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S. D. Chrostowska

I

"Philosophy is essentially homesickness—the urge to be everywhere at home."¹ This fragment, a "single gesture" of thought toward an object,² is equally about philosophy and about nostalgia. If philosophy is the loss of self (that very memento of loss), which it was for Novalis, then so is the way home. If our struggles abroad, our self-preservation and self-discovery, solidify our self, or multiply it as they did Odysseus's, then our homecoming is a flight into fluidity or else a shedding of selves. We should arrive vulnerable, not ourselves, as if never having been exposed to the tempest of the elements or confronted with alterity. The self is a journey homeward, the homely return ever beyond the horizon.

The transformations to nostalgic experience over the last century, particularly in the wake of two world wars, tell a dramatically different story. As the affective landscape and everyday life of Western culture were being reshaped, nostalgia—that erstwhile fulcrum of philosophy—began to change course, increasingly bound to the flow of capital. With the emergence of consumerism, utopias of newness and dictatorships of speed, nostalgia "as it once was" became a reactionary vice and risked obsolescence. Capitalism, however, saw nostalgia's potential for profit and, channeling it now into its waters, gave it unprecedented currency. We face questions about a belatedly "new," late-modern nostalgia, questions we nonetheless still struggle to formulate. *With affect bound for world capital, is nostalgia the last intervening station? How was this itinerary conceived? When did we depart? And can we turn back if we have nearly arrived at our destination?*

II

The confluence of nostalgia and capitalism infects as it affects. Historicist delights and privations determine the price of longing for the past and continually expand the possibilities of its manufacture. Nostalgic fulfillment, no matter how elaborate, is by design provisional, since unfulfillment—the addiction behind the addiction—becomes infinitely more desirable. I consume out of curiosity, boredom or envy, and it is what/how I consume that, as if by chance, consumes me by opening onto a new lack, expressed as nostalgia for a past gratuitously laid bare or gestured

at. The pined-for past holds out against our desirous inroads. It is this ineluctable logic so vital to nostalgia that capitalist praxis perverts.

Nostalgia reproduces rapidly through the channels of symbolic economy. The opportunities that accompany consumer capitalism—to construct our identity by “sharing” or “giving access” to personal history representing some significant, privileged (“living”) connection with the past, in case the link corrodes or the chain linking the past in collective memory loses its hold on the imagination—these same “opportunities” excoriate the remembrance and with it the things remembered, their autonomous life in our memory, beyond any justification and benefit.³

The more we are strip-mined for our past, coaxed out of circumspection, and led to articulate our experiences, the lesser, generally speaking, becomes our intimacy with what we lived and witnessed. On the one hand, this process is culturally responsible: depositing one’s memories into the archive of culture seems the only way of preserving them from time’s ravages and sure oblivion. From the naïve point of view of cultural sustainability, individual memory can change hands, with the sum knowledge of the past not merely undepleted, but enriched. Yet the most intimate relationship with a past can be overwritten by abstract memories; we have learned from books that memory is a palimpsest, and that only such intimacy, even a modicum of it, can make the submerged meaning legible. Gradual estrangement from our memories suggests we are losing the art of decipherment. Likewise, excessive nostalgia affords us the means to ignore the radically unfamiliar and turn away from blank, unclaimed futures.

If the public commemoration of bygone events makes us work for their restitution, if we cling to the recent past and put it on record, and if we have begun to speak of “nostalgia for the present,” it is because there seems no breaking the nostalgic chain forged in capital. With the exhaustion of firsthand experience, secondhand memory comes to serve nostalgia as well if not better, redoubling our longing for the firsthand.⁴ The more we indulge in our feeling for “good old” anachronisms, the more sentimentally we look back at our life, the cheaper our nostalgia is to evoke and the costlier it is to appease. Before long, we have pawned the better share of our past, our nostalgia subsisting on borrowed memories.

Subtending this economic model is the commodification of affective memories that constitute nostalgia and nostalgia-driven activity. To capitalize on nostalgia is to profit from the sale of such memories on the premise that they are reproducible and transferable, and, in ideological terms, that emotions, no matter how manipulated, retain their naturalness and remain a counterweight to materialism. Ultimately, however, capitalized nostalgia costs us part of our ability to bear the weight of

private memory—that is, memory that is alive not *in spite* but *because* of its solitude. It puts into question the value of lived experience, whose reproduction—patented and marketed as authentic—becomes itself nostalgogenic. Such recreated past has little staying power. The gratification it provides is devised as expendable (given up for another past on offer). Commodified nostalgia is (predictably) self-consuming nostalgia.

One corollary of the hollowed-out relationship with the past engendered by this process is the welcome reproduction of various pasts down to the smallest detail. The logic of nostalgia dictates that nothing can really be recovered, only re-collected, re-imagined. But nostalgia collaborating with capitalism has this message to convey: with a little ingenuity and investment, we, as a society of individualists, can regain desired aspects of the past. Such verisimilitude rejects the historical integrity of the original. What was strange transitions as exotic or quaint toward assimilation into the superficially familiar. The more distant a past, the better it can serve as a playground for the commercially bound imagination. If, as a result, we come to regard the ancients as our contemporaries, it is because what once lay largely in the purview of aesthetic experience, historical or literary study has become more readily accessible through forms of mass media entertainment and the cost- and time-effective heritage industry.

Mass production and consumption exhausts the past by paring down its heterogeneity for effortless recognition and streamlined exhibition. Whatever the past *redivivus*, it is valuable insofar as it confirms us in our current existence. It is fortuitously dropped from the “historical repertoire” when its image becomes de-historicized through overexposure and association with the here-and-now. Its nostalgic potential, utilized in this way, is thus attenuated. Only after an interval of “commercial death” or lying low in the hierarchy of market value can we expect its recrudescence—when it reappears with the vividness of near non-recognition, as if from the deep end of the unconscious. For it is not a cliché that one buries the past, but a quintessential statement on the past framed by individual existence. The flood of nostalgia marketing finds another limit in instinctual self-preservation; manufactured nostalgias do not command our dreams.

