



**NOSTALGIA AND RESILIENCE: A
PSYCHOANALYTICAL STUDY OF *TIMES SHELTER* BY
GEORGI GOSPODINOV**

Ummy Salma Yasmeen
malikarhamkhan2746@gmail.com

MPhil Scholar, Department of English, University of
Southern Punjab, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

Gul Zameer
gulzameeruos@gmail.com

MPhil Scholar, Department of English, University of
Southern Punjab, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

Gulshan Naz
gulshannaz55@gmail.com

Lecturer in English, Government Islamia Graduate College,
Sargodha Road, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Dr. Sajid Ali
prof.sajidali@gmail.com

Associate Professor of English, Government Municipal
Graduate College, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Abstract

This study explores Gospodinov's *Time Shelter* (2020) through the lens of nostalgia as a therapeutic tool, aiming to demonstrate how does the novel's narrative structure reframe nostalgia as an active mechanism for trauma recovery and resilience. This study analyzes the psychological and literary dimensions of nostalgia in the text, employing nostalgia to serve as a coping strategy and the underlying psychological mechanisms and their significance in the process of resilience and recapitulation. The study uses Routledge's psychological framework drawn from *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource & Past Forward* published in 2015 and 2023 respectively to examine the protagonist's engagement with memory both as a sanctuary and as a catalyst for agency. It reveals that nostalgia in *Time Shelter* operates as a tripartite phenomenon: a mode of escapism from present trauma, a tool for emotional regulation through curated historical spaces, and an anchor for identity continuity, enabling characters to reclaim agency. By situating these results within contemporary trauma studies, the research highlights the novel's unique contribution by revealing that nostalgia is not merely regressive but generative, offering a blueprint for resilience. The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, bridging literary theory and psychology to challenge deterministic views of memory's hold over the present.

Keywords: *Therapeutic Nostalgia, Narrative Medicine, Trauma Fiction, Resilience, Time Shelter*

Corresponding Author: Umme Salma Yasmeen (MPhil Scholar, Department of English, University of Southern Punjab, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.).
Email: malikarhamkhan2746@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Nostalgia in English fiction has evolved into a distinct literary genre that explores the interplay between memory, identity, and time, often serving as a narrative device to process loss, trauma, or cultural displacement. Routledge's (2015) approach has broadened the scope of nostalgia by relating that unlike historical fiction, which reconstructs the past with factual adherence, nostalgic literature prioritizes emotional truth, bending chronology to reflect how memory distorts, idealizes, or resurrects bygone eras. It has capacity to soften edges and gild experience. Moreover, its potential to distort or imprison those who cling too tightly to vanished days. The word nostalgia has a long and illustrious history, dating back centuries to the Greek words 'nostos' (return home) and 'algos' (pain or agony). It began as a medical phrase for homesickness, especially among Swiss soldiers, but it has since expanded to include a wider range of literary and emotional meanings. According to the philosophical observations of Kant (2006), nostalgia can evoke longing for locations and times that have passed. In addition to individual experiences, nostalgia now includes shared yearnings for times past personal recollection that are influenced by both distinct experiences and cultural norms.

Dr. Clay Routledge is a distinguished psychologist, a leading researcher in existential psychology, and an expert on the science of meaning and purpose. His work explores how humans find significance in our lives, particularly through the lens of nostalgia, as well as how nostalgic feelings can impact well-being, motivation, and a sense of meaning. The word 'resilio', which means to recover or retreat, is the Latin root of the word resilience. Psychology, ecology, and other fields have studied resilience, which has applications in understanding how people, ecosystems, and socio-ecological systems react to shocks. Prominent scholars such as C.S. Holling, David Salt and Brian Walker have promoted resilience theory, emphasizing its value in adapting to change and maintaining essential structures and processes.

