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Get back!
Methods for Exploring Discourses of Nostalgia and Nostalgic Discourses Using Corpora

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Abstract

Nostalgia for something lost (factual or imagined) has shaped nations and continues to shape national self-image and policies. The rhetorical appeal to nostalgia has been blamed for a range of phenomena, from populism to reactionary politics at large, and yet research in psychology has suggested that nostalgising has a beneficial cognitive function. The dissonance between the negative reputation of nostalgia and the science of how it works for us, as a positive and useful emotion, is related to the fact that nostalgia is not a given content, but a situated cultural practice. I here use corpus linguistics methods to pursue the mismatch between the "discourse of *nostalgia*" and "nostalgic discourses" and to move from expressions that denote nostalgia, to expressions that signal it. This paper reports on the methodological explorations analysing large newspaper corpora and working on the overlaps between the collocational profile of *nostalgia* and the markers of nostalgic discourse. The aim is to exploit corpus studies' ability to systematically analyze patterns as a gateway to access nostalgic narratives. Nostalgia is, in fact, intrinsically discursive: it is a story of transformation, and it is the story of felt absences in the present compared to an 'elsewhen'. Understanding the narratives of nostalgia and identifying a typology of nostalgic discursive triggers may offer insights into how this pervasive, powerful and often profitable emotion gains purchase in public discourse.

1. *Nostalgia*: A long premise

Routinely research on nostalgia across disciplines harks back to the, nostalgically Greek, XVII century coinage of the term, discussing how it started off describing the longing for an elsewhere, a medical condition which could be cured with opium, leeches, and a trip to the Alps (Boym 2001), and then transformed in the incurable longing for an elsewhen. The term *nostalgia* was, in fact, coined in 1688 by the Alsatian physician Johannes Hofer combining the Greek *nostos* (home) and *algos* (pain) and it described a disease: a disabling longing for home, tied to the experience of displacement and isolation, commonly suffered by soldiers on foreign campaigns. Over time the term demedicalised, demilitarised and by the end of the XIX century (Bonnett 2016) it morphed into a general sense of loss. The object of nostalgia from geographical became historical and the preoccupations surrounding it moved from a psychological to a social dimension.

Shedding the XVII century clinical meaning, nostalgia came to refer to the yearning for an idyllic golden age that is most likely as old as humankind. However, even though the term *nostalgia* changed referent, the negative pathological associations of the feeling it came to define stuck, and from a literal disease it became a metaphorical one. This enduring negative meaning permeates contemporary discussions of nostalgia (as illustrated by Cohen quoted below, my emphasis in bold), which has been blamed for a range of political phenomena, such as the rise of populist movements (De Viers, Hoffman 2018; Kenny 2017), ethno-nationalism (Duyvendak 2011; Elgenius, Rydgren 2022), Brexit (Campanella, Dessù 2019; Saunders 2020), austerity policies (Heatherly 2016) and reactionary politics at large (Lilla 2016). The literature in sociology, history, political science views nostalgia as toxic and condemns it as a falsification of the past and a threat to the future (Lowenthal 1989).

> The belief that the past was better than the present, and the only way forward is back, can be found in the corners of any society at any time. But when **nostalgia** grows to dominate Britain and much of the west it is as sure **a symptom of decay as the stink of dry rot** (Cohen 2021).

In this so-called traditional view, nostalgia equates progressphobia. Even though Cohen adopts the medical metaphor of symptoms, the negativity is not related to the unwholesome symptoms, but to the manipulative effects of nostalgia. Nostalgia is in fact associated with falsification, or at least unfactfulness. As Steven Pinker – a supreme anti-nostalgist – puts it using a quote attributed to Franklin Pierce Adams "nothing is more responsible for the good old days than a bad memory" (Pinker 2018: 48). Nostalgia is here seen as "a myth functioning as memory" (Williams 1973: 57) and absorbs its pejorative meaning from that of myths, perhaps most effectively defined by Angela Carter as "extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree" (Carter 2017: 47).

Yet in the 1980s research in psychology started considering the beneficial effects of nostalgia, which does not cause distress but is triggered by it. Nostalgia is a response to moments of sudden change, a dissatisfaction with the present and loss of confidence in the uncertain future (as argued also by sociological research, which holds a negative view of nostalgia: Davis 1979; Bauman 2017) and functions as a mood-repair mechanism, buffering against negative feelings and producing a sense of self-continuity and social-belongingness. Furthermore, it has a pro-social motivating function and promotes the pursuit of collective goals (Sedikides et al. 2004). In this view, nostalgia is presented as a mixed valance,[1] bitter-sweet feeling (Routledge 2015). This view does not uniquely describe warm and fuzzy personal nostalgia, but the pervasively positive evaluation resonates with intimate conceptions of the emotion,[2] of which my favourite definition is Chabon's:

> Nostalgia, most truly and most meaningfully, is the emotional experience—always momentary, always fragile—of having what you lost or never had, of seeing what you missed seeing, of meeting the people you missed knowing, of sipping coffee in the storied cafés that are now hot-yoga studios. It's the feeling that overcomes you when some minor vanished beauty of the world is momentarily restored (Chabon 2017).

So there is a dissonance between *nostalgia* as a bad word – the enduring traditional view of nostalgia as retrograde and misguided – and the science of how nostalgia works for us: nostalgia as a good feeling. The conflict of meanings is related to the fact that

"[n]ostalgia is a cultural practice not a given content; its forms, meanings, and effects shift with the context - it depends on where the speaker stands in the landscape of the present" (Stewart 1988: 227). Nostalgia, in other words, is neither detrimental nor beneficial, it is a pervasive and powerful human response to a variety of personal and political needs,[3] the positive or negative evaluation depends on control, i.e. on the ultimate question: who benefits? Which confirms the insight in corpus linguistics research on semantic prosody (Louw 1993; Duguid 2011) that the notion of control is inseparably bound up with evaluation and that the positive or negative "evaluative polarity of certain items" (Partington et al. 2013: 73) is dependent on the control or lack of control over events. In Raymond William's words: "[n]ostalgia, it can be said, is universal and persistent; only other men's nostalgias offend" (Williams 1973: 12).

2. Aims and methods: Examining nostalgia through corpora

The discussion around nostalgia in the previous section provides layers of motive for this research. Nostalgia is deep-seated – it is a human response to unmet social needs –; nostalgia is rife – according to a 2018 survey (De Viers, Hoffman 2018) no less than two-thirds of Europeans believe that the world used to be a better place –; nostalgia is powerful and profitable[4] – political rhetoric and marketing strategies have been exploiting nostalgia for decades. Paired with the idea that nostalgia is fundamentally discursive, i.e. that it exists through the stories of transformation and stories of felt absences in the present compared to an "elsewhen" (factual or imagined), all these characteristics make nostalgia an interesting and relevant topic for Corpus-assisted Discourse Studies (CADS, Partington 2004; Partington et al.2013), which aspires to understanding the ways in which realities (e.g. concepts, identities, values) are constructed discursively and uncovering what may otherwise be varieties of "non-obvious meanings" (Partington 2017). Some of these meanings serve, reflect, or reproduce ideologies, and "[e]motions circulate in public discourse in patterned ways which have profound social and ideological ramifications" (Wahl-Jorgensen 2019: 9).