Despite the artist’s proverbial aversion and resistance to consumerism, capital lays claim to the artistic past in tandem with the artistic present. This is a simple matter of manipulating cultural perspective: nostalgia is discovered at the root of every avant-garde; the present state of art is attributed to declining aesthetic standards; critics reward the return to classical technique; and art is proclaimed as a thing of the past. Similar rhetoric is applied to things commercial and/or practical in purpose, which often gain artistic value in the process. As Claude

Lévi-Strauss observed in New York in the 1940s, "One surrounds oneself with these objects not because they are beautiful, but because, since beauty has become inaccessible to all but the very rich, they offer, in its place, a sacred character . . ." (263). It is important to think through the reversal of fortune that this entails: what was commercial and everyday may, with the passage of time, become sublated. Consumed, its nostalgic charge spent, it is retired from mass culture, emancipated from the cycle of economic exchange, and given a shimmering afterlife—until we come across it, not knowing what to make of something so forgotten and so arresting. Their decommissioning is an occasion for things even artificial or utilitarian to begin with, things outmoded or broken, effaced and worn out, to redeem themselves through time—an occasion capitalism disavows but cannot prevent.

III

Nostalgia in its "uncompromised" form may romanticize its object, but this romanticization is not synonymous with physical comfort, psychological security, moral hygiene, beauty and contentment. Freud saw the house as a symbol of quiescence, of being unborn: "a substitute for the womb—one's first dwelling, probably still longed for, where one was safe and felt so comfortable" (36). Yet nostalgia is not a longing to return to this "safe home," but to home as a scene of incubation: a singular knot of unmade decisions, of excitement at the flowering of alternatives, of reversible mistakes, of preparations for departure. Thus, the past is reimagined along with that past's uncertainty about the future, as well as the thrill arising from that precariousness and from the relative remoteness of death (then relative to now, or now relative to then). A past exerts a pull on us because it is an open door to (real and imagined) possibilities—or, in the case of a past we either were not alive or have not lived to see, to historical realia that to us nonetheless signify the unexplored, and that have since become defunct.⁵

Nostalgia involves, then, a departure from the definite past for the indefinite; its "Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take / Towards the door we never opened / Into the rose-garden" (T.S. Eliot, 171). We long to forsake the actual past as our memory swells with apparent missed opportunities. At its extreme, nostalgia is a revolt against the past as *fait accompli*, against the past's facticity. As a recourse to what has passed away, it defies mortality and foreclosure of the possible futures it brings. Its epigraph: "Only through time time is conquered" (ibid., 173).

Because nostalgia is often spurred by regret,⁶ it illuminates the margins of what came to pass. Its manipulative use of the past consists in

excavating and multiplying potentialities obscured in the course of time. By the same token, however, nostalgia itself can be easily manipulated and exploited. Feelings of irreversible loss—for some precise, for others quite nebulous—that accompany regret and (fundamentally) a sense of the pastness of the past, are assuaged by the consumption of products reminiscent of that past, its selective semblances, and of nostalgia as such.

Nostalgia marketing does not merely “give a new lease on life” to our dormant emotive attachments to the past; it tries to transpose the more resonant associations onto new commodities. Meanwhile, services and disposable goods multiply, and our material attachments become more cursory, more ephemeral. The ideal domain of capital research and investment is everyday life, since, as Blanchot observed, the everyday “impugns all values and the very idea of value, disproving always anew the unjustifiable difference between authenticity and inauthenticity” (19). Devoid of responsibility for values, daily life remarks only the worth of commodities, the necessity of clock time, of (pseudo)cyclicity,⁷ of routine, of the expenditure and renewal of energy, and the relative freedom of leisure (to consume). It is no coincidence that everydayness, as trivial as it is tireless, invites the fabrication of nostalgia, ignoring the breach of authenticity and dispensing with “truth” about the past. Within its repetitious spontaneity, anomie, private uneventfulness, and ambiguous temporality, nostalgic daydreams point up the obliqueness of time itself, as nostalgic consumption does the ambiguity of the event. Nostalgia alleviates tedium not actively, through dialectical recovery, but by juxtaposition, taking the mind off of what some see as nostalgia’s prerequisite—the tedium that does not allow itself to be forgotten. Yet because the vicissitudes of the everyday have the power to stir in us a dread of nihilism, challenging us to overcome it, they leave open the possibility of dialectical recognition and (auto)critique (Blanchot, 19). The deepening of nostalgic experience lies in the negative-dialectical movement of its reverie, in the crisis of self, and finally in the quickening of another reality.

Those remarking on the mediation of past experience, historical objects or sites often make use of a conceptual shorthand, “commodification of the past,” to refer to what, in fact, is the peddling of affective attachments to the past. As a commodity and mass-marketing device, nostalgia draws on the reserve of historical contents, whose representations are its condition of existence. Nostalgia can be a hidden surcharge for heightening a product’s desirability. We pay for nostalgia directly where the product itself is an affective experience of a “recovered,” “restaged,” “reenacted,” “relived” past.⁸ Even in situations where authentic objects are used to elicit the desired consumer response, the context of exchange, its potential repetition, and its technical mediation drain these objects’

nostalgic resources. Our indifference to them coincides with their loss of marketing potency. The mediation of nostalgia through reproduction (artistic or mechanical) is of course nothing new. Today's technological mediation, however, differs in commercial scale and operates within a multi-tier marketing strategy.

The paramount historical role of photography in the production and marketability of nostalgia should not go unremarked. From the mid-nineteenth century, notes Walter Benjamin, this new medium "greatly extend[ed] the sphere of commodity exchange . . . by flooding the market with countless images of figures, landscapes, and events which had previously been available either not at all or only as pictures for individual customers" ("Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," 36). It was not long before the utility of mass visual reproduction became harnessed to documentation and the expansion of archiving institutions. Photography's influence grew apace with the need to record privately and for posterity, in what was fast becoming the memory industry. The immediacy and accuracy of relations between the photograph and visual reality compensated with authenticity (or so it seemed at first) for what this mechanical medium lost in artistry to painting. Photographs increasingly preserved not just images of the present but also of artifacts and loci of near and remote pasts. These were becoming collectively recognizable in an expanding mass-market culture. Many, in fact, came to epitomize the era they referenced for a growing number of consumers. The mass market soon began to capitalize on the associations stimulated by old photographs and to use them to sell both modern merchandise and replicas of sought-after relics. Nostalgia's current visibility owes its existence to the photograph.⁹

Once, however, they have spent their commercial charge, historical contents cease, at least for a time, to circulate like well-behaved commodities. Despite being "unchained" from capital, their time of compliance had taken its toll. Their dignity is violated, yet they have broken no code. The waning of their efficacy indicates they have been demoted, divested of value, abandoned for good—such, anyhow, is the hypnotized perception of the modern consumer, an after-image of consumption's irrationality and competitiveness (the search for lower prices or more rarefied products). For these reasons, only through an extended mass-market absence can the authenticity of historical contents be recuperated. A thing that has, for all intents and purposes, left the circuit of exchange exists casually, at the mercy of chance encounters with strangers. If it is buried, all the better for it; a longer period of convalescence may deliver it from the perils of time and misrecognition when it finally re-appears.