Georgi Gospodinov is a Bulgarian writer, poet, and playwright born on January 7, 1968. He is known for exploring themes of memory, identity, and time in his works. Gospodinov has received numerous awards, including the International Booker Prize for *Time Shelter*. His writing has been translated into 25 languages, and he's considered one of Bulgaria's most prominent contemporary writers. *Time Shelter* (2020) is a thought-provoking novel that explores the complexities of memory, identity, and time. The story

centers around a clinic that offers a unique treatment for Alzheimer's patients: recreating environments from past decades, allowing patients to transport themselves back in time and unlock remaining memories. Each floor of the clinic represents a different era, filled with artifacts and music from that time, providing a sanctuary for people to escape the present and revisit the past. Through the narrator's interactions with Gaustine, the mastermind behind the clinic, and the patients, the novel delves into themes of nostalgia, grief, and the human experience. The patients' stories, such as George's struggle with PTSD and Maria's suppressed grief, illustrate the significance of the past in shaping our present. By exploring the intricacies of memory and its impact on our lives, Gospodinov's novel raises questions about the nature of time, identity, and human connection. Gospodinov's *Time Shelter* delves deeply into nostalgia as a therapeutic tool against the complicated backdrop of Europe in the 20th century. The novel's original idea—in which patients retreat into decades that have been recreated—acts as a healing haven and promotes fortitude in the face of hardship. Gospodinov skillfully combines themes of memory, nostalgia, and the human experience with this narrative method, providing a moving meditation on the ability of nostalgia to deal with the uncertainties of the present. The protagonists find comfort, solace, and ultimately resilience by going back in time, highlighting the value of nostalgia as a psychological tool for negotiating the challenges of contemporary life.

Research objectives

- To explore the key manifestation and factors of Nostalgia in *Time Shelter*
- To investigate the psychological mechanism that contributes resilience in *Time Shelter*

Research Questions

- What are the key manifestations and factors in the narrative that contribute to Nostalgia as represented in *Time Shelter*?
- How do the underlying psychological mechanisms and their significance contribute in the process of resilience and recapitulation?

2. Literature Review

The study of nostalgia in literature has long been shaped by competing theoretical perspectives, with some scholars viewing it as a regressive escape into the past and others framing it as a vital psychological resource for navigating present challenges. While traditional literary criticism often treats nostalgia as a passive longing that distorts memory, recent interdisciplinary approaches have highlighted its potential to foster resilience, particularly in narratives that engage with trauma and displacement.

Psychological research has further complicated this discourse by demonstrating nostalgia's capacity to strengthen identity, regulate emotion, and provide existential meaning. This divide between pathological and restorative interpretations of nostalgia reveals a critical gap in scholarship. Scholars who explore resilience and nostalgia frequently mirror personal experiences as well as societal disparities. A common topic in literary works is nostalgia or a mawkish longing for the past and resilience.

Kielay (1970) explores that a captivating story that combines fiction, prophesy, and memory, arousing longing for a world that never ends. The world of Macondo is vividly described in the book, where myth and reality coexist and the experiences of the protagonists cultivate fortitude in the face of hardship. The story is vibrant and full of life, bringing readers into Macondo's captivating yet complicated world, even in the face of dishonesty and liars. Even though the hero's objective is never fulfilled, the language used to describe it is vivid. He can lead a quixotic expedition into the forest. Time was not passing it was turning in a cycle.

Aiman (2012) reviews *Catcher in the Rye*, a novel that depicts nostalgia woven throughout the text as the protagonist considers his past and the purity of his youth. The character's struggle to find purpose and connection in the face of obstacles and disillusionment with adulthood demonstrates his tenacity. The book explores the conflict between longing for a bygone era and the fortitude needed to deal with the challenges of adulthood. Holden frequently professes a wish to preserve youthful innocence for future generations, since he is filled with nostalgia for it. He uses this nostalgia for the past as a coping method for the challenges of adjusting to maturity. Holden exhibits perseverance in the face of adversity and loss by trying to protect others, especially kids, from the harsh truths of life.

Latala (2017) explores nostalgia and resilience during the civil war through its fusion of mystery, history, and nostalgia. As the characters traverse intricate stories spanning decades, the series cultivates resilience in them. These writings entice readers into an immersive universe by depicting the past in a nostalgic manner, providing a break from the present. His writing has received accolades for its capacity to inspire awe and offer consolation, demonstrating the effectiveness of storytelling in fostering readers' resilience. The conflict between the past and present is highlighted by Sassoon's memories, which contrast the atrocities of war with recollections of earlier times. Their imaginative and artistic escapes demonstrated the ability of creativity and imagination to offer solace and fortitude in the face of hardship.