This work sets out to explore how CADS can contribute to investigate nostalgia as a discursive phenomenon, precisely looking at the "patterned ways" in which nostalgia is represented (the discourse *of* nostalgia, hence nostalgia discourse) and narrated (nostalgic discourse). This is achieved by analysing corpora (primarily a large corpus of contemporary British newspapers) using the methods and tools of CADS to understand the meanings of *nostalgia* and to identify a typology of nostalgic content and linguistic manifestations that produce nostalgic discourse, i.e. that construct something – that is perceived to have been and is no longer – as idyllic, with the potential effect, if not the intent, to evoke nostalgic feelings.

CADS combines the quantitative rigour of corpus linguistics' methods and tools with the social perspective of more traditional approaches to discourse analysis, to study how social reality/ies are constructed, represented and transmitted linguistically. CADS main strength is its ability to systematically analyse linguistic patterns over very large samples of naturally occurring language, so we could say that CADS is good at counting and accounting.[5] One of CADS greatest challenges, however, is that its efforts are often directed at counting what is difficult to count. In the case of nostalgia, CADS is very good at examining "emotion terms" (Bednarek 2008: 12), i.e. "linguistic expressions that denote" (ibidem) nostalgia (i.e. nostalgia discourse), but the challenge is investigating "expressions that signal" (ibid.) it (i.e. nostalgic discourse). In this study I wish to explore how we can use the analysis of nostalgia discourse to inform the analysis of nostalgic discourse (Fig. 1). Which brings us to a further layer of motive in this

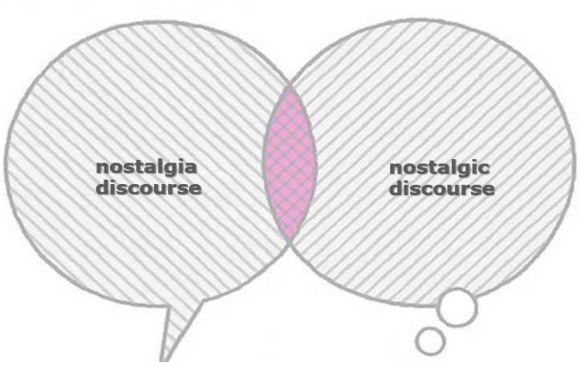

Fig. 1 | illustration of the assumedd overlap between discourses of *nostalgia* and nostalgic discourses.

study. My working hypothesis is that the dissonance of meanings between the negative reputation of nostalgia (i.e. the enduring traditional view) and the science of how it works for us (i.e. nostalgia as a good, and useful, feeling) is related to a mismatch between the discourses of nostalgia and nostalgic discourses, where representations of nostalgia and nostalgic people will likely be negative, but nostalgic discourses might be ubiquitous and enfranchised. My second assumption is that the overlaps between the use of the word *nostalgi**, expressions that convey a representation of nostalgia, and nostalgic content may provide a gateway to accessing the complex narrative of change vs. continuity, decline vs. progress. This work therefore aims to: a) analyse the collocational profile and evaluative prosody (Morley, Partington 2009; Partington 2015) of the word *nostalgia* and b) use them to identify a typology of nostalgic content and more elusive and allusive (Polletta, Callahan 2017) discursive triggers of nostalgia, in order to offer insights into how this pervasive, powerful and often profitable feeling gains purchase in public discourse.

The analysis adopts the main methods and tools in the kit of corpus analysts: keyword analysis (computed using *Wordsmith 8* and with an additional measure of effect size – see Gabrielatos 2018 – calculated on an Excel sheet), the examination of collocational profiles (performed using *Sketchengine* and *Xaira* when using XML annotated sub-portions of the newspaper corpus), and the close reading of extended concordance lines and full texts.[6] As is often the case in corpus-assisted work, the analysis relies on extensive manual classification in semantic categories and it benefits from input from a variety of disciplines and sources.

Despite being largely an inductive approach, CADS, is, in fact, also characterised by an appetite for insight from different perspectives; the corpus remains at the centre, but extra-textual incursions are welcome, as long as theoretical constructs remain flexible and practical and feed into our "picaresque serendipity" (Partington 2009: 292). One of the main reasons for using a corpus is because corpus tools enable us to order and reorder complexity and see patterns that would otherwise go undetected, because the human "naked eye" is not a sufficient tool for handling large amounts of data. The creative power released by the observation of corpora is best described by Scott and Tribble:

> It is here that something not dissimilar from the sometimes scorned "intuition" comes in. This is imagination. Insight. Human beings are unable to see shapes, lists, displays, or sets without insight, without seeing "patterns". […] The tools we use generate patterns (lists, plots, colour arrangements) and it is when we see these that in some cases the pattern "jumps out" at us (Scott, Tribble 2006: 6).

CADS is most often invoked as a bottom-up approach, whereby we let new knowledge emerge from the data, in addition I believe that CADS is just as importantly a "sideways" approach, whereby knowledge comes in from the periphery, as the historian Rafael Samuel once put it "as the byproduct of studying something else" (Samuel 1994: 5). And this is perhaps the core of CADS's aforementioned serendipitous nature. Indulging in the visual metaphor a little further, what we do in CADS is not unlike scotopic vision (a.k.a. night vision):

> 'If I wanted to see something in the gloom I had to fix my gaze just on the side of it, and then it would become visible.' Ancient astronomers were the first to observe this idiosyncrasy. They learned that faraway stars, too faint to see when on directly, could however be seen askance (Higgins 2022).

This idea of looking indirectly, askance, sideways, accommodates my assumption that we may gain access to nostalgic discourse (which is language as emotion) by looking at the overlaps with nostalgia discourse (that is language about emotion).

3. Methodological focus: A problem of operationalisation

Operationalising nostalgia poses several obstacles. Nostalgia is obviously related to time and memory, but not everything that is time related is nostalgic. In other words: all nostalgic narratives are "once upon a time" narratives, but not all "once upon a time" stories are nostalgic. So, how do we distinguish nostalgia from other forms of reminiscence? Secondly, because of the porous boundaries between emotions, how do we distinguish between nostalgia and other emotions that nostalgic discourse may overlap with or leak into, such as fear, anger, regret or general dis-

content?

Research in social and clinical psychology has reflected on how to measure nostalgic feelings, some for example have suggested a prototype approach to the identification of features of nostalgia (Hepper et al. 2012). The cognitive neuroscientist Felipe De Brigard (2018) offers a particularly efficient definition of nostalgia identifying three components: a cognitive component which is the mental simulation of a factual or imagined past, an affective component which is mixed valance with the negative affect generated by the feeling towards the present and the positive affect elicited by the content of the simulation, and a conative component that is the desire to reinstate the properties of the simulated event in the present. These are the components as experienced by the human brain, but they can be easily adapted to discursive features. We can recognise nostalgic discourse by: a reference to a past time (factual or imagined), a positive evaluation of the past in contrast to a negative present, and the expression – but more likely the implication – of a desire to return to that feeling in the present. The example[7] in figure 2 illustrates the application of De Brigard's model to discourse and it appears to be a good fit for a working definition. Then of course one could argue that evidence may fit different models and any choice of definition remains, precisely, an arbitrary choice. Still since testing this hypothesis required a definition, De Brigard's was deemed rather straightforward, efficient and comprehensive.