The diagnosis of nostalgia's perversion thus implies a cure. The most far-fetched inference to be drawn from the status quo is that time

will end up entirely consumed by nostalgia—that the present (or what used to pass for it) will be construed as past and as object of longing, and that this literal “nostalgia for the present” will lead through a perpetual regress of self-alienation to total bankruptcy. In reality, the capitalist transvaluation of nostalgia¹⁰ leads—circuitously, via the vagaries of exuberance—to affective renewal. We can ferry it into the present, we can simulate it, we can lose all veneration for it, but after some respite, and unless we destroy all its traces, the past will out.

To predict this is to invest myself in nostalgia’s future—by way of cultivating nostalgia for a particular kind of nostalgia. To then deny my sympathy for Peter Fritzsche’s fearful vision would be a dubious about-face. I am referring to the mutant, persistently discontinuous “nostalgia without melancholy,” which, in light of the radically nostalgic legacy of the nineteenth century, can hardly be seen as nostalgia in the “proper” (melancholic) sense.¹¹ Even so, Fritzsche’s apparent identification of nostalgia with the “melancholy of history” raises questions of historical development.¹² More pertinently still, one wonders which of Fritzsche’s two types/phases of nostalgia—the one with or the one without melancholy—is the continuity, and which the interruption. Despite acknowledging nostalgia’s historical contingency, Fritzsche appears wary of its conceptual displacement, his sights set on a narrowing horizon. It is no longer a matter of envisioning and bracing for the new nostalgia; a preponderance of the evidence proves that nostalgia’s meaning has already shifted. For some, this new nostalgia is only another transition; for others, it expands nostalgia’s experiential field;¹³ for still others, it marks the end of the past’s phenomenological significance. Although we cannot revert to “the old nostalgia,” these grimmer pronouncements and valorizations—are they not the platform of its custodians?

Do private collectors of antiques, and of old things in general, also preserve the traditional nostalgia? An antique collection may begin as an expression of nostalgia, removed from value considerations. But no serious collector can long refrain from *systematic* attention to the business of collecting. The inevitable plan for the acquisition of objects in assembling a collection is likely to transmute one’s motivation from a desire for direct contemplation of one’s possessions to a desire for their accumulation and exclusive possession (along with the social status attached to having “a ‘personal’ mooring back in history” [Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, 162]). A collection only opens up to deep nostalgic experience when its items’ mythic reference to the past is not taken for granted. It can then carry its owner “back beyond time to their childhood—or perhaps even farther still, back to a pre-birth reality where pure subjectivity was free to conflate itself metaphorically with its surroundings” (ibid., 84-85)—and

where desire, not yet in conflict with reason, structured the acquisition of knowledge. Collectors whose passion exceeds their capital would seem to have some advantage in this regard, according more mythic value to their precious possessions. Indeed, the sense of ownership (rather than invariably corrupting one's sensitivity) may become ground for profound intimacy, especially when one's property is rare. (Benjamin offers a personal example of this in "Unpacking my Library," 492.) The cultural functionality of collected objects (as signs of the past) remains intact even in a sequestered collection. Their removal from the market is merely physical; they continue to circulate and signify in duplicates/replicas and catalogue images. Lest collectors pride themselves on saving things from misrecognition or the mass market, the question of value must be at the back of their mind if the objects are to retain their historical gravity and nostalgic allure.

A form of liberation more radical than the antique collector's (whose effectiveness is directly proportional to his or her purchasing power) would be one that does not rely on the object's rareness or prior discharge from uselessness, but, on the contrary, on its market overuse and oversupply (without relative or objective diminishment of its qualities). Such hypothetical liberation could hardly be sanctioned and regulated by the manufacturer. Yet it is a fact that, without the aid of human charity and quite despite itself, capitalism periodically rehabilitates the past as such—not merely for individual, but for whole classes of objects.

This apology of capitalism is nothing if not backhanded. Can I be sure about the long-term effects of the all-pervasive "nostalgification" of the past? The virtuality and hyperreality of the global simulacrum, the spectacle of the "eternal present"—their coming may only be a matter of time. It is not here yet, but the future is in one sense already current: you can meet its harbingers in the street.¹⁴ My awareness of this makes my prognosis tenuous, and my choice to focus, for the nonce, on capitalist economy's redeeming qualities seems an ambivalent one. Will the future be able to reenter the historical dimension? Will it restore particular meanings to forgotten objects upon its encounter with them, in recognition of their full and continued existence?

Ironically, it is when we *fail* to recognize it—and our failure deprives this moment of its epiphanic throughline—that the extant, foreign thing regains its provenance and becomes "present" to us not as a reification of the past, not through symbolic representation and marketing optics, not as signal or fetish, but as apparition and remainder, by way of contiguities with other times and places. In the instant of its apprehension, it functions as an index of time in letting our reflection pass through it. Because the first question we would ask of this half-lit other is: *where has it come*

from? Perhaps our vestigial historical sense would frame the question differently: *where has all this gone?*¹⁵ No matter, because the thing stays exactly where it is, mute until summoned, until some “research” into its former circumstances, its fate, its historical truth is undertaken and bids it speak. This next step—toward rapport or toward historical dialectic—is precisely where the nostalgist and the futurist part ways.

