



A Psycholinguistic Analysis to the film *Midnight in Paris* with Reference to Nostalgia

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ABSTRACT

Decades ago, nostalgia was viewed as a disease; now it is considered to be an essential psychological resource which have a great value to human life. True, it is a topic that most common, ordinary, laypeople are acquainted with, but it is a topic that researchers, scientists, writers, and academics have a huge interest in. The the aim of the current paper is to discuss the topic of nostalgia and how it is considered to be a phenomena where people involve in deeply, they experience an improvement in positive psychological states such as positive mood, feelings of social connectedness, self-esteem, self-continuity, and insights of meaning in life. The paper answers the question of why and how people differ in their tendency to be nostalgic. This is done through language analysis of the film *Midnight in Paris*. This film has a nostalgic theme and it has been analyzed likewise. The purpose, here, is to analyze the language used in the film which emphasizes on the topic of nostalgia. One of the main conclusions arrived at, is the fact that language choices are strongly affected by the psychological condition of the speaker in expressing nostalgic feelings associated with imagination.

I. Introduction

Nostalgic is considered to be a mental voyage which is different from ordinary autobiographical and positive autobiographical mental travel. Generally, nostalgia is an emotion that includes sometime uncommon and expressive memories kept and perhaps increased across time. It shows a unique multilevel understanding pattern, bittersweet emotional signature, and elicitation of genuineness. These landscapes of

nostalgic reminiscences may be the key provider to the psychological state of the individuals at a certain time for a specific period.

There is a distinction between nostalgia and depression. They were considered to be the same. This is not true, according to many scientists and psychiatrists. Generally, we can portray nostalgia as an enjoyable experience relating sincere memories of the past, although it might behold certain pains like deceased beloved ones. That is to say, if nostalgia in its normal state, it must hold a depressive constituent which is strongly connected to the acknowledgment that specifies the idea of the past being irreversible. If the nostalgic sensations are considered from their pathological formula, then the mood will only enclose the delighted features minus the approval of hurt, damage, defeat, loss. This could be labeled as a nostalgic bittersweet sentimentality. The compulsive state assists mostly denial and functions similar to a screen affect.

The current research is an attempts to show how particular usage of language play a role in conveying nostalgia and nostalgic components, specifically, screen effect, ideal characters, romantic fantasies, and self-observation. The main character in the film experiences his nostalgic quests as a way of lasting close to the past where his ideals are. These nostalgic hunts served both a self-justifying function, as a path to escape the reality of the present and proposing a colorful imagination through the fantasy he goes through after midnight in Paris.

2. Understanding Nostalgia Neuropsychiatricly

In psychiatric terms nostalgia could be viewed as an exciting human behavior. The idealized fantasies of the past in the present reality. This is done by an eagerness to recreate this idealized past. Nostalgic people put forward psychic forces to win nostalgic desires. Some results of these attempts may be seen in a number of societies acts like naming first-born sons after their fathers.

So, within the psychiatric framework, nostalgia may be considered as longing to return home to the past; it is a yearning for an idealized past; a wish for a sparkling impression of the past. According to psychoanalysts, nostalgia is a screen memory not

a true recreation of the past. It is somehow a mixture of a variety of memories combined together to produce an atmosphere empty of negative emotions.

Nostalgia also exists in the pathological state besides the normal state. Schizophrenics, who have severe symptoms, experience the delusional system of their unrealistic memories (Hill, 1955, p. 47)). Kaplan et al 1988 state that the obsession of the loss causes depression in pathological grief to the idealized past (p. 299). According to Lishman 1978, the Alzheimer's senile dementia or Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome recent memory is noticeably troubled; nevertheless, the nostalgic memories do exist, which leads to replacing the past for the present (p. 530). In the case of the people suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder, it is the opposite, they long to remove memory to the past. However, in both cases, a sudden incident could bring back mixed emotions loaded with memories that are context specific (Ibid).

