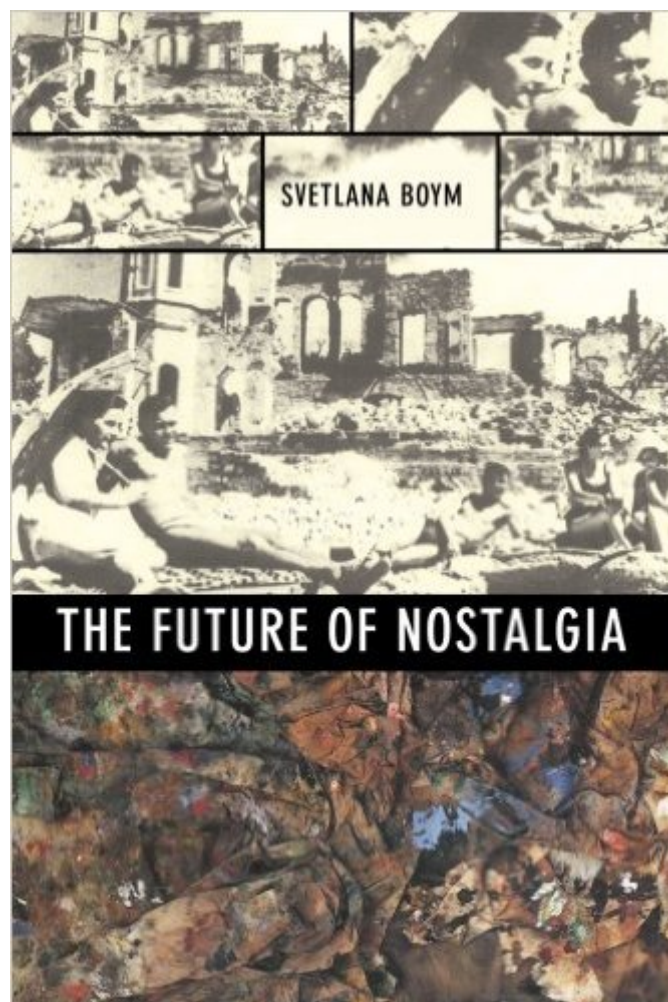


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The Future Of Nostalgia



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

Paperback: 432 pages

Publisher: Basic Books; First Trade Paper Edition edition (March 28, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465007082

ISBN-13: 978-0465007080

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (8 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #67,600 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > South](#) #175 in [Books > History > World > Civilization & Culture](#) #355 in [Books > Humor & Entertainment > Pop Culture > General](#)

Customer Reviews

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"; the persistence of immigrant eccentricity; the preservation (and transformation) of attitudes, and various phenomena of adjustment.

"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.

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