IV

Philosophers of progressive history, and especially advocates of endism, tend to turn a blind eye on past suffering qua history. Typically and paradoxically, history lies for them in futurity. These thinkers uphold the Hegelian contention that the wounds of history heal without leaving scars. The manufacture of nostalgia is in line with this utopian *telos*: on the production line of positive pasts there is little danger of scarring. Scar tissue, it turns out, is just another candidate—like the wrinkle in time and the age spot—for dermal resurfacing. Soon who will remember what a scar could reveal of Odysseus? Who will be able to tell one’s age? We cannot long *sensu stricto* for such a sanitized, surgically enhanced past.

Philosophers of that ilk posit the future as a static infinity. Progressive history advances across an endless expanse, its motion no longer relative. Hence the static notion of futurity typical of such philosophies—which is no proof of the limits of human imagination, only those of human fear and desire. Nostalgia, as the longing for a specific past, would naturally seem to be its reverse: projecting back a finite and dynamic world, unconstrained by present worries or wants. The past, if it is to retain its hold on imagination and remembrance—so that we can feel “heir not only to the Greeks and Romans but to near infinity” (Z. Herbert, 26, my translation)—must however be configured not as a finitude, which can in theory be encompassed by cultural/biological memory, but as an infinitude of infinitely divisible events. The further back, the more diluted the past appears, before vanishing altogether in the mythical dawn of being, when the human eye, still blind, was no implement of desire. The painful realization of (nearly) lost continuity with archaic time leads us to form attachments to it that are affective, metaphysical, and archival. By comparison, our ties to the future are primarily organic, ethical, pragmatic, and scientific. In contrast to the past, we have no new poetics of the future.

The sacred plenitude of being, unity in multiplicity, absence of time—despite our skepticism toward the metaphysical or the merely empirical, they appear to us as onto-/phylo-genetically realistic. If the present is time tightly wound, anamnesis is an indeterminate unwinding of time. Let the past assume the shape of a funnel: on the wider end an originary ontic fullness, of which the tapered end, the present, is an

adumbration. Naturally, the visions projected onto the past are always closer to such a plenum than is the present, while our apprehensions about the future transform the latter into a vanishing point or vacuum. This notion, crucial to experiencing nostalgia's spiritual dimension, has at least some epistemic basis: the further back we look, the softer our focus, the more diluted and permeable time appears. The sharper then becomes our speculation, the freer, more allegorical our imagination, on whose peripheries the sacred is at home.

Commodified nostalgia does away with an infinite, mythopoeic past. It divides the past into a finite series of static tableaux, arranged in accordance with accredited chronologies. The shallow longing that increasingly ousts deep commitment to remembrance denies a past any parturiency in its own right (emotional, spiritual, physical) and accepts its truth insofar as it links, or links up with, a valid chain of events and historical high points. It would seem that, though in conflict and without parity, the two economies of nostalgia—the “superficial” and the “profound”—can coexist. In all probability, however, as happened to ancestral lines in our evolutionary past, the more robust strain will eventually drive the weaker to extinction.

Modern nostalgia is often described as a compensatory phenomenon, “a reaction to the surfeit of forgetfulness, that is, to a sense that the present is undergoing an evacuation of meaning that is too rapid and too total” (Gross, 177, n. 3). It was certainly coeval with a new experience of time that merged the world-historicalness of progress with the compression of quotidian temporality. The “far side” of modernism matched subjective, private time and nostalgic anamnesis (the spontaneous remembrance of one's past) against standard, public time, sentimentalistic antiquarianism, and positivistic historicism. The contest between these modernist ideologies had two correlatives: on the one hand, anxiety and deracination, in light of an acute awareness that the past was linear and irretrievable, that time, closed to interpretation, also cannot be suspended, and, on the other hand, the sense of being historically anchored and of optimism about the future. The industrial revolution's effect on travel and communication offered a solution to this crisis in the shape of a collective secular fantasy: the time machine.¹⁶ What could be more symbolic of that momentous *Zeitgeist*? But the fantasy of physical time travel, the pedantic elaboration of its premises, is incompatible with nostalgia. The former is concerned with the past as spectacle, subject to consumptive forays from the future, and as raw material, subject to the time surveyor's gaze and, ultimately, to modification in fulfillment of the desire to master human destiny (thereby enhancing human survival in the future). Time travel is as egotistic and desecrative as nostalgia is ecstatic and consecratory in its relation to the

past. Abetting capitalism's co-option of nostalgia was culture's increasingly uneasy attitude to its own historicity.

Continuity with the past is maintained through material culture, and—owing to modern angst over historical amnesia and memory's fallibility—museumology evolved to maintain it. For all the anti-dialectical "cool didacticism of systematized collections" (Herbert, 59), the first public museums revolutionized nostalgia.¹⁷ They catalyzed the contemplation of the past in nineteenth-century urban environments. Cataloging, restoring, and reproducing museal artifacts meant their enshrinement as heritage for public consumption. This involved directing, institutionalizing, and didacticizing nostalgic experience in the guise of "lessons from history." One could say that, through no fault of their own, museums' proliferation sped up the process of the past's commodification in response to the growing demand for the "source," the hieratic repository of the "original."

If nostalgia is the longing for a potentiated past, redolent with possibilities imaginatively reactivated, it at the same time involves awareness of the constraints and frontiers of history and of their transgression. Through nostalgia, we are reminded of the longed-for past's uniqueness; we do not rush to reinsert it into the historical continuum, to "run along the scale of dates" without lingering at the sites of memory (Bachelard, 119). Of course, a vigorous sense of history and individualism reclaim this past as weeds do once arable soil. It is the dissociation and tension between a consciousness of the past as such, the past as it has been, and the past as it might have been that qualifies nostalgic soundings of memory, and that prevents us from surrendering to a totalitarian fantasy of rerouting the stream of history and erasing its scars—as facilitated by the convergence of nostalgia and consumerism. In ethical terms, the nostalgist benefits from self-sabotage.

A nostalgic disposition is discernible in the configuration of philosophy as a mental journey "home," where home stands for truth about the world, the absolute, and ourselves. Philosophical thinking of this kind—predicated on the principle of ontological change—was once the highest expression of nostalgic sentiment. Life without philosophy was one of vagrancy and errancy, of pleasures and illusions masking the self's divinity or absurdity, in either case occluding its happiness. Although Camus dismissed the idea that "a man's thought is his nostalgia" as spurious, nostalgia's spiritual dimension still lay within the bounds of "lucid reason constating its limits."¹⁸ Nostalgia revealed itself as a lack that only the return to an elusive origin—not beyond existence but somewhere within it—could eliminate. And, if we reason lucidly, that origin is at once everywhere and nowhere in particular.