3. Semiotics and Nostalgia

Nostalgia could be considered as remorse for a time that has passed. Thus, nostalgia is either a wish for the return to the past state or a description of an identity injury. Davis 1979, one of the 20th century sociologists, linked nostalgia to the breakdowns of life. Nostalgia is felt when individuals experience phases that involve a transformation in their lives that is why they use nostalgia to keep their identity (Davis 1979, p. 65). Psychologists define two chronological nostalgic concepts, present and future. According to Rose 1948, nostalgia is related to instability and confusion to the environment. While Nawas/ Platt 1965 identify nostalgia as an anguishing sensitivity to the future.

Holbrook/Schindler's 1991 defines nostalgia as

A preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favorable affect) toward objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth) (p. 330).

If we list down nostalgia in one term by some scholars and researchers in the field, we could see the following:

1. Belk 1990: a mood,
2. Holbrook and Schindler 1991: a preference,
3. Stern 1992: a state,
4. Holak and Havlena 1998: an emotion.

According to Loveland, Smeesters, and Mandel 2010, there are products in nostalgia, which are defined “as products that were more common or popular when one was younger”. Greimas 2002 identifies nostalgia in terms of semiotics analysis as: “a state of wasting away and languidness/ caused by an obsessive regret/ of one’s native country, a place where one lived for a long time”. Considering this definition, we could see there are two terms in opposition, wasting away and languidness. Wasting away means “weakening through gradual consumption” and repeats the idea of declination. While, languidness meanings are activity and force. These two terms “provide us information on the semantic value that this reduction is subjected to [...] the life vs. death” couple (Greimas 2002). Therefore, the described state is the slow and steady channel of one phase, that is languidness which equals life and continuity, to another, that is wasting away, which equals death and discontinuity. The causing component, that is the obsessive regret, is understood as “a state of painful consciousness caused by the loss of a possession”. This leads to the departure of whatever experienced before, therefore a denial.

4. The Selected Film

Midnight in Paris is an outstanding nostalgic film directed by the brilliant Hollywood figure Woody Allen. It is a romantic comedy that shows the fingerprint of Allen all over. It starts with the question in a gasp astonishment indicating that the past always seems much more vivid than the future. There is remorse that the past was so alluring but, unfortunately, we were not there:

- *Ah, dis you once see Shelley plain?*

Th film ends with another nostalgic sentence that clarifies the idea of the past being more substantial than the present which fades with the cold touch of reality. The pleasant, glorious days are in the past and we missed the chance of being there and experiencing all its magnificent that contradicts with the present reality:

- *Well, I forget the rest.*

The film is about a couple (Gil and Inez Paris) on holiday in Paris with Inez's parents. Gil is a screenwriter from Hollywood who cherishes the dream of someday writing a good novel and joining the pantheon of American writers. Those writers: Fitzgerald, Hemingway and the other legends of Paris in the 1920s are idealized by Gil. He would like to live in Paris, but Inez prefers to live in an upper-class American suburb, like her parents. He educes poetic associations with every cafe where Hemingway might once have had a Pernod, but she likes to go shopping. He had a brain tumor earlier in his life which slowed him down in his writing and his use of words. An indication that the tumor affected the language areas in his brain. The tumor also strongly affected his emotional and psychological state. Making him nostalgic in a way that he is rejecting his present.

One night, Gil wanders off by himself, gets lost, sits on some church steps, and as a bell rings midnight, a big old Peugeot pulls up filled with celebrators; writers, painters, important figures. They invite him to join them as they are going to a party. This goes on for another few nights where he sees Hemingway, Picasso, Dali, Man Ray, Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Gil is carried away in their wake and finds himself sunk into the Jazz Age and all its legends. His novel was going to be about a man who ran a nostalgia shop, and here he is in the time and place he is most nostalgic for. Gil so sincere, so enthusiastic, about his hero worship of the giants of the 1920s. He cannot believe he's meeting these people, and they are so nice to him — although at the time, of course, they did not yet think of themselves as legends; they ran into ambitious young writers like Gil night after night in Miss Stein's salon.