This illustrates how it is relatively easy to tell *that* a text is nostalgic, but very difficult to retrieve all the ways *how* a text can be nostalgic, i.e. the proliferous and polymorphous linguistic manifestations of nostalgic discourse. If our aim is to automatically identify with 100% precision and 100% recall,[8] and accurately quantify nostalgic discourse, I do not believe corpus-assisted methods, or as it happens any method,

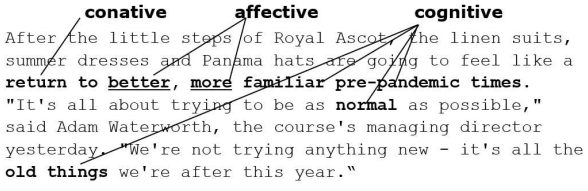

Fig. 2 | illustration of the three discursive components of nostalgic discourse.

can achieve that goal. What CADS can do though is offer strategies to identify expansive and perhaps non-intuitive plausible linguistic triggers, which may lead to a more comprehensive and systematic analysis of nostalgic narratives.

The next section reports on the collocational analysis of the word *nostalgia*. I have looked at a variety of large corpora to analyse nostalgia lexicon (*nostalgi**) and I have found very similar patterns across corpora, in particular I used *EnTenTen*[9] as a term of comparison to check that the findings from my study corpus were (with all due caution)[10] generalisable. However, because the aim of this paper is exploratory and methodological rather than descriptive, I will limit the scope of this analysis to one specific dataset: portions of the *SiBol* corpus.[11] *SiBol* is a large diachronic collection of contemporary British newspapers, to downsample data in this study I will focus on *SiBol* 1993 and 2005 (approximately 267 million words), which comprise the whole output of *the Guardian*, *the Times*, and *the Daily Telegraph*.

4. Collocational profile of nostalgia and networks of meanings

The first step of the analysis consisted in confirming whether the traditional negative view was prevalent when the word *nostalgia* is used in *SiBol 1993* and *2005*. I retrieved 2,775 occurrences of *nostalgia* and analysed its collocates in a window of 5 words to the left and 5 words to the right, with a threshold of minimum frequency of 5 co-occurrences. This resulted in 84 collocates that were examined individually and grouped in broad semantic categories in order to get an idea of the dominant patterns of meaning.

The most populated categories are to do with references to time and objects of nostalgia, for example *old*, *days*, *past*, *golden*, *era*, *pop*, *childhood*, *1960s*, and so on. We then have references to memory: *memory*, *evoke*, *evoking*.[12] References to feeling, such as *sense*, *feel*, *regret*, *mood*, *feelings*, *melancholy*, *sadness*; including expressions of desire, e.g. *yearning*, *longing*. References to the senses: *warm*, *whiff*, *redolent*. Many collocates in this group have a clear negative prosody with element of distortion (of sight): *sepia-tinted, tinged, glow, rosy.* A similar idea of distortion is expressed by the collocate *misplaced*, as well as through collocates hinting at hedonism or

excesses, for instance: *exercise, trip, fest, pure, orgy, indulging, escapism*. Finally, negativity emerges through references to pain and medical metaphors: *twinge, pang, aching, dose, antidote*; as well as water metaphors, which are notoriously imbued (pun intended) with negative prosody: *wave, wallow, wallowing, awash, steeped*.

Semantic classification is inevitably subjective as well as reductive, some groupings are rather unambiguous and intuitive, others require disambiguation through close reading of the extended co-text, some collocates could be classified in multiple categories or finer-grained ones (to grant transparency the full list of collocates is reported in Table 1 in the appendix). The outline of the semantic preference of nostalgia here, however, is functional to the examination of semantic prosody[13] of nostalgia or of nostalgic people and what emerges is that prosody is distinctly negative. Thus confirming alignment with the enduring traditional view.

Negativity and a dominant semantic areas of bogus memory unfold even more visibly if we look explicitly at objects of nostalgia, by retrieving the most frequent grammatical pattern of *nostalgia*: *nostalgia for*. Collocates to the right of *nostalgia for* are time references: *past*, *days*, *time*, *age*, *era* and invariably they are depicted as times which have never existed. *Nostalgia* is characterized a disease, as threatening and dangerous, and most visibly as misplaced (as evidenced by the sample of concordance lines in Fig. 3).

Pursuing the frequent grammatical pattern to the left of *nostalgia*, looking at what precedes *of nostalgia*, we find coherently negative patterns: nostalgia as a threatening *wave*, a misplaced *sense*, a self-referential *whiff* (Fig.4). The negativity of the wave metaphor has been largely documented, (see for example Taylor 2022) whiffs are more subtle, but tend to be *of* unpleasant things, literal (e.g. *gas*) or metaphorical

Fig. 3 | sample of concordance of *nostalgia for*, sorted by R1 position.

denounced the	**nostalgia for**	a past which never existed
	nostalgia for	a golden time which you did not really have
	nostalgia for	the past seems misplaced
warm glow of unreal	**nostalgia for**	a time
swooning	**nostalgia for**	a time they have never known
	nostalgia for	an allegedly golden era
an exercise in	**nostalgia for**	an imaginary past
dally regretfully with	**nostalgia for**	an imagined golden age
	nostalgia for	our far from glorious past
bogus	**nostalgia for**	the days

Fig. 4 | ssample of concordance of of *nostalgia*, sorted by L1 position

questionable sense	**of nostalgia**	
misplaced sense	**of nostalgia**	
a sense	**of nostalgia**	that backfires
tapping a wave	**of nostalgia**	
the tidal wave	**of nostalgia**	that has swamped the film and threatens to capsize it
is palpably untrue. It has the unmistakable whiff	**of nostalgia**	about it
there's a cosiness here and a whiff	**of nostalgia**	not to say self- referentiality

(e.g. *scandal*).

The grammatical pattern *with nostalgia* shares a similarly negative semantic prosody and a preference for distortion, the most frequent pattern being *tinged with nostalgia*, as in: *heavily tinged with nostalgia and somewhat out of date*. Examining examples of *with nostalgia*, however, there is one collocational pattern that fails to corroborate infallible negativity: LOOK *back with nostalgia*. While the majority of examples still hint towards inaccurate or distorted memory, we also find a handful of counterexamples characterising the past as indeed preferable to the present or the future and hence qualifying nostalgia as a legitimate response, as in the extract below from *the Guardian* 2005:

somewhere around the year 2000 the world reached a high point in the diffusion of civilisation, to which future generations may **look back with nostalgia** and envy.

A few counterexamples obviously do not change the overall picture of *nostalgia* as a "bad word" (Boym 2001: 59), however, from a methodological point of view, counter-examples present us with gaps that can open onto new paths of research.