"[I]t is no longer possible for a Westerner to be *displaced*. Everywhere he finds himself at home . . ."³ (Agacinski, 7). Given our globalized

economy, this point seems almost incontestable. Can occidental tourists (business travelers, etc.) today deny that they are everywhere hosted by their own reflections, in the form of familiar goods and services? One of the arrangements of global cosmo-capitalism is that, generally speaking, tourism is no longer the culturally uncomfortable experience it once was. The connotations of “home” are now overwhelmingly economic.¹⁹ By extension, the prevailing economy of the self is capitalistic. We have naturalized mobility as our manner of inhabiting the world, conditioned to develop little or no affinity for any one place, traveling light. Yet philosophical thinking opposes (and complicates) this free dwelling/moving in material security as inauthentic (even ironizes this “authenticity”), reminding us of the full meaning of roots.²⁰ For us, moderns, “home” is always already in the past and its attainment a futuristic mirage.²¹ Perspective is everything; everything is perspective. Ernst Bloch cautioned against nostalgic excess thus: “Even what was should not hold us as such. Nothing past should be sought so faithfully that one goes back, truly back. One often dreams of it, but one should beware” (62). The physical return can only mimic the impossible nostalgic return:

Above all, reunion with an utterly vanished as well as splendid past has some of the self-pity that is revealed in the usual sentimentality of such moments. Only then does the worst catastrophe of all take shape, the completely airless space: the reunion with ruins, with nothing but what is sealed up within them, easily becomes a departure from oneself, as from someone who never became. A dead man has then returned . . . (Bloch, 63)²²

In truth, modern reunions, odysseys, and imitations of Homeric sensibility are awkward, conflicted, and unconvincing. What did a scar reveal of Odysseus? That, in spite or because of his wandering curiosity, he had returned. A souvenir of his youth, no less illuminated for having occurred long ago, it was also the proof of his identification with that island, a mark of his nostalgia, deep yet plain to see.²³ But where had he arrived? In a place twenty years thence, at first unrecognizable, though he and this once-home—united at last—appeared essentially unchanged. On Ithaca time has not stood still, measured by waiting, by deferral, by the winding and unwinding of memory. Neither did time stop for Odysseus; it was, rather, he—self-possessed and nostalgic—who stopped for time. The true return is to his preserved core: his former role of king and husband. Paradoxically, the mutual dissemblance—of Odysseus and his native island, when he first awakes on its shore—is truthful: it manifests their mutual strangeness. When his core identity is finally discovered, it is in an act of hospitality in which Odysseus remains both stranger and host. His undisguising is the end of his passage, in which he had not only to return but also to prove himself the same Odysseus.²⁴ In the tortuous voyage home, temptations uncovered to him the plurality of self. He has

long longed to be true to himself. Yet had Odysseus been modern, he would have (in lieu of a disguise) so changed through his travels as to become almost unrecognizable, physically and morally a stranger in his own land—reminded of and never restored to himself in the ambiguity of his return. Would he not soon enough have cast himself out again, like Robinson Crusoe, not knowing what to call home: the bigger or the smaller of the two islands, perhaps, too, the sea? Crusoe shares with Odysseus a permanent, core self. But it is characterized by profligacy and he is returned to it almost involuntarily (“what is bred in the bone will not go out of the flesh”). Crusoe’s ostensible, unconfirmed identity, the one with which he aligns himself, is that of prodigal son. Yet his labile, shifting sense of “home” causes his longing to be displaced and, in effect, never wholly satisfied. He revisits without returning, compelled to embark on new adventures.

V

The historical morphology of nostalgia reveals at least three modes of nostalgic experience based on distinct economic models. The one with which I have concerned myself here, *capitalist nostalgia*, issues from an economy of representations simulating (“retrieving,” “repossessing”) lost pasts, indeed, lost temporalities. What can be called *romantic nostalgia* is, by contrast, rooted in an economy of representations in which the past is experienced as irretrievable. *Philosophical nostalgia*—the sublation of romantic nostalgia into systematic thought—is predicated, in turn, on an economy of statements that makes the irretrievable past the precondition for insight.

Plunging into the deep waters of nostalgia, we re-sensitize ourselves to the vertical dimension of past phenomena. This is where human existence can find its retreat, an asylum for its full potentiality, and where it most resembles myth. Romantic or philosophical nostalgia re-enchants and cuts both ways: it has the power to make the superficially familiar deeply strange, and the superficially strange deeply familiar. The difference between it and the capitalistic form lies in the mass appeal, the side-effects, and the far lesser affective intensity of the latter. Consumerist nostalgia, while ostensibly tributary to empathy with the past and to the reinvention of one’s identity, is aggregative; it expands and multiplies the self by staging encounters with and assimilating familiar, homogenized pasts. Romantic nostalgia, meanwhile, is a longing to survive oneself, to become other than one is; in the arithmetic of the self it is subtraction. The *poignancy* of nostalgia in the modern world stems from a coincidence in it of excitement and suffering, salvation and self-sacrifice. The Romantic

diction of this conclusion need not be off-putting. Who better than the Romantics—Novalis at their helm—knew the poetry of alienation and the perfect irony of yearning for meaning without language, for interiority without self?