Pal (2021) analyzes the novels of Susan Abulhawa, which explore themes of nationalism, nostalgia, and displacement and the Palestinian experience. Abulhawa

emphasizes the importance of nostalgia in maintaining cultural identity and building fortitude in the face of suffering and exile via the narratives of her characters. This nostalgia is essential for personal development, as it serves as an antidote to the distress of displacement and fosters resilience in diasporic individuals. Abulhawa's work illustrates the intricacies of Palestinian identity and the enduring influence of storytelling by interweaving narratives from the past and present. The work is exclusively, an antidote to the anguish of exile and a vital means to a nostalgia facilitated personal growth and served as “an antidote to the trauma of exile and a pivotal means to a meaningful existence” (p. 56).

Acar (2022) examines to see how the protagonists' identities are shaped by their interactions with their pasts and occupations. By navigating difficult feelings and situations through sentimental memories, Stevens and Kathy demonstrate how nostalgia can promote resilience. The importance of nostalgia and resiliency in comprehending human identity and relationships is shown in this study through an analysis of the characters' reflective narratives. In regards to main protagonist Stevens's recollections helped him realize this startling reality. Kazuo Ishiguro, who enjoys delving into the past and dancing with its shadows, delivers *Never Let Me Go* (2005) in a similar format as *The Remains of the Day* (1989) in which main character Kathy recounts her childhood behind the gates of Hailsham School with her best friend Tommy and Ruth.

Muthumeena & Vijayarani (2024) investigate the strand of nostalgia and memories recur in the novels of Amit Chaudhuri as the characters reminisce their locale and their lives through the different elements of Bengali cultural minutiae. Chaudhuri's tales combine musical, gastronomic, and cultural memories, emphasizing the value of memory in forming both personal and societal experiences and demonstrating the diversity of cultural customs. In addition to highlighting the intricacies and beauty of cultural history, this writing provides a nuanced depiction of Bengali culture, illustrating the ways in which cultural identification is entwined with resilience and nostalgia.

Gospodinov's *Time Shelter* (2020) offers a compelling case for bridging this divide, as its innovative use of nostalgic storytelling challenges conventional distinctions between memory and healing. By synthesizing literary and psychological approaches, this literature review establishes a framework for understanding how fiction can operationalize nostalgia as a tool for resilience, setting the stage for a deeper investigation of the novel's unique contributions. *Time Shelter* by Gospodinov deviates from conventional ideas of nostalgia as emotive longing and offers a distinctive examination of nostalgia and resiliency. Rather, nostalgia is portrayed in the book as a healing process in which going back to the past offers consolation and comfort when faced with uncertainty, building emotional fortitude and providing a haven from the difficulties of the present. By means

of the protagonist's imaginative reenactment of memories, the book emphasizes the healing and resilience-building power of nostalgia, providing a new insight into the human condition and the usefulness of recreating former experiences as a coping mechanism.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinnings based upon views of Routledge (2015 & 2023) have paved the way for conducting this research. He showcases his theories on nostalgia and resilience interconnectedly. He examines nostalgia's role in human psychology by revealing that nostalgia is a psychological resource that can help people cope with existential threats, maintain a sense of meaning and purpose, and promote psychological well-being. In order to foster social bonding, nostalgia transcends the traditional notion of mere sentimental and emotion longing and remembering bygone events. Furthermore, the importance of nostalgia in building resilience, overcoming hardship, and cultivating a feeling of self and social connection is highlighted in Routledge's works.

He claims that in times of upheaval, nostalgia helps preserve a person's sense of self and strengthen social bonds, serves as a pivotal and recurrent aspect while pursuing analysis of *Time Shelter*. The story of *Time Shelter* reinforces the idea that recurrent past experiences impact relationships and personal identity and that they are a stepping stone to resilience in the fog of uncertainty, even as people become increasingly absorbed in their pasts, which may strain their relationships with others and alter their sense of self.

Routledge (2015) presents a fascinating investigation into an emotion universally experienced yet often misunderstood. As more than fifteen years of research reveals, nostalgia is more than rose-tinted sentiment or living in the past as he states, "Nostalgia helps individuals make sense of their past by reinterpreting and reshaping their memories, allowing them to create new narratives that provide coherence and meaning to their current experiences" (p.38).

