenomenon are characterized by this copresence of past and present. His mistake is of course believing that all phenomena that share this characteristic are of the same kind. His move is not justified, as it s possible to identify phenomena that share major features whilst still being distinct, as I am showing is the case with nostalgia and involuntary memory.

Marcel also introduces the idea that this correspondence between past and present is particularly pleasurable as it acts as an elision between the moment of the present sensation and that of the past one, thus in a way destroying time itself and the anxiety and mortality that it implies. Marcel makes his point even more clear in the following passage

> "[N]ow that three times in succession there had been reborn within me a veritable moment of the past, my appetite for life was immense. A moment of the past, did I say? Was it not perhaps very much more: something that, common both to the past and to the present, is much more essential than either of them? So often, in the course of my life, reality had disappointed me because at the instant when my senses perceived it my imagination, which was the only organ that I possessed for the enjoyment of beauty, could not apply itself to it, in virtue of that ineluctable law which ordains that we can only imagine what is absent. And now, suddenly, the effect of this harsh law had been neutralized, temporarily annulled, by a marvellous expedient of nature which had caused a sensation-the noise made both by the spoon and by the hammer, for instance-to be mirrored at one and the same time in the past, so that my imagination was permitted to savour it, and in the present, where the actual shock to my senses of the noise, the touch of the linen napkin, or whatever it might be, had added to the dreams of the imagination the concept of "existence" which they usually lack, and through this subterfuge had made it possible for my being to secure, to isolate, to immobilize-for a moment brief as a flash of lightning-what normally it never apprehends: a fragment of time in the pure state." (Proust 1981, III 905)

Again Marcel makes it evident that in the episode of the madeleine he does not simply experience the past, but also a present sensation. This in turn brings about another important

realization. Marcel argues that to him pleasure only comes through the use of imagination[96]. This means that the real world constitutes a succession of letdowns to him, as it is impossible to imagine one thing while at the same time also experiencing it. However, in the episode of the madeleine we find an exception to this law, and in finding this rarity we also feel pleasure. More than that here Proust is revealing another fundamental point: there cannot be involuntary memory without the intervention of imagination. Some, including Hoy (2009), Hart (1973) and Deleuze (2000) use this point to argue that the past of the Madeleine is a past that one has not truly experienced. Now determining whether Proust actually wanted to make this point is beyond the scope of my enquiry. However, one could argue that here the function of imagination is not necessarily only that of changing the memory, but also the act of making present something that is absent from one's consciousness. As Deleuze (2000) notices flavor is the quality that is common to both the present and the past sensation. Here, I argue the function of imagination is that of bringing back to consciousness a sensation that is equivalent to that in the present. In order to recognize the past sensation as equal to the present one, however, imagination must also operate a comparison between the two, and it is through this comparison that the past sensation emerges as radically different from the present one, despite what seemed *prima facie.*

The entire matter of the madeleine is founded upon a paradox. The experience we live in the present is the same as it was in the past, yet at the same time it is a deeply different experience. The pleasure of involuntary Proustian memory derives from having beaten time itself, this pleasure is in the present experience, but of course, it was absent in the original past experience (or experiences if we are talking about habitual memory) that we think we are faithfully relieving in the present. This point is also made by Deleuze (2000, 59)

> "Involuntary memory seems to be based first of all upon the resemblance between two sensations, between two moments. But, more profoundly, the resemblance refers us to a strict *identity* of a quality common to the two sensations or of a sensation common to the two moments, the present and the past. Thus the flavor: it seems that it contains a volume of duration that extends it through two moments at once. But, in its turn, the sensation, the identical quality, implies a relation with something *different.*"

[96] Determining whether Proust is making a philosophical point valid for all mankind, or simply exposing a quirk of Marcel's personality is beyond the scope of my enquiry.

This difference reveals one further function operated by imagination. The past sensation brings something more than a mere sensation, it also carries a piece of pure past (in this case Combray). As Deleuze continues:

> *"*The flavor of the madeleine has, in its volume, imprisoned and enveloped Combray […]. At the same time that the resemblance between the two moments is transcended in the direction of a more profound identity, the contiguity that belonged to the past moment is transcended in the direction of a more profound difference. Combray rises up again in the present sensation in which its difference from the past sensation is internalized. The present sensation is therefore no longer separable from this relation with the different object. *The essential thing in involuntary memory is not resemblance, nor even identity, which are merely conditions, but the internalized difference, which becomes immanent.* […] Flavor, the quality common to the two sensations, the sensation common to the two moments, is here only to recall something else: Combray. But upon this invocation, Combray rises up in a form that is absolutely new." (Deleuze 2000, 59-60)

As Deleuze hints, imagination does not modify the memory of the perception of taste, rather in recognizing both an identity and a difference between the two sensations, imagination is moved to bring back the context of the past sensation. In bringing back the context (in this case Combray) imagination brings to consciousness a context that was never present. This should not be seen as a process of falsification. Instead, imagination operates a synthesis that highlights a truth about that context that was not available to experience at that original time.

> "Combray does not rise up as it was once present; Combray rises up as past, but this past is no longer relative to the present that it has been, it is no longer relative to the present in relation to which it is now past. This is no longer the Combray of perception nor of voluntary memory. Combray appears as it could not be experienced: not in reality, but in its truth; not in its external and contingent relations, but in its internalized difference, in its essence. Combray rises up in a pure past, coexisting with the two presents, but out of their reach, out of reach of the present voluntary memory and of the past conscious perception. "A morsel of time in the pure state" (III, 872) is not a simple resemblance between the present and the past, between a present that is immediate and

> a past that has been present, not even an identity in the two moments, but beyond, *the very being of the past in itself,* deeper than any past that has been, than any present that was. "A morsel of time, in the pure state," that is, the localized essence of time." (Deleuze 2000, 60-61)

As Deleuze (2000, 57) notices, voluntary memory "does not apprehend the past directly" rather it recomposes the past with different presents, it reduces the past to snapshots of "presents that have been", but this kind of memory is relative to both the present that has been and the present in which we recall. This relationship cannot recapture the "past's being *as past* (Deleuze 2000, 57). Involuntary memory on the other hand presents one instance of pure past. The experience of the madeleine is ultimately an epiphany on the meaning of time itself, that is a synonym of mortality, which brings about anxiety, all the same it is also true that in its very structure (both ontological and in the structure of the experience itself) we find the weapon to neutralize the annihilating function of time. Moments in time are not unique, but every so often they repeat themselves and through this repetition we can build a bridge between two moments in time, this way the annihilating function of time that either destroys or condemns to forgetfulness is itself annihilated. This happens through the function of involuntary memory of making the past re-emerge from forgetfulness.

Now that we better understand Proustian involuntary memory, we can see why it should not be conflated with nostalgia. First of all, as said, involuntary memory refers to two different kinds of phenomena. The first kind, which Proust discusses only briefly, is an act of reminding, rather than involuntary memory proper. For instance, the ring of a bell reminds Marcel of Swann. This reminding can also refer to unpleasant memory, in this instance for example being reminded of Swann also meant being reminded that Marcel's mum could not stay with him in bed, as she had to welcome the guest that had just arrived. Involuntary Proustian memory is a different phenomenon and is divided in two different moments. That first is that of identity between the past and present sensation, this moment is pleasurable as it signifies the momentary victory over the passing of time. The second moment is that of difference, which is what allows for the context of the past to emerge. This second moment is the motor of the entirety of *La recherche.* Nostalgia can be triggered by any of these three different phenomena, however it has an independent nature. If we consider involuntary memory proper and nostalgia we can see that the former is a moment of pure bliss, while nostalgia is bittersweet. Involuntary memory lasts only for a moment, while as we saw with J.P. nostalgia can last for years. The madeleine

is a trigger that only works if you have not encountered it in a long time, while the same nostalgia can occur repeatedly over the course of a few days. In the madeleine episode time is regained (for a short while, not in the same way it can be regained in writing). In nostalgia, on the other hand, the absence is essential. It is an essential component of nostalgia the awareness that ultimately time cannot be regained ever.

2.2 Part 2: How the Past Is Made Present

2.2.1 Memory and Imagination

In the first half of this chapter, we saw that for at least some types of nostalgia, most notably autobiographical nostalgia, involuntary memory plays a fundamental role. This however leaves us at least with three problems. The first is that we do not have to account only for involuntary memory, but also for memory in general; what is its relation with nostalgia? The second is determining whether memory is sufficient in nostalgia, or whether other faculties, most notably imagination, also play a fundamental role. The third is determining whether we can have nostalgia without memory. I will tackle the latter question in chapter 3, and I will spend the rest of this chapter to answer the former. A good starting point for understanding how autobiographical nostalgia relates to both memory and imagination comes from Hutcheon:

> [The nostalgic past] is rarely the past as actually experienced, of course; it is the past as imagined, as idealized through memory and desire […] It is "memorialized" as past, crystallized into precious moments selected by memory, but also by forgetting, and by desire's distortions and reorganizations. Simultaneously distancing and proximating, nostalgia exiles us from the present as it brings the imagined past near. The simple, pure, ordered, easy, beautiful, or harmonious past is constructed [and then experienced emotionally]. (Hutcheon 2000, 195)

Here, Hutcheon properly pinpoints the source of nostalgia as a lost past, and she also emphasizes the relationship between nostalgia and memory. Despite the similarities between these two phenomena, we should not conflate them (Casey 1987, 368). Memory, like nostalgia, is a selection since we do not remember everything that happened; neither nostalgia nor memory are snapshots of the past. Indeed, memory involves a renarration of the past, and this reparation is frequently influenced by previous and current emotions, which "color" and

"shape" it (De Sousa 2017). As I have argued with Leshchinskii in forthcoming paper, imagination plays a central role in both memory and nostalgia, however its function in these two phenomena differs. While imagination can bring all sorts of alterations to a non-nostalgic remembrance (confusing dates, misplacing persons, fabricating facts, and so on), nostalgic imagination is expressly oriented at a renarration of the past as an ideal time. On the one hand, a remembrance of our youth might be unconsciously altered by imagination in a variety of ways, leading to the generation of false memories that are not always happy. Your childhood, on the other hand, as experienced through the lens of nostalgia, is necessarily supplemented by imagination in certain very specific ways: nostalgia produces an ideal past by selecting, revaluating, and weaving together memories. As a result, nostalgic people always have a strong desire for the things they're recalling, which is not the case with non-nostalgic memory. Furthermore, a nostalgic individual believes that what is in the past has a specific meaning to her present (where it is missing), particularly to her present identity. Finally, one tends to compare the past to the present when nostalgic, generally favouring the former as preferable. However, nostalgia does not always imply that the present is inferior to the past; the present may simply feel devoid of something significant to a nostalgic individual, which he locates in the past.

A theory of memory that does not include imagination is not enough for explaining nostalgia for two reasons: first, any analysis of memory that does not include imagination is always incomplete as recollections always require some intervention of the imagination. Second, as we will see, in nostalgia imagination operates in a way that goes beyond its operation in recollections. Let us explore in more detail the point that memory requires to some degree the use of imagination. This point has also been explored by Goldie (2012), a major representative of the so called “narrative theory of memory” (Leshchinskii & Massantini). According to Goldie there is not any “pure” remembering (especially when we are referring to autobiographical memory), rather the act of recalling is always modulated by imagination. Goldie (2012) makes his point by drawing the distinction between “field memory” and “observer memory”. In the former we remember the past from our point of view, as if we were re-living that scene ourselves, in the latter we observe the past from an external point of view, as if we were the spectator of those events, rather than having actually lived them. In this kind of memory, we play three distinct roles at the same time: the observer, the protagonist and the narrator (Leshchinskii & Massantini). It is interesting to notice that observer memory is not less genuine than field memory, however it is evident that imagination, which is also involved

in field memory, plays a greater role in observer memory. In this kind of memory, imagination helps us to objectivize ourselves in remembering. In both kinds of memory the present perspective of the subject can influence the way in which we recollect the past: "Our memories are infused with what we now know, and with how we now feel about what happened…" (Goldie 2012, 54). In other words, memory is not a static or objective representation of the past, rather it is a dynamic renarration which is always open to further elaborations, especially in light of present affective states, knowledge, and future projects "For example, one can remember one's yesterday's failure at an exam through the emotionally-colored lens of shame or disappointment. A perspective, *any* and not just emotional, from which a subject is now recalling some episode, inevitably modifies the remembrance itself" (Leshchinskii & Massantini).

2.2.2 Identity and Desire[97]

A critical problem we have to discuss is determining what guides the transformation of the nostalgic past. It is an established point in the debate of nostalgia that this affective phenomenon has to do with one's identity (Davis 1977; 1979; Boym 2001; Wilson J. 2005). *Prima facie* this seems evident with memory; it should contribute to the formation of one's identity, as it supposedly tells us who we were, or at least who we believe we were. On the other hand, the relation between nostalgia and identity is more complex and by understanding this relation we can also better understand why memory and nostalgia should not be conflated. Nostalgia, unlike memory, reveals what aspects of the past we would like to bring back, if given the opportunity, or at the very least, what aspects we would like to experience again. In its most extreme instances, nostalgia reveals the future we want, a future that conforms to our idealized past. Therefore, "this emotion does not simply reveal who we believe we were, but, more importantly, that we believe something about that past to be so good and positive that we want our present and future identity to maintain strong continuity with it" (Massantini 2020).[98] In other words, we mainly feel nostalgia by focusing on the moments of the past that we now believe in having positively determined our present identity and that should also shape our

[97] I have discussed this part of my research in Massantini (2020).

[98]For the relation between identity and nostalgia in psychology and sociology, see Davis (1977; 1979), Sedikides et al. (2004), Wilson J. (2005). The underlying concept shared by all of these authors is the so-called "discontinuity hypothesis," which was initially postulated by Davis (1977; 1979). According to this theory, nostalgia at its very core is a coping mechanism that constructs and supports our sense of identity in rebuttal to existential threats.

future identity. I want to stress the fact that what determines the selection of the moments that shape our nostalgia is not the relevance they had in the past, but the relevance we attribute to them in the present, in light of the identity we think we have now or that we desire to have in the future. This process of revaluation and renarration of the past is an essential component of nostalgia. To better illustrate this point, I offer four examples, in which I consider how past events (either positive or negative) are seen in the present.

(1) The fact that we would feel nostalgia by concentrating on occasions that defined our past identity and that still have a positive influence on our present identity is quite straightforward. Let's take the example of a retired athlete who longs for his glory days. Clearly, without a discrepancy between his present and past circumstances, nostalgia would be impossible, since we can only long for something that we think not to have. However, at the same time, he also recognizes a strong continuity in his identity through time. The accomplishments of his boyhood still have a significant impact on who he is today. Even though he is no longer able to compete, he still considers himself to be an athlete, albeit a retired one, and the reminiscence of his past triumphs serves to affirm this identity.[99] (2) However, not all things that were once pleasant and significant to one's identity are relevant to our nostalgia. For instance, things that were meaningful to us as kids, like books or movies, may now make us entirely indifferent or even make us feel ashamed. We typically are not nostalgic for a past that we disown, a past that is too far away from the identity we now have (or desire). (3) Moreover, some events that have characterized our childhood and, therefore, our identity, nonetheless are not part of our nostalgic renarration as they were not pleasant events at the time, and we still perceive them as unhappy. For instance, I have very clear memories of the Twin Towers attack on September 11, 2001. Even though I was still a little child, the event had a significant impact on how I would perceive the world and helped shape who I would become. I would never, however, look back fondly on that day. This makes sense because nostalgia can only be used to describe things that we now perceive to have been positive and pleasurable. (4) Finally, one can be nostalgic for a time that was not necessarily seen as partly or entirely positive then but is seen as positive today. Continuing with the 9/11 example, I would admit that, on a deeper level, I occasionally yearn for the world's perceived safety in the years prior to 9/11. I miss how the world used to be, and in a way, I wish I could

[99] If we suppose nostalgia to be a spectrum that goes from bitter to sweet, this case would fall closer to the sweeter end.

return to that time period. However, if I am nostalgic, it's because I idealize a time that was probably just as problematic as the present. In this situation, it is evident how nostalgia performs a re-evaluation of the past, which can turn into an idealization and even suggest a rejection of the present, or at least of some aspects of it, as well as an imagining of the future (Hutcheon 2000, 195). (since I want the future to conform to my ideal image of that past). In general, nostalgia reveals not simply who we thought we were but, more precisely, who we think we are and who we want to be. It should be clear by now that the nostalgia we experience not only reveals the identity we believe we have (or wish we had), but also contributes to its development through renarrational processes. Since the object of nostalgia is an idealized past that was fundamental in the formation of our identities (present or desired), it is clear why childhood is a typical object of nostalgia.[100] Not only is childhood the decisive stage in the creation of our identities; it is also the time when everything seems possible. The sense of endless possibilities and near omnipotence that we associate with childhood and adolescence make them even more of an ideal object for nostalgia (see also Peters 1985). I conclude this section by explicitly stating that in nostalgia we do not yearn for particular handpicked moments that acquire a new meaning in the present. Instead, by combining those chosen and reevaluated moments, we idealize and retell the past as a whole (see also Casey 1987, 368). This point can be better understood if we think that this narration is not done once and for all. Rather, it is a continuous process, constantly open to new interpretations (see Davis 1977, Wilson J. 2005). This means that whenever we feel nostalgia, we could voluntarily or involuntarily focus on different reimagined aspects or moments, thus forming a new renarration. However, this process determines only the way we connect to and characterize the object of longing, which essentially is always the same—that is to say, a past that has been somehow renarrated and idealized to some degree.

2.2.3 Selection

From the previous section dedicated to identity we have understood that the nostalgic past is formed through the three processes of selection of moments of the past, their reevaluation and renarration. Let us now analyze each of these three processes. Before starting, we should keep in mind that even though I analyze these processes in relation to nostalgia, they

[100] Here I am referring to the 'material' or 'particular' objects of nostalgia. Other instances include the idealised good old days, youth, a mythical prehistorical past. I will better explain this point in chapter 3.

also take place in all autobiographical affective phenomena such as regret, affirmation, grief, guilt, shame and so on. As said, the first of the three processes is selection; in analyzing it we should note that there cannot be any selection without forgetting. This problem has been addressed, among others, by Merleau-Ponty (2010), who argues that any form of recollection is only possible thanks to forgetfulness, which is able to preserve the past:

> "It is forgetfulness that preserves, not absolute forgetting, as if the past had never been lived, but forgetfulness that still counts in consciousness as a soldier counts in the company: the forgetfulness which is disclosed as forgetfulness and thereby even as secret memory. Cf. Freud: it is by pushing back into forgetfulness that we make the past inaccessible, but also immutable. Freud himself indicates that not all forgetting is repression. Thus, the gesture of pushing back is not solely repression with a moral character, it is a more general gesture." (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 197)

Merleau-Ponty clarifies that there are at least three types of forgetting: absolute forgetting, which is the condition in which some part of the past are as if we have never lived them, Freudian repression, which is not his concern here, and forgetfulness, which represents the currently inaccessible part of the past, that can reemerge to consciousness. Forgetfulness is the condition of possibility of many mental phenomena, including autobiographical nostalgia. Here Merleau-Ponty defines the past of forgetfulness as inaccessible and immutable. What does he mean with inaccessible and immutable? As said, here he is not referring to Freudian repression nor to some form of definite oblivion. Rather, he argues that there is a form of forgetting (i.e. forgetfulness) that preserves the past because it makes it inaccessible. As Al-Saji (2007) notices, Merleau-Ponty seems to go in the direction of Bergsonian pure memory (see Bergson 1991). Pure memory is not a psychological matter. As Deleuze notices, pure memory is virtual, inactive and unconscious (though not in the Freudian sense) (Deleuze 1991, Bergson 1991). Pure memory is not a psychological reservoir of images located in the brain, it is rather the ontological condition of possibility of any recollection and even of any present perception (Bergson 1991, Al-saji 2007). If this past is inaccessible per se, does it also mean that it is lost? As Deleuze (1991) notices, for Bergson pure memory and pure past cannot ever be experienced, unlike what Proust believed:

> "A comparison could also be made here between Bergson and Proust. Their conception of time is extremely different, but both acknowledge a kind of pure past. According to

> Proust this being in itself can be lived. But according to Bergson, pure recollection or pure past are not a domain of the lived, even in *paramnesia*; we only experience a recollection-image." (Deleuze 1991, 126 n16)[101]

Merleau-Ponty follows Proust in the idea that the pure past lives outside ourselves, that it lives in objects around us, and that the encounter with these objects can unveil a pure memory from forgetfulness.

> [Therefore] Proust: "And as habit weakens everything, what best reminds us of a person is precisely what we had forgotten (because it was of no importance, and we therefore left it in full possession of its strength). That is why the better part of our memories exists outside us, in a blatter of rain, in the smell of an unaired room or of the first crackling brushwood fire in a cold grate: whatever, in short, we happen upon what our mind . . . had rejected. […]". There is consciousness which possesses itself and its significations, since it can recuperate itself, and which fights greedily [199] (63) to maintain its coherence and its universality. But by doing that, consciousness creates another version of itself, an external pressure, and prepares one day to allow itself to be undone and redone through the repressed time of which it wants to know nothing or, rather, of which it claims to know everything. In reality, consciousness is not completely itself; the forgetfulness that it weaves thus places it in a secret relationship with the forgotten. Forgetfulness is not the opposite of preservation because it truly preserves. That being the case, the problem is reversed. It is not a matter of knowing how the apparently forgotten is preserved or how our power to survey goes beyond the evoked without being actualized. All evocation is in principle a drawing out, and the originary form of the consciousness of the past, which founds all, is not the series of temporal positions, but partial reliefs on a horizon which is accessible only gradually and in transition. (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 197)

Selection is the first step in the process of disclosure of the past from forgetfulness. What I call selection, as we saw in Merleau-Ponty's commentary of Proust, usually does not take place voluntarily. As I have argued above, involuntary memory should not be conflated

[101] I am not interested in discussing the metaphysical or ontological nature of the past the way Bergson would. Rather I am interested in is the fact that from a phenomenological point of view we can experience this absolute past.

with nostalgia. However, one could mantain, that the process of selection and involuntary memory share a similar structure, so much so that it is easy to see why involuntary memory might act as a trigger for nostalgia. This position would explain why it is easy to conflate the two phenomena, as the former precedes the latter, while at the same time accounting for the difference between the two phenomena. In the episode of the madeleine, which Merleau-Ponty discusses in the passage above, we have the experience of a piece of the past that is presented as a pure piece of memory that emerges from forgetfulness. In nostalgia we also have this feeling of discovering something precious from the past. However, as we saw earlier in this chapter, nostalgia and involuntary memory remain distinct phenomena. Before moving on let us stress that in nostalgia we do not necessarily select moments of the past that were pleasurable at the time. What makes them pleasurable is the following process, that of reevaluation. What is relevant here, is that in the process of selection we have a direct connection with the past.

2.2.4 Reevaluation

The process of selection alone is not enough to explain nostalgia; the pieces of the past that emerge from forgetfulness must acquire new meaning in order for them to be nostalgic. This is apparently in contradiction with the idea expressed by Merleau-Ponty, who takes inspiration from Bergson in saying that there is an immutable pure past. However Sartre might help us in solving this problem.

