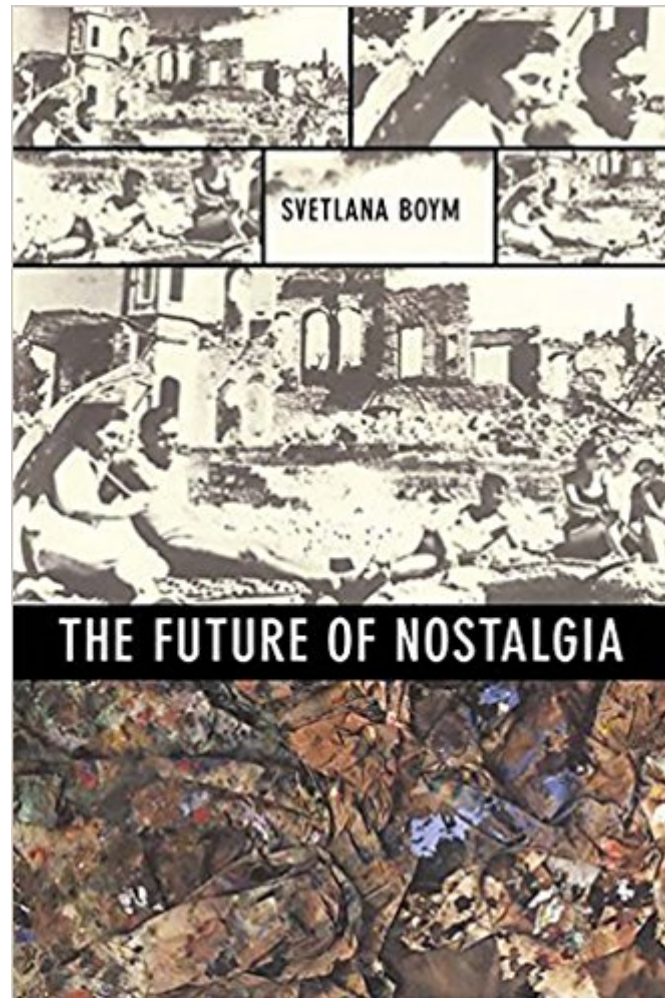




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# The Future Of Nostalgia



## Synopsis

Combining personal memoir, philosophical essay, and historical analysis, Svetlana Boym explores the spaces of collective nostalgia that connect national biography and personal self-fashioning in the twenty-first century. She guides us through the ruins and construction sites of post-communist cities-St. Petersburg, Moscow, Berlin, and Prague-and the imagined homelands of exiles-Benjamin, Nabokov, Mandelstam, and Brodsky. From Jurassic Park to the Totalitarian Sculpture Garden, Boym unravels the threads of this global epidemic of longing and its antidotes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The future of nostalgia isn't what it used to be, or at least it won't be once this book starts making its way through academic circles. A sort of training manual for the wistful, Boym's book alternates "between critical reflection and storytelling, hoping to grasp the rhythm of longing, its enticements and entrapments

The current U.S. craze for nostalgia runs from automobiles (the PT Cruiser) to fashion (the return of bell-bottoms) to television (TV Land reruns). Despite modern technology and conveniences, we enjoy looking back to yesterday. Boym (Slavic and comparative literature, Harvard Univ.; *Death in Quotation Marks*) divides her study of nostalgia into three parts. In the first section, she examines the history of nostalgia, once seen as an ailment to be cured. The second part focuses on cities, specifically Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Berlin, and on post-Communist memories. In Part 3, Boym

probes what she calls the stories of exile, looking at the writings of Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky, and others who wrote of lost homes. She also examines how nostalgia affects us today, citing movies like Jurassic Park and the subsequent interest in dinosaurs. This multifaceted work gives the reader much to ponder in regard to what we hold dear. Recommended for larger public libraries and academic collections. Ron Ratliff, Kansas State Univ., Manhattan Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is one of the best books I've read in a long time -- fiction or nonfiction. Boym is quite perceptive about the immigrant mindset, expectations, and associated nostalgia. Unfortunately, she died only a few months ago. Her obit in the New York Times provides a nice overview, in case you are not familiar with her work.

One of the most fascinatingly themed books I have read in many years, but once it moved from its major theme, Nostalgia, to the second half of the book, her excruciatingly detailed narratives of the internal issues within Russian cities, quickly became very tedious and boring to a non-Russian. In reality, Nostalgia is two separate books and each could well stand on its own.

