



The Future Of Nostalgia

Svetlana Boym

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Can one be nostalgic for the home one never had? Why is it that the age of globalization is accompanied by a no less global epidemic of nostalgia? Can we know what we are nostalgic for? In the seventeenth century, Swiss doctors believed that opium, leeches, and a trek through the Alps would cure nostalgia. In 1733 a Russian commander, disgusted with the debilitating homesickness rampant among his troops, buried a soldier alive as a deterrent to nostalgia. In her new book, Svetlana Boym develops a comprehensive approach to this elusive ailment. Combining personal memoir, philosophical essay, and historical analysis, Boym explores the spaces of collective nostalgia that connect national biography and personal self-fashioning in the twenty-first century. She guides us through the ruins and construction sites of post-communist cities-St. Petersburg, Moscow, Berlin, and Prague-and the imagined homelands of exiles-Benjamin, Nabokov, Mandelstam, and Brodsky. From Jurassic Park to the Totalitarian Sculpture Garden, from love letters on Kafka's grave to conversations with Hitler's impersonator, Boym unravels the threads of this global epidemic of longing and its antidotes.

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