> “There is, of course, a "pure matter" of memory in the sense in which Bergson speaks of pure memory; but when it shows itself, it is always in and through a project which includes the appearance of this matter in its purity.” (Sartre 1956, 498)

Sartre accepts, at least apparently, the Bergsonian idea of pure memory. However, he highlights that when we talk of actual recollection of the past, things change. The question is not what has been, but how the past appears to us. This is true not only for the tricks that imagination can play on memory (e.g. false memories). Even when memories are veridical, which is rarer an instance than one is willing to admit, they can change in the meaning they have for us.

> “Now the meaning of the past is strictly dependent on my present project. This certainly does not mean that I can make the meaning of my previous acts vary in any way I

please; quite the contrary, it means that the fundamental project which I am decides absolutely the meaning which the past which I have to be can have for me and for others. I alone in fact can decide at each moment the bearing of the past. I do not decide it by debating it, by deliberating over it, and in each instance evaluating the importance of this or that prior event; but by projecting myself toward my ends, I preserve the past with me, and by action I decide its meaning. Who shall decide whether that mystic crisis in my fifteenth year "was" a pure accident of puberty or, on the contrary, the first sign of a future conversion? I myself, according to whether I shall decide-at twenty years of age, at thirty years-to be converted. The project of conversion by a single stroke confers on an adolescent crisis the value of a premonition which I had not taken seriously. Who shall decide whether the period which I spent in prison after a theft was fruitful or deplorable? I-according to whether I give up stealing or become hardened. Who can decide the educational value of a trip, the sincerity of a profession of love, the purity of a past intention, etc.? It is I, always I, according to the ends by which I illuminate these past events. Thus all my past is there pressing, urgent, imperious, but its meanings and the orders which it gives me I choose by the very project of my end" (Sartre 1956, 498)

Here Sartre is not talking explicitly of nostalgia, however it is easy to see how his analysis works particularly well with this kind of autobiographical affective phenomenon. It is the subject that gives meaning to the past through her actions. It is important to note that my freedom manifests itself pre-reflexly in the way in which I choose my projects. This means that while I might deliberately choose my project and therefore my future, I do not always choose directly the value I give to my past. Memory gets actualized according to the present we have and the future we want. This process is often unconscious. Moreover, the memory we form contributes to the formation of our present memory, in a way therefore there is a relationship of reciprocal determination between the past and the other two modalities of temporality (i.e. present and future). If we follow Sartre, then in a way the present and future (e.g. our projects) precede that past, which is invented. In other words, the nostalgic past is always re-evaluated in light of my present needs and fragilities and my future projects. As we can understand through Sartre, we are merely what we remember, but we are first and foremost what we are able to imagine, that is to say how we project our future and how we reinterpret our past in light of our projects. This process of reevaluation of the past, which plays a major role in all autobiographical phenomena, but especially in nostalgia, is a continuous process which is always open to new interpretations. Indeed, every time we feel nostalgia we can focus, either

voluntarily or not, on different moments of the past and give them new meaning, thus forming a new nostalgic past. We can conclude the discussion on reevaluation by reminding the reader that there are two fundamental types of nostalgic reevaluation. The first is reevaluating a moment that was already positive at the time once first experienced it. *Prima facie*, this might seem as no reevaluation at all, however by simply reliving that moment in light of the present it acquires new meaning. The second is a more radical form of reevaluation, since through it we see moments that are pleasurable only retrospectively.

The theory I have outlined thus far seems to go in contradiction with another major point on which most scholars agree, which is that nostalgia is founded on the irreversibility of the past; after all, nostalgia is bitter because the past is irreversible, we cannot go back to it. This point was clearly made by Jankélévitch (1974), the philosopher who has explored more deeply the importance of irreversibility in nostalgia. Jankélévitch (1974, 143) notices also that time's irreversibility is what makes nostalgia incurable. According to him, in nostalgia we discover that the loss of beatitude is definitive and this is painful. Alternatively – he argues – we could say that since it is irreversible the past can seem to us as a lost paradise, as we can never go back and check the truth of its mundanity. In other words, irreversibility rather than representing an obstacle to the theory of reimagination of the past, serves as a foundation for it.

Jankélévitch therefore argues that nostalgia is a reaction to irreversibility, though not the only possible one. One could wonder does irreversibility affect all memory? The answer is no, as there are types of memory that allow you to go back and check. However, it would seem that it is typical of autobiographical memory to be about things that cannot come back. This in turn can generate various kinds of affective phenomena: remorse, regret, mourning, nostalgia, acceptance and so on. Finally, we must acknowledge that if irreversibility is a condition of possibility of an affective phenomenon such as nostalgia, this also means that specific affective phenomena can be our primary ontological disclosure to that condition of possibility. In other words, it is through experiences such as regret and nostalgia that time itself is presented to us as irreversible.

2.2.5 Renarration

We now turn to the third process, that of renarration. This is the most complex of the three processes, as it relies on the previous ones and in a way it includes them. As a matter of fact, we can analyze the three processes independently only through abstraction, as they take place simultaneously. There is more than one type of renarration at play in nostalgia. The first type is very similar to the process of reevaluation. In nostalgia we unconsciously create a renarration of the past that also includes our present identity, our desired future identity and a reimagined past, which should work as a foundation to such identities. The second type of renarration is the transformation of simple selected sensations and autobiographical episodes into something more complex. Indeed the nostalgic past is rarely an episodic past. It is rather a time that is created through a synthesis of many sensations and episodes which are then reevaluated and weaved together. This can be better understood through an example. When I think nostalgically of Christmas in my childhood I never visualize a specific Christmas from a specific year (e.g. Christmas of 1999). Instead various images come up in my mind that could be referred to any Christmas: leaving milk and cookies for Santa, opening presents on Christmas morning, eating Grandma's food, feeling the smell of panettone deep in my nose. Every now and then an image might come up that could refer to a specific Christmas, for instance opening a specific present, but on the whole all these sensations and images work toward the construction of an era, rather than an episode, and the function of this era is to fund to the narration of my identity, either present or desired. As Hart (1973) observes, this kind of nostalgic time, which he calls aeonic time, resembles mythic time. I will further develop this point in chapter 3, here however we can already notice some characteristics that are common to both mythic and autobiographical nostalgic past. In both of them imagination plays a central role, as the past of autobiographical nostalgia, though relying partly on memory, is a past that we never lived. Casey (1987) also notices that no recollection, though veridical and exhaustive, can reproduce the plenitude that we experience in nostalgia. Both mythical and nostalgic pasts are constituted by eras rather than by episodes organized in a specific chronological order. For instance, it would be impossible to me to say whether I received a specific Christmas present the year before or the year after I received another specific present. Rather, all the Christmases of my childhood constitute a nostalgic era, which is, for instance, radically different from the era made up by Christmases of my teenage years. In the same way it is impossible to say whether Zeus laid with Europa or Leda first, however we know that the era of Cronus reign came before the era of Zeus's reign. Finally, and most importantly, both mythical and nostalgic

times are strictly related to our identity, as they either work as the foundation of a present identity (think of all origin myths), or are the expression of an imagined identity that we perceive as lost and that we wish to regain (think of the myths about the fall of men)[102].

Before concluding this chapter, I have to tackle one last important function operated by the process of renarration. Indeed this process is responsible for both the pleasurable and painful components of nostalgia. As said, one of the functions of renarration is to relate the nostalgic past to one's present and future. Most notably, renarration presents a difference between one's past and one's present and future. Sometimes, the past is presented as a desirable yet unobtainable reality. This of course is the source of the painful component of nostalgia. Even in the cases in which renarration presents a strong continuity between one's past and one's present (as is the case of the old athlete we saw before) there is a small painful component due to the fact that he is not a young competing athlete anymore. At the same time, renarration is also responsible for the pleasurable component of nostalgia.

Through the process of renarration the past is presented to me as a narratively meaningful unity, as a story that connects my past, present and future and this makes it pleasurable. At the same time the fact that the nostalgic past is presented to me through a renarration means that I can contemplate it and engage with it (just the way one enjoys a book, or piece of art). Therefore the nostalgic can alleviate this longing by indulging in the contemplation of the re-narration of the past. In a way nostalgia is a sickness that contains its own cure. This contemplation does not always take place, when it does not, nostalgia becomes more similar to melancholia. Moreover, contemplation can be seen as an alleviation of the present anxieties (see Davis 1979).

[102] A possible objection to this line of thought might be focusing on the fact that some nostalgic people are very meticulous about the exact chronology of the past. Think for example of a person obsessed with videogames from the 80's or the golden age of comics books (1938-1956). Such a person would be able to tell you exactly when a specific game or issue was published. In this and in similar examples the chronology itself becomes mythicized, not in the sense that the elements inside the chronology can be moved at will, but rather that the chronology as a whole becomes an object of "nostalgic" veneration.

Chapter 3
The Embodiment of Nostalgia: Desire for the Whole and Displaced Nostalgia

"All places are distant from heaven alike."
Robert Burton[103]

"D'un mot : il n'est pas nécessaire que le nostalgique ait été ceci ou cela, il suffit qu'il *ait été* en général, et qu'ayant été il ait bien entendu, selon l'occasion, vécu aimé et souffert, comme tout ce qui existe. "[104]
Vladimir Jankélévitch[105]

3.1 Introduction

At this point we are still left with important questions regarding the fundamental theory of nostalgia. I dedicate the final chapter of this dissertation to understanding the role that media,[106] material culture, others and politics play in nostalgia. In this chapter, I will finish addressing the question "what is nostalgia?". In a way, in chapter 2 I sketched a "special theory of nostalgia", that is to say a theory that accounts only for autobiographical nostalgia, while

[103] Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, section 2, member 4.

[104] In a word: it is not necessary that the nostalgic has been this or that, it is enough that he has been in general, and that having been he has of course, according to the occasion, lived loved and suffered, like everything that exists.

[105] Jankélévitch 1974, 357.

[106] The reason why they are talked together is that interacting with media and material culture necessarily implies being situated in a shared world, as those media and material culture must necessarily have been produced by someone else.

here I would like to formulate a "general theory of nostalgia", one that would account for all forms of nostalgia, including autobiographical nostalgia, displaced nostalgia, and what I will call radical nostalgia. The question of *what nostalgia is* also implies answering the question of where nostalgia fits in the taxonomy of affectivity. And other questions, such as: Does it make sense to talk of displaced nostalgia? Why? Can we have nostalgia without memory? If so, what is the role of imagination?

In chapter 2 I mostly analysed instances of nostalgia that start from involuntary memory and showed how imagination modifies autobiographical memory in nostalgia. The temptation, into which many researchers have fallen, then would be to say that nostalgia always starts from memory and that it mainly has to do with autobiographical memory. In this chapter I will show why imagination plays a stronger role, so much so that we could say that nostalgia is a function of imagination and that there can be instances in which imagination can generate nostalgia without the intervention of autobiographical memory. This is for example the case of displaced nostalgia, which I will analyse in depth. Moreover, in this chapter I defend the idea that nostalgia is a desire to reunite with a 'whole' (i.e., an idealised past whose function is that of founding a desired personal identity). I propose to explain displaced nostalgia by arguing that since the nostalgic past is a past whose function is that of founding a desired identity (rather than an actual personal identity) then this past does not necessarily have to be the past of memory, rather it can be the pure product of imagination.

I will start this chapter by introducing the controversial concept of displaced nostalgia and showing why we do need such a concept in a theory of nostalgia. In order to fully account for displaced nostalgia I need to formulate a general theory of nostalgia, this requires to take several steps back and explain the role that the body plays in nostalgia. By relying on Proust, Merleau-Ponty and Trigg I will sketch the role of embodiment in autobiographical nostalgia, from a situated point of view (especially a phenomenological one). Then to better account for the role of the body in nostalgia, I will introduce Ratcliffe's concept of existential feelings, and I will analyse Plato's myth of the androgynous through Ratcliffe's framework. This will allow me to show in what sense nostalgia is a longing for the whole, and how this in turn can account for displaced nostalgia. I will further argue in favour of displaced nostalgia by comparing Davis' discontinuity hypothesis with Eliade's nostalgia for paradise.

3.2 Displaced Nostalgia

Displaced nostalgia "refers to nostalgia for times which were not known to us firsthand" (Wilson J. 2005, 32, cfr Vanderbilt 1994). In other words, displaced nostalgia is a form of nostalgia that does not refer to autobiographical memory (e.g. a nostalgia for a time that took place before one could experience it). This expression, first used by Vanderbilt (1994) and famously used by Wilson J. (2005) is not very frequent in the literature, as it is often replaced by periphrases. This adjective does not have any relation to the phenomenon of psychological displacement. Moreover, the term nostalgia does not mean that this type of nostalgia is necessarily not fitting (see D'Arms & Jacobson 2000) or immoral. In other words, the term displaced refers exclusively to a nostalgia for a time one has not lived, without any further connotation.[107] Discussing displaced nostalgia is no easy task as many scholars deny that an experience like that is even possible, or that the concept itself may be useful. For this reason, let us first of all consider a few examples of displaced nostalgia, so that we know what we are referring to. We can find relevant examples of displaced nostalgia throughout history, even well before Hofer coined the term nostalgia in 1688. One of the most important examples is that of Hesiod, who in his *Works and Days* (106-201) describes the five mythical ages of men, which starting from the most ancient one are: golden age, silver age, bronze age, heroic age, iron age (the one during which Hesiod himself believed to live). Hesiod argued that he would much have preferred having been born in a previous age (or even in a later one), rather than living in his time, which he believed to be considerably worse and more unjust than the previous eras. Later on, the myth of the golden age became a literary topos (see for instance Corpus Tibullianum, I, 3, 35-36 "Quam bene Saturno vivebant rege, priusquam tellus in longas est patefacta vias!" "how well they lived when Saturn was King, before the earth was open to long journeys").

[107] The term 'displaced' of course makes us think of place, so we could consider whether it can be interpreted as a longing for a place in which one has not ever been to. As we saw in the previous chapter, time and space are often deeply connected in nostalgia, therefore it could make sense for someone to feel nostalgic for a time and space one has never lived. For instance, one could be nostalgic for V century Greece, because they have read about it on books, even though they live in the 21st century and they never went to Greece. However, I think we should be cautious when using displaced nostalgia to refer to a longing that refers exclusively to place without any reference to time (e.g., the longing that someone who was born in the Warsaw pact area felt towards the life that could be lived in the USA). This is due to the fact that time is essential in the notion of nostalgia.

In contemporary scientific literature the most common cases of displaced nostalgia are instances of political nostalgia,[108] especially in reactionary and identity movements, such as neofascists movements that see the past as a glorious time, a paradigm of glory and honour that must also be preserved or restored in the present (Boym 2001). Indeed nostalgia and especially displaced nostalgia can deeply influence our behaviour as members of a political community (Mols & Jetten 2014, Boym 2001). An infamous Italian example of how this displaced nostalgia manifests itself is the annual gathering of Italian neofascists giving the roman salute for Benito Mussolini's birthday in Predappio, his birthplace. One should also take into consideration other examples, such as the Oestalgie (that is the nostalgia for communist East Germany, which can also affect people born after the reunification). One can also make non-political examples, such as the nostalgia for the 80's that some people born in the '90s or later have, as Lizardi (2017) has extensively analyzed. In the literature (Boym 2001; Lizardi 2015, 2017; Wilson 2005) cases like these have been fruitfully described as instances of (displaced) nostalgia. However, in the rest of the debate one finds that the concept of displaced nostalgia is either ignored or considered unreliable. Contrary to this common position I hold that displaced nostalgia deserves to be fully analysed and included in a theory of nostalgia for several reasons. First of all, even if we did not want to use the term nostalgia to refer to these phenomena, we would still need to account for them. More importantly, trying to account for displaced nostalgia can move us to formulate a theory that aims at understanding nostalgia on a deeper and more fundamental level.

What I think is wrong about most accounts of nostalgia, is the importance given to memory. Many scholars dismiss the idea of displaced nostalgia because they rely on the notion that nostalgia is a selection, re-imagination and re-evaluation of personal memories (e.g. Davis 1979). After all, if nostalgia has to do with the subject's memories (however selected, manipulated and reshaped) how could it be possible to feel nostalgia for a time period we never lived? This seems a very relevant limit of these theories, since displaced nostalgia is a widely experienced phenomenon. While nostalgia can operate such a 're-narration' of our memories, this does not imply that nostalgia necessarily deals with memories and that displaced nostalgia is therefore impossible. I dedicate most of this chapter to explaining why displaced nostalgia is possible and why it is correct to call it nostalgia. In order to do so however we need to take several steps back and understand the phenomenological function of the body in nostalgia.

[108] It is important to note that not all instances of political nostalgia are also displaced, though this often the case.

3.3 The Embodiment in Autobiographical Nostalgia

I have established that displaced nostalgia is a phenomenon that we need to account for. In order to do that I have to take several steps back and offer a deeper philosophical understanding of nostalgia. The first of these steps is understanding the role that the body plays in nostalgia. In order to defend my position I will have to turn to the very phenomenological foundation of nostalgia, by analysing it as an embodied feeling.

That embodiment plays a central role in our affectivity should be no controversial statement. As I have stated in the introduction of this dissertation, I use the theories of situated affectivity, according to which affectivity is not bound to the brain alone, but is also supported by elements and processes in the body and environment. The theories of situated affectivity derive from theories on situated cognition (Colombetti 2017; Colombetti & Krueger 2015; Griffith & Scarantino 2009; Krueger & Szanto 2016; Slaby 2014, 2016; Stephan *et al.* 2014; Stephan & Walter 2020). Theories of situated cognition and affectivity are also often referred to as the 4e approaches, the 4e being embodied, embedded, extended and enacted. In this chapter I focus on embodiment. It is interesting to notice that well before the introduction of the situated perspective, philosophers have underscored the central role the body plays in affectivity. The first one to analyse this matter systematically was Aristotle, who argued that *pathe* (roughly translatable as emotions) were *logoi enuloi*, that is to say "embodied thoughts". This emerges especially in his discussion of anger in the *De Anima*, where we see that the notion itself of anger is incomplete without referring to the body. Anger is as much "a desire for revenge" as it is "a boiling of the blood around the heart", not only that, such an emotion is a desire of the soul, embodied in a movement of the body. As Stephan and Walter (2020) notice, since then, William James and many phenomenologists, especially Merleau-Ponty, Scheler and Sartre hugely contributed to developing the idea of affectivity as an essentially embodied phenomenon. Despite this, since the 1970's a new movement had developed (see Marks 1982, Solomon 1976, Nussbaum 2001) that analyses emotions essentially as disembodied cognitive state processes (for instance reducing anger to the judgment we have been wronged and to the consequent desire of revenge) (Stephan & Walter 2020, Campeggiani 2021). It is in response to both an individualist and cognitivist accounts that situated affectivity was developed (Stephan and Walter 2020). In this development of course phenomenology played an important role. With the expectation of the brief cognitivist parenthesis discussed above, affectivity has always been analysed as embodied. Indeed most of the research on the embodiment of

affectivity is not focused on *whether* affectivity is embodied (Stephan &Walter 2020), but on *how*. I will contribute to this discussion by focusing on how nostalgia specifically is embodied, especially from a phenomenological point of view.

Help in determining this might come from Proust, as already shown in chapter 2, Proust is not interested in nostalgia *per se*, however his insights on memory can help us better understand the role of the body in nostalgia. Proust was influenced by many philosophers, most notably Darlu and Bergson (cfr. Fraisse 2019) and it is no controversial statement that his novel is a philosophical one. Though Proust did not read the work of Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, his work has some kind of resonance with phenomenology. So much so that philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty offered a phenomenological interpretation of parts of his work. As we saw in chapter 2, in book 7 time regained at the Guermantes house right before the party Marcel has in rapid succession three episodes of involuntary memory, here we'll focus on the first one, which I did not discuss in chapter 2. By walking on an uneven step, Marcel reveals how our past is embodied in our bodies.

> "I had entered the courtyard of the Guermantes mansion and in my absent minded state I had failed to see a car which was coming towards me; the chauffeur gave a shout and I just had time to step out of the way, but as I moved sharply backwards I tripped against the uneven paving-stones in front of the coach-house. And at the moment when, recovering my balance, I put my foot on a stone which was slightly lower than its neighbors, all my discouragement vanished and in its place was that same happiness which at various epochs of my life had been given to me by the sight of trees which I had thought that I recognised in the course of a drive near Balbec, by the sight of the twin steeples of Martinville, by the flavor of a madeleine dipped in tea, and by all those other sensations of which I have spoken and of which the last works of Vinteuil had seemed to me to combine the quintessential character." (Proust 1981, III 898–99)

Marcel goes on to notice that this experience closely resembles that of the madeleine, this is once again an example of involuntary memory. After the first instance, Marcel tries unsuccessfully to recreate the sensation, however through this bodily engagement with the environment he is able to forget the present time and place and is instead transported to the Venice of his past.

> "Every time that I merely repeated this physical movement, I achieved nothing; but if I succeeded, forgetting the Guermantes party, in recapturing what I had felt when I first placed my feet on the ground in this way, again the dazzling and indistinct vision fluttered near me as if to say: "Seize me as I pass if you can, and try to solve the riddle of happiness which I set you." And almost at once I recognised the vision: it was Venice." (Proust 1981, III 899)[109]

How can these passages help us understand nostalgia? One possible way, as I have already shown in chapter 2 is saying that involuntary memory can lead to nostalgia. However, we can see a deeper connection between embodiment and nostalgia that goes beyond mere causation. We can read these passages through the lenses of phenomenology, especially the work of Trigg (2012), who is heavily inspired by Merleau-Ponty. Trigg argues as follows:

> "Applied to the phenomenology of nostalgia, the key to the enigma of involuntary memory is manifestly located within the body. Consider how the alignment between involuntary memory and nostalgia crystallises the role of the body in nostalgic recollection. Acting upon us—emblematically through the sensual encounter with a mnemonic object—nostalgia retains its dynamism through storing itself in the body. With this, the body acts as a focal point, out of which an entire world is cast, complete with its own peculiar atmosphere and associations, its own ghostly actors and stage settings, and its own space for the ruins of the past to reappear and disappear. No longer held in time, the past reanimates itself through the radical heterogeneity of the human body. And so we follow the body—follow our *own* bodies—in leading us toward the rich texture of the past, as it was then in its original corporeal incarnation. Prised apart from the prism of everyday memory, the body loses its status as an instrument of orientation but gains the role of being a threshold to the past." (Trigg 2012, 177-178)

[109] Proust further develops the relationships between body and memory in various ways. For instance at the Guermantes' party that ends the novel, he meets the most relevant characters of the novel (those who are still alive at least). However, Marcel does not recognize them at first, they are old now. And just as it has happened to Marcel himself, time has deeply changed their appearance (even their social status at times). This helps Marcel realize that our past is somewhat visible to others, we take our time with ourselves, we take with ourselves all of our history. Proust (1981, III 1105) speaks of time embodied, of years past, but not separated from us, in other words we occupy a space in time and this constantly grows.