Further Routledge (2023) contends that nostalgia is a potent psychological tool. He observes the multifaceted realm of nostalgia with its transformative powers. Human identities and perspectives are shaped when emotional resonance of nostalgic memories is explored. He has illuminated various engaging and profound insights while describing the inherent power of nostalgia and its connection with resilience. This incorporates the inherent journey of human in past as well as forward movement of future. He puts aptly to unravel the threads of the past and discover how embracing nostalgia can enrich our present and guide us toward a more meaningful future. Nostalgia can strengthen social ties, combat loneliness and depression. It can also expose our most enduring ideals, inspire creativity, and offer consolation and fortitude in the face of stress, worry, and trauma. In

the end, nostalgia encourages people to live more purposeful and optimistic lives by giving them newfound motivation to accomplish their objectives. "By engaging in nostalgia, we are not moving toward the past. Nostalgia is a psychological resource that people turn to when experiencing meaning deficits. Further, nostalgia functions to buffer existential threats and mitigate the negative consequences of lack of meaning" (p. 62).

Further, Routledge (2023) draws particularly intriguing insights into the ways nostalgia can allay existential fears of death, as "even the most personal nostalgic memory is connected to a broader cultural framework that helps us feel transcendent in the face of unavoidable mortality" (p. 67). Moreover, his work emphasizes nostalgia as a powerful tool for building resilience. By leveraging cherished memories, individuals can foster emotional strength, connect with others, and create a more meaningful life story. As this approach enables individuals to navigate adversity and cultivate a more hopeful, resilient life. He manages to combine a scholarly approach with anecdotal detail and wit, which makes this insightful and comprehensive overview of nostalgia research highly accessible to a wide audience. Moreover, he shows readers how they can take advantage of the power of nostalgia to improve their own lives and the world around them. As he (2023) asserts, "Nostalgia is a powerful resource for resilience because it allows people to draw on past experiences and relationships to cope with present challenges."(p.33)

4. Textual Analysis

4.1. Key manifestation and factors of Nostalgia

Ecclesiastes teaches us time is everything ...and right at that moment in Revelation the angel announces that there shall be no more time. That's it. He doesn't proclaim the end of the world, but the end of time... The cages of the days shall be opened and all times will gather as on. And God will call back the past. (Gospodinov, 2020, p.138)

Nostalgia transcends time, symbolizing a deep longing for connection and unity across different eras. The image of 'cages of days' opening and all times gathering as one conveys a yearning for reunification with the past and a sense of wholeness. This nostalgia for eternity underscores a desire to transcend temporal boundaries, reconnecting with what has been lost. The line, God calling back the past further emphasizes nostalgia's role in shaping human experience, highlighting a profound emotional and existential connection to memories and the past. By emphasizing how our perception of time influences our sentiments of nostalgia, can be linked to the concept in *Ecclesiastes* and *Revelation*. Routledge (2023) asserts that Nostalgia is a powerful resource for resilience because it allows people to draw on past experiences and relationships to cope with present challenges and the idea, "When people feel alone, they may desire to mentally time travel

to a point in which they had relationship success. Nostalgia may offer a means to affirm belongingness needs” (Routledge, 2015, p.31), is reflected through these words of *Time Shelter*:

Then, in the afternoon of 1968 or 2020, it was one and the same afternoon at the end of the day,... Gray clouds drifted ominously over the future or the past, whatever we might call it, that Gaustine was sketching out before me. Of course, this is only a metaphor, I thought back then, trying to shake off my sense of foreboding. (p.44)

Nostalgia is a complex emotion that deeply connects us to our past, often triggered by sensory stimuli like sights, sounds, or smells that evoke powerful memories. It involves a sentimental yearning for bygone eras, blending past and present, and can be bittersweet, accompanied by feelings of melancholy or wistfulness. With its multifaceted nature, nostalgia encompasses temporal dislocation, sensory triggers, symbolic representation, ambiguity, and mixed emotions, providing rich insights into human experience and our perception of time and memory. One can move backward and forward by crossing the limits of time and geographical locations through the function of nostalgia. “I thought of how the recollection of scents is the last to leave the empty den of memory... I clearly pictured those women eternally turning the handles of square wooden coffee grinders... a scene from the seventeenth century (Gospodinov, 2020, p.52)”. This quote muses on the persistent memory-enhancing properties of fragrance. The fact that olfactory sense is among the first sensations that people acquire shows that fragrance has a strong connection to memory. The idea of fragrance remaining in memory and lasting longer than other experiences is evoked by the image of scent departing like a little beast, sniffing with its head to the ground. He sees ladies in the seventeenth century, grinding coffee with tall, cylindrical silver grinders with copper handles, or with square wooden ones. It suggests a relationship between historical settings, memory, and sensory experiences. This imagery conjures up nostalgic images of traditions.