Another character is Adriana, who has been the mistress of Braque and Modigliani, and is now Picasso's lover, fall in love with Gil. In the meantime, life in the present continues, with Gil's bride-to-be and future in-laws progressively annoyed by his disappearances every night. The events involve another journey even deeper and further into the past, indicating that nostalgia can change its features at a movable feast. Baring in mind that Gill has not experienced any of the events nor meet any of the figures in his life.

The theme of the film is nostalgia, memory, and history. It is not just about the city of Paris, it is all about the American fascination and romanticization of Paris, practically that certain age. An age where all the great figures exist and are the heroes of Gil's fantasies.

5. The Analysis

Generally, there are two kinds of meaning that lie within each word, phrase, sentence, etc.; they are surface meaning and hidden meaning. If we analyze these meanings according to the understanding of the audience, they will refer to the literary meaning and the interpreted meaning. These meanings depend on how they are produced and how they are comprehended. Depending on this general concept and the psychological analysis to nostalgia, the following extracts are used to reach the results of the analysis:

1. Yearn for the past; there is a strong eagerness to return to the past. The speaker is declaring that the present generation has no imagination, and it is blank with no sense to imagine beautiful things that boost human beings and lift some reality burdens:

- This generation is empty and has no imagination.

2. Not happy with the present; the speaker is clarifying that there are no feelings of whatsoever satisfaction to the present. Signifying that life in general, is not satisfactory and reasonable, nonetheless the specific things that we as individuals should live with:

-That is what the present is. It's a little unsatisfying because life is unsatisfying.

3. Sharing the love for the past; here the speaker is directing his speech to someone who has the same idea and that is there are small concepts of the past which are nostalgic to them. They might not have other common ideas but this one is definitely shared by both of them:

-We don't have the big things in common but we have the little things.

4. Confession: this beautiful yet painful sentence shows the reality that although nostalgia might be considered as a denial to the present, but it is definitely a denial of the painful present. A present that is so agonizing and full of misery, leads us to dream of going back to the past. A past that is free from all these sorrows:

-Nostalgia is denial, denial of the painful present.

5. Present (day); past (night), for the speaker, Paris is a place where all the big artistic figures lived in the past during the golden age. Thus, it is an idealist city for him that brings attractive nostalgic moments to his present:

-I can never decide whether Paris is more beautiful by day or by night.

6. A reason for nostalgia; the speaker is nostalgic because his present is not acceptable, that is why he is eager to go back to the past. He is convincing himself and declaring the reason why he wants to experience those nostalgic events:

-Maybe the present is unsatisfying because life is a little unsatisfying.

7. Believing in love; this is a confession that the speaker was near death. Since he is in love, death parted him and left him to experience the magnificent time of nostalgic involvement where he is in love again:

I believe that love that is true and real, creates a respite from death

8. A place in the past; the speaker wishes to go to Paris more often, indicating that he was there before, and he loved it. He had beautiful memories which he likes to go back to. Adding to that he wishes to see and feel Paris in the rain and most outstandingly being there in the 20's:



I don't get here often enough, that's the problem. Can you picture how drop dead gorgeous this city is in the rain? Imagine this town in the '20s. Paris in the '20s, in the rain. The artists and writers!

9. Fear of death; a piece of an advice is not to be afraid of death. If you like, love, or desire something or someone, you have to be bold. Take the opportunity to experience new things beside the old ones which you like most. Don not be afraid to go back to the past and be nostalgic at all times you desire:

You'll never write well if you fear dying. Do you?

10. A declaration of not knowing the figure; the speaker knows the Fitzgeralds as being important literary figures, but he says that he does not know them in order to learn more about them. He is trying to gain as much as possible from what he is seeing from these nostalgic moments with those great figures:

I actually don't know the Fitzgeralds that well.

11. Confessing the greatness of good literature of the past; yet another confession that the past is greater than the present. Literature belonging to the past is greater that leads readers to go back to reading them again. A statement that all what belongs to the past is greater and better from those that belong to the present.:

Yes, it was a good book because it was an honest book, and that's what war does to men. And there's nothing fine and noble about dying in the mud unless you die gracefully, and then it's not only noble but brave.

