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The role of nostalgia in making for well-being

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Abstract

While some maker activities and actions have clear and measurable outcomes with increasing research about the joys and benefits of creativity, there is an aspect of making which is infrequently considered, perhaps because it is largely unconscious or perhaps even viewed negatively or dismissively. This is the pleasure to be found in the nostalgic aspects of crafting and making. This article examines the current research on the benefits of nostalgia, and how craft activities invoke nostalgia in various ways. Nostalgia is implicated as an element which can contribute to well-being – the perception of purpose, control and satisfaction which supports health and happiness. Although nostalgia is also already a factor in some making projects designed around well-being and health, it might in the future be used more consciously to contribute to other well-making activities.

Keywords

well-making, craft, materiality, community, heritage, nostalgic crafting

Introduction

Well-making is a multifaceted perspective on the maintenance, restoration and development of physical, mental, social, and political wellness which can accrue from the act of material making (Rana and Hackney 2018; Gant et al. 2018).

While some maker activities and actions have clear and measurable outcomes, and there is increasing research about the joys and benefits of creativity, there is an aspect of making which is not much considered, perhaps because it is largely unconscious or perhaps even viewed negatively, pejoratively or dismissively. This is the pleasure and indeed the potential physical, mental, social and political wellness – to be found in the nostalgic aspects of crafting and making.

Experimental psychologists, recognizing the value of studying past-oriented emotional experience (Routledge 2016), have differentiated nostalgic memories from other autobiographical memories as uniquely emotional and as containing more positive than negative emotions (Wildschut et al. 2006). When nostalgia is evoked in study participants, it restores psychological equanimity, elevating mood, self-esteem and social connectedness, increasing a sense of meaning in life, and motivates into prosocial behaviours (Barrett et al. 2010; Routledge et al. 2011; Turner et al. 2012; Juhl and Routledge 2013; Lasaleta et al. 2014; van Tilburg et al. 2015; Sedikides et al. 2015; Sedikides and Wildschut 2016b). Nostalgic memories are also focused on relationships and are more social than ordinary autobiographical memories (Wildschut et al. 2006).

As well as pleasurable, nostalgia can be beneficial. Research suggests that nostalgia helps people cope with major changes by calling up memories of their former selves in a positive light (Davis 1979); people with dementia are found to respond positively to nostalgia as well (Routledge 2016).

In these ways nostalgia shares some common ground with positive aspects and outcomes of craft and art activities. Whether providing a sense of belonging and shared values, performing protective and restorative functions, contributing a generative force for a new sense of community or providing the transcendence (Gerber et al. 2012) required for imaginative flight used in moving participants' stories from memory towards future transformations, nostalgia, like art, offers unique ways of knowing (McNiff 2012), which may be a useful part of an approach to art-based research. The two ways of knowing can be seen, and used, in complementary ways.

In this article the potential for nostalgia to be employed within arts activities, thereby invoking, augmenting or increasing their potential for wellness, will be examined.

Nostalgia

Although there are indications that nostalgia has been recognized through many cultures and eras, nostalgia as we understand it is a condition tied to modernity (Boym 2001). In 1688, medical student Johannes Hofer named the condition 'nostalgia' from nostos ('return to the native land') and algos ('pain'), and therefore both etymologically and literally, 'nostalgia' means 'the suffering caused by the yearning to return to one's place of origin' (Wildschut et al. 2006:

1). Early treatments for nostalgia as a medical condition attempted to return patients to a physical place, but our modern understanding of nostalgia places it more as a psychosocial condition in which a 'place of origin' can be physical, social or a more interior emotional landscape. Though the experience of nostalgia points to a sense of something lacking in the present, the desire to return is irresolvable.

While it is true that nostalgia can be triggered by negative feelings such as loneliness or boredom (Sedikides and Wildschut 2016a), contemporary research shows that nostalgia has a generally positive psychological effect. In terms of the functions of nostalgia, current research (Sedikides et al. 2015) indicates that nostalgia has a 'mood-repair function' (Routledge 2016: 49) – that is, when people feel negative, they turn to nostalgia to improve their emotional state. It also suggests that 'people turn to nostalgia when their social needs are not being met' (Routledge 2016: 53). When people are lonely, they engage in nostalgia to help them feel more connected and also more socially motivated – when people had nostalgic memories from the past they were more likely to engage in social interactions and to feel confident in their social abilities; they also show an increase in optimism (Wildschut et al. 2006).