The text triggers olfactory stimuli and how long they linger in the mind, demonstrating an introspective and sentimental linkage to the past. A contemplative connection to the past is what is meant by reflective nostalgia often through sensory memories. A sentimental yearning and love for bygone sensory experiences are highlighted by the narrator's meticulous memory of smells and the visual of ladies using vintage coffee grinders. When certain sensory experiences arouse feelings of both loss and fondness for the past, reflective nostalgia frequently entails such intense emotional engagement. Routledge (2023) examines how nostalgia is shaped by memory and emotions. The limbic system of the brain, which controls emotions and memory, is directly connected to the olfactory system, which explains why scents are strongly associated with emotional memory.

The novel under discussion also explores nostalgia's complexities through the narrator's bond with Gaustine, who represents the fluidity and transcendence of nostalgic memories. Gaustine's effortless navigation across decades symbolizes nostalgia's power to bridge past and present, offering comfort and meaning. The narrator asserts, "I knocked on the doors of various years, but he was already inside, ushering me in and then disappearing" (Gospodinov, 2020, p.12). The ambiguity surrounding Gaustine's origin highlights nostalgia's ability to blur reality and imagination, consequently impacting identity and experience. Through Gaustine, the narrator finds connection and belonging across time, illustrating nostalgia's role in shaping identity and providing psychological comfort, aligning with Routledge's contention on nostalgia's significance in providing a sense of continuity and meaning.

Moreover, the textual discussion where the novelist has given references of 'May twilight', 'scraps of flag' and 'the café at the Union of Architects,' beautifully captures nostalgia's manifestation through the narrator's reflection on past experiences. The text vividly captures the essence of nostalgia, as the May twilight and remnants of a rebellious afternoon evoke a strong longing for the past. The narrator's visit to the familiar café, where they spent countless afternoons, serves as a poignant reminder of nostalgia's role in preserving cherished memories. According to Routledge's perspective, this nostalgic reflection offers psychological comfort and a profound sense of connection to the past, underscoring nostalgia's significance as a vital resource for crafting meaning and shaping identity. Ultimately, the passage intensively illustrates nostalgia's transformative power to evoke deep emotions and forge a sense of continuity between past and present, highlighting its enduring impact on human experience.

The passage deals with nostalgia's overwhelming manifestation, where the past floods the present like a tidal wave, decades flow like streams, and a river surges beyond its banks, sweeping away various items—branches, photographs, and movie scenes—illustrating nostalgia's all-encompassing reach. Gaustine's efforts to control the past highlight the tension between nostalgia's comfort and its potential to overwhelm, presenting a complex portrayal of nostalgia's power. As, "the world had become a chaotic open-air clinic of the past, as if the walls had fallen away. I wondered whether Gaustine had foreseen all this" (Gospodinov, 2020, p.123). According to Routledge's perspective, the excerpt essentially elucidates how memories from bygone eras blend into the present, as if flooding and taking over.

The potency of scent in triggering nostalgia, transporting the narrator to a bygone era with the image of women operating coffee grinders enhances the power of nostalgia in healing role. This sensory experience illustrates nostalgia's role in preserving memories and providing comfort, aligning with Routledge's perspective that nostalgia serves as a

psychological resource. The detailed description of the grinders and the setting, potentially in the seventeenth century, highlights the power of vivid imagery and temporal connection in evoking nostalgia. Overall, the text masterfully conveys the complex interplay between senses, memory, and emotion that underlies nostalgic experiences. This passage showcases the persistence of vivid memories, particularly those tied to unique events. According to Routledge's (2015) perspective, such nostalgic memories serve as a psychological mean, providing comfort and meaning. The passage highlights factors contributing to nostalgia, including sensory triggers (sight, atmosphere) and meaningful interactions, which can make memories resilient even as others fade. As Gospodinov (2020) puts:

Years later, when many of his memories had already scattered like frightened pigeons, he could still go back to that morning when he was wandering aimlessly through the streets of Vienna, ... A wind blew up and several of the newspapers swirled into the air. He tried to help, chasing down two or three and returning them. You can keep one, said Marquez. (p.16)

The passage dealing with temporal and spacial transcendence further incorporates the element of nostalgia as a powerful resource dealing with past and present instead of passive longing for cherished memories. It offers a richly detailed and immersive portrayal of different eras, bringing to life the people and places of the past. The descriptions of characters, such as noblemen, milkmen, and shoemakers, create a vivid tableau of bygone times. The mention of children playing leapfrog and a beggar with a torn hat adds to the sensory experience, evoking a strong sense of nostalgia. The note about volunteers and history students participating in this scene adds a layer of complexity, highlighting the intersection of past and present. Overall, the passage masterfully captures the essence of nostalgia, transporting the reader to a different time and place.