12. Identifying a present character by a past figure; the speaker is stamping the fact that Gil is a writer belonging to the time where the writer is living. He does not know that Gil belongs to the future. Perhaps, this is an acknowledgement that Gil could be a great writer belonging to the 20s. this leads to the assumption that Gil wishes to belong that age and loving this nostalgic instant:

Greetings and salutations. You'll forgive me, I've been mixing grain and grappa. Now this is a writer, Gil, yes?

13. Acknowledgement that it is not real; here is the truth that Gil does not belong to the past. He is just a nostalgic person. Someone who wishes deeply to go back to the past and belong there. A strong denial of the present. A proof of what he is experiencing is not true, not real, and not authentic:

You act like you've never been here before.

14. Declaring that it is not a dream; yet it is a dream, a nostalgic dream. A dream where he could get observations, benefits, and experiences as a writer. He is back to the past where he could have fun and get benefit. Engaging the nostalgic dream to his present fact that he is a writer struggling to finish his novel:

You're a writer. You make observations. You were with them all night.

15. In doubt of nostalgic feelings, here is a confession that he might be criticized for being nostalgic. He is explaining the setting of his novel being in a nostalgic place; a shop where they sell old things. He is asking if it is terrible or bad to experience nostalgia:

Y'know, a place where they sell old things, memorabilia. And, does that sound terrible?

16. Admitting of being nostalgic; a confession of loving to be nostalgic. He is talking about the novel he is writing but, actually, he is talking about himself. He is that person who would like to be in the past. Loving all the fascination of being nostalgic:

It's about a um...a man who works in a nostalgia shop.

6. Conclusions

1. The nostalgic experience of the character Gil went through very smoothly and consistently unlike screen memory, they are not related to a specific memory, but rather to an emotional state. A state where Gil is experiencing nostalgic events not related to his past. Thus, a memory is created by himself for his pleasure because he is not happy or satisfied with his present. The emotions he is undergoing are absolute and perfect, they are enclosed within a past era dear to his heart. Gil's yearning for

the flawless emotional state launches a challenge to recreate that past era by replicating activities performed at that time, engaging the use of symbolic illustrations of the past.

3. Although nostalgia presents the sense of belonging to certain memories where a person owns from the past that evoke a sense of pleasure and pain, for Gil's nostalgia it is different. His nostalgic event brings him joy and happiness only. It is after all filled with all the big figures whom he idealized and wished to be with at that certain period of time.

4. Gill goes through these nostalgic moments in Paris after midnight. As if he remembers a past time; the 20s, and a place; Paris, his consciousness realizes that specific memory is of significance to the present moment he is actually living. This indicates that what he is facing do not just bring him pleasure but also affects his productivity his present and expected future.

5. The sense of creativity, passion, and love may not be what Gil truly feels in his present. He is feeling and establishing all of them and more in his nostalgic journey to the era where he never been before. He owns all what he lacks in the events he is witnessing throughout this fantastic trip.

5. Gil's psychological condition and the fact that he is a survivor of brain tumor affects strongly his choice of words. His language from the beginning of the film till the end is loaded with direct and indirect indications to his desire to go back to the past. Whether conscious or unconscious of his selective utterances, they truthfully represent his psychological state.

6. Reaching the end of the film, one could only imagine how magnificent it would be if each individual could achieve this journey to a past where he/she wishes for without even living them before. Nevertheless, the burdens of life, traumas, disappointments, and the feeling of unsatisfaction all brings the painful fact that our present is actually affecting our present. This is actually the case of Gil.

7. Gil's brain tumor may have affected his way of thinking and behaving. One could conclude that what he is experiencing is but a daydream or a beautiful imagination of what life could have been for him if he had lived in the past with all those big literary and artistic figures. After all, he is a writer, and his imagination is wider and richer than ordinary people.