Good book

Very well written and enjoyable reading. Scholarly written - a very informative and intelligent book capturing ... nostalgia!

Perfect for those who want a full discussion of "the mysteries and rhythms of longing" and memory

This amazing book has been efficiently described by its Editorial Reviews. It is ingenious, absorbing, and by turns difficult and thrilling. Do not be misled by the kitschy or simplistic associations you might have to the term "nostalgia." Exile, either voluntary or forced - no small thing either way - is its precondition. Many, but far from all, of the examples and references are Russian and Eastern European. Each of the seventeen chapters is an essay of depth and precision. They are greatly satisfying: rich and dense with associations and references from art and literature, and the entire span of recorded human history. Boym names Part One "Hypochondria of the Heart," and variously introduces her kaleidoscopic interests in nostalgia - as an "epidemic." Nostalgia, she asserts (and proves convincingly) is "the disease of an afflicted imagination." It afflicts those who would become

assimilated to their new worlds - as well as those who (variously and often highly individualistically) resist. The second section, "Cities and Re-invented Traditions" contains five chapters that focus on Russian and European conceptions and realities. The final part, "Exiles and Imagined Homelands" is my favorite. Its chapters cover among other things the excess of souvenirs to be found in immigrants' apartments (knickknacks of identity and remembrance that would not ever be displayed back home); cyberspace, which "makes the bric-a-brac of nostalgia available in digital form

"How to begin again? How to be happy, to invent ourselves, shedding the inertia of the past? How to experience life & life alone, "that dark, driving, insatiable power that lusts after itself?" These were the questions that bothered the moderns. Happiness, and not merely a longing for it, meant forgetfulness & a new perception of time." "The modern opposition between tradition & revolution is treacherous....." So opens the second chapter of Svetlana Boym's "The Future Of Nostalgia" after she has traced the roots of the concept from being identified as a DISEASE of Swiss exiles into a recognition of the problem of all mankind at the start of the 21st century. I hope I'm not wrong in saying that I think that this book may be an important new cornerstone in art, poli-sci & philosophy. I like this book THAT MUCH.... Ms. Boym's book fell into my hands quite serendipitously as I was researching material for my own novel; I was doing a search on "hypochondria" for a character I was trying to delineate with a certain kind of homesickness, and up popped the heading "Hypochondria Of The Heart" for an interview with Ms. Boym in a newspaper from Harvard University where she is a professor of Slavic Literature. The premise for her book deeply intrigued me since she elucidated some similar points that I had been trying to frame in my own work. I hurriedly ordered her book from our local library, anticipating something groundbreaking. I wasn't disappointed. This book traces a link between poetry, philosophy & politics in the modern age which is rooted in nostalgia, the longing for home & the feeling of loss due to a distinctly modern concept of time. However, this is no futile deconstructionist tract, nor is it a conservative tome yammering on about the pervasive influences of the enemy in a "See? We told you so!" smug-but-ineffective posturing. What Ms. Boym does is show both healthy & unhealthy effects of nostalgia on history & memory. The first part of the book lays out what the modern conception of time has done to modernity, popular culture, conspiracies & collective memory, et. al. This clarifies the reality of the problem of modern life not as meaningless, but a somatization of symptoms attributed to to fractured parts of humanity, cultural & individual. She doesn't stop there, however. Boym is savvy enough to show examples of her position in parts two & three of the book. Part two shows the impact of longing for return on Moscow, St. Petersburg, Berlin & Europe in general. This cements

evidence for the concept of modern time on TRADITION, by showing what particular post-Communist cities do to reestablish history after years of trying to synthesize it. Part three cleverly goes to the other side for a balance by showing the longings of exiles like Nabokov, Brodsky & Kabakov. In this mode, the idea of nostalgia affecting historical tradition is expanded to include the revolutionary INDIVIDUAL going against the grain & what they expected their hopes to gain them apart from their homelands. All of this could be very boring however, except that Ms. Boym exhibits a clear & rich style, making this book a terrific read. I found myself wanting to read it again, not because of confusion, but because of the wealth of insights that flow forth from her. This is the first book I've read to give any useful & pragmatic perspective on our seemingly fracturing globe these days, not because it points out what is going on, but because it takes the idea of "home is where the heart is" and shows what might have happened to the heart. I feel that this book is universally useful to all political stripes and many different fields of the humanities. I'll wager that this may turn out to be one of the first most important books of the 21st century. Why? Because I feel a wiser & more articulate human being from reading it.

As described and arrived in a timely manner!

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