4.2. Nostalgia and Resilience

Gospodinov's *Time Shelter* probes the intersection of memory, identity, and resilience by revisiting the past through a unique lens. The novel's central concept, a clinic where people relive memories from bygone eras, exposes the dual nature of nostalgia as bittersweet, capable of both comforting and confining. As the narrative unfolds, it reveals how memories shape individual identities and provide a sense of continuity, while also highlighting the tension between nostalgia and living in the present. By exploring this complex dynamic, Gospodinov's work offers profound insights into the human experience. Nostalgia serves as a coping strategy and mechanism while giving refuge to mentally depressed victims. The novel under consideration consists of numerous instances where

this mechanism is exemplified by the author aligned with theorist's conception. For instance:

But as the rooms become more convincing, an increasing number of healthy people seek out the clinic as a '*time shelter*', hoping to escape from the horrors of our present - a development that results in an unexpected conundrum when the past begins to invade the present. (Gospodinov, 2020, p.2)

Here individuals seek refuge in the past to escape present traumas, finding comfort in nostalgic experiences. This blurring of past and present influences our perceptions and behavior. It reveals nostalgia's profound impact and supports Routledge's ideas (2015) on nostalgia's role in shaping human experience. He asserts that when people engage in nostalgia, they experience a boost in positive psychological states such as positive mood, feelings of social connectedness, self-esteem, self-continuity, and perceptions of meaning in life. Since nostalgia promotes these positive states, when people experience negative states (such as loneliness or meaninglessness), they use nostalgia to regulate distress. Nostalgia also functions as an intervention for individuals at risk of mental health problems connected with deficits in meaning. Intervention of nostalgia disrupts the association between low meaning in life and psychological maladjustment. In all, nostalgia fulfills a key existential role by allowing characters to infer meaning of life from personally cherished autobiographical memories in clinics of past.

The forget-me-not flower holds a special significance as a symbol of memory and remembrance. Its name is derived from a charming legend Flora, the goddess of flowers, who gave it the power to evoke memories in people. This flower is also believed to have healing properties, specifically in alleviating melancholy and depression. What's remarkable about the forget-me-not is that its seeds can lie dormant for up to thirty years, only sprouting when conditions are right. "I read somewhere that the blossom of the forget-me-not cures melancholy or, to put it more officially, has an anti-depressive effect. That flower remembers itself over the course of thirty years" (Gospodinov, 2020, p. 66). The forget-me-not's heartfelt plea, 'Don't forget me!', echoes nostalgia's yearning for meaningful connections and cherished memories. The flower's memory-evoking properties and alleged therapeutic benefits highlight nostalgia's comforting role, providing solace and alleviating melancholy. Furthermore, the seeds' remarkable dormancy, sprouting after thirty years, parallels nostalgia's latent presence, resurfacing when circumstances permit.

Similarly, Gospodinov's yearning for Italy in the 1960s aligns with Routledge's notions about nostalgia as a means of regulating feelings, fostering interpersonal relationships and reaffirming one's identity and resilience. The romanticization of that time

period gives consolation, enhances a feeling of community and may encourage people to look for comparable experiences in the present. As per Routledge's (2023) perspective, nostalgia is primarily positive emotional experience that involves thinking back on personally meaningful events and social relationships. "Nostalgia is more than rose-tinted sentiment or "living in the past"—it can also be a powerful resource for our well-being" (p. 23). Gospodinov (2020) incorporates biblical concept of investing in everlasting, spiritual goods in appreciating past accomplishments and experiences when he says, "but store up for you treasures in the past, where neither moth nor rust destroy, and where thieves do not break in nor steal" (p.132). This new understanding suggests that one's past experiences are stable and secure, molding ones identity and values in a way that offers stability and long-term satisfaction. This aligns with Routledge's (2023) conception that the quest for the good life may be encouraged by nostalgia, since it can invigorate attempts at authenticity and interpersonal connection.