So – "minding the gap" – I investigated second-order collocates of LOOK *back*, in order to explore the network of semantic relationships, or "connectivity" (Brezina et al. 2015: 141), between words that collocate with each other and, according to Phillips "articulate a crucial area of conceptual content" (Phillips 1989: 69), a.k.a "aboutness". This allows us to eclipse the word *nostalgia*, but pursuing the activity associated with nostalgising, that is looking back. The dominant ways in which one can LOOK *back* in the corpus are, of course, *in anger* (229 occurrences) and *fondly* (39 occurrences), followed by *with regret* (21), *with wonder* (19) and *with nostalgia* (16). The pattern LOOK *back fondly* is largely found in positively evaluated contexts and appears to express acceptable nostalgia, this led me to dig deeper in the collocational network and look at *fond**, which would provide a much larger sample to test whether this could be a gateway into positive nostalgic discourse.

One in ten occurrences of *fond* in the corpus refer to *fond* MEMORY, RECOLLECTION, REMEMBRANCE, or REMINISCENCE (989 occurrences) and one in four occurrences of *fondly* to *fondly* REMEMBER, RECALL, IMAGINE, or REMINISCENCE (585 occurrences). Reading closely the concordance lines we come across nostalgic discourse where the longing for the past in the face of a lacking present emerges as legitimate, as illustrated by these examples from *SiBol*:

Once, she **remembers fondly** – thinking of the time before the Ukraine declared its independence in 1991 - there were Canadians and Germans. They used to come in groups. Now the hotel is almost empty

The Community's great and good are still living in the halcyon years of the late 1980s. In those **fondly-remembered** days, western Europe's economy was booming, the Cold War froze Europe's ethnic struggles under the ice and M Delors was the acclaimed architect of the EC's 1992 programme to create a barrier-free single market. Nowadays, the summiteers gather twice a year under pressure at home, most with economies slumping and increasingly shamed by the gap between their rhetoric and their action in the Balkans.

This confirms that a positive view of nostalgia is indeed represented, and this happens by means of alternative lexicalisations. Funnelling down the collocational network enabled us to find one of them, the challenge, however, is to account for the multifaceted renderings that express or invite the emotion of nostalgia. Moreover, in all 260 examples of the phrase *fond memories*, fond memories are positive, though not all of them are instances of nostalgic discourse. Readapting Batcho (2007:362): one cannot be nostalgic without remembering (or imagining, but one can remember (even fondly) without being nostalgic. Only the close reading of each concordance line allows us to identify the presence of nostalgic attributes, this not only implies slow manual work, but also subjective judgement.[14] The aim and the logic of corpus-assisted methods is not achieving greater objectivity, but providing greater accuracy, "yeald[ing] to a fuller picture and a wider perspective" (Marchi 2019: 39), and (as mentioned earlier) committing to accountability. To do this, we have to make sure that the lexical items we select are valid indicators, i.e.

that they measure as plausibly and as comprehensively as possible the cultural concept we intend to measure.

Travelling the collocational network of *nostalgia*, as has been shown, gives us bottom-up (and sideways) access to nostalgic content and may allow us to build a glossary of nostalgic triggers, but probably remains imperfect in terms of coverage. Because the motor of nostalgia is an evaluative contrast between past and present and not just a memory, not even a fond one, we need perhaps to step beyond the lexical level and adopt a more textual approach. This translates into the attempt to identify prototypically nostalgic texts that we can then mine for linguistic traces of nostalgic and/or nostalgia-inducing linguistic mechanisms.

5. Agglomeration of Keywords and prototypically nostalgic texts

Keyword analysis and collocation analysis are essentially two ways to approach "aboutness", earlier defined as areas of conceptual content, an idea that harks back to the notion that "the total meaning of a concept is experienced by standing at its control center in a network and looking outward along all of its relational links in that knowledge space" (de Beaugrande 1980: 68). Keyword analysis aims at accessing what is comparatively distinctive of a corpus or a text. A keyword is a word "whose frequency is unusually high in comparison with some norm" (Scott 1996: 53), if we accept frequency to be a parameter of typicality, it follows that words that are key in a set of texts are domain and/or content-distinctive and that their presence may identify prototypical texts in that domain and/or about that topic. This means that we can use keywords that are contextually key in the same set of texts to identify texts that are relevant for a specific purpose, in this case specific types of content (i.e. domains) and specific topics that prototypically invite nostalgia. Jagfeld et al. (2022) use a similar approach to select relevant posts on the basis of lemmas overused in sampled relevant posts compared to non-relevant posts on the topic of bipolar disorder. Other methods, such as topic modelling (which will not be discussed in this paper), have been adopted towards similar aims. A criticism of keywords analysis is that it presupposes "that maximum distinctiveness is the most significant aspect of the content of a corpus, and can thus lead to a form of textual stereotyping" (Murakami et al. 2017: 272) and it is true that keywords do not tell us what is most typical as much as what is most different. Distinction, however, is exactly what we want in this case. The idea is to derive from keywords analysis agglomerations of words, i.e. words that are co-key across texts, to use as a colander to sieve through potentially prototypical nostalgic texts. These texts can in turn be used as a source of nostalgic glossary. So stereotyping is precisely the purpose of this operation.

To test this method, I used a sub-portion of *SiBol* which was annotated to make it possible to access fine-grained metadata and identify individual newspaper texts. *The Guardian* contains the whole output of year 2005 (87,216 articles), stored by individual articles (1 text – 1 file) and XML annotated in order to make it possible to retrieve the position of each article in the newspaper (i.e. indication of page number and of section). I extracted 647 articles containing *nostalgi** words from the rest of the corpus and created a small study corpus, amounting to 0.7% of the whole output of *the Guardian* 2005. *Nostalgia* (456 occurrences), *nostalgic* (256), *nostalgically* (11), *nostalgie* (5), *nostalgics* (2), *nostalgist* (2), *nostalgists* (2), *nostalgiafest* (1) are in fact relatively infrequent words, which however is obviously not in contrast with the hypothesis that nostalgia may be a pervasive emotion. The vast majority of the texts containing *nostalgi** (83%) are feature articles, in particular from the *Reviews*, *Family*, *Film and Music*, and *Weekend* sections.[15] Feature articles constitute about 53% of the total output of the newspapers, which means that *nostalgi** is firmly a soft-news item, belonging in the supplements' pages of the print newspaper.