Here Trigg is of course referring to the body in the sense of *Leib*, that is to say the lived body. Phenomenologists adopt a distinction between the objective body and the lived body, respectively *Körper* and *Leib* In Husserl *and corps objectif* and the *corps proper* or *corps vécu* in Merleau-Ponty (Gallagher & Zahavi 2012). This phenomenological distinction explicates the two different ways in which we can experience the body. The notion of the lived body "captures the body understood as an embodied first-person perspective" (Gallagher and Zahavi 2012), while the other notion "focuses on the body as seen from an observer's point of view, where the observer may be a scientist, a physician, or even the embodied subject herself. (Gallagher and Zahavi 2012). From now on, even when I might simply use the word body, I always refer to the concept of the lived body. The lived body is the piece that holds together nostalgia, in it is stored the habitual kinesthetic memory which is the starting point of the nostalgia evoked by entering a place (e.g., I remember how I could move in that space, the possibilities that space would offer me). The same is true for habitual kinematic memory, for example the nostalgia for playing video games or a sport has its cardinal point in the lived body. After all, the body is our point of view and point of interaction with the world, it is the centre of the possibilities of experience and interaction with the world. In the examples I have analysed in this chapter and in the previous one the environment does not offer mere triggers of involuntary memory (Trigg, 2012). Rather, it also brings back a specific kind of embodiment we had in the past through the embodiment we have in the present.[110]

3.4 Existential Feelings

The phenomenological theory of the body we have seen thus far through Proust and Trigg is not enough to fully account for the role of the body in nostalgia. We need to achieve a deeper understanding of embodiment and to do this I will introduce Ratcliffe's theory of existential feelings. I will build on Ratcliffe's approach to account for embodiment not only in autobiographical nostalgia, but also in displaced nostalgia. Indeed, what I have described in the previous section is mostly valid for autobiographical nostalgia alone, while what follows is

[110] The body is not only that through which we experience nostalgia, sometimes the body itself, or even just some parts of it, can be the object of nostalgia. This is for instance the case of amputees, who can be nostalgic for the limbs they have lost. This kind of nostalgia however is not as frequent as one might believe. As Kafer (2013) notices, people often impose on people who have lost (or never had) some functionality or body parts a *compulsory nostalgia* for their former selves, this is a type of nostalgia that is often refuted by disabled people (Kafer 2013, Montalti 2020).

valid for both autobiographical and displaced nostalgia. Ratcliffe (2005, 2008 2012, 2015, 2017 2018, 2020) elaborated his theory of existential feelings by taking inspiration from Heidegger's (1962) theory of *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmungen*. Just like Heidegger, Ratcliffe is interested in elaborating a theory about the most fundamental activities of our affectivity, that upon which the rest of our affectivity is built upon, indeed existential feelings are pre-intentional modes of being situated in the world. In order to understand what Ratcliffe refers to when he talks of existential feelings, let us consider the examples that Ratcliffe makes:

> "People sometimes talk of feeling alive, dead, distant, detached, dislodged, estranged, isolated, otherworldly, indifferent to everything, overwhelmed, suffocated, cut off, lost, disconnected, out of sorts, not oneself, out of touch with things, out of it, not quite with it, separate, in harmony with things, at peace with things or part of things. There are references to feelings of unreality, heightened existence, surreality, familiarity, unfamiliarity, strangeness, isolation, emptiness, belonging, being at home in the world, being at one with things, significance, insignificance, and the list goes on. People also sometimes report that 'things just don't feel right', 'I'm not with it today', 'I just feel a bit removed from it all at the moment', 'I feel out of it' or 'it feels strange'." (Ratcliffe 2008, p. 68)

Ratcliffe further clarifies:

> "The world can sometimes appear unfamiliar, unreal, distant or close. It can be something that one feels apart from or at one with. One can feel in control of one's situation as a whole or overwhelmed by it. One can feel like a participant in the world or like a detached, estranged observer, staring at objects that do not feel quite 'there'. Such relationships structure all experiences. Whenever one has a specific experience of oneself, another person or an inanimate object being a certain way, the experience has, as a background, a more general sense of one's relationship with the world." (Ratcliffe 2005, p. 47)

From the first quote it is evident that Ratcliffe is trying to describe some kind of bodily feeling, while from the second we can gather that existential feelings have to do with our relationship with the world. Ratcliffe (2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2020) argues that existential feelings have these two fundamental characteristics, let us examine them in further detail. Existential feelings are "feelings" in the sense that they are bodily experiences (2020). "Bodily"

has multiple meanings here, first with this expression we refer to the fact that an existential feeling is felt in the body (generally speaking the body as a whole rather than parts of it). So for example when I feel alive, detached or overwhelmed (just to make a few examples) my entire body feels in a specific way. When I feel alive my entire body feels light, when I feel overwhelmed my body becomes heavy, when I am depressed, my body feels as if it were weighted down, when I am anxious I feel my entire body palpitate. The fact that existential feelings are bodily feelings in this sense is a relevant phenomenological feature, however it is also important to keep in mind that existential feelings share this feature with other affective phenomena. Indeed, many emotions are felt in the body in its entirety, or at the very least it is hard for us to locate "where" in the body we feel a specific affective phenomenon. A notable exception is disgust which, due to its relation to the protection from contamination (Nussbaum 2004, Kolnai 2004), can be more or less be located in the, mouth (revulsion), throat and stomach (nausea) (Kolnai 2004). Other important exceptions come from the analysis of expressions such as "I feel butterflies in my stomach", which refers to the sensation of excitement and fear before the person with whom one is infatuated. Despite these exceptions, many affective phenomena that are felt in the body are not easy to locate, and it could be argued that we feel them in our entire body. When I say that I feel guilt, shame, joy, grief and so on, I might say that I feel these affections in my body without necessarily locating where exactly I feel them, I might even go so far to say that I feel them in my entire body, but this would not be enough to define them as existential feelings.

As said above, existential feelings are "bodily" in more than one sense; not only in the sense that they are felt in the body, as we just saw, but also in the sense that the body is what allows us to feel something else. Ratcliffe clarifies this point thus:

> "[Existential feelings] are relational—a feeling of the body is also that *through which* one experiences something else. This observation is not specific to existential feeling, and others have plausibly argued that a wider range of feelings are not merely 'bodily'. For instance, Goldie (2000) distinguishes 'bodily feelings' from 'feelings towards', where the latter are intentionally directed experiences with objects external to the body. In later writings, he makes clear that the two are not mutually exclusive; some but not all bodily feelings are also feelings towards (Goldie 2009). Existential feelings comprise a distinctive subset of those feelings that are not exclusively bodily." (Ratcliffe 2020, 251)

Once again Ratcliffe highlights an important feature of existential feelings, which however is also shared with other affective phenomena. We should then ask what distinguishes existential feelings from other affective phenomena. According to Ratcliffe what is peculiar of existential feelings is that "they constitute a sense of *how one finds oneself in the world as a whole*" (Ratcliffe 2020…). Differently from emotions, which color specific objects, people or state of affairs present in the world in specific ways, existential feelings disclose the world as a whole characterised in a specific way: real, familiar, unfamiliar, unavailable, available, full of opportunities and so on. In drawing this fundamental characteristic of existential feelings, Ratcliffe relies on the phenomenological tradition. Indeed, I believe that his notion of world must be partly interpreted in a Heideggerian way. That is to say the world that we feel in existential feelings is a context, a meaningful whole where we find ourselves related to other things and people (Heidegger 1962, Polt 1998). As Polt (1998, 54) puts it: "a world is *a system of purposes and meanings that organises our activities and our identity, and within which entities can make sense to us"*. Just like Ratcliffe after him, Heidegger (1962) argued that specific affective phenomena disclose the world to us in specific ways. Heidegger develops this theory by analysing the concepts of Stimmung and Befindlichkeit (usually translated as mood and attunement respectively). As I said, Ratcliffe draws inspiration from this theory to formulate his own. The most careful readers of Heidegger, however, should have noticed that one of the fundamental differences between the theory of the two philosopher is the importance given to the body. While Heidegger does not directly tackle embodiment, Ratcliffe gives it pivotal importance. Indeed, the body is not simply where I feel existential feelings and that through which I feel the world, embodiment is also and most importantly what allows me to be in the world and to have meaningful relations in it. By drawing from Husserl and Merleau-Ponty Ratcliffe holds that the experiences of things include a sense of various practical and perceptual possibilities that are available to us through our embodiment:

> "For instance, the visual experience of a drinking glass ordinarily incorporates possibilities such as touching it, picking it up, and drinking from it. These possibilities are inextricable from a range of felt, bodily dispositions, such as the inclination to reach out towards something or retreat from it." (Ratcliffe 2020, 251-252)

Ratcliffe goes on to argue:

> "Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty add that localised experiences of possibility presuppose a more enveloping orientation, a sense of belonging to the world. When I see or think about something, when I am afraid of something, and when I am in a bad mood about a wider situation, I already find myself in the world, in a way that differs in kind from intentional experiences in one or another modality (e.g., imagining, perceiving, or remembering something). This 'world' is presupposed by intentional states of whatever kind with whatever content. We can think of it in terms of a possibility space, a receptivity to *types* of possibility. Different existential feelings, I suggest, involve differences in the types of possibility to which one is receptive, differences that are integral to experience rather than consisting of non-experiential dispositions. Things are experienced as *significant* to us, as *mattering* to us, in different ways, something that involves a sense of the possibilities they offer. For instance, something might appear threatening in one or another manner, or immediately useful in the context of a project. Alternatively, it might offer the possibility of hope or disappointment, security or insecurity." (Ratcliffe 2015). (Ratcliffe 2020, 251-252)"

As human beings, we usually are not detached observers of the world that experience reality objectively. We are situated in a world which is presented to us as full of possibilities, but also worries and obstacles, it is a world that is relevant to us and of which we take care. Our primary relation with the world is affective, the world is unveiled to us through the way we feel. Existential feelings are the fundamental affective tonality that shapes our being in the world. As Ratcliffe notices (2015) existential feelings can change radically even when from an objective point of view nothing has changed. For instance, in the case of depression from an objective point of view nothing has changed yet the way I feel the world and therefore the way in which I interact with it changes radically. Since existential feelings constitute the background of our affectivity, we usually feel existential feelings when we move from one to another. Indeed, Ratcliffe focuses on pathological existential feelings such as depression, that is to say when the way in which we feel the world is radically different from how it is usually.

Existential feelings shape (or at least are a reflection of) our range of possibilities, which are available to us in relation to our embodiment. As said, existential feelings are not directed at specific objects, as is the case for emotions, instead they are directed at the world as a whole and they structure our entire experience, cognitive activity and engagement with the world. In a way they are bodily feelings of the possibilities of engagement I have with the world, or to

put in other words, they are the bodily feelings of my relationship as an embodied being with my world as a whole. One final point I want to discuss from Ratcliffe's theory is that existential feelings also work as a foundation of other affective phenomena. For instance Ratcliffe (2015) discusses through the lenses of existential feelings what Lear (2006) calls "radical hope". Regular hope can be described as an emotion as it is an affective phenomenon limited in time and it refers to a specific object (in this case a possible state of affairs in the future). Radical hope on the other hand is more akin to an existential feeling. First of all it lasts longer than an emotion (indeed Ratcliffe argues that most people have it most of the time). Second, it does not refer to a specific state of affairs located in the future. Instead, radical hope is the feeling that things could be better in the future. In other words, radical hope is the bodily feeling that the world is disclosed to me as whole that is open to the possibility of being better for me in the future. Rather than being a hope for a specific event (e.g., "I hope I will pass the exam next week"), radical hope is the condition of possibilities of all hopes (e.g. "I feel I live in a world in which things can get better for me, *for instance* passing the exam next week").

It is important to highlight the fact that an existential feeling can support various emotions. For instance Ratcliffe (2015) argues that depression can be analysed as an existential feeling. Having such an existential feeling does not mean that one can only feel one emotion (e.g., sadness) all the time. Instead depression, like all existential feelings, determines the ranges of possible emotions one could feel. So for instance when thinking of the future, a depressed person would be much more likely to feel anxiety, rather than hope, and when she thinks of the past, she might feel various emotions, such as nostalgia, regret or grief, but is very unlikely to feel affirmation.

The question now is whether nostalgia can be described as an existential feeling. As I have stated multiple times, nostalgia is very hard, or even impossible, to fit in neat taxonomies. However applying Ratcliffe's theory to nostalgia can help us understand many fundamental points about this phenomenon. I hold that nostalgia is a bodily feeling that reveals our relation to our entire world. In what way is the world presented to us in nostalgia? Just like any particular hope (which tends to be best described as emotions) is founded upon radical hope (which is arguably an existential feeling), similarly any particular nostalgia – be it autobiographical or displaced – is founded upon a radical nostalgia. Radical nostalgia is the existential feeling that the world as a whole in the present lacks the foundation of our identity (either present or desired) and that such a foundation is instead in the past. In radical nostalgia,

which is the foundation of all other nostalgias, I am not concerned with specific memories, moments or even eras. What is relevant to me in radical nostalgia is mainly the fact that the present as a whole is not available to me as a source to determine my identity and at the same time the foundation of this identity is disclosed to me as located in a past whose only fundamental characteristic is that it is no more that *it has passed.* It does not necessarily even to be *my past* it only needs to *be passed.* As said, this radical nostalgia constitutes the instances of all other nostalgias in which we may focus on precise reimagined memory, on an entire renarreted era of our life, or even past world that is completely imaginary.[111] To better understand these points, I intend to read Plato's myth of the androgynous through the lenses of existential feelings.

3.5 Plato's Myth of the Androgynous

Though not explicitly about nostalgia, but rather about eros and desire, the Platonic myth of the Androgynous, narrated by Aristophanes in the *Symposium* lies at the very core of this dissertation, as the reading of this myth has inspired a considerable part of my philosophical analysis of nostalgia.

In the platonic dialogue the poet Agathon hosts a banquet to celebrate his victory in a dramatic competition. When the guests are done eating, Eryximachus, a physician invited by Agathon, proposes they should take turns in making an encomium to praise Eros, the god of desire and love. Here I will focus on the fourth speech, the one presented by Aristophanes, the famous comic playwright. Aristophanes tells a tragicomical myth on the origin of Eros, according to which humans were originally monstrous spherical beasts with two faces, four legs and four arms. These creatures were powerful and full of hybris, so much so that they threatened to defy the gods, who in response punished them by splitting them in two parts. As we will see, this process later brought about humans in the form and shape they are today and also brought about the generation of Eros. Let us now analyse the myth in the context of the dialogue more closely. First, we must notice that in Aristophanes' myth embodiment plays a central role. Even before letting Aristophanes start his speech, Plato leaves us several clues that

[111] A possible question is whether we ever experience radical nostalgia itself. The answer to this question is yes. However, when we feel radical nostalgia, it is usually accompanied by more a more specific nostalgia (e.g., childhood nostalgia) and therefore it is hard to consciously shift the focus of consciousness to radical nostalgia itself. It is also possible to feel radical nostalgia without it be accompanied by other forms of nostalgia. In this occasion rather than being directed to a specific renarration of the past, our nostalgia is directed to the past as an undefined whole.

the body is going to be a protagonist. According to the order originally agreed upon by the guests, after Phaedrus and Pausanias (respectively the first and second to do their speeches) it would have been Aristophanes' turn to do his encomium. However, Aristophanes, either because he had eaten too much or for some other reason, starts making funny noises (he has the hiccup) that comically highlight his corporeity (Strauss 2001). For this reason, he exchanges places with Erixymachus, who is a physician. Strauss (2001, 98) gives great importance to this exchange, stating that the two of them exchanging places means that their speeches to a degree are interchangeable. More specifically, by taking the place of a physician, Aristophanes secretly talks as a true expert on the nature of the human body. In his speech Erixymachus had said that eros is something of the body, that it is essentially a bodily matter. Aristophanes does not go against this idea of eros as an embodied phenomenon, if anything he offers an insight that far surpasses that of Erixymachus. As we will see, Aristophanes essentially describes Eros as longing. Indeed, it is as if Aristophanes captured something essential about all types of longing, and being nostalgia also a type of longing, his myth can be aptly used to describe it. However, it is also important to bear in mind that Aristophanes' myth is not really capable of accounting for longing and love in their totality. He only gives us part of the picture, so much so that his thesis is further developed and partly refuted later on in the dialogue (Fussi 2009).

Let us analyse Aristophanes' myth keeping in mind that what follows is not an interpretation of what Plato meant to say, nor is what follows an attempt to contribute to the secondary literature on Plato. It is instead an interpretation entirely devoted to better understanding nostalgia.

> "Once upon a time our anatomy was quite different from what it is now. In the first place there were not merely two sexes as there are now, male and female,but three, and the third was a combination of the other two. This sex itself has disappeared but its name, androgynous, survives. At that time the androgynous sex was distinct in form and name, having physical features from both the male and the female, but only the name now exists, and that as a term of insult. 'Secondly, the form of every person was completely round, with back and sides making a circle, and with four arms, the same number of legs, and two faces exactly alike set on a round neck. There was one head for the two faces (which looked in opposite ways), four ears, two sets of genitals and everything else as you might guess from these particulars. They walked about upright, as we do today, backwards or forwards as they pleased. Whenever they wanted to move

fast they pushed off from the ground and quickly wheeled over and over in a circle with their eight limbs, like those acrobats who perform cartwheels by whirling round with their legs straight out. 'The reason for the sexes being as they were and three in number is that originally the male was the offspring of the Sun, the female of the Earth, and the androgynous of the Moon, which shares the nature of both Sun and Earth. Because they resembled their parents the offspring themselves were round and their movement was circular also. They were awesome in strength and might, and their ambition was great too. They made an assault on the gods, and what Homer says about Ephialtes and Otus is said about these too, that they tried to make an ascent to heaven in order to attack the gods." (189d-190c)[112]

In this first part of the myth humans are presented as powerful beings; the world is disclosed to them as full of possibilities. This is evident if we look at their specific kind of embodiment which makes them so powerful that they are capable of thinking they can defy the gods. Speaking of divinity, even though they are not described as godly themselves, they are said to be descendants of the Earth, the Moon and the Sun, which are pre-Olympic gods (Rosen 1987, Strauss 2001). It is evident that their status is not fully divine, though closer to divinity than our contemporary men, nor completely human, as humans proper are yet to be born. The myth continues as follows. Zeus and the other gods deliberate on a solution. They cannot kill them all, as they did with giants, since this would mean losing the sacrifices humans offer them. Eventually they decide to split them into halves, this would mean both making them weaker but also doubling their numbers and therefore doubling the number of sacrifices they offer:

"he proceeded to cut everyone in two, just as people cut up sorb-apples for preserving or slice eggs with a hair. As he divided them he told Apollo to take each separated half and turn round the face and half neck to the cut side, so that each person by contemplating its own cut surface might behave more moderately. He also told Apollo to heal their wounds. So Apollo proceeded to turn the faces round and gathered the skin all together on the belly, as we now call it, like a purse with a drawstring, leaving one opening in the centre which he fastened with a knot, and which is now called the navel. He also smoothed out most of the wrinkles and fashioned the chest, using a tool such as shoemakers use when they smooth out wrinkles in leather on the last. But he let a

[112] I quote Howatson's translation.

few wrinkles remain, around the belly and navel, to be a reminder of what happened ages ago." (190d-191a)

Here it is interesting to notice that humans undergo a transformation, not only are they split in two, but each of the halves is further modified: their wounds are healed, their skin is gathered around the belly and their wrinkles are smoothed. These two transformations play a fundamental role in the myth. With the first one (i.e.,being split in two) they lose the type of embodiment they previously had, the one that granted them such incredible powers. Losing this kind of embodiment means that their world will also change, since our world is constituted by all the possible meaningful relations that we can have with objects and people through our embodiment. Not only will the relationship with the world change (i.e., it will not be as full of possibilities as it once was), but the relation the subject has with herself will also change; from now on it will not be a self-sufficient unity, but rather a part that is always missing something. The fact that they undergo a further modification (i.e., the ironing of the skin and the creation of the navel) is even more tragic, because it means they will be unable to reconstitute the previous unity:

"After the original nature of every human being had been severed in this way, the two parts longed for each other and tried to come together again. They threw their arms around one another in close embrace, desiring to be reunited, and they began to die of hunger and general inactivity because they refused to do anything at all as separate beings. Whenever one of the two died and the other was left alone, the survivor would look for another mate to embrace, either the half of an original woman, as we now call it, or the half of a man." (191a-b)

Here it is interesting to note that the Greek word for the verb "to long" is *potheo.* This word has already sparked the interest of many scholars (see Illbruck 2012, Ercoli 2016, Jankélévitch 1974) especially in relation to the modern theories on nostalgia. Plato does not discuss this term here, however in his dialogue *Cratylus* (420a) Socrates explains the difference between this term and *himeros.* The latter is the desire for something that is close and achievable, *pothos* instead is the desire for something that is absent and arguably unachievable. In the myth of the Androgynous, once humans are split in two, each half is worried that her original identity, that of being a whole being, might be lost forever. Each half therefore longs for her previous condition of unity as she believes that to be her true identity, though now lost.

Something quite similar happens in nostalgia, as in nostalgia we feel the absence of a part of ourselves, we often feel we "lost" the person we used to be. This part of ourselves is of crucial importance, as it determines what we feel to be our original identity, an identity we now feel is lost. Unfortunately, both in the case of the myth and in the case of nostalgia the desire to rejoin the other part and recreate the original whole seems to be impossible to fulfill. In the myth this is due to the fact that the two parts have undergone substantial modifications, which makes it impossible for the two halves to recreate the original unity through a simple embrace. (191a5-9). The same is true for nostalgia, the reconciliation with one's past seems to be impossible. This is due not only to the fact that, as we have seen several times, the past is irretrievable, but is also due to the fact that the "present self" and "the past self" have undergone deep modifications.[113] The nostalgic person has changed due to the passing of time and, more importantly the past self has also changed, due to the process of renarration. In other words, even if we had a time machine, the nostalgic person could not possibly reobtain the original condition she longs for, since the idea she has of the past and herself have deeply changed over time.

In the myth, after the separation the world appears differently to men: if previously it was full of possibilities, so much so that the circle-being were even ready to defy the gods now possibilities are drastically reduced: to them there is no world outside the longing for the whole (see Fussi 2009). Here we see one further important detail, once the halves find each other they embrace each other, stopping doing anything else. This inevitably causes the death of one of the parts. The surviving part however, rather than letting herself die now that she has lost what made her complete, starts looking for a new part. This means that love is not of the part, which is interchangeable with other parts to a degree, but for the whole which can only be obtained through the relation with a part.

Once again something similar happens in nostalgia. As we have seen, in fact, the moments for which we are nostalgic are not fixed once and for all but are to a certain extent interchangeable. For example, I may focus on a specific Christmas morning in my childhood or my 10th birthday party, however in both cases I am not so much nostalgic for those particular moments, but rather for my childhood. The part, as well as the moments, are interchangeable,

[113] Think for example of the recent invasion of Russia in Ukraine; Russian propaganda talks about recreating an original unity, without taking into consideration the fact that in the meantime Ukraine has changed independently. Recreating the original unity is impossible.

what matters is that they are seen as intermediaries for the desire to return to an original condition.