The psychosocial functions of nostalgia emerge from psychological mechanisms by which a strong sense of identity is formed and maintained. These are rooted in theories around separation and individuation (Peters 1985; Bassin 1993; Colarusso 2000). Beginning as an infant, an individual must come to understand that their mother is not a part of themselves; they are a separate being existing outside of themselves. A strong sense of 'self and object constancy' (Colarusso 2000: 1482), in which the infant recognizes that they are separate both from the mother and from the objects around them, is associated with healthy psychological function. Becoming and functioning as an adult is predicated on the child recognizing agency over self and the objects in its life. Calvin Colarusso (2000), moreover, proposes that throughout life, self-constancy is continually being sought through a further series of individuations (in relationships more to do with individuals than objects) as someone moves through the stages of life – from child to adolescent, from single to married, from employment to retirement, for example. The challenges of accepting these new roles are lessened by a strong sense of self and self-continuity.

Self-continuity (the sense of a connection between one's past and present selves leading to a more robust and cohesive sense of self) is positively associated with psychological well-being, and the lack of it is conversely associated with distress and difficulty in coping (Routledge 2016). A lack of self-continuity, as with loneliness, can trigger nostalgia, but nostalgia can help with forming and maintaining a strong sense of identity, which helps people to adapt to changing circumstances. It may even help people who have difficulty with feeling that their lives have meaning (Routledge et al. 2011; Wildschut et al. 2006).

However, despite the increasing evidence of the psychological benefits, there remains a sense of dislike or wariness of nostalgia. It is seen as superficial, meaningless, ersatz. Susan Stewart describes nostalgia as a 'social disease […] a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience' (1993: 23). The postmodern overuse of past forms without context or meaning and the continued use of nostalgia for marketing only add to this mistrust of nostalgia in general. There is also the timing of nostalgia as a trend: it appears culturally in times of uncertainty or anxiety, and to the

same purpose: 'the nostalgic evocation of some past state of affairs always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, and uncertainties' (Davis 1979: 34).

Despite this wariness, research indicates that people in general understand nostalgia very well. They recognize that it is a mixed state of both longing – a certain sadness – and happiness, which is also universal (Hepper et al. cited in Routledge 2016). In addition, the perception of nostalgia in something – food, song, place or even more nebulous or less material placements – increases not only certain kinds of well-being but also engagement and attachment. What might this mean when applied to crafting activities?

Is craft nostalgic?

Nostalgia is a label which is often applied to craft without too much examination – it is often assumed that craft is a nostalgic occupation, but no real reason is given as to why this might be. At times, this can cause a problem for craft makers, with the nostalgic aura seeming to point to a certain irrelevance for craft in the contemporary world. As Kristina Niedderer et al. (2016) point out, if a practice is perceived as being embedded in the past, it is also seen as averse to innovation. It is one thing being seen as regressive, but another aspect of being cast as a nostalgic practice is hinted at by Stewart (1993), where the 'inauthenticity' with which nostalgia is viewed leads to it being seen as dishonest. And this is a valid criticism if nostalgia cloaks difficulties and inequities within an idealization of the past. However, there are many ways in which craft not only avoids but upends these criticisms.

One of the ways in which crafting is seen as nostalgic is in its relationship to memories of family. Although this may take the form of a direct memory of a family member knitting or engaging in some other craft, it can often be a more indirect relationship to a feeling of home or of homeliness which comes from cultural images of families. Home is the setting for the beginnings of identity formation, the beginnings of self with which the self-continuity aspect of nostalgia has relevance (Routledge 2016). As Stella Minahan and Julie Wolfram Cox identify in 'The inner nana, the list mum and me: Knitting identity', 'the nostalgic association of knitting and knitted items with earlier times is embodied through images and references to the grandmother (or "nana") as a signifier of the past and as a source of comfort and care' (2010: 39). Although there is reason to be wary of this imaginary pure and simple vision which privileges the 'bourgeois domestic' (Stewart 1993 33), there is nonetheless a psychological function at work in invoking self-continuity. Minahan and Cox found that references to the female lineage in particular 'nanas' by young women who were part of knitting groups used these references in the construction of their own identities:

[N]ostalgia reflected a concern with immediate family relationships and a yearning for a better (if fantasized and romanticized) past. We found that these nostalgic yearnings were strong, and created images of previous generations as generous and skilful – to be admired and emulated.

(2010: 40)

Even if not taught to craft by older relatives, it is rare to never have engaged as a child with materials and making. The feeling of calming oneself or of being engaged with materials in a state of flow is one which can be part of a nostalgic vision to which crafters are drawn. The mood-repair function of nostalgia may well contribute to this engagement.