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Notes

I am indebted to John Noyes for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

1. Novalis, "Fragment 857," *Das Allgemeine Brouillon: Materialien zur Enzyklopädistik 1798/1799*, by Novalis (Hamburg: Meiner, 1993), 194, my translation. The German text reads: "Die Philosophie ist eigentlich Heimweh—Trieb überall zu Hause zu seyn." *Heimweh* is literally "home-" or "homeward-ache," while *nostalgia* (a modern coinage) combines "pain" with "to return home." A 1745 reprint of the 1688 dissertation which introduced *nostalgia* to the medical community bears a title aligning three terms (see my italics), evidently treated as equivalents: "Dissertatio Curiosa-medica de *Nostalgia* Vulgo: *Heimwehe* oder *Heimsehnsucht* quam Perantiqua, etc." The reprint of Hofer's work from 1710 added yet another term, replacing *nostalgia* with the more descriptive *pothopatridalgia* (comprised of *pothos*, variously rendered as "erotic desire," "sorrowful regret," "yearning" for an unattainable object, a word used in the Homeric epics to evoke a kind of yearning-unto-death, and *patris-algos*, or "pining after the fatherland") as the medical equivalent of *Heimwehe* (see Carolyn Kiser Anspach, "Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia by Johannes Hofer, 1688 [Book Review]," *The Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine* 2 [1934], 376). See also James Hillman's "Pothos: The Nostalgia of the Puer Eternus," eds. J. Hillman et al., *Loose Ends: Primary Papers in Archetypal Psychology* (Dallas: Spring, 1975), 49-63.
2. Walter Benjamin, "Epistemo-Critical Prologue," *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, by W. Benjamin, trans. John Osborne (New York: NLB, 1977), 32.
3. In such "production" of nostalgia, affective alienation is concealed as self-actualization. A few words about nostalgia's relation to the self are unavoidable. Nostalgia of any type and intensity plays an important role in the self's crystallization, owing to the contingent, storied and processual character of identity. From this perspective, life narratives process and organize personal experience, enabling the recognition of experiences qua experiences. In our attempts to define ourselves through our stories, we both describe and construct our manner of being in the world, its factual, perceptual, and emotional features. There is a core of this identity that may resist change. Its immutability is mythical—and we find it in ancient and modern mythologies. Because we exist in constant motion, we continually look back upon what we leave in our wake. While life narratives may involve nostalgic reflection, recent work on the subject distinguishes between nostalgia and autobiographical memory (i.e., "about the self and events in one's life") (Darrel D. Muehling and David E. Sprott, "The Power of Reflection: An Empirical Examination of Nostalgia Advertising Effects," *Journal of Advertising* 33.3 [2004], 26). This distinction is vital to appreciating the philosophical character of nostalgia, which counteracts self-representation with *other-reflection*.

It is rare, in our day especially, to go through life without ever feeling nostalgic. Nostalgia of some degree is all but ensured by the condition and consciousness of existence. Despite, or because of, the buoyancy of adventure, we often feel uprooted (as if we belonged elsewhere/elsewhen), or downright rootless. We may long for (hence, belong to) a particular place/time, or we may long to belong. The effects of nostalgia vary depending on our self-constitution. One common effect is self-assertion and self-

reinforcement. From it no doubt comes the *idée reçue* of nostalgia as a longing for “the good old days,” for a more fulfilling or hospitable lived past. Another of nostalgia’s effects is self-repudiation and self-disintegration. A hybrid, fragmented, or fragile unitary self that internalizes otherness would appear to lend itself more to this latter kind of nostalgic experience—let us call it *philosophical nostalgia*—than would a wholesome, unified self. Given the above concept of identity, individual subjectivity is never self-identical. The philosophic search is for the truth of ourselves which is also such truth’s deconstruction; what we posit as its culmination, the fulfillment of self, is simultaneously the self’s dissolution.

4. *Legislated nostalgia*, coined by Douglas Coupland in 1991, describes a closely related phenomenon. His term misleadingly suggests force and legal parameters as defining characteristics. The simpler coinage seems to be *simulated nostalgia* from Stacey Menzel Baker and Patricia F. Kennedy, “Death by Nostalgia: A Diagnosis of Context Specific Cases,” *Advances in Consumer Research* 21.1 (1994): 169-74. Other existing terms for nostalgia for another’s experience (e.g., *historical*, *communal*, *vicarious*, or *phantom nostalgia*) fail to evoke the increasingly commercial character of such transgenerational memory-experiences.
5. There is no indication here of a precondition or cause of nostalgia—that the present is perceived as a blind alley, that nostalgic sentiment necessarily or typically arises in situations where possibilities are drastically narrowed. I do believe that nostalgia involves both juxtapositions of the present with the past and the retrojection of aspects of the present—a “double exposure,” to use Svetlana Boym’s metaphor, “a superimposition of two images—of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life” (Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* [New York: Basic, 2001], xvi). Boym’s conception of nostalgia as, among other things, a longing for the past’s “unrealized possibilities,” “unrealized dreams of the past and visions of the future that became obsolete,” has obvious similarities with my own (xvi). I am also partial to Boym’s and Fred Davis’s view that nostalgia is a response to the threat of a perceived or actual discontinuity of identity, the causes of which range from the private to the social, the economic, and the epochal. Its consequence, however, is not necessarily the restoration of the (teleological) nexus of identity but, rather, in my opinion, of the potentiality of alternate identities. As Davis himself points out, there is in the “nostalgic dialogue” between past and present “nearly always . . . some risk” of succumbing to melancholy or depression (Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* [New York: Free P, 1979], 16). The rigidity of Davis’s relational perspective on nostalgia comes through in his assertion “that points at issue [in the dialogue] are intended to arrive at the foregone conclusion of the superiority of times and things past” (16). It seems to me, however, that every “romance” with the past has its own trajectory and can conclude with the present, the definite “leaver” in this relationship, feeling superior.
6. To Camus nostalgia appears as the “phantoms of regret” (Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O’Brien [New York: Vintage-Random, 1991], 137).
7. I defer here to Guy Debord’s distinction: “Cyclical time was the time of a motionless illusion authentically experienced; spectacular [*pseudocyclical*] time is the time of a real transformation experienced as illusion” (Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith [New York: Zone, 1995], 113).
8. This is not to say that alienable goods deriving all or part of their value from the nostalgia they are meant to elicit cannot remain conducive to a deep nostalgia. Nevertheless, the general tendency in the world of mass-produced commodities is, again, toward the replacement of necessarily insatiable nostalgia with (seemingly) infinite but satiable longings.
9. Photography may aid the production of historical narratives, but it is also the death mask of the past—it does not “call up the past (nothing Proustian in a photograph)” but only marks the absence and attests to the past existence of its objects (Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard [New York: Farrar, 1981], 82). Barthes’s photographic

punctum, “more or less blurred beneath the abundance and the disparity of contemporary photographs, is vividly legible in historical photographs: there is always a defeat of Time in them,” a “vertigo of time defeated” (96-97). In its affective keenness, it is clearly assimilable to philosophical nostalgia. Photography was not always complicit in nostalgia’s commodification. Even it has seen better days—and its “little history” is not without its own nostalgia. Benjamin admired the early masterworks of photography—despite encroaching commercialization—for their aura and ability to awake our “optical unconscious” (Walter Benjamin, “Little History of Photography,” trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, eds. Michael W. Jennings et al. [Cambridge, MA: Belknap-Harvard UP, 1999], 512). Thanks to the continuum of illumination characteristic of them, these first images “emerge[d], beautiful and unapproachable, from the darkness of our grandfathers’ day” (515-17, 527). This apotheosis was regrettably short-lived. The medium’s almost immediate industrialization, faster technology, and retouching techniques reinforced its commercial role as an instrument of mass seduction and persuasion: its faux creativity vulgarized taste.