> "But in any case they were beginning to die out until Zeus took pity on them and thought up another plan: he moved their genital organs round to the front. Up until then they had their genitals on (what was originally) the outside of their bodies, and conception and birth took place not in the body after physical union but, as with cicadas, in the ground. By moving their genitals round to the front, Zeus now caused them to reproduce by intercourse with one another through these organs, the male penetrating the female. He did this in order that when couples encountered one another and embraced, if a man encountered a woman, he might impregnate her and the race might continue, and if a man encountered another man, at any rate they might achieve satisfaction from the union and after this respite turn to their tasks and get on with the business of life. 'So it is that ever since that far-off time, love of one person for another has been inborn in human beings, and its role is to restore us to our ancient state by trying to make unity out of duality and to heal our human condition. For each of us is a mere tally of a person, one of two sides of a filleted fish, one half of an original whole. We are all continually searching for our other half. Those men who are sliced from originals" (191b-191d)

3.6 Satisfying the Desire

At this point we could come to the conclusion that nostalgia is an evil, which unlike Hofer's Heimweh cannot be cured. In fact, unlike space, one cannot go back in time. Is this actually the case? Again a possible answer can come from the reading of the Symposium. The gods, in fact, pitied by the fact that men could not satisfy this whole desire of theirs, intervene again, giving them the opportunity to unite sexually. This union allowed men to find relief from their painful desire, thus being able to return, at least for a while, to daily activities. Even in nostalgia it is possible to find momentary relief. Those who are nostalgic, as I have already stated in this thesis, can devote themselves to the contemplation of their own narration of the past. Clearly, the desire cannot be satisfied definitively, however this contemplation can be pleasant enough to completely relieve (at least for a while) the sense of desire and lack. Here we can add that this nostalgic relief is not necessarily something exclusively intracranial, but also an embodied phenomenon that relies on the relation with something external. Just like in the myth the relief takes place through an embodied interaction, similarly in nostalgia the relief

often takes place through the engagement with objects and people: listening to a tune from one' s nostalgia on one's smartphone, collecting vintage toys, engaging in nostalgic conversations with siblings or childhood friends. Such interactions, which I will further analyse next chapter, seem to offer us that missing piece that would complete our identity and make the narration of the past plausible. Nostalgia, therefore, is in a certain sense a disease that contains in itself its own cure. So both in eros as Aristophanes describes it, and in nostalgia there is a bitter component, which is desire and lack, but there is also a sweet component which is the momentary satisfaction of this desire. It is a desire for an imagined condition, they believed they once were whole, but even before being split they lacked something, indeed they wanted to conquer the gods.

3.7 The False Promise

The myth ends with the following hypothesis:

> "If the god Hephaestus, welding tools in hand, were to stand over them where they lie together, and ask, ''What is it that you two want from each other?'' they would be unable to answer. Suppose he were to ask them again, ''Is this your desire, to be always together, as close as possible, and never parted from each other day or night? If this is what you want, I am ready to join you together and fuse you until, instead of two, you become one. For your whole lives long the two of you will live together as one, and when you die you will die together and even in the Underworld you will be one rather than two. Tell me if this is what you long for and if it will satisfy you to achieve this''. 'We know that no one who heard these words would deny them or would admit to wanting anything else. He would simply think that to join with and melt into his beloved, so that instead of two they should become one, was exactly what he had so long desired. The reason is that our nature was originally like this and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love. In the past, as I say, we were one, but at the present time through our wrongdoing we have been made by Zeus to live apart, as the Arcadians have been by the Spartans. And if we are not well-behaved towards the gods, the fear is that we may be split up once more and go around looking like the people you see in profile on monuments, sawn in half along the line of the nose, or like the half-dice used as tallies." (192d-193a)

Should we trust Aristophanes and believe that indeed there is nothing more desirable than being reunited with a part in order to make a whole? I am very doubtful about that. If anything, I think the myth ends on a very ironical note. Sure, when we are in love, when we are nostalgic, or more generally when we have a desire that cannot ever be fully satisfied, we might think that there would be nothing in the world that would make us happier than being forever with the object of desire, thus finally being whole forever. The text however might suggest that such a path would be anything but desirable. First of all, it is evident that such a new state would not be obtained through the same art that caused the fracture in the first place. Apollo used medicine and surgery to divide humans, Hephaestus on the other hand proposes using metallurgy to recreate the whole and there is no assurance that this *techne* could be able to recreate the original condition. Indeed it would be much more likely that his work would create a parody of the original being, rather than a faithful recreation. Think once again of the example of J.P., the man who has built a shrine to the 80's in his own home, is that a truthful recreation of a time period, or is it its parody, made exclusively by pieces of pop culture from that time? Both in the case of Hephaestus and J.P. we do not have an "organic" recreation of the world that includes everything of the past, as such fit would be impossible (keep in mind that in his operation, Apollo could have cut away some skin that is now lost forever, yet it was also that skin that made the original whole). Instead, we have an artificial, though detailed, surrogate. Not only that, actually accepting Hephaestus' offer would also mean lose one's identity to the other in order to gain a new identity. Wouldn't having the part we always desire with us also mean the end of desire itself (at least from the point of view this myth)? What lover could ever want to stop loving? And similarly what nostalgic would ever want to stop being nostalgic? Sure the condition of pothos, of impossible desire is a painful one, but those brief moments, of ecstasy that we live both in love and nostalgia seem to potentially outweigh the painful components of these phenomena, and more importantly seem better than stopping desiring at all.

A final comment on the ending of this myth is also the fact that it offers an outlook on the future. Aristophanes seems to be wary of the future, as it might bring a new punishment: being split once again. Now we cannot really say whether this passage is also to be interpreted

ironically. However, highlighting the distrust towards the future, the ungratefulness for the present and the desire to regain a mythical past condition seems a rather painfully nostalgic note with which to conclude the myth.

If we were to read the myth of the androgynous through the lenses of Ratcliffe as a model to understand nostalgia, I would say that when we are nostalgic we feel as if we have lost the world around us because we are not capable anymore of doing the things we believe we were able to do in the past. The past of the split men is a past full of promises, most notably they were ready to try and conquer Mount Olympus, were the gods dwell. The split men do not regret having failed to conquer Mount Olympus, rather they miss a time when the world available to them made such a feat feasible. Once again this is also something that happens in nostalgia, for instance in childhood nostalgia we often miss the fact that the world was presented to us as full of promises and possibilities. One thing children are often told is "you can be whoever you want". It is not surprising that once you grow up and figure out that sentence is not quite true you feel a fracture. You realise that Mount Olympus is not conquerable after all, you feel split and now the world is not presented to you as full of promises and possibilities as it once was; hence you start longing for such a world.

3.8 Eliade's Nostalgia for Paradise

Thus far, we have seen that nostalgia is the desire to reconnect to a whole world that we believe was available to us in the past and that constituted our past identity which we wish to regain. Moreover, it is through our embodiment that we feel and experience the world as available and full of possibilities or as something that was that way in the past but is no more. It is through the body that we can engage with an interchangeable part of the past, thus momentarily curing the pain of nostalgia. I believe that the past desired by both the nostalgic and the man from later generations in the myth of the Androgynous can be completely imaginary. Since this is a controversial point, I will offer an argument for why the past of nostalgia can be fully imagined rather than being the product of the modification of autobiographical memory.

In order to understand why we can feel displaced nostalgia, we must first understand how and why a past that has nothing to do with memory can become 'nostalgic'. I illustrate

this point by comparing Eliade's concept of 'nostalgia for paradise' (Eliade 1957) and Davis's 'discontinuity hypothesis', a dominant theory in the sociological and psychological research on nostalgia (Davis 1979, Sedikides et al. 2004). This comparison shows that the nostalgic past is not necessarily a lived past stored in memory and subsequently 're-narrated'. Rather, as Davis hypothesised, the nostalgic past serves as a foundation of our personal identity. According to Davis, we perceive this personal identity to be in strong continuity with our past identity. However, reading Eliade's work, we can deduce that the identity the nostalgic past establishes can be merely a desired one. In other words, this identity might not belong to the nostalgic subject who yearns for it; it can even be an identity she never had but for which she longs nonetheless. The nostalgic past can even be purely imagined, either because we never lived it or because it never existed at all.

Mircea Eliade has been an influential, yet somewhat controversial, historian of religion. Throughout his work he uses the concept of "nostalgia for paradise" to explain why many religious and ritual practices were born. To argue in favour of his point, he takes into consideration various myths in which an original state of bliss and direct contact with the divine is lost and longed for ever since. Examples of these types of myths with which we are all familiar are the fall of Adam and Eve and the Greek myth of the Golden Age. Plato's myth of the androgynous also perfectly falls in this category, with the important difference that rather than being the product of an entire culture, it is the skilful creation of a philosopher. Eliade specifies that in various forms, the paradisiac myth, can be found everywhere in the world (Eliade 1960)[114] including Oceania and Asia. As Eliade argues:

> "In effect, all these myths show us primordial man enjoying a beatitude, a spontaneity and freedom, which he has unfortunately lost in consequence of the fall—that is, of what followed upon the mythical event that caused the rupture between Heaven and Earth." (Eliade 1960, 60)

[114] Eliade's work can be read both as a research on the history of religion and as a theology (Olson 1989). For the purposes of this thesis I will focus on the more psychological and philosophical aspects, it is evident that his work cannot be reduced to this.

Even though all of these myths differ from each other because they present characteristics that are peculiar to the cultures that produced them, they also share fundamental features because they are the product of the same human nature:

> "The "nostalgia for Paradise" belongs, rather, to those profound emotions that arise in man when, longing to participate in the sacred with the whole of his being, he discovers that this wholeness is only apparent, and that in reality the very constitution of his being is a consequence of its dividedness." (Eliade 1960, 98)

In other words, Eliade believes that nostalgia for paradise is the answer to the feeling of being fragmented, of not being whole. The subject does not perceive themselves as a unity, but rather as a fractured being. As a consequence of this feeling we desire to return to a previous mythical state in which we were in direct contact with the divine.[115] Here it is interesting to notice the close resemblance to the myth of the androgynous: when humans where whole they were divided into three genders that descended from pre-Olympian gods. Thus, these ancient beings were not quite humans yet and were indeed very close to divinity, so much so that defying the Olympian gods was possible for them. By using the concept of "nostalgia for paradise" as a tool to analyse myth and religion, Eliade implicitly captures something essential about nostalgia in general.

To illustrate this point, we should consider the similarities between Eliade's position and the so called "discontinuity hypothesis". This theory was first formulated by Davis (1977; 1979) and has ever since deeply influenced the sociological and psychological research on nostalgia by authors such as Wildschut (2006) Sedikides *et al.* (2004; 2008), Wilson J. (2005), Mols and Jetten (2014), Iyer and Jetten (2011). According to this hypothesis, at its very core nostalgia is a coping mechanism that forms and corroborates our sense of identity in response to existential threats.

Or as Davis (1977, 420) put it:

[115] One might consider these theories rather dubious. As a matter of fact, Eliade, despite being an extremely influential thinker, has often been criticized for being too general and for lacking empirical evidence to support his positions. Indeed, we cannot adopt his method, which he called "creative hermeneutics" (Paus 1989) and we cannot consider Eliade's theories on religion as correct. Rather, we should use them as useful concepts to understand and frame nostalgia in the right way.

> "1) the nostalgic evocation of some past state of affairs always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties or uncertainties even though these may not be in the forefront of the person's awareness, and 2) it is these which pose the threat of identity discontinuity (existentially the panic fear of the "wolf of insignificance") that nostalgia, by marshalling our psychological resources for continuity, seeks to abort, or at the very least deflect".

Davis proposed that through nostalgia the individual constructs identity continuity via such processes as "an appreciative stance toward former selves; excluding unpleasant memories; reinterpreting marginal, fugitive, and eccentric facets of earlier selves in a positive light; and establishing benchmarks in one's biography" (Davis 1979, 35-46). To better understand Davis' theory and how it can be compared to Eliade's I will reformulate it in 3 points and see why it excludes displaced nostalgia:

D 1) Nostalgia always occurs as a coping mechanism in the context of an (unconscious) fracture, a discontinuity in the sense of identity (hence the name). This can be caused by: present fears, discontents, the feeling of losing control, anxieties or uncertainties.

Common examples in the literature are young people moving out for college. For them this is a period of hope and excitement, but it can also be a period of major life changes and of anxiety. These young people do not know who they are supposed to be and they start asking themselves questions such as "Who am I?" "Who am I supposed to be?" "What is my place in the world?"

D 2) This sense of fracture generates in the subject the need for an ideal past on which to anchor their *present or desired* identities. If we keep referring to the example of young college students we could say that since they do not know who they are, they find refuge in who they think they were. This past cannot be presented for what it truly was: as ugly as the present, otherwise nostalgia would not work as a coping mechanism.

D 3) In nostalgia imagination transforms autobiographical memory. Imagination shows the past as good, easy and preferable to the past, excluding unpleasant memories; selecting memories, reevaluating memories, and weaving them together. This offers a reimagined

and idealised version of the past. The nostalgic person believes that this past was good independently from the fact that it actually was or not. This in turn helps the nostalgic subject believe that since things were good in the past then they will continue to be good in the future, thus feeling less anxious and perceiving less this sense of fracture.

I argue that the discontinuity hypothesis is incomplete. My proposal is that sometimes autobiographical memory is not capable of offering the "material" imagination needs to form the idealised past. When the fracture is too big, when autobiographical memory is not enough one has to tap into a past one has never lived and sometimes even into a past that has never existed. At this point the question is: can we completely remove autobiographical memory from the picture and still account for nostalgia? Indeed, it is possible to think of a nostalgia founded exclusively on imagination, as Eliade shows. Even though Davis and Eliade worked independently and from different fields, their arguments are strikingly similar. To make their similarities more evident I will also reformulate Eliade's position in three points.

E 1) The deepest impulse of men is to participate in the sacred with the totality of their being: they want to be blissful, spontaneous and free. They unconsciously perceive the absence of this condition as a fracture (a fall in mythical terms).

Humans feel as if they lost a mythical state of grace, this loss can also be described as a deep sense of fracture of all. In mythical terms, this corresponds to Adam and Eve being banned from Eden, or the original humans from Aristophanes' myth being split in two.

E 2) This generates in the subject the need for a past on which to anchor their *Desired* identities.

It is interesting to note that this need for a past on which to anchor one's identity is not necessarily an attempt at redemption. Indeed according to Eliade the fall is not the result of an original sin from which we must repent or purify (Olson 1989). It simply is the loss of a condition that was closer to the divine.

E 3) Since autobiographical memory is incapable of supporting the formation of a past so detached from reality, imagination alone is used to found a mythical past that has all the desired characteristics for which we long (it is blissful, spontaneous and free).

It is interesting to note that Davis and Eliade agree for the most part on their respective points 1 and 2, as they both interpret nostalgia as an answer to the sense of fracture of one's identity. They also agree on the fact that in response to this fracture people try to anchor their identity on a past that does not coincide with the past of memory or historiography. It is evident that point one and two are not too problematic as they are consistent with the theory of nostalgia I have constructed thus far. A minor point I should notice here is that according to Davis' reading nostalgia seems mostly a pleasurable affective phenomenon. In a way he and many of those who follow him, overemphasise the pleasurable part of nostalgia, rather than the painful one. One could say that the "nostos", the homecoming is more prevalent than the "algos", the longing. As Trigg (2012; 2020) has noticed, this is a very partial understanding of nostalgia, which can turn out to be an affect way bitter than sweet.

The true problem with Davis' theory is point 3, as it presupposes autobiographical memory as a necessary component. Even though the past of the discontinuity hypothesis is the reimagination of autobiographical memory, while the past Eliade refers to is mythical i.e. purely imagined, they have the same function: they are the response to fracture in the sense of identity and the attempt (to build a foundation on which) to repair it.

Eliade's extreme example is useful because it helps operate a paradigm shift in the discontinuity hypothesis. The necessary faculty involved in nostalgia is not autobiographical memory, but imagination, which can also, but not necessarily, operate on/with autobiographical memory. I think that this shift is very interesting for several reasons. First of all it offers a way to include displaced nostalgia in a general theory of nostalgia. Most importantly, it does not do so by generating a distorted theory of nostalgia made exclusively to include displaced nostalgia. Instead, this shift underscores what is most essential about nostalgia, i.e., a sense of fracture in one's identity and the desire to be in continuity, to be a whole with one's imagined past, which functions as the foundation of our desired (our present identity). In this picture autobiographical memory (and other forms of memory such as habitual memory and semantic memory) *can* play a role, however their intervention is not decisive for us to feel nostalgia. One further advantage of this account is that it further explains the fact that the "parts" with which we interact are interchangeable. What I mean with that is that when I feel nostalgia in my mind I have memories whose main function is that of allowing me to briefly be in a state of unity with an absolute past. Finally, this account also better accommodates an explanation of the role of the

body in nostalgia. As we saw through Ratcliffe we could say that all instances of nostalgia (even those that can be described as emotions) are founded upon a radical nostalgia (which can be described as an existential feeling). This nostalgia has essentially to do with how the world feels available to us. In this the body plays two fundamental roles. First of all, the degree and modality in which the world is available (or not available, since in nostalgia we locate the most relevant part of it in the past) is felt in the body. Second, the fact that the world feels available (or not available) to us is first of all a function of our embodiment as it is through our body that we can interact with the world. The radical nostalgia upon which all instances of nostalgia are built upon is necessarily a longing produced by imagination alone rather than by memory helped by imagination. This is because in this kind of longing we do not refer to specific objects but rather to an entire world. As Casey (1987) already argued, such a world cannot be reduced/reproduced to any recollection or plenum of recollections and is rather an imagined whole.

3.9 Limit Cases of Displaced Nostalgia and Their Function

We could say that what Eliade describes with the name of nostalgia for paradise is a form of radical displaced nostalgia. It is displaced because it does not refer to autobiographical memory and instead refers to an imagined mythical past, it is radical because it works as an existential feeling as it is often the background, has to do with how we feel the world as available or not and works as the condition of possibility of further affective phenomena. More specifically, it works as the foundation of religious sentiment. Indeed Eliade argues that nostalgia for Paradise is the foundation of all religion. Should we endorse this position? Answering this question goes well beyond the scope of this dissertation as it would require formulating a philosophy of religion which I cannot offer here. However, I think that Eliade's point might be worth further investigation if we interpret it more strictly, that is to say if we try to defend the position that *some* aspects of *some* religious phenomena have their foundation in a radical displaced nostalgia. Nostalgia however has not been interpreted only as a possible foundation of religion, but of philosophy as well. Heidegger (1995, 5-79) discusses this problem. He argues that what he calls *Heimweh* (which, in this case, I believe can be assimilated to nostalgia)[116] is longing for an originary unity. In *Heimweh*, we are driven 'to

[116] Once the home for which we long becomes metaphorical, the transition from homesickness to nostalgia has already taken place. In this sense the Heimweh that Novalis and Heidegger talk about is fundamentally nostalgia. When homesickness is eternal, it has already transformed (almost) in nostalgia.

being as a whole' or 'to be within the whole' (Heidegger 1995, 5). Heidegger, who here is interpreting Novalis's fragment—'Philosophy is really a homesickness [*Heimweh*], an urge to be at home everywhere' (Novalis 1923, Vol 2. 179), goes on to explicate the way this desire to be at 'home', to be 'as a whole' or 'within the whole', is at the core of the philosophical endeavour. This idea introduced by Novalis however is very controversial and has been opposed in various ways, for instance Levinas argues as follows:

> "Has not Plato, rejecting the myth of the androgynous being presented by Aristophanes, caught sight of the non-nostalgic character of Desire and of philosophy, implying autochthonous existence and not exile-desire as erosion of the absoluteness of being by the presence of the Desirable, which is consequently a revealed presence, opening Desire in a being that in separation experiences itself as autonomous?" (Levinas 1969, 63)

Fully tackling this problem would require formulating a theory of metaphilosophy which I cannot offer here. Before leaving this topic altogether, it is worth it to briefly discuss is Harper (1966), who argues that the nostalgia that should found religion and philosophy is the nostalgia for "presence". According to him "presence", not to be confused with the buddhist concept, is a condition in which poetic justice is restored. What is most relevant about "presence" is that, unlike the absolute in which there is no true plurality, it always includes a plurality and a form of participation. In other words, while the model of the nostalgia for the absolute (which is central in the myth of the Androgynous, in Eliade and in the passage of Heidegger we saw) refers to a subject and her relation to divinity or wholeness, the model of nostalgia for presence on the other hand necessarily includes the nostalgic subject in a community in which the subject partakes. For better or for worse Harper's idea has been largely ignored and unfortunately his work (Harper 1966) does not really offer strong enough of a foundation to develop a full theory of nostalgia especially for what concerns the role of poetic justice in nostalgia. Despite all this, I think that he captures something very important about nostalgia, that is to say that it often refers to a strong sense of belonging (or wanting to belong) to a community. I will come back to these concepts in the final chapter.

I dedicate the final paragraph of this chapter to reflect on limit cases of displaced nostalgia, which are nostalgia for early childhood (especially the relation with the mother) and

nostalgia for the prenatal life (that is to say the "life" we live in the mother's uterus before getting born). These kinds of nostalgia have been studied primarily in psychology and psychoanalysis (Akhatar 2017, Fodor 1950). These are limit cases because they refer to periods of our lives that we actually lived and that yet we cannot really remember as our memory was not developed enough at the time. Fodor (1950) argues that in a way we experience happiness in a perfect way, only in the mother's womb and that Heaven is a mythical representation of this state, in which "wants were satisfied without wanting (35)". At first glance Fodor's theory seems extremely promising, as they would seem to offer an interesting link between autobiographical nostalgia and displaced nostalgia. By relying on Freud's idea of the uncanny (*Unheimlich*), one could argue that all instances of truly displaced nostalgia ultimately rely on a nostalgia for experiences we actually lived (i.e., the first 3 years of life and prenatal "life"). Unfortunately choosing this path implies major challenges. Most notably, a philosophical (especially a phenomenological) method alone is not well equipped to tackle early life development and therefore a help from psychology and psychoanalysis would be required. Unfortunately in these fields the idea that prenatal nostalgia and nostalgia for the preoedipal mother have been strongly disputed and declared to be considered metaphorical at best (Akhtar 1996).