The reference to Switzerland and *The Magic Mountain* in the text hints at symbolic or thematic significance, suggesting that Switzerland serves as a setting conducive to the exploration of timeless themes or ideas. The concept of 'time degree zero' in Switzerland highlights the unique position of the country as a place where different eras coexist, free from the constraints of time. The text appears to explore a variety of topics, including memory, nostalgia, societal change, and the impermanence of time. It challenges readers to think about how the past, present, and future interact as well as how people and society deal with time and change. The narrator is talking about why the protagonist decided to embark on their adventure in Switzerland in this exchange. Two factors are mentioned by Gaustine: a preference for the book, *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann and the fact that Switzerland is a country where individuals are open to accepting death. While pointing out Gaustine's pessimism, the narrator chooses to concentrate on the novel's more romantic explanation. The allusion to 'time degree zero' which is consistent with the hypothesis put forth by Routledge (2015) in *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*.

"The time is coming when more and more people will want to hide in the cave of the past, to turn back. And not for happy reasons... We need to be ready with the bomb shelter of the past" (Gospodinov, 2020, p.24). The quote by Gospodinov highlights the human tendency to seek refuge in the past during times of uncertainty or turmoil, echoing Routledge's study (2023) on nostalgia as a psychological-healing resource. His perspective posits that nostalgia serves as a coping mechanism, providing comfort, meaning, and resilience in the face of adversity. He elaborated that psychological threat triggers nostalgia and, in turn, nostalgia improves well-being across several dimensions of psychological health (i.e., affective, social, self, and existential). The metaphor of 'bomb shelter' illustrates this concept, suggesting that nostalgia may offer a psychological safe

haven. Gospodinov's mention of people wanting to 'hide in the cave of the past' underscores the human desire for escapism and comfort in familiar memories. Routledge's notions suggest the same that nostalgia may work as a double-edged sword: while it provides temporary solace, it may also hinder progress if over-relied upon, aligns with Routledge's (2023) perspective on nostalgia's role in human psychology, emphasizing its potential as both a coping strategy and a huge pitfall.

We are constantly producing the past. We are factories for the past. Living past-making machines, what else? We eat time and produce the past. Even death doesn't put a stop to this. A person might be gone, but his past remains. Where do all those heaps of personal past go? those severed connections that still bleed, all those dumped lovers; "dumped"—this word isn't a coincidence, a garbage word. (Gospodinov, 2020, p.58)

Here the profound impact of nostalgia serves as a vital source of comfort, meaning, and resilience. As humans, we are constantly creating and accumulating our past archives and debris which in turn shape our identities and persist even after we're gone. The remnants of these memories, including the painful and unfinished ones, contribute to the complex and multifaceted nature of nostalgia. According to Routledge's (2023) notion, nostalgia plays a crucial role in helping individuals cope with uncertainty and adversity by providing a sense of continuity and meaning. By tapping into these past experiences, individuals can derive a sense of comfort and resilience, ultimately underscoring the significant influence of nostalgia on human experience. The vivid imagery of 'heaps of personal past and 'severed connections that still bleed' evokes the emotional resonance of unfinished stories and unflinching lost love .

Looking back on former experiences and emotions, whether happy or sad, nostalgia aids in a person's ability to hold onto their identity and continuity over time. The narrator establishes a connection between their previous experiences and current identity by re-living past , such as their successful troupe debut after a failed audition. In the end, this promotes their feeling of self-consistency in the face of difficulties and changes, which aids in their development as individuals.

All the radio stations play music and news from past decades. What's happening today doesn't matter anymore. It doesn't matter which decade was chosen in the referendum; everyone is living in their own. We thought that the past was organized like a family album with carefully ordered photos... But it, too, is forced to broadcast the past in all of its anarchy. (Gospodinov, 2020, p.124)

The narrator of this section paints a picture of a society in which old media dominates daily life and radio stations, overwhelming people with talk of bygone eras. People are stuck reliving the past, which conveys a notion that the present is less relevant.

The event exemplifies how nostalgia may take over our life and make the past appear more important than the present. The Although nostalgia can obscure present experiences and realities when it gets too strong, it also aids in helping us find purpose and continuity. This excerpt demonstrates the way that nostalgia can occasionally cause us to become fixated on the past, which can have an impact on how we view and interact with the present.