One initiative in which both the 'nana' and material engagement were invoked was the Crafts Council's Craft Club, a scheme launched in partnership with the UK Hand Knitting Association in 2010, in which schools acted as community hubs, which utilized the skills held within local communities to teach young people craft skills. Volunteers attended training sessions to help them teach young people confidently, and the Craft Club team matched these volunteers with schools in their area where lunchtime and after-school clubs provided the opportunity to pass on their skills.

The nostalgic view of knitting as a shared intergenerational activity with its non-commercial, almost familial overtones – many of the volunteers were grandparents – made this one of the most popular and successful initiatives by the Crafts Council. The pilot for the project was at Lindens Primary School in Sutton Coldfield, which was later awarded an outstanding report from Ofsted; Craft Club was given a special commendation for its role in this achievement (Bevan 2011: n.pag.). The scheme had an extremely positive response, with over 400 Craft Clubs created. Positive intergenerational relationships, reduced stress and increased well-being were some of the results. As Anthony Killick (2020) points out, the mutual benefits afforded by this intergenerational sharing, both for younger and older people, are significant.

Both the potential for working with more natural materials and the very materiality itself involved in crafting provide a link to the natural world in a time when fears of its erasure are increasing. The slower pace of artisanal work and the human-sized scale of production involved in crafting mirror a nostalgia for a slower pace of life which reflects in turn the existential buffering offered by nostalgia against present fears and anxieties. The desire for preindustrial ideas of lifestyles as a form of 'escapism' nevertheless can manifest in activities which promote wellness in various ways.

Research on the release of neurotransmitters (increasing feelings of well-being) during baking, gardening and knitting (Riley et al. 2013), and on the lessening of stress and anxiety in participants in arts on prescription workshops shows a positive correlation (Holt 2020). Participatory arts programmes are associated with improvements in mental health such as decreased social isolation and increased mental well-being (Wilson and Sharpe 2017) across a number of age and social groups. The current research posits that repetitive actions, multisensory engagement and effort in anticipation of fulfilment are all factors (Kaimal et al. 2016) in the well-being produced in these activities – but it is plausible that the nostalgia experienced by some in the course of these activities has a role to play as well.

Links have been made (Peach 2013 to the previous period of 'craft revival' in the 1970s: another period of instability in which the social and economic uncertainty of the time was met by an upswell in engagement with craft, either in material or symbolic forms. Feminism and environmentalism have both used craft objects or processes (Robertson 2011) as a form of protest and as a corrective to the issues facing the world (notably in the 1970s reflecting a nostalgic return to nature-focused form, and then used in a more knowing, and at times, ironic way in contemporary times). The 'economic instability, concerns over the depletion of natural resources […] and a desire to reject consumerism and private sector values' (Peach 2010: 10–11) common to both the 1970s and today resulted in the use of nostalgia to allay fears and anxieties, manifesting in craft. As Rozsika Parker in The Subversive Stitch notes, embroidery offers 'a repository of traditional values in an uncertain world' (1984: 161). Although Minahan

and Cox (2007) argue that much of the contemporary nostalgia is tinged with irony rather than representing a wholesale return to the past, Henrik Most (2005) surmises that the digital world we increasingly live in increases a desire for more physical and tactile encounters. While the same stressors remain from a hundred years ago – 'the problems and anxieties surrounding the acceleration of modern life (unemployment, the strain of new work processes and their effects on physical and mental life)' (Hackney 2006: 23) – these are supplemented today by new stressors such as climate anxiety and the mental and social effects of COVID-19. A report in The Guardian (Morris 2021: n.pag.) collated responses to the contemporary upswing in craft apprenticeships and workshops – for example, from a participant on a Leach Pottery course, 'I like the idea of making something utilitarian and, of course, getting my hands dirty, making a mess'; and from an apprentice, 'I love the fact that people are going to hold and use our work; it's so intimate, more intimate than looking at a painting or piece of sculpture'. In the same report Libby Buckley, director at Leach Pottery, says:

I think the idea of craft and making has really taken off in the last couple of years […]. Some of that is down to COVID. People who spend their time on a computer all day like the idea of having a go, getting their hands dirty. The great thing about pottery is that it's really playing with mud. It's very tactile […]. So many people are re-evaluating their lives.

(Morris 2021: n.pag.)