10. What is meant here is nostalgia’s transvaluation from a *negative* mental and/or physical condition, first identified in the late seventeenth century as a contagious psychosomatic disease (a dysfunction of military body and spirit signifying defeat), then as a modern if retrogressive social malaise (signifying unproductivity and complacency), an impediment to and antithesis of progress, into a generally *positive* state of mind (signifying untapped desire and profit), in line with economic growth. This transvaluation was concurrent with homesickness’s/nostalgia’s temporalization and conceptual shift toward metaphor, which James Phillips illustrates with classic literary examples: “Odysseus longs for home; Proust was in search of lost time” (“Distance, Absence, and Nostalgia,” *Descriptions*, eds. Don Ihde and Hugh J. Silverman [Albany: SUNY P, 1985], 65). (He then offers a modern, nostalgic reading of the Homeric hero: “Odysseus does not fully return, for he recovers his home but not his youth. Even his home has been altered by time. The temporal loss is thus more profound, always encroaching on the spatial sphere.”) As Boym reminds us, the shift has not been permanent; the earlier mould persists in modified form as *restorative nostalgia*, stubbornly re-spatializing time, re-instating stasis (Boym, 49; cf. note 20 below).
11. Peter Fritzsche, “Specters of History,” 1618. Fritzsche, of course, is not the sole critic of the new nostalgia. Rather than merely acknowledging the change, Fredric Jameson also describes it as a turn for the worse. Explaining his use of *nostalgia* in his discussion on “nostalgia film,” he owns that “passionate expressions of that older longing once called nostalgia” should not be confused with the “depersonalized visual curiosity and a ‘return of the repressed’ of the twenties and thirties ‘without affect’” (Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* [Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1991], xvii). Peeling back the layers, Jameson calls attention to the regressive pathos of “nostalgia for nostalgia”—since “the way back to the modern is sealed for good” (156).
12. See Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004). Melancholia and nostalgia originated as distinct pathologies; their separate “aetiologies”—even if nostalgia was initially conceptualized by way of the familiar, as a kind of melancholy—ask for caution in tracing their cultural manifestations. If, in its broadest sense, melancholy is an unfocused depressive or ruminative state—a sense of loss, vague because it lacks a clearly defined object-image—nostalgia is always for something more or less defined. In conflating the two, the experiential purview of nostalgia, which can involve a dominant positive affective-reflective orientation toward the past as much as the saturnine cast of mind traditionally associated with it (and with melancholy), seems unduly reduced. On a spectrum between pleasure and pain, the ratio of *nostos*, the idea of the (lost, distant, absent) object, to *algia*, the desire for that object (its return, proximity, presence), remains definitive of nostalgic experience. As everywhere else, the source of pleasure/pain is

relative and unbound by convention: what now or normally brings nostalgic happiness might sometimes elicit all-but-unmitigated pain (and vice versa), without ceasing, for all that, as an object of longing. Similarly, what used to define the “negativity of the present” can come to exert a powerful attraction from a sufficient distance (Phillips, 71). Although nostalgia first came into focus as a morbid reaction to the inhospitality and discomforts of military service on alien soil (no doubt, too, to fear and suffering on the battlefield), it is also true that, after returning to their paradisiacal homeland, those “who have seen corpses, maimed bodies, and rivers of blood, yearn for those things” (S. Ansky, *The Enemy at His Pleasure: A Journey through the Jewish Pale of Settlement during World War I*, trans. and ed. Joachim Neugroschel [New York: Metropolitan, 2003], 273). In the aftermath, the soldier’s nightmare feeds the veteran’s dream; the dead hand of the past beckons and he comes. No straightforward signifier of savagery or bloodlust, such nostalgia for the negative was one of Ansky’s profound discoveries in war psychology, first glimpsed in his own, an observer’s, “longing for the burned, mutilated homes and stores” of ravaged Galician shtetls.

13. The majority of sociological literature on nostalgia over the last thirty years propagates content- and experience-based categorizations (such as *collective* or *public* versus *private*). Nostalgia emerges as a chimera of emotions, ranging from the painful, through the ambivalent, or bittersweet, to the eudaemonic. Psychoanalytic studies, on the other hand, supply source-based models. Classifications closer to my own are those that recognize the qualitative, purpose- and intensity-based diversity of nostalgia. Christina Goulding, for one, distinguishes *existential* from *recreational* and *aesthetic nostalgia* (see Christina Goulding, “Heritage, Nostalgia, and the ‘Grey’ Consumer,” *Journal of Marketing Practice, Applied Marketing Science* 5.6/7/8 [1999], 177-99; “Romancing the Past: Heritage Visiting and the Nostalgic Consumer,” *Psychology and Marketing* 18.6 [2001], 565-92). Somewhat earlier, Davis, who noted the overall qualitative change in nostalgic experience, made an important structural distinction between the “ascending orders” of nostalgia: *simple* (idealizing the past), *reflexive* (analyzing nostalgia critically, its fidelity to the past), and *interpreted* (questioning one’s nostalgic response, likened to phenomenological *epoché*) (see Davis, 16ff, 24). Nostalgia advertising, for instance, generally involves first-order nostalgia (see Susan L. Holak and William J. Havlena’s application of Davis in “The Good Old Days: Observations on Nostalgia and Its Role in Consumer Behaviour,” *Advances in Consumer Research* 18.1 [1991]: 323-29). But it is Boym’s differentiation between *restorative* and *reflective* nostalgia—the former “attempt[ing] a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home,” the latter “delay[ing] the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately,” since longing lies in belonging—that most resembles my own, although she avoids the historicization of the two variants (Boym, xviii, 41-55). Her evaluation of them is implicit in her cautionary “Unreflected nostalgia breeds monsters” (xvi).
14. I take but little comfort in Jameson’s recent recasting of his late-capitalist nightmare as a phenomenological impossibility. He calls the “reduction to the present” a “historical tendency” that is “in any case unrealizable,” despite all our historical amnesias and insensitivity (Fredric Jameson, “The End of Temporality,” *Critical Inquiry* 29.4 [2003], 717).
15. Though its fate is a far cry from that of the antiquated objects in Orwell’s menacing vision of a future now past, our over-consumed, fatigued commodity nonetheless joins the brotherhood of things expelled from reality in the grip of a totalizing system. The “ghostlike” proprietor of a junk-shop without a clientele, aware of the worthlessness of his depleted stock (which gives him “the air of being a collector rather than a tradesman”); Winston’s encounter with a glass paperweight, vaguely recognized, fascinating “not so much [for] its beauty as the air it seemed to possess of belonging to an age quite different from the present one”; the instant accord of the two men in that object’s appreciation, the simplicity of a sentence—“It’s a beautiful thing”—repeated by each in turn (George Orwell, 1984 [New York: Signet-Penguin, 1950], 150-51, 95-96). For the protagonist of 1984, the spirit of a bona-fide past still survives in “a few solid objects with no words attached to them,” scattered and arranged in a space in which the past seems still to be