Chaper 4
Affective Scaffolds of Nostalgia

> "What is it you enjoyed about the 1980s?"
> "Are you kidding me? Where do I begin? The colors. The bright neon and fluorescent shades. The bold styles of rebellious clothing. The attitude. The toys that unlike the toys of today, actually required creativity and imagination. We were essentially the last generation that played outside. We were the last generation that actually kept our clothes on. We were the last generation for a lot of things and because of that I felt a burning desire to remain living in that period inside my head."[117]

4.1 Introduction

Nostalgia is a fundamentally situated phenomenon.[118] That is to say, a phenomenon that is entrenched in an environment. In this chapter I analyse a specific aspect of our environment: media and material culture. Media is inseperable from material culture as media is available to us through the interaction with material culture that allows for its production (e.g. musical instruments) and reproduction (e.g. cd players) (DeNora 2000, Krueger & Szanto 2016). With the exception of music, philosophers have not shown too much interest in the relationship between nostalgia and media, unlike scholars from the social sciences, who put a big emphasis on it. In particular, authors such as Hutcheon (2000) and Lizardi (2015) have stressed that in our era, technology offers the means for making nostalgia more accessible than ever. As Hutcheon notices:

[117] https://www.80sthen80snow.com/about-jp

[118] I already discussed some concepts of this chapter in Massantini (2020).

> "[N]ostalgia requires the availability of evidence of the past, and it is precisely the electronic and mechanical reproduction of images of the past that plays such an important role in the structuring of the nostalgic imagination today, furnishing it with the possibility of 'compelling vitality'. Thanks to CD ROM technology and, before that, audio and video reproduction, nostalgia no longer has to rely on individual memory or desire: it can be fed forever by quick access to an infinitely recyclable past." (Hutcheon 2000, 196)

Since Hutcheon wrote this, potentially nostalgic content has become more readily available than ever due to the constant availability of movies, books, and songs via our smartphones. Access to virtually any piece of media ever created is now possible thanks to websites like YouTube and internet archives, which include everything from newsreels from the 1930s to whatever was popular when we were kids. In other words, we can now easily feel nostalgia at any time (Lizardi 2015).

Even if this is a common viewpoint, we should remember that speaking of material culture as only a trigger for our nostalgia may be simplistic (see Wildschut et al. 2006; Lizardi 2017, 6). In this chapter, I focus on how the environment might be organized—typically, but not always, by the subject—in a way that can structure the subject's nostalgia. I do not dispute that the environment can unpredictably trigger our nostalgia. In actuality, material supports do not just cause an emotional reaction. They also make it feasible for us to feel nostalgia in ways that would not be otherwise possible. Despite the fact that a true "homecoming" is recognized to be impossible, material culture gives a strong connection to the past, one that allows us to revisit the moments and experiences that make up our nostalgic renarration whenever we like.

I will begin this chapter by focusing on the relationship between music and nostalgia. In order to do so I will rely on the works of Proust, Rousseau and Jankélévitch. The latter will help us see how material culture allows us to engage with music. I further explore this idea by introducing the concepts of scaffolds and affective niche. However, material culture should not only be considered as a support for the reproduction of nostalgically relevant texts but also as a subject worthy of being analysed in its own right. Indeed material culture can support nostalgia in numerous other ways. In this regard I will discuss collections (e.g. toy collections) as nostalgic affective niches constituted by pieces of material culture. Finally I will devote the

rest of the chapter to discussing two important matters. First I discuss concepts such as "retro" that should not be conflated with the material scaffolding of nostalgia. Second, I will consider in what way the scaffolds on which we rely to modulate our nostalgia can be externally controlled.

4.2 From Sound to Music

I will start analysing the relationships between media and nostalgia by focusing on a specific medium, i.e. music. Many authors have pointed out the importance of music in our nostalgic experiences. Here in particular I will focus on three French speaking authors (i.e., Proust, Rousseau and Jankélévitch) who have contributed in various and complementary ways to the understanding of the relationship between music and nostalgia.

Once again, a good starting point in understanding this is reading Proust. Though his work does not tackle nostalgia directly, his reflections on involuntary memory include sound and music as well. In book seven when Marcel is waiting at the Guermantes's house before the party he has another important epiphany regarding the nature of involuntary memory. The sound of a spoon on a plate startles him. This time Marcel analyses the phenomenon swiftly. The sound was that of a servant striking a spoon against a plate, this in turn made him recall the sound Marcel heard a few days earlier, that of a worker striking a hammer against the wheel of a train. Once again, this episode of involuntary memory is particularly pleasurable. Is it safe to say that sound can play a similar role to that of olfactory and gustatory sensations in the episode of the madeleine. The temptation here would be to say that therefore also music can act similarly to a sound like the one of a spoon hitting a plate, that is to say that it can act as a trigger for involuntary memory which in turn can lead to nostalgia.

Proust famously tackled the theme of music and involuntary memory in his description of Vinteuil's sonata. This sonata is a fictional piece of music that is often heard by Swann, the main character of "Swann in Love" which is the central part of the first volume of *La Recherche*. Swann was a wealthy and cultured friend of Marcel's family that would often come visit when Marcel was still a young boy. The sonata is so significant for Swann because it became the "hymn national" of Swann's unhappy love for Odette (Jenkins 1998) a well-known courtesan in Paris. The sonata, and especially a specific little phrase from it, deserved the title of "hymn national" of their love because it accompanied many happy moments Swann had with Odette. Let us take into consideration a famous passage in which Swann hears the sonata

by accident in a moment of his life in which the love Odette had for Swann, if such a sentiment truly ever existed, is now over.

> "But suddenly it was as though she had entered, and this apparition was so agonisingly painful that his hand clutched at his heart. The violin had risen to a series of high notes on which it rested as though awaiting something, holding on to them in a prolonged expectancy, in the exaltation of already seeing the object of its expectation approaching, and with a desperate effort to last out until its arrival, to welcome it before itself expiring, to keep the way open for a moment longer, with all its remaining strength, so that the stranger might pass, as one holds a door open that would otherwise automatically close. And before Swann had had time to understand, what was happening and to say to himself: "It's the little phrase from Vinteuil's sonata-I mustn't listen!", all his memories of the days when Odette had been in love with him, which he had succeeded until that moment in keeping invisible in the depths of his being, deceived by this sudden reflection of a season of love whose sun, they supposed, had dawned again, had awakened from their slumber, had taken wing and risen to sing maddeningly in his ears, without pity for his present desolation, the forgotten strains of happiness." (Proust 1981, I 375)

In this passage Swann starts reflecting on the sonata. This is particularly interesting to us for various reasons. First of all, even though Swann is unaware of this, he is experiencing involuntary memory (Jenkins 1998). This experience shares with the experience of the madeleine the fact that it brings about memories of the past that would otherwise have remained invisible. However, the two experiences differ in the fact that rather than feeling pure pleasure, here Swann feels many different emotions. The passage goes on thus:

> "In place of the abstract expressions "the time when I was happy," "the time when I was loved," which he had often used before then without suffering too much since his intelligence had not embodied in them anything of the past save fictitious extracts which preserved none of the reality, he now recovered everything that had fixed unalterably the specific, volatile essence of that lost happiness; he could see it all: the snowy, curled petals of the chrysanthemum which she had tossed after him into his carriage, […]; he could smell the heated iron of the barber whom he used to have singe his hair while Loredan went to fetch the little seamstress; could feel the showers which fell so often

that spring, the ice-cold homeward drive in his victoria, by moonlight; all the network of mental habits, of seasonal impressions, of sensory reactions, which had extended over a series of weeks its uniform meshes in which his body found itself inextricably caught" (Proust 1981, I 375-376).

Here we see that what in voluntary memory was a vague "lost happiness" in the involuntary memory evoked by the sonata becomes much more. It is filled by specific sensations, thoughts and feelings. It is here that Swann truly feels he has lost happiness and love. As we already saw in chapter 2, involuntary memory brings about not only past sensations, but also the context in which we lived them. This happens here as well, and what is more, after the passage we just saw, Proust shows how as Swann relives past contexts, he feels a succession of various emotions including self-pity, jealousy for his own past self whom Odette once loved and finally resignation for the fact that the love Odette had for him is over.

A critical difference between this episode and the episode of the madeleine or the sound of the spoon hitting the plate is that in the case of the plate and that of the madeleine what triggers involuntary memory is a simple sensation while in the case of the sonata it is a complex one. Since the phrase of the sonata is a piece of media, it has a precise structure and this in turn plays necessarily a role in the way involuntary memory and emotions are experienced. According to Jenkins (1998) the structure of the sonata is particularly interesting because in it the reader retrospectively can see Swann's love story with Odette. Proust describes the rhythm of the phrase of the sonata thus:

"With a slow and rhythmical movement it led him first this way, then that, towards a state of happiness that was noble, unintelligible, and yet precise. And then suddenly, having reached a certain point from which he was preparing to follow it, after a momentary pause, abruptly it changed direction, and in a fresh movement, more rapid, fragile, melancholy, incessant, sweet, it bore him off with it towards new vistas. Then it vanished" (Proust 1981, I 228-229).

Jenkins (1998) comments on this point as follows:

"So too does Swann's love for Odette (in the pages that follow) begin at a slow rhythm. The happiness toward which this love first moves is noble, unintelligible, and precise,

but the reader cannot yet know this. Only retrospectively, cifter the episode of the Sainte-Euverte reception, will the Phrase have performed (for Swann, for three hundred bystanders indifferent to Swann's particular case, and for the reader as well) the importance, the dignity, the "charmes d'une tristesse intime" (349), like Swann's love for Odette, regardless of its seeming lack of logic. Likewise will the change in direction of Swann's love, adumbrated here in this musical metaphor, later be clear: the adjectives "rapide, menu, melancolique, incessant et doux" will will find their justification in the story of Swann's jealousy. And the remarks in the final volume on Swann's mistaken impressions concerning the Phrase will have all the more force because the reader, like Swann himself, once deprived of a perspective gained through time, will him(her-)self not have been able to read the first time all the signs contained in the Phrase" (Jenkins 1998, 93-94).

It is important to note that Swann does not directly reflect on the correlation between the rhythm of the phrase of the sonata and the way in which he retrospectively remembers his love story. However, it is safe to say that even though Swann is not fully aware of this, rhythm and melody change during the phrase is relevant to how he relives the past while listening to the music. Music can trigger involuntary memory in a peculiar way that cannot be reduced to the way a simple sensation like a sound or taste can. More specifically, by having a structure that unfolds over time, a piece of music like the phrase from the sonata can evoke a renarration of the past and trigger various emotions. As we have seen in previous chapters however Proust does not directly tackle nostalgia. Fortunately, other authors before him and most notably Rousseau had analysed the relationship between music and nostalgia closely. Rousseau analysed the "Ranz des Vaches" a piece of swiss folk music that has been connected to nostalgia since the times of Hofer (Illbruck 2012 , Starobinski 1966). Starobinski introduces this peculiar music as follows

"In 1710, in a Latin dissertation, Theodor Zwinger, of Basel, mentioned the appearance of a curious and intense nostalgic condition whenever the Swiss soldiers serving in France and Belgium heard a "certain rustic cantilena, to which the Swiss drive their herds to pasture in the Alps" This Kiihe-Reyhen, this Ranz-des-Vaches had the power to revive sad recollections of their native land. And this was especially detrimental to those whose blood had already been altered by the change of air, or for those naturally

inclined to sadness. This is why, Zwinger asserts, when faced with the disastrous effects of these tunes, the officers considered themselves forced to prohibit them and to punish those who persisted in playing, singing or even whistling them, with the utmost severity". (Starobinski 1966, 90)

Rousseau tackles the problem of the Ranz des Vaches in his Dictionary of music:

"I have added the celebrated Ranz-des-vaches, that Tune so cherished by the Swiss that they have forbidden it from being played in their 'Troops on pain of death [il fut défendu sous peine de mort de le jouer] since it would cause those who heard it to dissolve in tears, desert, or die, so much would it arouse in them the ardent desire to see their country again. One would seek in vain in this Tune the energetic accents capable of producing such astonishing effects. These effects, which do not take place on foreigners, come solely from habit, from memories, from a thousand circumstances which, recounted by this Tune to those who hear it and recalling for them their country, their old pleasures, their youth, and all their ways of living, arouse in them a bitter pain for having lost all that. The Music therefore does not precisely act as Music, but as a memorative sign. This Tune, although always the same, today no longer produces the same effects it formerly produced on the Swiss, because, having lost the taste for their first simplicity (le goût de leur première simplicté), they no longer regret it when it is recalled for them. So true itis that itis not in their physical action that the greatest effects of Sounds on the human heart must be sought!" (Rousseau 1995, 924 as quoted by Illbruck 2012, 88)

Starobinski (1966) comments this passage by arguing that the tune itself is a fragment of the past that strikes our senses. It is at the same time a memorative sign and also something that elicits our imagination. As it is typical also of nostalgia, this generates in us both pleasure and pain, since we fleetingly experience an impossible return. The return we experience is at the same time imminent and impossible and the past through melody emerges nostalgically and fleeting from oblivion: "The image of childhood reappears through a melody, only to slip away, leaving us a prey to this "passion du souvenir" which Madame de Stael saw as "the most disquieting sorrow that can take possession of the soul" (Starobinski 1966, 92-93).

We can make a comparison between Rousseau's analysis of the Ranz des Vachesas memorative sign and Proust's literary description of involuntary memory and the Vinteuil sonata. Both the Ranz des Vaches and the phrase of the Vinteuil sonata have an affective function. According to Rousseau the Ranz des Vaches, just like in the case of the madeleine, essentially has the function of triggering what Proust later called involuntary memory, which in turn can trigger a longing. Interestingly, Rousseau notices that the longing is not triggered necessarily as he argues that once the love for simplicity has left the Swiss, the Ranz des Vaches cannot evoke it. This idea is absent in Proust. Indeed, Swann is a very sophisticated man and yet while listening to the phrase of the sonata he feels many emotions, including some kind of longing, and maybe even nostalgia. Another important difference is that Rousseau argues that the Ranz des Vaches does not act as music, but as a memorative sign, Rousseau presents a phenomenon much different from Proust's discussion of the Vinteuil sonata and is rather closer to the episode of the madeleine. More precisely, also in the case of the madeleine it is not the gustative perception per se that is powerful, but rather the fact that it takes the subject back to a previous gustatory experience and therefore the time and context in which that experience (or series of experiences) took place. Similarly, in the case of the Ranz des Vaches, Rousseau argues, it is not the beauty of the music that evokes the longing. Instead, this music triggers longing when it is listened to by people who have not heard it in a long time and who associate it with lost happiness as they would often hear it in the home that is now faraway. One could say that Rousseau's account is reductive as music is much more complex, in the sense that music can generate various moods in the subject; for instance one could argue that more depressive, sad or melancholic songs can further facilitate nostalgia or homesickness.

Indeed, one could say that even though Proust does not directly tackle nostalgia, he offers a better account of the role of music, as he does not commit Rousseau's mistake of reducing it to a memorative sign. However, we should offer a more charitable reading of Rousseau and argue that here he is only considering a specific case and that generally speaking when a piece of music triggers nostalgia its structure does play an important role. When Rousseau tackles the Ranz des Vaches he is mainly interested in showing how a piece of media that embodies a piece of cultural memory can promote collaboration between memory and imagination capable of generating longing (Illbruck 2012). The discussion of the Ranz des Vaches should not be taken to mean that music can only trigger nostalgia when it acts as a memorative sign. Norton (1973) for instance shows that according to Rousseau in music we may reproduce the passions and emotions which are its source. The melody in particular is

capable of imitating those emotional states that can be conveyed by language and this is particularly true in the case of nostalgia.

Let us consider the following passage:

> "When governed by a meaningful succession of sounds, music becomes like a declamation, filled with "ses périodes, ses phrases, ses suspensions, ses repos, sa ponctuation de toute espèce" (XIII, 404). Movement, succession, and Time are, therefore, the stuff of which melodic energy is made. Through them, music may reclaim its former powers: it may evoke and affect, as well as re-create incomparable moments of seemingly irretrievable time." (Norton 1973, 142)

The idea that music and nostalgia can have a deep relation was later discussed also by Jankélévitch (1974). He argues that music cannot directly act on things to transform them, however it can give a voice to the unhappy fact the past is irreversible. This is partly possible because music, just like time is not reversible. In other words, a piece of music is made up by a specific succession of notes and the notes that have already been played cannot be changed. Jankélévitch (1974) also notices that music, unlike time, can be repeated: "on peut la rejouer ou la réentendre, remettre le disque sous l'aiguille autant de fois que l'on voudra" (375), that is to say: "you can replay it or hear it again, put the disc back under the needle as many times as you want". By reflecting on the material support necessary to reproduce music, Jankélévitch introduces an important point: music is at the same time irreversible and repeatable. Let us see his point in greater detail. Music is doubly irreversible. As said, it is irreversible in the sense that the notes in it make up an immanent unchangeable order. Music is also irreversible in the sense that even though it can be repeated (e.g., by playing the instruments again in the case of live music, by moving the needle back to the beginning of the song in the case of a record player, or by tapping or pressing on rewind), each repetition is necessarily located in what Jankélévitch calls "la temporalité générale" - the general temporality. This means that every repetition differs qualitatively from an other, because they are located at different points of the general temporality.[119] "En somme la demi-heure nommée symphonie est un irréversible

[119] Of course a record player or Spotify are capable of reproducing the same piece again and again. The point here is that each repetition differs from any other in that it takes place in a specific part of time. For example, yesterday I listened to a piece from 09.00 a.m. to 09.05 am. I can listen to the same piece again today, but that reproduction

curieusement maniable où le remède nous est donné en même temps que le mal" (Jankélévitch 1974, 375) - "In short, that half-hour called a symphony is an irreversible curiously pliable thing in which the remedy is given to us at the same time as the disease."

In short, music here is described as a disease, because it is a painful reminder of the irreversibility of time; time is irreversible just like the order of the notes or the order of executions of the same piece of music. At the same time, music is a cure, because it allows us to relive the past at will. Similarly, nostalgia is painful because it is a desire for something unobtainable and at the same time it is pleasurable because in nostalgia we can indulge in the contemplation of the past for as long as we want.

In light of what I have discussed thus far, it is easy to see why media, and especially music can be so effective at eliciting nostalgia. Whenever a piece of music elicits nostalgia in us there are up to three factors that can contribute to our feeling of nostalgia. The first is that we might associate that music with happy moments of the past, because we used to listen to it when we were younger. The second is that it might have a melody that provokes in us a melancholic mood, which in turn facilitates nostalgia. The third is that whenever we listen to a piece of music, we engage with a medium that is irreversible, and in it we see reflected the irreversibility of time itself, which is the condition of possibility of nostalgia.
The first factor, the one that elicits our autobiographical involuntary memory, is not always present, though when it is present it is the one that usually plays the most evident role. The second factor, just like the first, is not always present, however, since it acts on the very foundation of our affectivity, could elicit nostalgia in us even if it is the very first time we hear a specific piece of music. The third factor is always present, though the listener is usually not aware of it. This third factor acts on imagination, as it is the irreversibility of time (which is reminded to us by music) that allows for imagination to intervene and recreate a past that never truly was. Indeed, it is important not to reduce the activity of music in relation to nostalgia to that of a mere memorative sign. If music was nothing more than a memorative sign, then it could only work on autobiographical nostalgia, instead the second and third factors can also intervene in displaced nostalgia.

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will differ from that of yesterday in that it can be played again today, or tomorrow, but it cannot be played again yesterday at 09.00 a.m.

4.3 Situated Affectivity: Affective Scaffolds and Niche Construction

We saw that nostalgia can be closely correlated to media, for instance music, which I have started analysing. By reflecting on Jankélévitch, we saw that the relation we have with music (and other media) must also be analysed by taking into account the material support that allows us to engage with such media. Most interestingly, by arguing that nostalgia can be evoked by music and that we can repeat music whenever we want, Jankélévitch invites us to reflect on the fact that after all nostalgia is not always a purely involuntary phenomenon, as most scholars argue it to be. In order to better understand this aspect, I will now use the theories of situated affectivity, which in part I already introduced in the previous chapter. Situated affectivity will also help us better understand nostalgia in other respects. More in general we will see that nostalgia is deeply dependent on the emoter's environment, especially the technology, media, symbols and material culture present in it (Hutcheon 2000; Boym 2001; Wilson J. 2005; Lizardi 2015) and the theories of situated affectivity offer great tools, especially the various formulations of the concept of affective scaffolding, to comprehend this characteristic of nostalgia. The supporters of these theories argue that we should not analyse affect and emotion as processes that take place exclusively intracranially. That is to say, they hold that affectivity is not a process confined to the individual brain; rather, it also incorporates processes that occur within the body and sequences of active engagement with the environment, usually in a highly social and relational context (Slaby and Wüschner, 2014).

Thus, affectivity is to be regarded as a process that involves the brain and the body of the emoter, and that can be supported or scaffolded, by technology, processes or structures present in the environment (Griffiths and Scarantino 2009, Slaby 2014, Krueger 2014, Colombetti and Roberts 2015, Stephan & Walter 2020)[120]. I will use the ideas of scaffolding and niche creation, two key concepts in situated affectivity, to talk about the role material culture plays in nostalgia. By expanding on Vygotsky's work, Clark (1997) developed the idea of the external scaffold in cognitive science (1968). The environment may contain objects or structures that the subject can dependably use as a reliable external scaffold to support

[120] Whether affectivity can be extended (i.e., co-constituted by extrabodily processes) or, at most, embedded (i.e., co-dependent upon extrabodily processes), is not something I debate (see Stephan et al. 2014, 69). I remain neutral on the subject because as Stephan and Walter assert from a pragmatic point of view, whether affectivity can be extended or merely embedded does not make much difference, and rather than losing ourselves in metaphysical dilemmas, we should, as I do in this theses, focus on the "personal, moral, and societal importance of being aware of these scaffoldings" (Stephan and Walter 2020).

cognitive processes (Clark 1997, 45-47). Language and technology (from paper and pen to computers that may be used, for example, to perform complex computations) are classic examples of external scaffolds (Clark 1997). An expert bartender using specialized glassware and decorations that she places on the counter rather than literally memorizing long orders is a more contemporary example (Stephan & Walter 2020).

The notion of situated affectivity was expanded upon by Griffiths and Scarantino (2009) when they introduced the concept of emotional scaffolds and distinguished between synchronic and diachronic scaffolding:

> "[T]he environment plays an active role in structuring and enabling emotional "engagements," which […] are scaffolded by their natural context of occurrence. The environment scaffolds emotion in two ways. Synchronically, the environment supports particular emotional performances – particular episodes of, say, anger or sadness […] Diachronically, the environment supports the development of an "emotional phenotype" or repertoire of emotional abilities. Thus, the provision of confessionals in churches enables certain kinds of emotional performance (synchronic scaffolding), and the broader Catholic culture supports the development of the ability to engage in the emotional engagements of confession (diachronic scaffolding)." (Griffith and Scaratino 2009, 443)

The environment, which includes everything from language to architecture and from material culture to political institutions (Colombetti and Krueger 2015), does not simply offer triggers for the affective reactions of the subject. The notion that emotions are a response to the environment is a trivial one that would not need the notion of scaffolding to explain it. Rather, the environment takes part in the affective process by providing scaffolds that enable affectivity to be performed and developed in particular ways (Griffiths and Scarantino 2009).