I then compared through keyword analysis the *nostalgi** *Guardian* (647 texts, 634,051 tokens) against the rest of the newspaper (86.569 texts, 40,751,328 tokens). Computing keywords with *Wordsmith 8*, setting a threshold of at least 5 occurrences in at least 5 texts as minimum frequency in the study corpus, I obtained 480 keywords, which were disambiguated by reading the co-text (at times close and at times extended) and grouped in broad semantic categories. As was the case with the earlier collocation analysis, the categories described below are flexible and instrumental rather than descriptive and reifying

(see Marchi 2019: 66); for transparency, a selection[16] of keywords is reported in the appendix (Table 2).

a) The most populated category (in terms of word types) is text-type/domain dependent, that is it matches the topics of the supplements. Over 30% of the words in the list can be referred to this category, with a predominance of words related to music (e.g. *music*, *band*, *album*, *songs*, *pop*, *rock*, *voice*, *musical*, *disco*, *Beatles*), books and art (e.g. *art*, *book*, *novel*, *poems*, *poetry*, *memoir*, *fiction*, *writer*), and film and TV (e.g. *film*, *cinema*, *movie*, *Humphrey*, *Hollywood*, *screenplays*, *Tardis*, *Coronation*, *Doctor*).[17] The text-type also determines a high frequency of personal pronouns, in particular first person (*myself*, *me*, *my*, *I*) which are typical of features, compared to hard news, yet third person pronouns are also comparatively more frequent in the *nostalgi** corpus, which correlates with a higher presence of verbs signposting storytelling (e.g. *was, says, tells, explains, describes*), accounting for about 2% of the keywords in the list. We could perhaps add to this macro-category characterized by genre-typical lexicon also markers of vagueness[18] such as: *all*, *much*, *something*, *quite*, *everything*, *maybe*, *somehow*.

b) The second most frequent category, covering over 20% of the list, is represented by time references. These can be divided in sub-categories: general time references, such as: *when*, *old*, *never, always, ever, era, past*, *still*, *once*, *time* (7%). We then have a 5% of keywords referring to specific a past time, such as decades (*50s*, *1930s*, *80s*, *60s*, *70s*, and so on), precise years (*1945*, *1975*, *1968*, and so on), or periods (such as *Victorian*, *Edwardian*, or *19th-century*). We can include 3% of words referring to specific times of life that are object of nostalgia, for instance: *childhood*, *young*, *boy*, *youth*, and 2% of keywords referring to holidays (such as: *summer, Christmas, holiday*). The latter however overlap with other words that refer to holidays in terms of place rather than time, for example: *seaside*, *caravan*, *camping*, and are therefore not included in the twenty per-cent.

c) In line with what emerged from the analysis of collocates, 5% of keywords that refer to the sphere of emotion: *sense*, *feel*, *mood*, *pleasure*, *sentimental*, *melancholic*, *wistful*, *yearning*, *fond*, *haunting*, *affection*, *misty-eyed*, etc. Another 4% can be reconducted to the senses, most prominently sight: *look*,[19] *eyes*, *dark*, *image*, *picture*, *rose-tinted*, *hear*, *smell*, *harking*, etc.

d) We then have a set of smaller, but coherent groupings, each accounting for between three and five per-cent of the keywords in the list. Words referring to the country/nation, to patriotism or cliché Englishness: *English*, *Englishness*, *landscape*, *monarchy*, *tradition*, *Queen*, *patriotism*, *values*, and so on. Words pointing towards the area of style (e.g. *style*, *fashion*, *clothes*, *vintage*, *retro*, *kitsch*). About 3% of words specifically point towards so-called "Ostalgie"[20] (e.g. *Russian*, *Soviet*, *Putin*, *Stalin*).

e) Finally, we have words (5%) resonating with De Brigard's components of memory (*remember*, *memory*, *forgotten*, *evoke*, *recalls*, *reminds*, and so on) and of imagination (e.g. *wonder*, *imagination*, *fantasy*).

Describing the idea of keywords, Scott and Tribble use the example of a recipe for cake, which "may well have several mentions of *eggs, sugar, flour*" (Scott, Tribble 2006: 58), consequently the frequency and the co-presence of the ingredients in the list of keywords can tell us which texts are recipes for cake. Similarly, the words listed in the groupings above may be ingredients in the recipe for nostalgia and their co-presence may signal distinctive nostalgic content. I have mentioned earlier in this section the idea of "agglomeration", that is, words that lump together across texts. These words are therefore both co-key and evenly dispersed (see Egbert, Biber 2019 for an illuminating discussion of the importance of text dispersion in keywords analysis) across the target texts, in our case the *nostalgi** texts. For example, multiple words in the time category are co-present: in pairs (e.g. *when*, *time*) in about 60% of *nostalgi** texts, in triplets in 45% (e.g. *when*, *time*, *now*), in groups of four in 34% (e.g. *when*, *time*, *now*, *back*), and so on. Which means that the density of time references is distinctively high in these texts. Combinations of "time" words and "memory" words are co-present in over 50% of texts. Pursuing agglomerations of different categories we gain systematic access to nostalgic discourse and we can then test these agglomerations of lexical items on larger datasets, thus using the "boiled down extract" (Scott, Tribble 2006: 6) of the *nostalgi** corpus as heuristics to filter out lumps of nostalgic discourse in other texts (which have no mentions of *nostalgi**).

I tested these agglomerations on the *SiBol* cor-

pus and what emerged when retrieving concordance lines containing "time" words and "memory" words[21] was a definite nostalgic discourse which we may paraphrase as "those were the days" discourse:

memories were **evoked** of a distant **age when** points mattered more than prizes and the art of genuine competition had not been lost amid a plethora of pacemakers.
The **memory** of a **time when British** youth knew to behave with respect, decorum and decency seems as wistful as a long ago summer holiday.
The details came slowly at first, but as they began to talk so other **memories** soon flooded in. Some **remembered** the **days** of the railways, some even **remembered** the **time when** you could reach the capital by boat. A certain blankness filled their eyes as they tried to recall something akin to innocence.
Writing as one old enough to **remember** an **era** of ministerial integrity, the manipulation of such a visit for particular party advantage seems yet another step down a particularly sleazy path and merely adds to the contempt in which many citizens already hold their political ''leaders''.
Rachel Kelly **looks back** at Britain during the Blitz and discovers that meal times were much healthier then It was an **age when** chocolate pudding was sweetened with carrots

The close reading of concordance lines gives access to further interesting patterns, such as the frequent use of negation (or impediment)[22] before references to memory and time, which constructs a peculiar discourse of "nostalgia for any time but the present":

I cannot **remember** a **time when** politicians were so out of touch with the people and so in touch with each other
I CANNOT **remember** a **time when** children have seemed so utterly under siege.
Today, when a third of the adult population lives alone, myself included, it is difficult to **remember** a **time when** people saw close- knit communities as the future. Yet in the late **1960s** and early **1970s** there was a vogue for communal living.
We knew we had to behave properly in those areas of the house, we couldn't run riot as we did in the nursery. Mummy and Daddy still joke about it today: they say, 'Back to Mimi,' when things get out of hand. I can't **remember** a **time when** I answered my parents back. If they said no, that was no. We were quite disciplined.
it is difficult to **remember** a **time when** avowed lawbreakers have enjoyed such sympathy from our authorities.

This points towards the idea that nostalgia is not really about the past, as much as about felt absences in the present. This lack or faultiness shows a further looping overlap between the discourses of *nostalgia* and nostalgic discourses. In the analysis of *nostalgia*, in fact, an element that emerged repeatedly was the association with visual metaphors: nostalgia as lack of vision, faulty or distorted vision, with collocates such as *blinded*, *clouded*, *rose-tinted*, *goggles*. In the representation of *nostalgia* the defectiveness is in the memory, in the nostalgic representations the defectiveness is instead in the present. This nostalgic discourse in journalistic texts interestingly resonates with the words of poet-laureate Carol Ann Duffy:[23]

> Those early mercenaries, it made them ill –
> leaving the mountains, leaving the high, fine air
> to go down, down. What they got
> was money, dull, crude coins clenched
> in the teeth; strange food, **the wrong taste**,
> stones in the belly; and **the wrong sounds**,
> **the wrong smells**, **the wrong light**, every breath –
> wrong. They had an ache here, Doctor,
> they pined, wept, grown men. It was killing them.

