

CALL FOR PAPER
« *La nostalgie n'est plus ce qu'elle était* » :
Uses and constructions of nostalgia in film and television

International conference – Université Bordeaux Montaigne, ARTES
30th March-1st April 2026

Nostalgia, postmodernity, vintage culture, retro esthetics, heritage films: cinema and television have always relied on the pleasures of repetition and audiences' taste for the past. Remakes, reboots, adaptations, biopics and reinterpretations of familiar franchises reveal a unique connection between film and memory, articulating both individual and collective pasts. Such practices help construct and sustain nostalgia, which permeates narratives, aesthetics, industrial strategies and viewers' experiences. Nostalgia cannot merely be reduced to a sense of wistfulness for the past : it depends on a complex relationship to time, when the present looks back in order to select and rework what has been lived. Initially conceived as a feeling of homesickness associated with exile or uprooting oneself, nostalgia can actually operate at aesthetic and narrative levels, creating ambiguous stories, images, structures and collective memories. Nostalgia on film has the ability to shape an idealized past acting as a refuge from the present; it can function as a reflexive and critical flashback, and work as a tool for generational recognition or heritage preservation.

In *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), Svetlana Boym distinguishes two major forms of nostalgia throughout literary fiction: restorative nostalgia, which works to recapture and idealize a lost past, and reflective nostalgia, which favours some critical distance, questioning the very mechanisms of memory. For Boym, nostalgia is not a daydream of the past, it represents a complex experience, combining a desire for continuity with an awareness of the irreversibility of time. Boym observes that nostalgia is often mobilized in response to rapid social, historical and technological changes, and acts as an emotional defence in the context of national tensions.

In contemporary film and television studies, nostalgia is analysed as a complex phenomenon shaping narratives, aesthetic forms and modes of reception. Following on from earlier works (Powrie, 1997 ; Vincendeau, 2001 ; Cook, 2005 ; Hodgin, 2011), recent research has focused on the multidimensionality of nostalgia, notably on its role in relation to heritage, the construction of identity and cultural discourses (Sperb, 2016). For example, Simon Reynolds (2011) examines a tendency termed as « retromania », observed throughout the cultural industries. Fantin, Févry and Niemeyer (2021) suggest an interdisciplinary approach which links nostalgia, media and technologies, underlining the growing impact of digital cultures on our relation to memories. Other notable works include Kathryn Pallister's (2019) analysis of nostalgia in the era of streaming, where platforms are particularly foregrounding their heritage catalogues as part of their programming strategies. All these works underline the mutability of such a concept, and its key role throughout contemporary forms of interactions between past, present, and media technologies.

The conference will explore these current dynamics, inviting all theoretical approaches (reception, aesthetics, technique, production, etc.) through four complementary strands, without any chronological or geographical limits regarding the case studies. Nostalgia will be studied as an aesthetic construction, a cultural phenomenon, and an ideological framework.

Narratives and characters

The first strand will examine narratives and characters marked by nostalgia (Guy, 2018; *La Belle Époque*, 2019; *Nostalgia*, 2022) and investigating memory. It includes, but is not limited to: the reimagining of existing ‘universes’ (Disney, Harry Potter, Star Wars, Marvel, etc.); remakes (*La Fille du puisatier*, 2011; *La vita davanti a sé*, 2020, etc.), sequels (*Les Bronzés 3 : amis pour la vie*, 2006; *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*, 2023; etc.); heritage films (*Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*, 2024); biopics (*The Crown*, 2016-2023; *Barbara*, 2017; *Moi qui t’aimais*, 2025). Nostalgia also manifests itself in representations of aging and the processes of digital de-aging, while intersecting with questions of gender and class.

Nostalgia for recent times

The second strand will explore the construction of nostalgia for recent times: how can nostalgia for the 1980s, 1990s or 2000s be understood? Examples include, but are not limited to: television shows like *Stranger Things*, *That ‘90s Show* or *How I Met Your Father*, as well as films such as *Atomic Blonde* (2017), *Captain Marvel* (2019), *Turning Red* (2022) and *L’Amour ouf* (2024). The aim is to investigate what appears to be a shortening of time between the period nostalgically reconstructed onscreen, and viewers’ own present – a phenomenon which seems to be accelerating.

Collective memory and history

The third strand will focus on collective memory, with an interest for practices of spectatorship such as cinephilia and collecting (for example, Carlotta Films’ new designs for classic films), which helps preserving and reviving shared cultural memories. This strand will also investigate how history is written onscreen – through war films and television series, media forms of historical documentaries – and consider how these works select, organize and stage past events which sustain a sense collective nostalgia and shared memory.

Industries and nostalgia

Lastly, the fourth strand will study how industries engage with the concept of nostalgia. At the production stage, this involves workers’ circulations and exiles, the use of analogue practices and materials for specific projects, and the emergence of new hybrid terms, such as “tradigital” in the field of animation. Similar trends can be found at the level of distribution, exhibition and curation via the development of dedicated festivals (Cannes Classics, Il Cinema Ritrovato, Cinema Rediscovered), magazines (*Schnock*) and catalogues (notably on streaming platforms); or at the level of marketing, with promotional strategies based on vintage aesthetics.

Submission details & deadline:

Abstracts in French or in English (c. 300 words), alongside a paper title and a short biography, are to be sent to the four following email addresses **by 19 December 2025**:

eve.benhamou@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr ; berenice.bonhomme@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr ; gwenlegras@wanadoo.fr ; loick.massonnaud@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr .

Papers can be written in French or English. A publication of conference proceedings is planned.

Organising committee:

Eve Benhamou, Bérénice Bonhomme, Gwénaëlle Le Gras, Loïck Massonnaud

Scientific committee:

Internal members (Université Bordeaux Montaigne):

Eve Benhamou, Pierre Beylot, Bérénice Bonhomme, Camille Gendrault, Gwénaëlle Le Gras, Clément Puget, Marguerite Vappererau.

External members:

Sébastien Févry (Université catholique de Louvain), Mary Harrod (University of Warwick), Hélène Laurichesse (Université de Toulouse-Jean Jaurès), Raphaëlle Moine (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3), Camille Pierre (Université Toulouse 2-Jean Jaurès), Katalin Pór (Université Paris 8), Delphine Robic-Diaz (Université de Tours), Ginette Vincendeau (King's College London)

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