The meditative and playful qualities of crafting may indicate a nostalgia for childhood play and the flow associated with it, and the slower pace involved may be invoking a nostalgia for past times perceived as less stressful. And there is another element involved in some crafting initiatives which invokes another aspect around which there is a nostalgic aura – that of community.

The self-continuity – seeing oneself as essentially the same person across all stages of life – reinforced in individual nostalgia is also bolstered by nostalgia for community. Whether it is in a loose community of crafters who meet to engage in one activity or with a group for whom craft is a focal point for a wider sense of cohesion, the sense of community which develops can be a potent source of nostalgia, involving a sense of belonging and shared values. And this nostalgia performs the same protective and restorative functions for participants.

In communities involving making, several kinds of connection – to the material, to the process – are involved, but this connection is extended to include a sense of cohesion in the group via making, a shared purpose, and the emotional connection of making together. There can be a nostalgia in the idea of community itself, in particular when contemporary life can feel so fractured, dominated by media interfaces, lonely for some, as Minahan and Cox propose:

Groups may offer, among other opportunities, the possibility of nostalgia through a romantic return to simpler times or to an idealized past […] a form of collective leisure and a means of building connection, community and social capital while remedying the individualism typical of the present Information Society.

(2010: 40)

This kind of social connectedness can offer psychological and physiological benefits for all ages (Berkman 1995). However, research additionally shows that if collective nostalgia occurs within

groups, it also results in unique benefits to individuals in the group and the group itself (Wildschut et al. 2014: 17). For example, '[i]n addition to being a source of social connectedness, nostalgia increased participants' perceived capacity to provide emotional support to others' (Wildschut 2010: 573) and 'collective nostalgia could strengthen belief in the group's efficacy to (re)establish cherished values […] through collective action […] this would suggest that collective nostalgia is not only consequential for individuals in groups but for society at large' (Wildschut et al. 2014: 16). In this way, nostalgia adds another layer of well-being to that already offered by social connectedness in groups.

The ways in which nostalgia can be present in group-making situations are varied. Personal memories are one nostalgic focus: the individual heritage emanating from childhood or even family lore. Another form of nostalgia can exist around cultural heritage. So, for example, knitting may be nostalgic because of memories of loved ones engaging in the practices or even passing on skills. But there are nostalgic cultural references to knitting – for example, knitting as a form of meditation or a useful activity during wartime, or as part of the DIY ethos of the hippie era. This cultural nostalgia evokes similar elements such as slowing down, material meditation, creativity, thrift/sustainability and so on. This cultural, rather than individual, nostalgia has been termed 'anemoia' or 'legislated nostalgia' – a nostalgia for a time one has never actually known. As Susan Yelavich and Barbara Adams note, '[t]here is a distinct pleasure and reassurance that comes when we recognize a glimmer of continuity with those who came before us' (2014: 70).

Heritage and cultural centres which act as repositories for cultural nostalgia have a role to play in mental health. The MARCH mental health network, running from 2018 to 2021 and with members including the Museums Association as well as the Crafts Council, produced research indicating that life satisfaction is increased by increased engagement with arts events, historical sites and museums (Chatterjee 2019). Here museums and historical sites are examined as community assets, with a role in health via 'social prescribing'; however, the mechanisms by which health is increased by engagement in these assets still require further research. It is not unlikely that cultural nostalgia plays a part in people's engagement and response.

Further support for this engagement with the past for not only personal but also community health has been examined in a series of UK research council-funded projects on 'Social Haunting', which produced a series of 'Ghost Labs'. Within these playful participatory community arts process or events spaces, participants drawn from working class de-industrialized UK cities within which memories of previous community structures, actions, ways of living were encouraged to examine their place in what Geoff Bright (2020) calls contested pasts. In these processes or events,

[w]hatever does happen (if handled in a certain way) allows difficult feelings to be gently re-articulated out of the blind field of contested pasts. In that moment, ghosts are transformed […]. Feelings (or 'affects'), held privately for so long, are thus made available for collective re-appropriation and ownership. Once made common, they can be held again in common, as a renewed collective bond.

(Bright 2020: n.pag.)

In this way the difficult aspects of the past are re-evaluated and used as a generative force for a new sense of community. This is a long way from the idea of nostalgia as a twee and disengaged

personal emotion or engagement. Rather, even difficult pasts with what William Kurlinkus describes as a 'resistant nostalgic underlife' (2018: 5) can be explored and engaged with in ways which increase individual and community well-being. The engagement with the past is precisely that of a generative nostalgia, as Bryan Brown puts it, 'reflective and celebratory, with a pinch of mourning and a dash of optimism' (2018: n.pag.).