The text highlights the intricate relationship between nostalgia and resilience, echoing Routledge's (2015) notions and ideas. While explaining this he asserts, "In moment of anticipated loss, I turned to nostalgia. And it provided some needed relief. It stabilized me" (p.3). The narrator of the novel also finds comfort in nostalgic memories, which provide meaning and solace. Nostalgia can offer temporary relief, but also potentially intensify emotional struggles. The novel suggests that resilience is a fluid process of navigating between past and present, underscoring nostalgia's multifaceted role in human experience. "People had forgotten how detailed the past is and they were gleefully rediscovering things, going down to the basement, digging out old stuff, cleaning it off, repainting it, getting it restored" (Gospodinov, 2020, p.122). It shows how people find comfort and continuity in reliving past cultures. The return of vintage goods and fashions revives treasured memories and simpler times, fostering social bonds, shaping identities, and giving life meaning and purpose. The passion people have for vintage films, music, and other items is a reflection of our shared desire to preserve and revisit the past. The increase in retro activities and vintage goods suggests a desire to concretely replicate the past. The resurgence of antiquated goods and customs is motivated by this idealization. Cultural reinforcement, the return of retro aspects in popular culture, such old-fashioned automobiles, music, and movies, helps to bolster a sense of continuity with the past and a common cultural memory. People often idealize the past as simpler and better than the present, which is reflected in their careful rediscovery of historical artifacts and customs. The past is often seen as simpler and better, reflected in the rediscovery of historical artifacts and customs.

His memory grows weak, his mind deserts him I have thought up is chasing me hard on my heels, it catches up and passes me. Forgive me, O God of utopias, the times have mixed together and now you don't know whether the story you are telling has already happened or is yet to come some connections have been deeply buried and seem lost, even though they can pop up unexpectedly one day. (Gospodinov, 2020, p.129)

The narrator's account showcases the complex interplay between nostalgia and resilience, aligning with Routledge's (2015) notion of nostalgia pointing out that "perhaps engaging in nostalgia acts as a barrier to present and future social ambitions (p.57). In various mythologies, memory is personified as a significant deity, such as Mnemosyne in Greek mythology, underscores its importance. However, the absence of a major memory

deity in some mythologies might suggest that perspectives on memory's role have evolved over time. As one's understanding of neuroscience and psychology advances, one gains a deeper appreciation for the intricate connections between memory, nostalgia, and resilience, highlighting the significance of exploring and understanding human memory and experience. The reference to Lethe being eclipsed by Mnemosyne, the mother of the muses, implies that forgetting and memory were possibly not as valued or understood in ancient times.

Gospodinov masterfully explores the intricacies of human psychology, weaving together complex themes of power dynamics, memory manipulation, and identity formation. As the agent assumes control over Mr. N.'s memories, questions arise about the nature of truth and autonomy. The narrative beautifully captures the significance of nostalgia, with both characters seeking comfort in the past. This nuanced portrayal sheds light on the fragile, dynamic interplay between memory and identity. The section provides a moving examination of memory, identity, and the pursuit of self-awareness when confronted with doubt and bereavement. It pushes readers to think critically about how memories are prone to resilience and how narratives affect, and how we see the world and ourselves.

5. Conclusion

The preceding analysis cogently validates the researchers' principal contention that nostalgia, as theorized by Routledge, functions within *Time Shelter* not as a passive indulgence in sentimental reminiscence, but as an essential psychological apparatus that fosters resilience, sustains identity coherence, and provides existential stability. Through a close reading of thematically nuanced and symbolically layered textual excerpts, the study systematically demonstrates how Gospodinov's narrative constructs nostalgia as an organizing principle that arbitrates the interplay between temporality (past and present) and subjectivity (memory and self-conception). Grounded in Routledge's conceptual paradigm—which frames nostalgia as a compensatory mechanism for restoring psychological equilibrium in contexts of meaning deprivation—the study reveals that nostalgic invocation in the novel serves to ameliorate ontological dislocation, reconstruct fractured personal and collective historiographies, and reinforce epistemological continuity. Consequently, the meticulously curated textual evidence not only corroborates the researchers' central argument but also makes a substantive contribution to wider academic discourse on the affective, cognitive, and narratological operations of nostalgia in contemporary literary fiction.

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