A further link shines through: the relation between nostalgia and the senses, which surfaced in the lists of keywords and collocates. This happens sometimes indirectly, as in the case of hearing, with texts about music being the prototypical habitat of nostalgic discourse, and sometimes more specifically, with a prominence of sight (*look back* as remembering and the proliferation of visual metaphors of nostalgia as distorted vision), and smell, where we have the unpleasant *whiff of nostalgia*, but also something akin to the redolent Proustian madeleine[24] (as in the examples below for the keyword *smell* lumping with

"memory").

She **remembers** pigs, the **smell** of clover honey wafting through the house and an elderly female relative who sat by the fire all day smoking a clay pipe.
This is an annual that takes us **back** to **childhood** - the plant's strong, spicy **smell** is *nostalgic*
an evocatively sensual recollection of the first race in 1981. He **remembered** the nerves and "the rustle of bin liners, the **smell** of liniment, men greasing their nipples
those looking for a little instant *nostalgia* should open Wohl's lavishly illustrated book, **smell** the reek of **old** flying leathers and feel the **past** rush like slipstream off its pages
"We all know how strongly our sense of **smell** can trigger a **memory**: a scent can uncover images that we thought we'd lost. One of the first **memories** I have of my mother is that clean, freshly washed **smell** of her clothes. I've tried to preserve that reassuring **smell** in my memory, so I feel she isn't gone."

This experiment with agglomerations of keywords needs further fine-tuning and it has not yet provided the comprehensiveness that it aimed for. It has however sparked ideas, lit up connections, opened up paths, or rabbit-holes to run down and explore. It has, in other words, released that creative power which encapsulates the serendipitous nature of CADS. In the next section I will attempt a methodological reflection on this exploration and I will reflect on the value as well as the challenges and limitations of applying a corpus-assisted approach to the study of a phenomenon at the crossroad of emotion, memory, and imagination and in the sphere of so many different disciplines, from psychology, sociology, political science, and marketing to the specialised areas of heritage studies, memory studies, history of emotions and nostalgia studies.

6. Take aways and future journeys

As stated earlier, this work had a primarily methodological intent and methodological meditations have been disseminated throughout this paper. I wanted to test whether there was an overlap between the discourses of *nostalgia* and nostalgic discourses, and whether that intersection could be exploited to access the "discursive renderings of nostalgia" (Mannur 2007: 28), that is the sundry ways in which nostalgising translates into language and trickles through text. The analysis presented here has evidenced that this overlap exists and hopefully it has succeeded in showing how it can disclose a repertoire of linguistic expressions that signal (and may trigger) nostalgia. The use of CADS methods and tools has provided a systematic, rather than selective, way to operationalize nostalgia, I have not however been able to solve the issue of coverage, that is accounting for (and counting) all the unpredictable and complex potential discursive manifestations of nostalgia.

Still, even though we might never be able to tally *all* the ways in which nostalgia happens through language, the fact that we can size up some pervasive and recurrent linguistic patterns, gives us the opportunity to observe the accumulation of mediated constructions of the emotion of nostalgia and to understand how texts may "prime" us (Hoey 2005) to feel nostalgic. The stress on *text* is important and CADS ability to identify prototypicality in texts may help us articulate the combined power of two discursive forces: pervasiveness and resonance. While some corpus tools, prioritizing vertical reading of lists and concordances, account for the *power of accumulation*, the preservation of texts as "the fundamental unit of analysis" (Egbert, Schnur 2018: 159) allows us to account for the *power of story*. Nostalgia narratives, in fact, exist through the linear meaning-making machine of stories: "what gets forgotten, what gets remembered, and whose stories it is we are telling" (Woods 2022: 22), and CADS has much to contribute to analysing the building blocks of these stories, after all "we use language to enjoy nostalgia" (Evans 2022).[25]

The methodological exploration presented here, as often is the case, has prompted more new questions than provided definite answers and it has opened up a host of ideas for future research on this formidably complex, productive and ubiquitous topic. It would, for example, be interesting to investigate different text types and profile nostalgia across different corpora. Newspaper discourse, we have seen, privileges the negative traditional view associated

with public nostalgia, while in texts containing more autobiographical and intimate recollections a positive private nostalgia may well be prevalent.[26] As well as expanding the research across genres, because nostalgia is bound up with time, it seems essential to unfold it longitudinally and test the famous leitmotif "nostalgia isn't what it used to be" through diachronic analysis (Marchi, Taylor 2023). Having pointed out earlier that emotions have porous and fuzzy boundaries, it would be interesting to use the same methods to scrutinize and map other emotions, which seems of paramount importance for a discipline invested in the uncovering of power and meaning.

> Precisely because emotions are in part socially constructed and profoundly shaped by power relations, their public articulation – particularly in mediated contexts – tells us about more than merely how individuals feel: it tells us about how we collectively and socially narrate emotions for larger purposes (Wahl-Jorgensen 2019).

Which links also to CADS's interest in the language of persuasion, where another fruitful investigation would be exploring the connections between persuasion, emotion and storytelling and how nostalgia can be used as emotional fuel to sell products or ideas.

So the future promises a multitude of paths of research, but we must also acknowledge that CADS, or rather, linguistics will not suffice. Because the topic is so complex and multifaceted, to advance our collective knowledge about the linguistic nature of emotions, such as nostalgia, and the emotional nature of language, we need an inter-, trans-, multi- disciplinary endeavour. This entails reflecting both on what CADS can bring to the table and on its limits.

The reassuring thing is that we tend to be good at acknowledging complexity and that we are used to strive to reconcile the need to zoom out and to zoom in (to generalise to then recontextualise). What CADS often affords is progressive approximation: we spot something from afar, thanks to the tool's distant reading (the bird-eye view), we then get closer in descending loops. Each step leads to the next, which is to do with CADS erratic nature and the fact that we do not generally know where we are going until the data take us there; and by not knowing where we are going there is a chance we will find something (or somewhere, or somewhen) new. So what CADS has to contribute ultimately is its "eclectic empiricism" (Marchi 2019: 38). What it should look for in other disciplines such as history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, art, and more, is extratextual input, a deep understanding of context, an assessment of production, reception, causes and effects.

A recurrent criticism towards CADS is that it is largely monosemiotic and that "language-only corpora will tell us some of the story, but they will not tell us the whole story" (Caple 2018: 85). From the exploration of nostalgic discourse has emerged a consistent relation between nostalgia and the senses, so not just multimodal, but properly multisensory analysis seems to be a perfect match for text analysis, thus including visuals, but also auditory research (Goodale 2011), and even the contribution of sensory studies on smell, taste, and touch, working on the intricate overlaps between emotions, feelings and the senses.