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شیکاریه کی زمانه وانى دەر وونى بۆ فیلمى نیوه شهوى پاریس له ریگه ی ئاماژه دان به نۆستالۆژیا (خولیاى بیر گه پانه وه بۆ پابردوو)

پوخته

چەند دەیهیه ک له مه وه بهر، نۆستالۆژیا وه کو نه خۆشییبه ک ده بیندرا، ئیستا به که رسته یه کی گرینگی سایکۆلۆژی دادهنریت که به هایه کی گه وره ی له ژیاى مرۆف دا هیه. راسته نۆستالۆژیا بابه تیکه که خه لکی گشتی و ئاسایی پیی ئاشنان، به لام بابه تیکیشه که توێژه ران، زانایان، نووسهران و که سانى ئەکادیمی زۆر ئاره زووی ده کهن. ئامانجی ئەم توێژینه وه ی ئیستا گفتوگۆکردنی بابه تی نۆستالۆژیا به و چون به دیارده یه ک دادهنریت که خه لک تیایدا قولده بنه وه و به ره و پێشچوونیکى ئه رپنی له بارى دەر وونیاى دینیتته ئاراهه، وه کو: مه زاج و بارى دەر وونى ئه رپنی، چەند هه ستیکى په یوه سته بوونى کۆمه لایه تی، باوه رپه خۆبوون، به رده وامبوون، دوورپروانین له مانای ژیاى. ئەم توێژینه وه یه وه لامى ئەو پرسیاره ده داته وه که چون و بۆچی خه لک له خواست و خولیاىان به نۆستالۆژیا وه جیاوازن. ئەمه ش له ریگه ی شیکارکردنی زمانى فیلمى نیوه شه وه له پاریس ئەنجامدراوه. چه قبیرى فیلمه که نۆستالۆژیا یه وه هر به هه مان شیوه ش شیکارکراوه. لیره مه به ست ئەوه یه که شیکارى ئەو زمانه بکریت که له فیلمه که دا به کارهاتوو وه جهخت له سه ر بابه تی نۆستالۆژیا ده کاته وه. یه کیک له وه درئه نجامه سه ره کیانه ی پیی گه یشتووین ئەو راستییبه یه که بژارده کانی زمان به شیوه یه کی به هیز له لایه ن بارى دەر وونى قسه که ره وه کاریتیکراوه له دهرپینى ئەو هه سته نۆستالۆژیا یانه ی که تیکه ل به ئەندیشه بوون.

تحليل نفسي لغوي لفيلم منتصف الليل في باريس مع الإشارة إلى الحنين إلى الماضي

الملخص

منذ عقود ، كان يُنظر إلى الحنين إلى الماضي على أنه مرض ، والآن يعتبر مورداً نفسياً هاماً له قيمة كبيرة في حياة الإنسان. صحيح أنه موضوع يعرفه معظم الناس العاديين والعاديين ، ولكنه موضوع يهتم به الباحثون والعلماء والكتاب والأكاديميون كثيراً. الهدف من الورقة الحالية هو مناقشة موضوع الحنين إلى الماضي وكيف يتم اعتبارها كظاهرة ينخرط فيها الناس بعمق ، فإنهم يشعرون بتحسن في الحالات النفسية الإيجابية مثل المزاج الإيجابي ، ومشاعر الترابط الاجتماعي ، واحترام الذات ، والاستمرارية الذاتية ، ورؤى المعنى في الحياة. تجيب الورقة على السؤال لماذا وكيف يختلف الناس في ميلهم إلى الحنين إلى الماضي. يتم ذلك من خلال التحليل اللغوي لفيلم منتصف الليل في باريس. يحتوي هذا الفيلم على موضوع حنين وقد تم تحليله بالمثل. الهدف هنا هو تحليل اللغة المستخدمة في الفيلم والتي تركز على موضوع الحنين إلى الماضي. أحد الاستنتاجات الرئيسية التي تم التوصل إليها ، هو حقيقة أن اختيارات اللغة تتأثر بشدة بالحالة النفسية للمتحدث في التعبير عن مشاعر الحنين المرتبطة بالخيال.