Colombetti and Krueger (2015) make a significant advancement in the notion of affective scaffolding, asserting not just that our emotions rely on our sociocultural context, as Griffith and Scarantino (2009) had already postulated, but also that affective states entail the active manipulation of the environment. According to them, this process results in the formation of what they call 'affective niches'—that is to say, "instances of organism-environment couplings (mutual influences) that enable the realisation of specific affective

states. This active manipulation need not be the product of a conscious intention, although it can be rather, it is often just part of our repertoire of habitual dealings with the world."[121] (Colombetti and Krueger 2015, 1160).

Because it emphasizes how fundamentally intertwined we are with our environment as affective beings, niche construction theory provides a comprehensive understanding of affective scaffolding. According to the niche construction theory, we modify a niche in many ways as occupants of a given environment to better meet our needs (in this case, affective needs). Our affective structure is simultaneously shaped by the niche in which we were born and the contributions we have made to its formation. The example of the woman's purse provided by Colombetti and Krueger is very intriguing and aids in comprehending the concept of affective niche. Such a handbag is an instance of a highly portable and personalised affective scaffold, as it is a:

> "collection of technologies specifically chosen for regulating affect: charms and tokens for good luck and peace of mind, which influence one's appraisal of, and ability to cope with, specific situations; photos, assorted mementos (such as old theatre tickets and restaurant receipts), snippets of notes, and letters from loved ones that bring about fond memories of individuals and elicit specific feelings; and small weapons or tools that affect one's awareness of one's action possibilities, which accordingly generate feelings of confidence, power, and security'." (Colombetti and Krueger 2015, 1163)

Colombetti and Krueger (2015) following Sterelny (2010) analyse some core features of affective scaffolds, here I will focus on trust and individualisation.[122] These characteristics

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[121] The idea of niche creation has its roots in evolutionary biology, and it has been extensively researched by Odling-Smee, Laland, and Feldman (2003). The beaver's activity of constructing dams is an illustration of niche construction in nature. The ecosystem in which the beaver lives is shaped by this action. Thus, the habitat created to meet the demands of the beaver turns into a niche, which in turn influences the behavior of the beaver and its offspring. Sterelny (2010) was the first to introduce the idea of niche building in cognitive sciences.

[122] Coninx and Stephan (2021) describe 8 dimensions: "(a) *Trust* concerns the reliability of a particular scaffold or a type of scaffold and the subject's access to it. (b) *Robustness* characterizes the regularity with which a scaffold is engaged. (c) *Mineness* captures how closely the scaffold is integrated into one's self-narrative, i.e., how closely the scaffold is experienced with respect to who we perceive ourselves to be. (d) *Individualization* characterizes the degrees to which the particular scaffold is adapted to the individual agent. (e) *Incorporation* indicates to what extent the scaffold is phenomenally inte- grated into the affective experience. (f) *Awareness* indicates the degree to which people are consciously aware of the scaffolding relation. (g) *Intent* indicates whether the agent explicitly

help differentiate proper affective scaffolds from occasional stimuli coming from the environment. Trust refers to the degree to which we believe a specific resource to be reliable in generating a specific affective state. If we trust a specific resource, then we believe it will reliably affect us in specific and predictable ways. For instance, I can consider listening to a specific piece of music as trustworthy if I have experienced several times that it can put me in a specific mood. Trust also refers to the way and degree to which a resource is available. Resources can be available in different ways: museums, cinema and institutions are available in the sense that they are located in specific places that offer services and experiences able to reliably generate specific states in us. For instance, I can consider going to church as a reliable source for various feelings (e.g. feeling of belonging to a community, hope, peace and so on). Resources are often available because they are in our homes; indeed, we design our homes in such a way to meet our needs, including some of our affective needs. In other circumstances resources are available because they are small and portable, which allows us to carry them with us, as is the case of the handbag discussed above. Smartphones are another important example of this: they are small and portable and they represent one of our most important sources for affective regulation, not only because they represent the primary sources to interact with people who are not present, but also because they allow us to have access to an almost infinite amount of media (movies, books, music) through the internet. Moreover, thanks to the age of cloud computing, the resource we trust are not bound to specific devices. Instead they are always available from any device that allows us to log in on the services we use. For instance I can upload entire libraries of media on the cloud and easily access them from any device. Moreover, a great part of nostalgically relevant media is stored on websites such as YouTube, which means they can be accessed any time even without having to log in. The dimension of individualisation refers to the degree to which a resource has been adapted to fulfil the subject's purposes and regular activities. Of course the more one uses a resource the more it gets individualised. Individualisation therefore is necessarily a diachronic process. For instance, over a long period of time I can organise my house in such a way that it accommodates my affective needs. For example over time I can collect souvenirs from my travel and organise

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intends to use or structure an environ- mental resource to shape the affective experiences of themselves or others. (h) *Control* indicates the degree to which an agent can actively influence a scaf- folding relation." (50-51)

them on shelves in such a way that when I look at them I can get lost in pleasurable memories of past vacations. Sterelny (2010) notices that this is a process of reciprocal adaptation as the user adapts the resource to their needs, but at the same time the user adapts themselves to the resource.

4.4 Supporting Nostalgia

Let's look at the environment more closely to understand how it can encourage nostalgia. Researchers have shown a particular interest in media streaming devices that enable the consumption of all types of media, including books, movies, and especially music, such as MP3 players, portable computers, and smartphones. I think these technologies enable two distinct types of user-resource interactions (i.e. interactions between an individual and an affective scaffold). The first kind of interaction is one in which an individual uses material culture as unidirectional material tools for emoting (see Stephan and Walter 2020). For instance, if one involuntarily finds herself feeling a painful nostalgic longing for her youth, she can look at photographs of her young self sharing moments of joy with relatives or friends. Through this interaction with a resource in the environment, she can control her nostalgia by participating in an enjoyable contemplation of the past. The past is seen in the image and might be thought about as something that is not entirely gone but is kind of still "present." Since this mediated aesthetic relation with the past is enjoyable it relieves the sense of longing. In this example, consequently, the subject begins a deliberate and unidirectional influence of the world into herself to fulfill a specific affective need (see Stephan and Walter 2020). This alleviating of the sense of yearning could happen without an external support. After all nostalgia is bitter because we long for something, and sweet because we love partaking in the contemplation of the past, be it a mediated contemplation or not. However, the use of a scaffold makes the relieving function easier and quicker to be practiced.

In this section, I'd like to talk about the functionally integrated gainful system (FIG), which was first described by Wilson R. A. (2010). In particular, Krueger and Szanto (2016) try to show that the music we listen to through our portable electronics does not simply trigger our affectivity and that the relation we have with our portable devices capable of reproducing media is not unidirectional. Instead, they create a FIG when combined with the listener. FIGs have the following three essential qualities: “they consist of processes that are (1) *coupled*, in that they are linked by reliable causal connections; (2) *integrated*, in that they are mutually

influencing and working together as one; and (3) *functionally gainful*, in that these processes together realise novel functions they cannot realise separately" (Krueger and Szanto 2016, 867). Consequently, a FIG entails ongoing feedback between a person and particular aspects of her environment, much like a niche does. According to Krueger and Szanto, listening to music can satisfy FIG's requirements. When we consider how material culture always mediates our interaction with music, this becomes clear (DeNora, 2000; Krueger and Szanto 2016, 867). The majority of the time, we listen to music using modern devices like MP3 players and the widely used streaming services made available by the smartphones in our pockets. These material technologies serve as a reliable resource that we can use whenever and for however long we like, satisfying the requirement of coupling (Krueger and Szanto 2016. 867-868). How does integration fit in? With the help of physical technology, we may interact with music in real time. Depending on our mood, we can construct playlists with particular artists, genres, and songs. By adjusting the volume and bass, we may alter the aural qualities of the music, and we can even establish the listening environment (e.g. headphones or speakers). "Finally, the manipulation of music through the material device that reproduces it loops back into us, as what we listen to can modify our mood, thus creating a functionally gainful system" (Massantini 2020). Moreover, the streaming service might offer us new music depending on our listening history. The subject alone cannot fulfil the self-stimulation we achieve through the manipulation of the music, achievable only through engagement with material culture (Krueger and Szanto 2016, 867-868).

Even though this model works particularly well with music, a medium with which the user can interact easily, I believe that it can easily translate to other media, such as videos. The ongoing feedback between the user and the device allows the creation of playlists of nostalgic material[123] on the go. For example, whilst listening to a song from my childhood, I can also be reminded of a similar song that was popular around that time. Immediately I can use my device to stop listening to the former song and start listening to the latter. Not only that, I can listen to the song as whole or, as it often happens, just to that chorus that was so popular when it first came out. Then I might be reminded of how that song was played during a particular scene of movie I really like and at once, without changing device (and maybe without even changing

[123] The concept of 'playlist past' is essential to the work of Lizardi (2015). With this phrase, he alludes to the possibilities of building collections of nostalgic materials, ranging from novels to videogames, that new technologies offer and the mass-media industry promotes. The playlist past, in Lizardi's opinion, is a sentimental, personalized, selfish, and uncritical past.

app) I can watch that precise scene as many times as I want. In other words, I can structure my nostalgic experience in a way that could only be possible through the interaction with such devices. Not only that, if in a way the device allows me to structure my experience exactly as I desire, it is also true that desire is partially induced by the fact that the device allows me to be erratic. As in Krueger and Szanto's (2016) example, the technology that allows us to reliably self-stimulate our affective state (in this case, nostalgia) is always in our pockets. Therefore, we could induce nostalgia in ourselves whenever we want, by manipulating the device that reproduces the media. Moreover, as long as we are in full control of the device, we can also prolong the nostalgic experience by keeping feeding ourselves with nostalgic stimuli.

What I find particularly interesting in these models of scaffolded nostalgia is the peculiarity of the functional gain. Reading a book, listening to a song or watching a movie from our childhood immediately connects us to the past in a way that otherwise would not be possible.[124] While our memories of the past can change through time, the interaction with media from that time allows us to connect directly to that past in a way that memories cannot offer. Only through something that comes uncuffed from the past can we reconnect with our childhood in the most direct way. In other words, media has the quality for which the nostalgic person yearns most: an immediate connection and continuity with the past. It is only natural that nostalgia should occur through them.[125] In these instances, the environment integrates the function of alleviating the sense of longing by allowing the subject to engage in an experience comparable in the imagination of the subject to those that characterised her childhood. The subject could not fulfil this function autonomously through remembering alone. Remembering a melody and listening to it do not create the same effect. In the same way, the phenomena of remembering a childhood experience (such as the engagement with a text) and recreating that experience in the present are radically different. However, this relief is always time-limited and incomplete; it is bittersweet, we could say, since (as argued above) the object of longing is a time idealised as a whole and not as single experiences. In this light, we can easily see how nostalgia is often scaffolded through material culture. Despite instances in which one might

[124] This example works best with books we read as kids and reread as adults, but it also applies to books that include themes from books we read as kids.

[125] Naturally, this is somewhat counterintuitive. The past can be instantly connected to through media, giving the relationship an instantaneous appearance. At the same time, this connection is "mediated," as Lizardi (2015) would put it, because it occurs through a medium. We may observe a fundamental aspect of nostalgia—the connection to a past that is gone but still somehow accessible—through our interaction with the media.

feel nostalgia without some kind of affective scaffold, nowadays it seems that nostalgia usually takes place through engagement with media and material culture.

4.5 Collections as Niches

Material culture is relevant for nostalgia not only because it allows for the reproduction of nostalgically relevant media. Material culture is not only books, CD and CD players, smartphones and computers. Rather it also includes every type of everyday object, including utensils, toys, cars, antiques and so on. Material culture in particular plays a fundamental role in the phenomenon of collecting, which has been studied as an interesting material manifestation of nostalgic longing (Wilson 2005, Boym 2001, Lizardi 2015).

The model of niche construction can be particularly useful in describing collecting. Owning, collecting and organising objects from the past allow us to create a space in which certain affective phenomena would otherwise be impossible. For example, Wilson J. (2005, 113) observes that some people collect items that they wanted as kids but were unable to acquire at the time. Owning that specific item in this case enables the person to not only connect to her youth but also to somewhat "complete" it and idealize it. In a way, having those toys allows the subject to "restore" what never was.[126] When we consider persons who collect artifacts from a time that ended before one was born, the concept of restoring and experiencing a past that one has never experienced becomes even more clear (see Wilson J. 2005, 109-127). A collection looks to be a reliable and highly individualized source of nostalgia from the standpoint of niche creation.

By collecting artefacts and texts that defined our culture in the past, we can construct reliable sources through which we can re-narrate and – to a certain degree – 'relieve' a past that is a mixture of the personal and the collective. We can better see these points by going back to the case study of J.P. which I discussed before in this thesis. If you recall, J.P. is a man who has built an impressive collection of 80's memorabilia. The collection, which at some point worked for him as a coping mechanism for the loss of his parents, has now become a celebration of his own nostalgia and that of an entire generation, a nostalgia which he proudly shares on the internet. Let us read this quote from one of his interviews:

[126] The same goes for music: you can stream or buy as a CD what you could not afford as a child.

> "One of the first toys I remember from my childhood are Care-Bears and when an elderly lady offered to sell me some for $10 each, I immediately started see my mother within them."[127]

It is evident here that that toy worked for him as a way to scaffold his grieving process. However, J.P. has also admitted that at one point he also started collecting toys that he wanted as a kid and that his parents would not buy him at the time.

In the example of a toy collection we can see how the subject can recreate the perfect childhood he never had. He can collect not only the toys he once had and that are now lost, but also all the toys he wanted but that her parents could not afford. We could say that in this instance owing that particular object allows the individual not only to connect to his childhood, but also to some degree "complete" it and thus idealise it. In a sense owning those toys let the subject affectively "restore" to some degree what never was. A collection such as J.P.'s can be classified as an affective niche for several reasons. First of all this collection is highly individualised, since it is designed and organised and acquired piece by piece by the nostalgic collector himself[128]. It is therefore also highly trusted, because the more individualised it is, the more trusted it becomes. It represents a stable and reliable source to alleviate the sense of nostalgic longing because it allows its owner to engage with the past. More specifically not any general version of the 80s, but rather the one he has carefully crafted through a process of selection that has shaped both the collection and his vision of the past. J.P.'s nostalgic 80s are for the most part a happy time made of pieces of pop culture that exclude unhappy and problematic aspects of the decade, such as the AIDS epidemic or the Chornobyl disaster. Not only that, a collection such as his can also scaffold feelings of belonging to two communities. The first is his own generation (those who grew up in the 80s). The other is the community of those who see value in collections such as his (e.g. other collectors, or people who have a fascination for the 80s). Finally, it is also interesting to notice that while the entire collection as whole can be considered a niche, individual pieces of the collection, especially those that

[127] https://www.80sthen80snow.com

[128] Each collection is different and reflects the collector's identity and personality.

are particularly important to their owner, resemble more closely the notion of affective artefacts (Piredda 2020). Affective artefacts are individual material objects that are usually employed by a user to regulate their own affective state.

4.6 Retro and Vintage

Before moving on I must still tackle a problem: clarifying the difference between scaffolded nostalgia and similar phenomena such as retro. In analysing the relationship that nostalgia has with material culture and media it is important to focus on the concepts of "retro" and "vintage". These concepts are important because they all have to do with a fascination with the past and involve the engagement with media and material culture, and are often wrongly conflated with nostalgia. While there can be some overlapping between these concepts, they are actually quite distinct from one another. Let us start from retro. In his "Retromania" Reynolds (2011) lists four characteristics that differentiate retro from other ways in which we can relate to the past:

> "(1) Retro is always about the relatively immediate past, about stuff that happened in living memory." (Reynolds 2011, xxx)

Here it is important to point out that relatively immediate past does not necessarily refer to the past one has lived. This point is further clarified in what follows.

> "(2) Retro involves an element of exact recall: the ready availability of archived documentation (photographic, video, music recordings, the Internet) allows for precision replication of the old style, whether it's a period genre of music, graphics or fashion. As a result, the scope for imaginative misrecognition of the past - the distortions and mutations that characterised earlier cults of antiquity like the Gothic Revival, for instance - is reduced." (Reynolds 2011, xxx)

Here we come to understand that the totality of past of retro is essentially the time period comprised between yesterday and the beginning of the twentieth century. In retro it is not important that one has lived a specific period (e.g., the American 50s or the Soviet 80s). What is important is that there is plenty of archival documentation that allows us to recreate a specific style from that period. If nostalgia is interested in an entire world, retro reduces that

world to a style one can wear or play. This point is particularly important because it helps us identify one specific aspect in which retro differs from displaced nostalgia. Retro and displaced nostalgia have in common the fact that they can refer to a time period one has never lived. Retro however is much more limited in scope, as it requires the "ready availability of archived documentation" which allows for a precise replication of a past style. Displaced nostalgia, on the other hand is extremely wide in scope and can include anything from the generation before the one in which I was born all the way to antiquity and even mythical times.

Not only that, retro can also be about a time period we actually lived (e.g. if I am in my 60s I can see something from 30 or 40 years ago as retro, even though I was alive at the time). In short there is only a short window of time in which retro and nostalgia can actually overlap (at least for what concerns the time to which they refer). Reynolds further characterises retro thus:

> "(3) Retro also generally involves the artifacts of popular culture. This differentiates it from earlier revivals, which, as the historian Raphael Samuel points out, were based around high culture and originated from the higher echelons of society - aristocratic aesthetes and antiquarians with a rarified taste for exquisite collectables. Retro's stomping ground isn't the auction house or antique dealer but the flea market, charity shop, jumble sale and junk shop." (Reynolds 2011, xxx)

As we saw nostalgia can also rely on artefacts. One important difference from retro is that nostalgia is not limited to popular culture, though it often is. One for instance can feel displaced nostalgia for classical Athens and go to the British museum to support her nostalgia. Retro on the other hand has to do by definition with artefacts from pop culture. Reynold concludes as follows:

> "(4) A final characteristic of the retro sensibility is that it tends neither to idealise nor sentimentalise the past, but seeks to be amused and charmed by it. By and large, the approach is not scholarly and purist but ironic and eclectic. As Samuel puts it, 'retrochic makes a plaything of the past'. This playfulness is related to the fact that retro is actually more about the present than the past it appears to revere and revive. It uses the past as an archive of materials from which to extract subcultural capital (hipness, in other

words) through recycling and recombining: the bricolage of cultural bric-a-brac." (Reynolds 2011, xxx-xxxi)

Here we can see another important difference with nostalgia. Nostalgia, even its most reflective or ironic variations, is an idealised and sentimentalised version of the past that can be scaffolded by material culture. Retro on the other hand is material culture that does not necessarily have to scaffold any idealisation of the past. Later on, Reynolds also explains the difference between retro and vintage. The two are related but not identical. Vintage is about the original period artefacts, as opposed to brand-new artefacts that rework old designs as is the case of retro (Reynolds 2011, 192)

"The word 'vintage' itself was something of a rebranding coup, replacing the notion of second-hand or 'used' (that even more off-putting American expression for previously owned goods). The word comes originally from the wine trade, where superiority is generally measured by how old a particular vintage is. It drifted across to refer to other things where age could be a seal of quality: musical instruments, early motor cars from between the world wars. By the fifties and sixties, old clothes were starting to lose their stigma, at least within bohemia. According to fashion historian Angela McRobbie, the Beats rummaged for thirties style clothing, while the dormant flea markets of major European cities were made happening places again by hippies seeking fur coats, lace petticoats and velvet skirts. As with collectable knick knacks, a micro-economy of traders and aspiring designers sprang up who foraged for salvageable garments in the markets, mending and sometimes tweaking the clothes they found." (Reynolds 2011, 193)

It is important to note that one can appreciate a retro or vintage item without feeling any nostalgia for the time and space from which it comes. For instance, one can appreciate furniture, fashion, music and other pieces of material (and immaterial) culture from the Italy of the 1930s without being nostalgic for a country that at the time was controlled by a fascist regime. At the same time appreciation of retro and vintage are not completely separated from nostalgia either. Objects that fall under the categories of vintage and retro can be used to express our nostalgia and therefore our identity. So for instance Anna can use an object from 30's Italy because she finds it fascinating, Bianca can use that same object to scaffold her nostalgia for 30's Italy, and Carla can be nostalgic for fascist Italy even without using that item

as a scaffold. Retro and vintage are always “itemised”, they always refer to specific items or styles (an entire room can be retro), nostalgia on the other hand refers to an entire world and items at most represent scaffolds, even though we are not always aware of this, indeed most of the time we are not.

4.7 Mind Invasion

In this final section I discuss the fact that nostalgia can be externally influenced and even manipulated (see Jamesson 1991, Lizardi 2015). The tools that situated affectivity offers - especially what Slaby (2016) calls ‘mind invasion’ - can be used to better understand these problems[129]. Slaby founds this concepts on the critique of the user/resource model. In this framework, a conscious individual (‘user’) – who is typically a fully developed adult – pursues a specific task through intentional use of a piece of equipment or by utilising particular elements of the structure of the environment (‘resource’). This model, which dominates situated affectivity theories, is flawed because it ignores crucial political issues and does not adequately handle the intricacy of the relationship between "subject" and "environment" (Slaby 2016). More precisely this framework does not emphasize the fact that the resources subjects use also have an impact “in bringing about and enabling the agent, and transforming her or him in various ways” (Slaby 2016, 7). In other words, we should concentrate not just on how we structure the niche to satisfy our affective needs but also on how, in turn, the niche shapes us by creating affective attitudes and needs.

Now it should be clear that the notion that nostalgia is a purely personal and spontaneous emotion cannot be true. Instead, one's social and cultural context has a significant impact on the nostalgic renarration process, which involves selections and reevaluations. Here, I provide an illustration of how diachronic scaffolding might be used to generate and shape nostalgia, an emotive attitude we hold toward the past. Let's go back to the 9/11 example that I looked at in a previous chapter. I may have fond memories of the world before 9/11, but were things really less complicated? Since I was too young to make judgments at the time, I am unable to say. My nostalgia for the world before 9/11 must thus be based on more than just my memories, particularly how the mass media depicts that era before and after 9/11. I can utilize

[129] Note that Coninx and Stephan (2021) consider mind invasion a specific form of mind shaping, a concept that I analyse in chapter 5.

visuals from the media that portray the world before 9/11 as a "mind-tool" to make up for the dearth of memories I have from that era. Not only that, but I can organize my nostalgia by actively engaging with these media.

This might kind of reflect what Boym (2001) calls reflective nostalgia, especially when we think about the active engagement, irony and self-awareness that define this kind of yearning. This is just another instance of the user/resource framework that would work best with media produced around the time for which we are nostalgic.[130] However, if we begin to think about media created after the era for which we are nostalgic, yet portraying that age, we must realize a fundamental aspect of media in general: they are renarrations in and of themselves. Movies, books, and documentaries are examples of mass-media productions that always make a choice, provide a point of view, and hence always entail re-evaluation, especially when they depict the past. The idea of scaffolding so gains even more significance. These cultural products serve as a scaffold for the processes of nostalgic selection and renarration as well as a support for our memories. This is crucial. In actuality, the structuring of the renarration of our past is inextricably linked to the renarrations of the past that our environment presents to us and in which we actively participate. If we consider nostalgia for our childhood in general, this can become more clear. Even though we only recall experiences we actually had when we were children, unlike other forms of nostalgia, like political nostalgia, such experiences are not inherently nostalgic. They become nostalgic only after they are presented as such (Boym 2001, Hutcheon 2000, Lizardi 2015). Or, to put it another way, when the selection and re-evaluation (or renarration) processes occur. Even though these processes could happen independently, the majority of the time they are integrated by the selections, re-evaluations and renarrations already present in the environment, in the form of media.
This has profound political implications.