Although text and discourse analysis are largely conceived as either ancillary or self-sufficient, this is somehow an invitation to prod disciplinary boundaries and move towards more complementary and cooperative approaches. The work presented in this paper, as mentioned earlier, aims to be suggestive, rather than explanatory and I hope it has, if nothing else, succeeded in provoking interconnections and, in the spirit of this journal, promoting disciplinary fluidity.

Table 1: L5R5 collocates of nostalgia in SiBol 1993 and 2005. Frequency cut-off <5

collocate	freq.	z-score
old	75	13.1
days	65	17.1
past	59	16.4
exercise	49	40.9
sense	39	15.9
feel	34	11.3
wave	34	33.2
wallow	29	147.6
trip	29	20.1
golden	25	21.6
era	23	19.8
eyed	22	31.4
pop	18	11.8
warm	17	13.3
whiff	17	42.3
longing	16	47.3
tinted	16	57.1
regret	16	21.8
childhood	16	16
misty	16	61
romantic	16	16.9
memory	15	12.4
1960s	15	13.8
1970s	14	12.3
sixties	14	19.2
tinged	13	47.4
pure	13	15.4
wallowing	12	70.8
fest	12	55.7
mood	12	10
bygone	12	59.5
empire	12	11
mere	12	13
cosy	11	21
glow	11	25.1
feelings	11	12.3
instant	10	12.3
indulging	9	29.8
misplaced	9	26.2
melancholy	9	21.9
dose	9	18.5
seventies	9	13.9
imperial	9	11.5
hint	9	12.6
buffs	8	35.1
orgy	8	30
indulge	8	18.1
awash	8	24.2
twinge	8	51.1
retro	8	21.8
romance	8	11.5
heady	7	16.7
evokes	7	24.3
edwardian	7	17.6
fifties	7	12.7
dewy	7	48.3
kitsch	7	23.2
sadness	6	13.7
sentiment	6	10.1
steeped	6	21
pang	6	39.7
antidote	6	19.2
evoked	6	21.5
evoke	6	19.9
glories	6	19.4
70s	6	14.1
sentimentality	6	20

simpler	6	13.7
vanished	6	12.7
blend	6	10.1
yearning	5	14.8
escapism	5	28.1
sepia	5	28.7
rosy	5	14.8
aching	5	20.1
wistful	5	19.6
fond	5	10.1
redolent	5	24.2
stalin	5	12.2
boomer	5	39.6
certainties	5	19.1
nostalgic	5	12.6
ain't	5	11.7
seam	5	11.6

Table 2: Selection of Keywords in the *nostalgi** corpus, sorted by highest frequency in individual texts.

Key word	Freq	Texts	RC Freq	Log_L	Log_R
WHEN	1721	474	89041	74.19	0.31
LIKE	1487	440	53539	407.52	0.84
TIME	108	410	57558	35.04	0.27
NOW	967	392	51677	30.49	0.27
JUST	944	379	50075	32.13	0.28
BACK	755	352	36354	56.34	0.42
THEN	754	338	407	21.33	0.25
STILL	649	320	31283	48.1	0.42
LIFE	685	279	29047	101.78	0.6
OLD	606	279	17991	278.17	1.11
NEVER	532	263	22366	82.13	0.61
LITTLE	448	257	2056	44.78	0.49
GREAT	454	238	19081	70.18	0.61
ONCE	330	222	14675	39.05	0.53

LOOK	394	215	16835	56.56	0.59
EVER	334	213	13082	68.65	0.71
ALWAYS	411	211	16834	70.9	0.65
PAST	336	210	14299	49.12	0.59
THINGS	404	208	1581	83.3	0.72
RE	472	203	2263	36.23	0.42
YOUNG	387	200	16753	52.27	0.57
AGAIN	322	197	14945	30.18	0.47
REVIEW	229	189	98	32.64	0.59
SHOW	375	188	15949	54.98	0.6
MUSIC	554	185	16707	245.24	1.09
LOVE	307	184	10951	86.61	0.85
HISTORY	320	183	10659	110.16	0.95
STORY	314	174	10639	103.1	0.92
KIND	279	168	9013	104.22	0.99
SENSE	264	161	8419	101.96	1.01
FEEL	240	160	11346	20.14	0.44
LIVE	268	154	10863	48.24	0.67
BOOK	441	148	14121	168.55	1.01
HIMSELF	262	143	10678	46.13	0.66
AGE	237	143	9359	47.23	0.7
FILM	420	132	1402	143.73	0.95
WAR	333	132	15012	36.7	0.51
MODERN	246	127	6599	140.2	1.26
MIND	180	125	6644	45.54	0.8
MOMENT	174	125	7501	23.97	0.58
TV	241	120	10225	35.72	0.6
ENGLISH	282	119	9192	102.9	0.98
ROOM	192	117	7937	31.87	0.64
LOOKS	163	112	6577	29.88	0.67
CENTURY	177	110	5629	68.84	1.02
POP	188	108	3861	168.99	1.65
TELEVISION	187	107	8277	22.66	0.54
READ	178	104	7681	24.41	0.57
WOMAN	192	103	8291	26.24	0.57
STYLE	134	102	5044	31.74	0.77
SOUND	144	101	5629	29.81	0.72

ORIGINAL	151	101	4242	78.27	1.19
WIFE	159	100	6783	22.99	0.59
VERSION	140	99	4428	55.21	1.02
REMEMBER	157	97	4556	75.86	1.15
WROTE	171	96	5211	73.85	1.08
KNEW	138	94	5164	33.35	0.78
ART	257	92	8349	94.61	0.98
AUDIENCE	141	92	4762	46.72	0.93
DEAD	141	92	5848	23.08	0.63
CULTURE	175	91	5673	64.78	0.99
ROCK	193	91	4589	137.49	1.43
STUFF	141	91	3586	89.05	1.34
IMAGINE	110	90	2904	64.7	1.28
EYES	114	89	3711	41.74	0.98
WRITTEN	142	88	5069	39.97	0.85
BAND	250	88	513	224.99	1.65
CLASSIC	116	88	3008	70.63	1.31
SUMMER	233	87	8414	63.26	0.83
STORIES	146	86	4219	71.2	1.15
SONG	151	86	2909	148.64	1.74
BOOKS	215	85	6978	79.34	0.99
FRIEND	128	84	5172	23.33	0.67
PIECE	126	84	4943	25.74	0.71
SONGS	175	82	3213	183.78	1.81
WRITING	154	81	5504	43.19	0.85
DARK	98	81	3445	28.91	0.87
STAR	130	80	5142	25.75	0.7
VOICE	107	80	4202	21.78	0.71
BEAUTIFUL	115	80	2977	70.25	1.31
ALBUM	193	78	3537	203.17	1.81
GENERATION	107	76	35	38.68	0.97
BOY	129	74	4535	38.05	0.87
SCENE	93	73	3518	21.66	0.76
READING	128	73	488	29.01	0.75
THEATRE	172	72	6875	32.72	0.69
PLAYS	109	72	3731	34.77	0.91
PERFECT	98	72	3397	30.14	0.89