- happening (155). Their very existence and prescribed “unmemorability” drive a wedge into the monolith of official history; their speech, prompted by his nostalgic, redemptive remembrance, would—if it ever left this neglected, “slummy quarter of town”—be methodically falsified, supplanted, silenced. And this in a post-consumer-capitalist dystopia.
16. The first literary text to feature this invention was Enrique Gaspar’s 1887 *El Anacronopete* [The Anacronopede]. The anacronopede, capable of counterclockwise travel, makes its debut at the 1878 World’s Fair in Paris. The machine’s explosion at the end of the novel chastens bourgeois vanity (the travelers’ obsession with unlocking the secret of immortality). (For a discussion see, for example, Augusto Uribe, “The First Time Machine: Enrique Gaspar’s Anacronopete,” *New York Review of Science Fiction* 11 [June 1999]: 12-15). The concept of the time machine was popularized by H. G. Wells in the following decade. The few characters in Wells’s book spend time talking physics of time travel with the machine’s inventor—a man identified only as The Time Traveler (the type that would travel through time?). Tellingly, though his machine can move freely through the past, The Time Traveler teleports himself to the distant future, and finds the world evolved into a post-consumer-capitalist utopia. Since the publication of *The Time Machine*, time travel has received countless treatments in science fiction literature and film. One of them, Chris Marker’s 1962 film *La Jetée*, is of particular interest, being both a deconstruction and a nostalgic phantasmagoria of sorts. Reflecting the nostalgia-driven narration is the film’s elliptical structure. It consists of black-and-white freeze-frames arresting action with eerily photographic poise. These are displayed at irregular intervals, as in a slideshow, and punctuated by filmic fades and dissolves. The images are impelled by the hallucinatory desire of the nameless protagonist, whose effort to retain certain moments—lucid dreams of an alternate past—as memories is perhaps the reason for their resistance to cinematic protensity (Barthes, 90). The procession of images that is *La Jetée* conveys not a once-lived past but a dream of another time and the experience of nostalgia. In the end, the man chooses, instead of the future, to once more return to this image-paved past: to a vague and ominous event obsessing his memory since childhood—where now as a grown man he will meet his demise. His return: a lethal rupture of self.
 17. An overview of nineteenth-century debates concerning the museum can be found in chapter one of Didier Maleuvre’s *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1999).
 18. Camus, 48, modified translation. Camus here cites Plotinus’s notion of the metaphor-based, aesthetic use of reason, in which reason is reconciled with the eternal. As for Husserl and the phenomenological school, Plotinus’s reason is “an instrument of thought and not thought itself” and, thus, without limit (*ibid.*). *Absurd reason*, on the other hand, does not see the world as either rational or irrational, but as unreasonable; thus, reason has limits, and the absurd frame of mind is a nostalgic constataion of these limits.
 19. For a brief discussion of the transformation of the concept of home in relation to nostalgia, see Davis, 5-6.
 20. Heidegger’s reflections on nostalgia run in this vein (for a summary, see Agacinski, 16-18). Taking his lead from precisely the Novalis aphorism, he identifies homesickness as the “*fundamental attunement*” of philosophy (Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker [Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995], 9).
 21. A remark by Bryan S. Turner drives this point home: “we may therefore appropriately talk about an ontology of nostalgia as a fundamental condition of human estrangement, thereby simultaneously linking the notion of nostalgia to the philosophical traditions of Marx and Heidegger” (Bryan S. Turner, “A Note on Nostalgia,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 2.4 [1987], 150).
 22. Bloch then advocates philosophical anti-nostalgia (if nostalgia is seen as re-entering the past or its remnants with self-pitying sentimentality) as “a rehearsal, even a double rehearsal, for death” (63-64).

23. I refer the reader to Erich Auerbach's famous essay "Odysseus' Scar," *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953).
24. The possibility of this mythical self-sameness is doubtless one of the sources of Georg Lukács's nostalgia for the age of the epic and his implicit, anti-modern reading of the Homeric hero's way of being in the world: "There is not yet any interiority, for there is not yet any exterior, any 'otherness' for the soul. The soul goes out to seek adventure; it lives through adventures, but it does not know the real torment of seeking and the real danger of finding; such a soul never stakes itself; it does not yet know that it can lose itself, it never thinks of having to look for itself" (Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, trans. Anna Bostock [Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1971], 29). These reflections, written in "the mood of permanent despair over the state of the world," are introduced, once more, by Novalis's equation of philosophy with nostalgia, which makes Lukács both historicize and consign all philosophical quests to timeliness: "That is why philosophy, as a form of life or as that which determines the form and supplies the content of literary creation, is always a symptom of the rift between 'inside' and 'outside', a sign of the essential difference between the self and the world, the incongruence of soul and deed. That is why the happy ages have no philosophy, or why (it comes to the same thing) all men in such ages are philosophers, sharing the utopian aim of every philosophy" (12, 29).

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