The scaffolds through which we make this selection and renarration can be ‘hacked’. To better understand this, I refer to Slaby’s (2016) concept of mind invasion:

> “The term “mind invasion” is intended to capture some of the ways in which it is exactly not my individual decision to employ a mind tool in the pursuit of my self-avowed

[130] For instance, there is a discernible difference between a film from the 1950s that portrays society through the prism of the era in which it was made and a film about the 1950s that portrays the same society in a critical or romanticizing light.

goals, but rather forms of pervasive framing and molding effected by aspects of technical infrastructure and institutional realities." (Slaby 2016, 6)

Affective mind invasion takes place when an individual adopts affective dispositions that are typical of a specific environment (e.g. from the corporate workplace to the world of sport and from academia to the army).

> "In mind invasion, the affective dispositions and patterns of interpersonal interaction that individuals adopt are not only considered normative in the environment in question (Colombetti and Krueger 2015) but also adopted without the full awareness or consent of the subject. Thus, the new affective disposition is detrimental to the subject and beneficial to those who have more control over the environment. For example, Slaby analysed the corporate workplace where, over time, employees adopt patterns of interpersonal interaction, emotional experience and expression, made possible through environmental scaffolding. Employees might feel the affective need to always be reachable, even when not at work. Technologies such as email and smartphones support this affective attitude. Even though employees are those who actively engage with the technology, the affective attitude that results from this engagement is only beneficial to the employer and can even be detrimental to the employee, who might feel guilt or anxiety when she is not reachable (Slaby 2016, 9-11)." [131] (Massantini 2020)

Some types of political restorative nostalgia can be explained by mind invasion, which I shall go into more detail about in the following chapter. This nostalgia typically shows itself in environments such as the fascist nation or party, in which symbols and rituals are intentionally and methodically utilised to praise the glory of the past of the nation and the imagined continuity of that past with the present. Fascist Italy, for instance, employed Imperial Rome's emblems, such as the fasces and the eagle, as constant reminders of the country's former greatness, which Italians were supposed to restore (Giardina 2008). Additionally, the development and popularization of rituals, celebrations, and architectural styles (Giardina 2008) were used as sort of "mind tools" (see Slaby 2014, 35) to manipulate the nostalgia of

[131] According to Stephan & Walter (2020), mind invasion occurs when external structures reach inward into he person. An individual may be subjected to such invasion with her consent, as in the case of psychotherapy, or without it, as in the case of manipulation.

many Italians who, in the absence of these tools, probably would not have been nostalgic at all. Because so many Italians were "victims" of restorative nostalgia, they did not view themselves as nostalgic people but as defenders of an identity continuity that was nothing more than a fantasy (see Giardina 2008).

The model of mind invasion does not apply exclusively to political nostalgia, but also to childhood nostalgia, especially in "digital places".[132] In reality, target advertisements may be a good illustration of how our minds might be invaded online. For instance, a user who searches YouTube for cartoon theme songs to soothe her childhood nostalgia may be classified as someone who enjoys collecting items from those cartoons. She might consequently receive a barrage of advertisements attempting to sell such collectibles. Such advertisements would become more frequent and personalized if she clicked on them. As a result, the browsing experience would change from something that could help with nostalgia to something that could be prolonged indefinitely and against the person's will due to the prevalence of such nostalgic reminders.[133]

Important facets of childhood nostalgia are explained by the notion of being used by mind tools rather than actively using them. Authors emphasize the marketability of childhood nostalgia and the media industry's significant interest in encouraging a certain type of nostalgia that depends on consuming the products it promotes on a constant basis (Lizardi 2015). As we've already seen, things only become sentimental and profitable as a result of being portrayed in that way. By creating media that recycles popular culture that was popular when today's adults were kids (see Lizardi 2015), the media business de facto selects and reassesses that popular culture, making it once again pertinent to us.

The audience recognizes that media as being nostalgically relevant not because they believe that aspect of their childhood is still significant on their own (see Lizardi 2015), but rather because the environment's offering invades their evaluation. According to Hutcheon (2000), memory and oblivion play equal roles in the construction of our nostalgic narratives; without oblivion, nostalgia could not execute its function of choice. These media have, in some ways, diminished our capacity for memory (Reynolds 2011, Lizardi 2015). They enhance

[132] For instance, social media is listed among the tools that might invade the mind by Stephan & Walter (2020).

[133] Even if he does not talk of target ads but of pop culture in general, Lizardi (2015) has similar concerns.

memory to a degree that is detrimental to the subject. The subject is no longer able to distinguish whether something is relevant to her own nostalgic renarration because it directly impacts her identity and personal history or just because it is being portrayed as such from the outside. The choice at the center of the nostalgic renarration in these instances is obviously not the subject's spontaneous action or the result of active participation by someone who builds his nostalgia through the independent use of material culture. Instead, this choice is meant to be general enough to appeal to everyone. As a result, each person's narrative will tend to open up more and more to the incorporation of pop culture elements, which will feed a nostalgia marked by a need that may be satisfied by consuming media that reuses these pop aspects.

Lizardi (2015, 2017) conducts a sharp analysis of the present trend in the media to capitalize on nostalgia. However, he overemphasizes the significance of specific artifacts and books in our longing, in my opinion, though. He asserts that we can be nostalgic for beloved texts and artefacts with which we grew up and for the experience we had in the past by interacting with them (Lizardi 2015). He refers to nostalgia experienced through modern media as "mediated nostalgia," which effectively interferes by influencing how we view those artifacts and texts (and related experiences). By reinterpreting Freud (1917), he contends that the media encourage either a melancholic nostalgia or an attitude of mourning. Contrary to the latter, the former cannot let go of the object of desire (in this case, the childhood literature and artifacts and their experience in the past) since it is idealized and recreated rather than being shown in its actual context (Lizardi 2015). Instead, I think that when we feel a sentimental attachment to childhood books, toys, and experiences, it's mostly (even unconsciously) because those things help us connect to and mold the actual source of our longing, which is an idealized (or renarrated) childhood. To truly experience and satiate our nostalgia, we still need books and artifacts. But because they are merely means to an end (or, to be more accurate, the scaffolds of our nostalgic longing and its satisfaction), rather than the target of our longing, I think they can be used interchangeably to some extent. As we have seen, the re-evaluated moments and memories selected to renarrate and relate to our cherished lost time are not establish once and for all but always open to modifications indicative of our present or desired identity. Since these moments are somewhat replaceable, even more so is the material culture (and the texts we consume through it) that can scaffold this selection. It is exactly this interchangeability that makes these scaffolds so easy to be chosen for us rather than by us.

Moreover, the continuous production of media that tacitly try to shape and, thus, manipulate our nostalgia does not merely 'invade' the process of selection and rewriting of our nostalgic narrative. It also diachronically scaffolds how we experience childhood nostalgia. As we've previously seen, we inhabit a world in which the past is available at all times through technology but, in a way, a past thus documented and available also becomes inescapable (see Hutcheon 2000; Lizardi 2015). The more we interact with this kind of content, the more we will depend on it to synchronically scaffold our nostalgia. Hence, the mass media contribute to the creation of a nostalgia that might transform our narration. This nostalgia necessitates the products sold by the mass-media industry to be fully experienced and satisfied.[134] Compared to the nostalgia experienced by the retired athlete in the earlier case I discussed in this thesis, this form of nostalgia seems to be very different. While his nostalgia is the representation of genuinely crucial components of his personal history, the childhood nostalgia generated for the masses seems by contrast entirely construed and disconnected from the personal history of individuals. I do not want to implicate that nostalgia involving collective experiences of the past, such as interaction with the pop culture of our childhood, is inherently problematic the opposite. In fact, nostalgia is very much a "social" emotion because the past we are yearning for is always one that we share with others (Wilson J. 2005; Boym 2001, 54). There is nothing wrong with employing objects from or about our past to scaffold the creation and satisfaction of our nostalgia (including pop culture elements). We should be more conscious of the fact that re-evaluation and renarration processes cannot be fully performed independently, a fact that can be used for political or commercial purposes.

4.8 Conclusions

In our environment, certain niches are organized in such a way as to scaffold not only our memory but also the processes of selection and renarration that form the object of yearning, an unrecoverable time favorably reevaluated and renarrated, sometimes to the point of idealisation. If we identify these processes with the 'bitter' part of nostalgia, we could say that

[134] I agree with Lizardi (2015) that the majority of media that elaborate on texts from the audience's childhood are manipulative. I disagree with him when he cites Jamesson (1991) to claim that this manipulation can also result in our culture having an uncritical view of the past. Modern media outlets that attempt to capitalize on nostalgia are not interested in portraying society from the past as being superior to that of the present (as the plethora of examples that Lizardi offers implicitly demonstrates). Further investigation would be necessary to prove that the mass-media sector fosters in our society a lack of historical critical thinking, as this societal transformation would not be the sector's primary objective but rather a byproduct of its marketing strategy. However, a systemic and concentrated mind invasion, like the one we observed in the example of fascist Italy, can in fact create a society without a critical understanding of the past.

the environment scaffolds the ‘sweet’ part as well. Interacting with material culture that we can link up to this renarrated time ameliorates the sense of longing, by experiencing in the present what defined our lost time, according to our renarration of it. This relief is not ever lasting and never total because what we yearn for is the idealized past as a whole, not the specific moments that, at this precise time, seem to have defined that past.In other words, media can scaffold nostalgia since they support the desired experience of contemplating the past. The scaffolding process in this instance is possible because there is a complementarity between the structure of the emotion and the structure of the scaffold. The former is a longing for continuity with the renarrated past, the latter constitutes a bridge to that renarrated past. Furthermore, a different kind of scaffolding is also possible because there is a correlation between the structure of the emotion and the structure of media: they are both renarrations. The interactions with the scaffold enable to reorganise the bits of the past and revaluate them. Instead of accomplishing this through memory and imagination alone, the subject can reorganize pieces of media to constitute a renarration that satisfies her. I demonstrated how this emotion fluctuates between extremes by using examples related to childhood nostalgia. on the one hand, childhood nostalgia can resemble restorative nostalgia – not because we fool ourselves into believing that the past can come back but because we can succumb to a nostalgic selection and renarration that is not the result of our free reflection but, rather, is constructed to take advantage of us. In a wider sense, the notion of mind invasion can explain this commercialisation of our childhood nostalgia by contemporary mass media. In environments that are systemically reorganized and controlled, as occurred in fascist Italy, a proper mind invasion can shape a restorative nostalgia engeneered to meet political goals. on the other hand, media can give us the potential of constructing our child-hood nostalgia the way a person who feels reflective nostalgia would: freely, actively, self-consciously and sometimes ironically. Such an organized form of nostalgia wouldn't just disclose who we are and what we wish to be. By continually assessing and reassessing the relevance of priceless childhood memories while simultaneously appreciating the bittersweet mosaic we created by freely arranging those experiences, it can also help us establish and redefine our own identities.

Chapter 5
Collective and Political Nostalgia

> "Survivors of the twentieth century, we are all nostalgic for a time when we were not nostalgic. But there seems to be no way back."
> Svetlana Boym[135]

5.1 Introduction

Scholars who work on nostalgia seem divided. On the one hand, sociologists and media experts take it for granted that nostalgia is a collective phenomenon that can have deep political implications. On the other hand, philosophers mainly analyse nostalgia as an individual phenomenon. In this chapter, I begin by reviewing the main theories on collective and political nostalgia. I then take concepts from the philosophy of collective emotions to outline some elements that the current debate on collective nostalgia is lacking. Finally, I show the importance of interpersonal relations in the formation of collective nostalgic narratives,[136] a point that is still under-studied in the current debate.

5.2.1 Theories on Collective Nostalgia

The expression 'collective nostalgia' is problematic, as authors do not agree on its meaning. This can often create confusion, since the term 'collective', especially in a philosophical context, can have many implications that are hard to validate. First of all, I

[135] (Boym 2001).

[136] Collective narratives play a fundamental role in many collective emotions; however, it is not easy to argue that they play a role in collective affective phenomena. For instance, it is hard to argue that collective narratives are present in stadiums among supporters of the same team during sporting events. The fact that collective narratives cannot be found in all collective emotions may explain why this point is still under-studied.

consider the most important theories of collective nostalgia, which mainly come from sociology and psychology, as philosophers have dedicated little to no space to this expression.

5.2.2 Davis

A good starting point is analysing Davis's (1979) position, as he was arguably the first to define the concept of 'collective nostalgia'. Davis interpreted the expression collective nostalgia as a form of the emotion in which many people happen to be nostalgic for the same past (Davis, 1979; Mols & Jetten, 2014).
As Davis (1979) put it:

> "It is important to distinguish between *collective* nostalgia and what for a want of a better term I call *private* nostalgia. This distinction has much more to do with the symbolic and imagery *content* of nostalgia than with nostalgic experience itself. Whether we conceive of nostalgia as an emotion or as a form of consciousness … the subjective experience remains much the same of whether its objects are of a collective or of a more private character. Both display the same yearning and adoration for some slice of personally experienced past. Collective nostalgia, however, refers to that condition in which the symbolic objects are of a highly public, widely shared, and familiar character, those symbolic resources from the past that under proper conditions can trigger upon wave of nostalgic feeling in millions of persons at the same time."(Davis 1979,122–123)

According to this interpretation, what makes nostalgia collective is simply the fact that the same symbolic objects happen to trigger it in many people at the same time. The problem with this definition is that there is very little that is collective about it.[137] Davis himself openly stated that what he called personal and collective nostalgia are essentially the same experience. He argued that there is not any difference in the kind of experience. Indeed, we could say that what he called collective nostalgia is nothing more than an instance of personal nostalgia whose content and triggers happen to come from a highly shared environment and therefore are common to many people. A philosopher might argue that such a definition is unsatisfactory,

[137] This type of collectivity can also be found in "collectively feeling cold" that happens every winter. Millions of people in that circumstance feel cold, but the fact that the fact that many people feel cold at the same time does not feel different from feeling cold privately.

but even before delving into the philosophy of collective emotions, we can see why this definition is so deficient. If we recall J.P.'s case, we saw that an essential function of collective nostalgia is that of building the feeling of belonging to a community, and from Davis's definition (and subsequent analysis), it is hard to see how nostalgia could build such a feeling, as it ignores the relevance of relationships and social interactions between people who share nostalgia for the same time.

5.2.3 Wilson

Davis's definition, as we saw, is problematic; however, he must be praised for at least trying to define collective nostalgia and its differences with personal or individual nostalgia, as many scholars from the social sciences who use the expression 'collective nostalgia' have not expressed this distinction clearly. Wilson (2005) offered an important development on Davis's theory, which she integrated with points from various scholars, especially Boym. In his book, Davis focused on media as the source of highly 'shared' symbolic and imaginary content that works as the source of collective nostalgia. As we saw in the previous chapter, Wilson instead focused on the role that material culture, and specifically collectibles, plays and the fact that communities can be built around collecting and nostalgia. Moreover, Wilson (2005) directly tackled the problem of collective nostalgia, and at one point she offered two possible meanings of this expression:

> "Nostalgia may be experienced collectively, in the sense that nostalgia occurs when we are with others who shared the event(s) being recalled. In this way, nostalgia might be used as conversational play and as a strategy for bonding. Nostalgia is also experienced collectively in the sense that one's nostalgia is often *for* the collective—the characteristics and activities of a group or institution in which the individual was a participant." (Wilson 2005, 36)

Admittedly, Wilson (2005) focused almost exclusively on the first type of collective nostalgia.[138] This type takes place through interactions with other people, usually through

[138] Wilson did not focus much, if at all, on the second type of collective nostalgia that she cited here. We can, however, make a couple of observations on it. It seems likely that Wilson (2005) was inspired by the work of Harper (1966) to formulate this notion. According to him, nostalgia is not a longing for the absolute but rather for a sense of belonging to a community that is governed by poetic justice; that is to say, a justice that punishes vice

conversations. Wilson took a considerable step forward from Davis when she highlighted the importance that interactions play in collective nostalgia. In her model, many people do not simply happen to share the triggers and contents of nostalgia; rather, they use nostalgia as a tool for social bonding. As we will see in this chapter, I take this idea further by showing the way in which these types of social interaction are not only means of bonding, but they also work as collective reconstructions of the past. The second observation is that for Wilson, the interaction mainly takes place in person. This, of course, is due to the fact that she wrote her analysis in the early 2000s. Since then, however, the way in which we socialise has profoundly changed with the advent of social media. If, for Wilson, a good part of nostalgic conversations take place at conventions (e.g. collectors' conventions) and in casual conversations with family and friends, a considerable part of nostalgic conversations now take place over social media groups that are focused on nostalgic topics. Another aspect of this first kind of collective nostalgia, Wilson argued, is that it is characterised by the recollection of shared events. This apparently means that such nostalgia is necessarily linked to autobiographical memory. This of course might represent a problem with Wilson's theory, as such a position seems not to be compatible with the concept of displaced nostalgia, even though she is the one who has popularised the term. Indeed, Wilson (2005) openly stated that 'nostalgia is clearly contingent upon memory' (p. 37).

The reason why Wilson did not contradict herself is that while nostalgia is contingent on memory, it is not necessarily contingent on autobiographical memory, as it can also depend on collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992), which is not relegated to an individual but to an entire community and is therefore often transgenerational. She connected the notion of nostalgia to that of memory. In this sense, displaced nostalgia becomes possible through material culture that becomes what I might describe as a scaffold for transgenerational collective memory. What is important to note here, although Wilson did not make the point directly, is that the fact that collective memory can be mediated by material culture and has a double function. On the one hand, pieces of material culture (from small objects such as pens to huge buildings) can outlive humans and traverse years by undergoing little to no change. This allows for material culture produced in the past to sometimes represent a direct connection to the past itself. On the other hand, material culture cannot represent the entirety of the past

and rewards virtue. Interestingly, Wilson (2005) dropped any reference to poetic justice in order to formulate a theory that is able to describe collective nostalgia more generally.

but only a small fraction of it. This means that when we rely on material culture to form an image of the past (either at the individual or collective level), in reality, we have to use a great deal of imagination.

5.2.4 Nostalgia as Group-Level Emotion

Another influential model of collective nostalgia is that of nostalgia as a group-level emotion, which is a position developed by Wildschut et al. (2014), who relied on the work of Smith et al. (2007). According to Smith et al. (2007) and Wildschut et al. (2014), a group-level emotion is one that is felt by individuals who think of themselves as a part of a group. Wildschut et al. (2014) made a commendable attempt, because they tried to distinguish collective nostalgia phenomenologically from personal/individual nostalgia. However, this distinction was based mainly on what collective nostalgia does (that is to say, offer psychological benefits) and not what it is.

While interesting from an empirical point of view, group-level nostalgia has at least two major problems. The first is that it is very narrow, in that it is incapable to properly account for instances in which interactions do play a fundamental role. According to Smith et al. (2007) and Wildschut et al. (2014), for an emotion to be on a group level, it is sufficient for an individual to self-identify with a social group and to appraise a situation based on this self-imposed social identity (Thonhauser, 2022). What is most relevant is that no kind of interaction between the components of a group (either synchronic or diachronic) is required for an emotion to be group-level.

The second problem is that this theory presupposes subjects to believe in being part of a group without asking how the feeling of belonging to a group came up in the first place. In other words, this theory does take into consideration the possibility that the emotion itself might play a role in the formation of the feeling of belonging to a group.

5.2.5 Boym and Political Nostalgia

Another important author who has deeply influenced the debate on collective and political nostalgia is Boym (2001). Boym only came across Davis's work after finishing her influential book, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Boym, 2001, p. 357, n. 1). Yet, by reading her distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia, which I have discussed in the

introduction to this work, we can deduce important critiques of Davis's concept of collective nostalgia. Let us consider the following passage:

> "Restorative nostalgia evokes national past and future; reflective nostalgia is more about individual and cultural memory. The two might overlap in their frames of reference, but they do not coincide in their narratives and plots of identity. In other words, they can use the same triggers of memory and symbols, the same Proustian madelaine pastry, but tell different stories about it.
> Nostalgia of the first type gravitates toward collective pictorial symbols and oral culture. Nostalgia of the second type is more oriented toward an individual narrative that savors details and memorial signs, perpetually deferring homecoming itself. If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space. Restorative nostalgia takes itself dead seriously. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not." (Boym, 2001, p. 49)

A crucial point of Davis's idea is that collective nostalgia is characterised by collective triggers and symbolic objects. However, Boym shows that we can have a very personal or individual nostalgic experience even when it is supported by mass media. Indeed, Boym indicates that while both restorative and reflective nostalgia can share frames of reference, they evoke completely different narratives. While Boym often uses the term 'narrative', she never directly analyses the meaning of the concept. In order to expand on some parts of Boym's theory, I tackle the concept of collective narratives later in this chapter. Collective nostalgia is defined by the fact that its symbolic objects are available to the masses. Boym, on the other hand, shows that reflective nostalgia, which is a highly individual and personal form of nostalgia, can also thrive on cultural memory. In other words, contra Davis, Boym shows that nostalgia can rely on fragments of a widely shared cultural memory without necessarily generating actual collective nostalgia, since the re-narration one can make of those fragments can be highly individual and very different from that of another person who uses similar fragments of cultural memory. A second important point to make is that Boym for the most part does not speak directly of collective nostalgia. Despite this, her thoughts on restorative nostalgia are extremely helpful. While not all forms of restorative nostalgia are collective (and vice versa), some of the most interesting forms of collective and especially political nostalgia

fall in the category of restorative nostalgia. More often than not, restorative nostalgia is about a shared past that has to be restored collectively; that is to say, *in* a community and *for* a community rather than being 'enjoyed' individually. The 'collective' character of restorative nostalgia shines when it generates national and religious revivals. In these instances, we can see collective narrations about a former glory that is to be maintained or restored by a community. These types of narrative are prevalent in right-wing movements, such as among neo-fascists. As Bonnet (2010) observed, restorative collective political nostalgia is not a prerogative of the right. Left-wing movements, for instance, can host the belief that class struggle has been won by the bourgeois and can therefore be nostalgic for a time when it was still winnable by the proletariat.