HEAR	105	72	3984	24.2	0.76
ERA	87	72	215	57.91	1.38
1970S	86	71	1823	73.74	1.6
FAMOUS	94	71	36	20.96	0.75
IMAGE	89	71	3044	28.45	0.91
NOVEL	210	70	4723	164.13	1.51
SOUNDS	89	70	2926	31.74	0.97
HALL	117	70	4659	22.58	0.69
STRANGE	83	70	2225	47.37	1.26
GIRL	106	69	3832	28.68	0.83
TELLS	86	69	3102	23.44	0.83
OLDER	89	68	3256	23.18	0.81
WRITER	136	67	3937	66.07	1.15
MEMORIES	95	67	1379	131.81	2.15
MYSELF	103	67	4056	20.75	0.71
BOYS	105	66	3849	27.17	0.81
FILMS	137	66	4062	63.07	1.12
WONDER	90	66	3024	30.25	0.94
AUTHOR	104	66	3396	37.77	0.98
MEMORY	83	66	2244	46.57	1.25
LIVED	82	65	2882	24.2	0.87
MUSICAL	120	64	2843	86.02	1.44
QUEEN	97	64	3574	24.68	0.8
FASHION	119	64	4196	34.78	0.87
CHILDHOOD	100	63	1493	134.58	2.11
BROTHER	98	63	3733	22.28	0.75
MOVIE	137	63	343	89.06	1.36
COLLECTION	114	63	3005	67.25	1.29
CHARACTERS	100	62	2619	59.74	1.3
LINES	80	62	2956	20.17	0.8
FAMILIAR	66	61	2191	22.93	0.95
CULTURAL	98	61	2651	54.92	1.25
HAIR	87	61	3017	26.72	0.89
STARS	83	60	2894	25.09	0.88

Notes

[1] A complex/mixed emotion that allows for the activation of both positive and negative affect (see Watson, Stanton 2017).

[2] Interestingly negative views frame nostalgia as (pretend) memory, positive views frame it as emotion.

[3] The political effects of collective nostalgia, for example, can increase and decrease support for right-wing populist rhetoric (Lammers, Baldwin 2020) and the political use of nostalgia can accommodate "progressive, even utopian impulses as well as regressive stances" (Pickering, Keightley 2006: 919).

[4] Marketing strategies and advertising have profitably exploited the appeal of "retro" for decades (Brown 2001).

[5] Perhaps the most important tenants of corpus linguistics (and CADS) are the "principle of total accountability" (Leech 1992: 112) which predicates that the analysis (can and) must account for all the instances of a phenomenon in the corpus, and the "culture of the counterexample" (Partington et al. 2013: 332) i.e. actively pursue contradicting or non-conforming evidence.

[6] *Wordsmith* (Scott 1996), *Sketchengine* (Kilgariff et al. 2004) and *Xaira* (developed by Lou Burnard and Tony Dodd at Oxford University, https://tei-c.org/Vault/Talks/OUCS/2006-02/talk-xaira.pdf) are corpus analysis tools (generally referred to as concordancers) which allow us to do different things with the data, or allow us to do the same thing in different ways (and hence potentially seeing things from different angles). One benefit of using multiple pieces of software is that we remain alert to the fact that tools are just tools, they are not methods and their output is not the analysis.

[7] The example above was retrieved testing another hypothesis in search of linguistic mechanisms that invite nostalgia (Marchi 2022), in this case looking at the co-occurrence of *normal* and *times* in the context of the Covid pandemic, using *SiBol* 2021 (more on the *SiBol* corpus in the following sections).

[8] Recall refers coverage and to the fact that *all* relevant examples are retrieved, precision refers to consistency and the fact that *only* relevant examples are.

[9] *EnTenTen* is a 36billion words English web corpus available on the *Sketchengine* platform.

[10] Any corpus is representative of a specific community of users and of language domain, staying with the metaphor of corpus, i.e. body, we know that bodies come in many shapes, sizes and shades and that patterns may vary entirely in different corpora, that represent rather different domains of language or communities.

[11] Publicly available through the web-based suite of tools *Sketchengine*. For further information about the *SiBol* project and the corpus composition see: https://centri.unibo.it/colitec/en/research/corpus-assisted-discourse-studies-cads.

[12] EVOKE could be classified also in the category "feeling" since it is just as common to evoke emotions as it is to evoke memories. Moreover, EVOKE also suggests a further layer of meaning as lack of control, in larger corpora (such as the complete *SiBol* collection and the enormous *EnTenTen20*) we find other collocates pointing towards this: *induce, stir, inspire, conjure, fueled by, invoke, rekindle*. Verbs suggesting lack of agency in the nostalgising.

[13] The boundary between the concepts of semantic preference and semantic prosody is sometimes muddled. The broad distinction is that semantic preference refers to the relation to a semantic field, while semantic prosody "links the node to some expression of attitude or evaluation which may not be a single word, but may be given in the wider context" (McEnery, Hardie 2012: 138). So, in this case, we can have a semantic preference of "distortion" or of "hedonism", but semantic prosody is simply either positive or negative.

[14] For the purposes of this work nostalgia is operationalised following De Brigard's definition and nostalgic memories are different from (other) fond memories in that they contain the constitutive component of contrast between a positive past and a lacking present. In different contexts (or text types) the distinction between a nostalgic and a non-nostalgic memories may well be based on different characteristics, as emerges from work I am conducting with Craig Evans on personal/autobiographical nostalgia.

[15] Since 1992 *the Guardian* launched its features section as the *G2* supplement, when the paper transitioned to the "Berliner" format in 2005 a number of feature sections were published as individual supplements in a range of page sizes.

[16] Keywords occurring in less than 10% of texts and grammar words were excluded.

[17] The last two are good examples of manual disambiguation: over 50% of occurrences of *doctor* in the corpus referred to the BBC series Doctor Who, similarly the majority of references to *coronation* refer to the soap-opera Coronation Street. As a rule ambiguous or polysemous words are assigned to sematic categories on a quantitative basis, i.e. words are grouped depending of their dominant meaning in context (i.e. that identified in the highest proportion of occurrences).

[18] Duguid (2010) shows that increasing vagueness is a key features in the diachronic comparison of newspaper and is an indicator of the progressive informalization of newspaper language; Marchi (2019) reports that the increasing informalization is also due to the increasing volume of soft-news in the output of newspapers.

[19] *Look* is a good example of fuzzy boundaries between categories, since it can just as reasonably be classified as "memory", as it refers to a metaphorical looking back.

[20] While Ostalgie (German neologism of the year 1993) specifically refers to nostalgic longing for East Germany, it is used as a label to indicate post-Soviet nostalgia broadly.

[21] Time and memory keywords in bold in the examples.

[22] Underlined in the examples.

[23] Extract from *Nostalgia* form the collection *Mean Time*, by Carol Ann Duffy (1993). Sense of defectiveness highlighted in bold.

[24] Or the "delicious smell of petrol", quoted in Tullett's brilliant study on the history of smell (Tullett 2023: 36).

[25] Craig Evans, conversation during a nostalgia reading group meeting, 27 May 2022.

[26] This is, for example, the case in a corpus of transcripts of the BBC radio program *Desert Island Discs*, I am currently working on.

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