Craft can be a symbol of national identity that is reproduced iteratively. The production of Harris Tweed in the Outer Hebrides in Scotland, or silk spinning and weaving in Japan, reflects craft work which has a centuries-old lineage. While still produced as work in some industries, '[w]hat has replaced the toil is a culture of the handmade that views spinning and weaving as a leisure activity that plays a role in a collective nostalgia by romanticizing the life of rural communities' (Minahan and Cox 2010: 40). Some tourist initiatives knowingly invoke nostalgia in the way they promote local or vernacular craft activities, markets and/or items (Terrio 2008; Borseková et al. 2015). And some tourism offers the chance to participate in historical or nostalgic activities where participation 'reflects attempts to construct personal, collective, and cultural identity' (Creighton 2001: 18). In a world where levels of migration are unprecedented, crafts are a focal point for members of diasporas for whom the intersection of their cultural identities are experienced as 'as dissociated rather than overlapping and as inherently incompatible' (Wildschut et al. 2014: 16).

The link to a previous life, a previous collective self, through craft, and the psychosocial benefits this can bring, is exemplified in the group Shelanu, a collective of refugee and migrant women working with the Birmingham (UK) charity Craftspace. Shelanu, meaning 'belonging to us', is inspired by the women's new home at Birmingham and their experiences of migration. The group's aims include both teaching new skills (craft, language, entrepreneurial) and providing a space and forum to value and build on the women's heritage. Though aimed at integration and aspirational in intent, the collective nostalgia invoked in both creating together as a group and valuing the experiences of refugee and migrant women may be a particularly potent ingredient in the well-making provided in groups and initiatives such as these. Creating this new shared space which references prior shared spaces and experiences, along with a collective creative purpose and a desire to help each other, is a potent form of creative place-making (Madsen 2019).

Nostalgia in well-making

Some projects aimed at well-making already reference shared history and heritage in very concrete ways without foregrounding the term nostalgia or referencing its psychological mechanisms. Of particular interest in this regard are the Co-Creating Heritage projects undertaken as part of the Co-Creating CARE: Community Learning through Collaborative Making research project. The aim of the project, which ran from 2013 to 2014, was to test and develop a methodology for co-produced community learning through creative practice, skill-sharing and storytelling that built confidence and promoted self-reflection and reflexivity. Parts of the project took place in heritage sites Soho House and Rathfarnham Castle through project community partners Craftspace in Birmingham and Bealtaine in Dublin. The buildings and their locations and collections were the inspirations for designs and art works produced collaboratively by participants (all aged 50 or above). For example, the Dublin group visited Rathfarnham Castle, which has been in continuous occupation since 1204 and is steeped in Irish

history. On their tour of the building, the group became intrigued by how the carpet designs in the castle were inspired by the ceilings' intricate plasterwork. With the inspiration of the shapes and pattern structure of the stair carpet – hexagons and diamonds – they decided to make two long collective prints which would be hung beside the ornate entrance staircase. Collective cultural nostalgia was reinterpreted and reinvented in a creative way, where nostalgia became a generative element in the well-making activity.

At Soho House, the Maker-Centric project (2016) associated with Co-Creating CARE and aiming to imagine futures for the community through place, heritage and the act of making used the same approach towards the heritage building. This building was once the gathering place for the Enlightenment group, the Lunar Society, which met regularly to discuss philosophy and ideas for creating a better future through science and culture. The house has been restored to look as it did when the Society met there on the night of each full moon. Both the fabric and contents of the building, and the history of the ideas formulated within its walls, inspired this project. Again, a guided tour was the starting point, with the focus on how people in the past imagined the future. Participants were encouraged to recall and imaginatively revisit their past, and envision utopian or dystopian futures, in stories which were collectively developed and connected imaginatively with those of Soho House. The project then moved to developing collective utopian and dystopian designs for a Praxinoscope [(1)], an early animation device from the nineteenth century which uses mirrors and a drum containing images. The apparatus was historical but futuristic in its time, scientific and cultural, and was designed to help move participants' stories from memory towards future transformations.

Tales and narratives were transformed into visual motifs in painting, drawing and in fine metal sheetwork by asking the participants to integrate their own stories with the visual elements from Soho House. One member of the group used the sheet metal to make a silver spoon reflecting the Georgian straining spoon on display in the house, but in the bowl of the spoon a shadowy face referenced not only the dark portraits on the walls but also memories of the participant's father, a first-generation migrant to the UK from Jamaica. As his father was also a carpenter, the participant also created a saw to go with the spoon, not only recalling his personal history and the metalworking history of the local area but also aligning his present and future as a maker. His reflection was, 'I remembered things I hadn't thought about for a long time. I reconnected with my history' (Co-creating CARE 2016: n.pag.).