Following Boym (2001), various scholars have investigated political nostalgia, especially in right-wing movements. Menke and Wulf (2021) offered a good state-of-the art analysis on how populist leaders exploit crises and nostalgic narratives. These narratives can be summarised as follows. First, the world is presented as undergoing a deep crisis, which implies a loss of control for the community (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Menke & Wulf, 2021; Taggart, 2004). This creates a sense of insecurity, fear and discomfort towards the present (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Menke & Wulf, 2021; Smeekes et al., 2015; Steele, 2019). This insecurity fosters an 'us versus them' narrative according to which those responsible for the corruption of the present are non-native outgroups and corrupt elites (Menke & Wulf, 2021; Mudde, 2004). Finally, political leaders present a solution to this crises through a return to the *heartland* (Taggart, 2004)—a romanticized and nostalgically derived vision of the future that offers a sense of security (Menke & Wulf, 2021; Steele, 2019; Taggard, 2004).

5.3 Philosophical Critiques of the Theories of Collective Nostalgia

Thus far, I have shown various ways in which collective nostalgia has been analysed and defined by scholars. From a philosophical point of view, these theories can be seen as problematic or deficient in various ways, especially if one is aiming for an account of collective nostalgia as a robust collective emotion (i.e. genuinely collective).[139] Theories of collective

[139] Thonhauser (2022) noted that, according to some scholars, genuinely collective emotions do not exist and people can at most have diachronic integrations into collective evaluative perspectives (Sanchez Guerrero, 2016; Thonhauser 2021). Other scholars have reduced collective emotions to group-based ones felt simultaneously by many people (Goldenberg et al., 2014; Von Scheve & Ismer, 2013).

emotions that try to account for them in the robust sense focus on the criteria that an emotion must meet in order to be considered collective. Here, I focus on two of these criteria: sense of togetherness and mutual affecting.[140] In this chapter, I hope to contribute to the debate on collective nostalgia by analysing collective nostalgic narratives as processes that build a sense of togetherness through mutual affecting. With the expression **'sense of togetherness'**, we refer to the idea that collective emotions are experienced as 'our' emotion; that is to say, with a first-person plural awareness (Schmid, 2008, 2014; Thonhauser, 2021). **Mutual affecting** is the idea that collective emotions in the robust sense cannot be experienced by an isolated individual, as is the case for group-based emotions, but rather require at least two individuals who are integrated (or 'coupled') through ongoing interactions (both verbal and non-verbal) (Thonhauser, 2021) that can take place either in person or on internet we-spaces such as social media or chat apps (Krueger & Osler, 2019). Sense of togetherness and mutual affecting are aspects that are completely missing in Davis's model, in the group-level model and in Boym's theory. On the other hand, Wilson stresses the fact that nostalgia works as a tool for creating a sense of belonging to a community and the fact that this sense is built through interactions. In this sense, Wilson comes very close to these two criteria. Her theory, however, is far for being complete; in particular, I think that a good account of collective nostalgia should take in deep consideration the importance of collective narratives. Not only that, analysing how collective narratives work will also offer us a better understanding of how a sense of togetherness and mutual affecting are fundamental in collective nostalgia.

5.4 Collective Nostalgic Narratives

Many theories of collective nostalgia do not stress the importance of mutual affecting between individuals. Theories of collective emotions, on the other hand, seem lacking, in that they often overlook the importance of narratives, which play a major role not only in nostalgia

[140] These, of course, are not the only ones. Other important criteria discussed are 'we' intentionality, shared concerns and values and sense of self–other difference. Collective, or 'we', intentionality, which is the idea that, in collective emotions, the intentional object is not only common to many people but also that those people are orientated towards objects not as individuals (as an 'I'), but as a group (as a 'we'). Some of the most important contributors to this debate are Schmid (2008) and Zahavi (2016). Some philosophers (Salmela, 2012; Salmela & Nagatsu, 2016a, 2016b) have moved the centre of attention to shared concerns and values. In their account, shared emotions are 'a matter of appraising the particular object of emotion similarly with other people on the basis of concerns that can be shared to a varying extent' (Leon et al., 2019; Salmela and Nagatsu, 2016a, p. 9). According to Leon et al. (2019), a sense of togetherness must also be accompanied by a **sense of self–other difference**. This balance between individuality and being a part of a 'we' in which the subjectivity of the self is not completely lost is achieved through second-person engagement, as Leon et al put it: 'By experiencing oneself through the eyes of the other, by incorporating the other's perspective on oneself, one can come to see oneself as fundamentally like the other' (for a more comprehensive account, see Zahavi, 2016).

but also in many other affective phenomena. In what follows, rather than committing to a specific formulation of collective emotion theory, I try to offer a deeper understanding of how collective nostalgia entails a collective re-narration of the past and how this process works. Moreover, I will show how collective narrations help build a sense of togetherness through mutual affecting. Here, I use Goldie's concept of narrative thinking to better reframe collective nostalgia. As I have already shown in Chapter 2, it is very fruitful to think of nostalgia as a re-narration of the past. The function of this re-narration is to give substance to the world for which the nostalgic longs. Goldie holds that while our lives cannot be reduced to narratives, they still play a central role; in particular, we can think of the way we relate to our past and future in terms of narratives, and especially as affective narratives (regrets, nostalgia, grief, hopes, fears and so on). According to Goldie, a narrative is something that can be narrated. Narratives can be told, written, filmed or expressed in many different forms of media. More generally, they are something that can be thought through narrative thinking. Far from being a chronicle, a narrative is a presentation of the past from a certain perspective. Having a perspective means that the narrative is structured according to what the subject knows (or believes to be known; Goldie refers to this phenomenon as dramatic irony). Not only that, having a perspective means structuring a narrative according to what matters to the self. As we have seen throughout this thesis, both these elements are very much essential in nostalgia. According to Goldie, we can all have a narrative sense of self. This is the sense that one can have in narrative thinking of having a past, a present and a future that are connected (or disconnected) to each other in significant ways. Not only do we have a narrative sense of ourselves, but we can also have a narrative sense of other people. For example, through narrative thinking, I can construct meaningful narratives about the past, present and future of people I know. The narrative sense of self can be compiled by many sources, not only by my memory. For instance, if I pass out when I am drunk, I can rely on my friends' testimony to form a narrative of what I do not remember doing. We can also construct our narrative sense of self by relying on sources that inform us about events that happened before we were even born. Think, for example, of a prince who is heir apparent to the throne. His narrative sense of self, especially for what concerns future hopes, fears and expectations, does not depend exclusively on his personal experience but is rather determined by the narratives of his entire family. His duty is that of becoming king, and this narrative of his future is shaped by the narrative of his family's past.

An important point that is missing from Goldie's theory is an account of collective narratives. Fortunately, authors such as Tellefsen and Gallagher (2017) have tried to fill this gap. As they put it:

> "The characters within narratives are often individuals, but we often tell stories about groups—*we*-narratives. The *we* could be as small as a dyad and as large as a nation-state or an ethnic group. We-narratives can be told from the first-person plural perspective (we) or the third-person plural perspective (they), and they can be told by individual narrators or by a process of joint narration and co-construction. Like individual narratives, they can be told from the inside or the outside—by individuals within a group or by an individual outside a group. Institutional narratives are the backbone of organizations. Every organization has a story to tell about how it became an organization, its goals and mission, and its plan for the future. Intimate couples often develop we-narratives. Consider "how we met narratives." Individuals often tell the story of how they met, either individually or jointly, and these stories often define their relationship in significant ways. Couples continue to narrate their relationship to themselves, each other, and others throughout their time together." (pp. 102–103)

Tellefsen and Gallagher (2017) argued that when narratives are shared—that is to say, when they are endorsed by each party—they can stabilise collective agency and life of a group just as much as individual narratives stabilise the agency of individuals. We can expand on this theory by showing how collective narratives can develop and how they can become essential features of collective nostalgia.

As we saw before, the affective niches that we help shape and by which, in turn, we are shaped support our nostalgia in various ways. For instance, our cultural niches include media that depict the past. These depictions can be used to integrate our semantic memory (i.e. the memory we have of what we believe to be facts, such as historical facts). By interacting with these media and organising them into collections or playlists, we can scaffold the processes of past re-narration and even myth construction. Our affective niches, however, do not include only our culture; rather, they also feature other people or, to be more precise, the interactions we have with other people. Similar to media, people can become reliable sources that can integrate our memories. This kind of resource becomes essential in intergenerational nostalgia (Lizardi, 2017), a nostalgia in which a heterogenous group feels nostalgia for a same period of

the past even though some of the members of that group actually experienced that past while others only have a vicarious knowledge of it. However, the most interesting function that interpersonal relationships play in nostalgia is how they integrate the processes of 're-narration of the past'. Think, for example, of two siblings who grew up together. Now that they are adults, they can engage in conversations during which they use expressions such as 'remember when …' or 'I really miss …'. These kinds of interpersonal exchange can be used, either consciously or not, not only to reminiscence together but, more specifically, to select precious moments of a shared lived past that can be weaved together to form a common re-narration of it. In such conversations, the subjects might pay particular attention to verbal and non-verbal cues such as agreement or disagreement, tone of voice, facial expression and posture (Colombetti & Krueger, 2015; Krueger, 2014). By picking up on these cues, the participants could lead a conversation in a way that their feelings are more attuned to each other the more the conversation goes on. In this type of conversation, the nostalgic experience is the result of a *self-stimulating loop* (Clark, 2008; Colombetti & Roberts, 2014, Haq et al., 2020). In other words, the expressions and behaviour of sibling A elicit nostalgia in sibling B, who responds with expressions and behaviours that in turn elicit (or reinforce) the nostalgic feeling in sibling A, and so on. Moreover, through the reoccurrence of several similar exchanges, the relationship between the siblings may develop in such a way that they both see this social niche as a reliable source that they can use to experience nostalgia and a comforting sense of belonging. This process works both on the synchronic and the diachronic level. On the synchronic level, it brings the individuals to experience shared or collective emotions; on the diachronic level, it builds a shared affective repertoire between the two brothers (Von Scheve & Slaby, 2019).

In this example of the two brothers, we can see that the activity of creating a nostalgic re-narration of the past together is essentially made possible through a process of mutual affecting. This, of course, also augments their sense of togetherness because the narrative they are building is one about a 'we'. It is important to notice that, since they are brothers, they probably have already built a diachronic sense of togetherness through many interactions that have taken place over the years. These previous interactions did not necessarily revolve around nostalgia but also included future projects, collective fears, hopes and so on. The question now is whether collective nostalgic narratives can build a sense of togetherness in individuals who do not yet know each other. In order to answer this question, I must first show the role that media can play in collective narratives.

5.5 Media and Collective Narratives

Here, I focus on the role that media (especially audio-visual media) can play in collective narratives. As I did in the previous chapter with music, I first talk about the structure of the medium, as its structure determines the way in which it can scaffold nostalgia. Much of what I said of music can also be applied to audio-visual media. This is quite intuitive if you think of movies that are built around a specific musical score (think for example of musical or animated movies such as Disney's *Fantasia*). However it is clear that audio-visual media cannot be reduced to their musical component, although it can be relevant, just as much as music cannot be reduced to its melodies. Even though, in the previous chapter, I exclusively analysed pieces of music that do not have lyrics, such as the *Vinteuil Sonata*, music can also be accompanied by lyrics, which add an important level of complexity. Most relevantly, lyrics allow for music to express extremely complex narratives. Music can still evoke narratives without the use of lyrics, as changes in rhythm and melody can be used to express various emotive or descriptive changes. For instance, music can express the passage from mood to mood, as in the case of the *Vinteuil Sonata*, but it can also express other forms of narrative. Think, for example, of the three movements of Vivaldi's *Winter*, from his famous *Four Seasons*. These three movements evoke, in order, the cold wind that gets increasingly stronger before stopping altogether (first movement, *allegro non molto*), the rain that subsequently falls (second movement, *largo*) and finally the wind that rises again, although not as violently as previously (for more on narrative and music, see Lockey, 2017).[141]

In movies and television shows, everything becomes much more complex, as not only auditory but also visual language is used. This means that not only the script and the acting but also the editing and cinematography (e.g. framing, lighting, camera motion and angles) all contribute to evoking specific moods, emotions and narratives. If we think of nostalgia, this can happen in numerous ways (for a comprehensive list, see Lizardi, 2015). For instance, Jameson (1991) argued that so-called nostalgic films offer a glossy, idealised and indeed nostalgic image of the past. For example, think the way the musical *Grease*, which was filmed in the 1970s, romanticises, sanitises and glamourises the teenage lifestyle of the 1950s. In doing so, it completely ignores fundamental aspects of 1950s America such as racial segregation. The

[141] Sometimes Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* is accompanied by sonnets that describe the narrative of the movements. However, the narrative can be easily understood independently, so much so that it is plausible that the anonymous author who wrote the sonnets may have been inspired by the music (Everett, 1996).

fundamental aspect on which I wish to focus is that these kinds of media represent an important source that can be available to people who engage in nostalgic conversations, such as the one between two brothers. As Boym (2001) observed, one can have individual experiences with this kind of media; however, quite often, these resources can be used collectively in processes of collective re-narration of the past. Here, we are not limited to personal reimagined memories but also to the nostalgic (but also non-nostalgic) re-narration offered by media.

I explain collective nostalgic narratives of the past that (at least partly) rely on mass media by considering Coninx and Stephan's (2021) taxonomy of affective scaffolding. In particular, I focus here on unidirectional user–resource interactions that work at the sociogenetic scale. Unidirectional user–resource interactions take place when 'the agent is using or structuring an environmental entity in order to enable, support, enhance, or regulate their own affective experiences without thereby modifying and dynamically interacting with the scaffold, i.e. without initiating a causal feedback loop between the agent and the environmental resource' (Coninx & Stehan, 2021).

According to their theory, at the sociogenetic scale—that is to say, the scale on which the interaction of complex social organisation can exceed in duration and effect the lifespan of single individuals—these interactions work as follows:

> "On this scale, the relevant unit of analysis is a collective in its interaction with environmental resources that may exceed the life-span of a single individual. It concerns the socio-historical development of structures that enable the acquisition and expansion of the repertoire that members of a social group may use to shape their affective experiences. As a paradigmatic example one may think of the generation and maintenance of religious or spiritual contexts, including material arrangements (e.g. building churches) and social conventions (e.g. rituals), which facilitate the experience of faith, compassion, or devotion. Further, in social communities, narratives may be jointly created and passed on which provide an affective resource for its members enabling feelings of belonging or self-worth. For example, this may include the origin myths of cities and nations (e.g. the tale of Romulus and Remus and the foundation of Rome), ethnic groups (e.g. the creation of humans out of trees described in the *Edda*), or religious communities (e.g. the discovery of the golden plates from which Joseph

Smith claims to have translated the *Book of Mormon*)." (Coninx & Stephan 2021, p. 54)

Coninx and Stephan's (2021) analysis here focuses on multigenerational examples. However, I think it also works well to describe how the sense of belonging to a specific generation is built. Think of a group of people who were born at around the same time and who are getting to know each other. Members of this group can build up (intentionally or not) a sense of belonging to the same generation by engaging in conversations that resemble the ones from the example of the two brothers, with the big difference being that rather than building on memories of shared past events, they can use media as a source that can integrate the re-narration of the past they are constructing together.[142]

Coninx and Stephan's (2021) theory can also be used to analyse some fundamental aspects of political nostalgia. In particular, they talk of unidirectional mind-shaping, which takes place 'when an agent is – intentionally or non-intentionally – scaffolding the affective experiences of another agent without there being a further mutual effect between the scaffolded and the scaffold'. At the sociogenetic scale, Coninx and Stephan (2021) described this kind of interaction as follows:

> "There are many occasions in which particular subgroups within a state (e.g. a political, economic, or religious subgroup) use or structure environmental resources, such as, media or the access to public resources, to shape the overall social climate or the affective repertoire of certain subgroups in their favor. The propaganda techniques that can be used for such purposes are manifold: illustrative distinction between friend and foe, demonization of alleged enemies, idealization of certain life forms, distribution of misinformation, pseudo-scientific or pseudo-religious justification of the own superiority, creation of a person cult, etc. The goals of such forms of mind-shaping might be to maintain a particular structure of power relying on the inequality of people of different origin, gender, skin color, religion, sexual orientation, or economic status. Such scaffolding may diametrically modulate the affective repertoire of the members

[142] This can be seen especially in social media groups dedicated to shows that depict the past. As Krueger and Osler (2019) observed, social media themselves represent a scaffold for affectivity. This means that in analysing an example such as this, we should take into consideration at least two resources and their relative structures, namely the television series that is discussed and the social media platform that enables it to be discussed.

> of different social subgroups. For example, the agent may use structures, narratives, or rituals to enable self-confidence, faith, and feelings of belonging in the members of their own subgroup while reinforcing in others the internalization of their own worthlessness and inability to increase feelings of exclusion and hopelessness. While many of these cases point to deliberate mind-shaping, we also encounter forms of mind-shaping without explicit intent, as in cases of structural racism, sexism, or ableism which are culturally inherited and maintained." (p. 58)

This analysis is interesting because it aptly describes the narrative we saw when talking about political nostalgia and right-wing populism. Here, I propose an example that aims to demonstrate that even in cases of mind shaping (or even mind invasion) such as this, the interaction between members of the group plays a central role. Think of a group of young neofascists who are nostalgic for the greatness of Fascist Italy, even though that era ended in 1945, decades before they were born. The vague image they have of Fascist Italy probably partly comes from media, such as from books and documentaries. These people queue up every year in front of the door of Mussolini's mausoleum on the day of his birthday. On such occasions, the interactions between these individuals might be characterised by key expressions that would resemble something like 'I wish I was born when …', 'We were better off when …' or 'It is time we take back control'. Just as in the example of the two brothers, in such a conversation, the subjects may pay particular attention to verbal and non-verbal cues such as agreement or disagreement, tone of voice, facial expression and posture (Colombetti & Krueger, 2015; Krueger, 2014). By picking up on these cues, the participants could lead a conversation in a way that their feelings are more attuned to each other the more the conversation goes on. In this type of conversation, the nostalgic experience is the result of a self-stimulating loop (Clark, 2008; Colombetti & Roberts, 2014; Haq et al., 2020). In other words, the expressions and behaviours of neofascist A elicit nostalgia in neofascist B, who responds with expressions and behaviours that in turn elicit (or reinforce) the nostalgic feeling in neofascist A, and so on. Moreover, through the reoccurrence of several similar exchanges, the relationship between the neofascists might develop in such a way that they both see this affective (and social) niche as a reliable source that they can use to experience nostalgia and a comforting sense of belonging.[143]

[143] As Valentini (2021) shows, modern internet infrastructures offer great supports to implement far right (and often nostalgic) narratives. Of course, various platforms can support narratives in different ways depending on the structure of the platform. For example, the ephemerality and anonymity that characterize platforms such as 4chan

This kind of interpersonal exchange can be used, either consciously or not, to select and revalue or even falsify moments from semantic memory that can be woven together to form a common re-narration of a mythic past; that is to say, a past that has little to do with memory or historical record and all to do with constructing a narrative that serves a present desire for taking back control over an endangered political identity. We can identify this process of imagining a collective nostalgic past that is completely independent of our memories with the term 'myth construction'. Such a constructed mythical past establishes not simply the identity of an individual but also that of an individual who feels she belongs to a certain group—a group whose existence precedes that individual. For example, I can be nostalgic for a time that I never experienced because of the role I attribute to that past in shaping the identity of a specific group that I feel I belong to (e.g. my national, ethnic or religious group). While it is evident that these case scenarios can be analysed through the lenses of mind-shaping and mind-invasion, we should also take into consideration that, even when mind invasion takes place, interpersonal relations (be they online or in person) between the members of a group play a major role in the creation, consolidation and dissemination of the narratives that describe the identity of that group. People who engage in neofascist conversation do not necessarily use mind invasion or mind shaping on each other (either voluntarily or not). Instead, what I find most interesting about this example is that interpersonal relationships constitute a process of collective re-narration—a proper form of myth construction.

In this thesis, I have already determined that memory is not essential for nostalgia, since the object of this emotion is a foundational past—a past that founds our identity and that, in extreme cases, can be completely imagined. Another important question we should answer in order to understand displaced nostalgia is the following: since the 'I' that experiences displaced nostalgia has never experienced the time for which she longs, what exactly is the relation between that past and her identity (either present or desired)? The answer is that displaced nostalgia does not merely found the identity (either perceived as present or desired) of an individual but rather refers to the identity of an individual who feels that they belong to a certain group. This is a group whose existence precedes that individual. Therefore, I can be nostalgic for a time I never experienced because of the role I attribute to that past in the shaping of the

easily support far right racist (and, I would add, nostalgic) narratives. Also the fact that there is close to no moderation allows for more radical narratives to be implemented.

identity (present or desired) of a specific group I feel I belong to (e.g. my national, ethnic or religious group). Indeed, these interactions contribute to the creation of a sense of belonging to a group. Nostalgia then consolidates the identity of someone who identifies with a group. Therefore, through the exchanges that take place in the niche, people also build the nostalgically shaped feeling of belonging to a specific community (see Colombetti & Kreuger, 2015; Krueger, 2014). In other words, in these niches, individuals overcome the feeling of a fractured identity by contributing to the formation of the identity of the group that they feel they belong to.

As a matter of fact, the feeling of belonging to a particular community that feels they partly 'share' the same re-narrated or mythical past is particularly important. What I mean to say is that even though every single individual who participates in the niche has their own myth—their own re-narration of the past—that is similar to some degree to the re-narration of the other people in the niche. Indeed, the more one participates in the niche, the more her re-narration will integrate parts of re-narration that she has picked up from the others. What I have described here is a dynamic and interactive process of mutual affecting that takes place on the synchronic and diachronic level. This process is capable of creating a sense of togetherness. It is a process that constitutes a nostalgic group identity, or to be more specific, it builds the 'we' of collective nostalgia.

Conclusions

In this thesis I investigated nostalgia, focusing on the relationship between this phenomenon and the environment, in particular media and politics.The theories of situated affectivity have proved to be fundamental to understand this complex affective phenomenon that is also affecting some of the most recent social and political changes. Nostalgia has a multifaceted nature, so much so that it does not fit neatly in any category of the taxonomy of affectivity. Not quite an emotion, not quite an existential feeling, nostalgia can be fruitfully analyzed as either. Despite its elusive nature, it is possible to identify constant and constitutive traits of this affective phenomenon. By analyzing it as an existential feeling, I showed that nostalgia arises when we feel that the present world is incapable of offering us a solid foundation to our identity. Nostalgia is therefore the desire to become one with a past world whose function is that of founding our desired unreachable identity. By analyzing it as an emotion I showed how nostalgia weaves an idealized renarration of the past which is far from from coinciding with memory or historiography. In moments of great personal and collective changes, individuals and societies seek in a nostalgic past a foundation to their identities. This process, which in itself can also play a positive role, risks turning into a dangerous desire to regain a lost purity and glory that exist only in the imagination of those who, consciously or not, deceive themselves or others. In nostalgia we are not so much interested in individual memories or specific images from the past, but rather in our connection with an entire past world. The moments that characterize our nostalgia are not fixed once and for all, but are always open to be reinterpreted or even replaced according to our present identity. Since these moments and memories are to some extent interchangeable, the material supports of nostalgia are all the more so. It is precisely because of this interchangeability that the supports, and consequently the reconstruction of the past to which they refer, can be chosen for us rather than by us.

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