

# The global epidemic of nostalgia

Society



This essay will attempt to explain the upswing of consumed nostalgia in the 20th Century, specifically through technological advancements. I will be touching on topics such as the breakdown and degradation of collective memory and the loss of self through my research. Introduction We forage in thrift stores for the 90s and 00s outfits to wear. We reboot films and tv shows to great success. We digitally stream our music and yet, we still buy vinyl. We revisit the past constantly and perhaps exceedingly so.

Nostalgia for the last two decades of the 20th century has been the drive for much of the visual material that we have today. Thus, I ask myself, why has there been such a pervasiveness for nostalgic consumption in the last two decades? And ultimately, is there a bigger, underlying issue concerning today's fixation with the past? Described as an inevitable symptom of modernity, Nostalgia was once proposed as a curable disease, similar to paranoia, except the sufferer was manic with longing, not perceived persecution, and similar to melancholy. After briefly outlining the history of nostalgia, I will attempt to explain the shift from modern to postmodern interpretations of the term and how it came to be. I will be looking at the transformative perception of nostalgia over the years and the major elements that have shaped its growth. Technology of Memory and the Culture of Amnesia Technological advancements have had the adverse effects of muddying the line between the archiving and the hoarding of information. The relentless documentation of past events as data with no tangible size or shape amplifies the deceptive nature of accumulation, that what we have gathered is just as crucial as the next piece of data we manage to get our hands on. The lesser that memory is experienced

subjectively, the more objective it will become hence the obsessive archiving, the attempt to conserve the present and at the same time, the total preservation of the past (Nora 1989). So, instead of building the inventory of memories in our minds, we export our memories onto external drives, into cyberspace. We have forgotten what needs remembering (Huyssen 1995). Thusly, The responsibility of remembering now falls upon the archives, with modern memory shedding its subjective layer and becoming a storehouse of a colossal size, an unlimited stream of playback, too boundless for us to recall. I plan to explore in greater detail by including more findings on how we have adapted to these newer systems of memory and how our brains have been reworked and remapped by the use of technology.

Alienated Memory and the Loss of SelfMemory is concerned with the continuity and the preservation of the past, yet it is also able to alter the past to fit the present. Thus it plays a vital role in self identification, serving as a justification of the beliefs, attitudes and the needs of the present (Huyssen 1995). In the same vein, collective memories, or memories that intersect over time are particularly essential in forming the unique singularity that is oneself (Miztal 2003). However, due to the increasing lack of value in remembering, we lose the context of these pivotal social experiences that shape our character. Where we could once have swapped stories, linking commemorative events and members of the social group to one another, we are now more inclined to pass on a fragmented translation of our individual memories. The fundamental act of articulating our unbroken storylines and building a shared social framework of individual recollections

is slowly being expunged, and in return the integrity of our unique self starts to erode. Consumed Nostalgia The degradation of memory has developed a yearning for cohesion and for a community with a collective memory, the pining for a constant in a world of disjointedness. (Boym 2016). Memory has been torn apart by the breakdown of collective memory, forcing us to rely on indirect, external depictions rather than internal memories. (Nora 1989) In *lieux de memoire*, she sheds light on the multi-faceted role that material culture plays in the representation of individual and collective memory, relying on the spatial and visual qualities of the exterior to compensate for internal loss.

For the final essay, I will be expanding on how the factors above, the breakdown of memory and the loss of identity has prompted this turn of nostalgia and how the role of the internet has aided and abetted the nostalgic culture. I would also like to delve deeper into the role that material culture plays in the representation of individual and collective memory and I will be looking more specifically at mid-century modern design and how the idealised narratives of the period has kept the style of design relevant in modern culture.