Other participants used historical elements such as ballooning (experimented with by members of the Lunar Society) to imagine a future without cars and in which balloons dropped flower seeds to create a utopian future vision based on a technology from the past. While the dystopian visions included polluting industry, prison and mental health issues, the utopian imaginings were much more about shared spaces, community gardens and connected communities with their associated health benefits: '[n]ice to go back to my childhood in Brum and share it with others, feeling welcome and at home in my city…change is possible if we work together' (Co-creating CARE 2016: n.pag.).

These reflections suggest strongly that the heritage and memory aspects, aligned with a creative making focus, added something very tangible to the participants' ability to project their thoughts into the future and feel agency over their ability to create better outlooks. This indicates positive implications for the use of nostalgic elements in further well-making initiatives

and activities – whether this be a craft activity attached to a memory project or a nostalgic or heritage element as part of a maker initiative. The two aspects appear to have a strong positive synergy.

Nostalgia's mood repair and social needs functions (Routledge 2016) are facets of the uses of nostalgia in crafts-based well-making activities. However, the functions of nostalgia may go beyond those of psychological comfort in ways which mirror both challenges and opportunities in the field of art-based research generally. In the case studies examined here, it becomes clear that nostalgia, as an evoked state of memory and affect, is providing a link to transformative imagination in the same way that 'within the creative process where expressions also tend to be a step ahead of the reasoning mind' (McNiff 2013: 8). Nostalgia, in similar ways as art, can be a way of finding unexpressed desires which lie dormant or subconscious in the minds of stakeholders. Because futuring is a work of the imagination, art-based research is the only appropriate methodology for imagining the future. Participants are transported into the past by material consciousness and connection with the crafted objects and spaces of the past. Merely hearing of the history will not do it; trying to think logically of what might happen in the future gives limited answers. Using nostalgia as an affective state in art or craft activities can invoke or contribute to transcendence – the affective and 'meditative level of consciousness, resulting in contemplation, reflection, introspection and self-expression not achievable in other states of consciousness' (Gerber et al. 2012: 44), which parallels distinguishing features of art-based research. The use of nostalgia offers connections with art-based research with potential for further examination.

Conclusion

Craft, and making, may not be seen as powerful or even very relevant to contemporary life because of unconscious nostalgic associations. However, 'nostalgia must be understood not as a reduction or denial of history but as a fundamentally productive affective engagement that produces new historical meaning for the past as a way of reckoning with the historical present' (Dwyer 2015: 22). Nostalgia holds the possibility of inducing psychological comfort in those who choose or are predisposed to engage with it. It arguably acts in different ways on individuals and on communities and appears in different forms: in individuals, nostalgia is often invoked in creating or maintaining concepts of identity; in communities it is invoked in ideas of connection. It is in both of these invocations that nostalgia is, or can be, aligned with crafts. This can relate to the way crafts are viewed generally but also might be something that can be usefully invoked, for self-reference and well-being functions, for community cohesion and wellness in collective nostalgia, and for additional individual and social benefits in work engaging with heritage and diasporic initiatives. In addition, the growing body of information concerning the nostalgic components of why participants craft, either individually or in groups, can provide knowledge of what is missing in the present, which was felt to have existed in the past, so it can be provided or aimed towards in the future: 'rhetorical analyses of nostalgia can tell designers what different communities of users love about the past, miss in the present, and wish to recover in the future' (Kurlinkus 2018: 5).

Craft practice has sometimes been viewed as a reactionary retreat from current times (Peach 2013). Nostalgia is often seen as a regressive impulse, something like candy floss, giving momentary pleasure without substance: Garth Clark spurned its 'cloying whimsy and saccharine

cuteness' (2007: 450). However, recent research reveals another side to nostalgia, a more generative, proactively constructive means to certain types of psychological and social wellness. Whether creating a bond through shared memories while engaged in maker activities, feeling a sense of wholeness in remembering family or social making history or engaging with cultural memories of place in a renegotiation of the present, nostalgia can provide psychological and social benefits. For those involved in designing well-making projects or activities, using nostalgia – whether personal, cultural, or a combination of the two – as a generative element appears to hold potential and value.

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Note

1. See https://craftspace.co.uk/maker-centric-2016-utopia/ , for an image of the praxinoscope.

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