States of (Be)longing: The Politics of Nostalgia in Transition Societies

By

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What can I say – who knows if one day I will long for these dissertation-writing days!?

Plagiarism Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature

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Date

April 11, 2012

Abstract

South Africa and Russia achieved two of the most remarkable political transformations in modern history, yet significant numbers of their citizens feel a longing for aspects of the old regimes. While there have been some studies of nostalgia among older Russians and South Africans, the following is the first comparative qualitative examination of the phenomenon among young members of the countries' inaugural "born free" generations: those who came into the world just before or after the fall of Apartheid and Communism, and have had little or no experience of life prior to regime change. Its purpose is to examine how and why young people growing up in post-authoritarian transition societies experience, and long for, the past. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with seven South African and five Russian youths, recruited through purposive sampling, who reflected on the ways in which the recent past impacts their lives, self-perceptions and socio-political identities. While they differed in some areas, respondents from both countries identified several broadly shared areas of nostalgia, clustering around a perceived loss of community, moral values, personal safety and social trust; and a concomitant rise in individualism, materialism and anomie. Employing a Marxian engagement with symbolic interactionism and interpretative phenomenological analysis, I analyse their transcribed testimonies in light of the relevant scholarship on nostalgia, social memory and transition studies, alongside theories of post-modernity and critical sociology. I conclude that their nostalgia may be the product of Russia and South Africa's belated and compressed transition from "modern" to "post-modern" societies; a rebellion against the harsh transition to a Baumanian "liquid" life characterised by economic precariousness and the fraying of social bonds; and/or an expression of profound ambivalence that struggles to reconcile nostalgic regrets about the risks and human costs of globalised capitalist polyarchy, with a hunger to exploit the freedom and opportunities it offers.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANC – African National Congress

ANCYL – African National Congress Youth League

AWB – Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging

COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Unions

DA – Democratic Alliance

GEAR – Growth, Employment And Redistribution

IPA – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

KOMSOMOL – Communist Youth League (in the Soviet Union)

NP – National Party

SASCO – South African Students Congress

UKZN – University of KwaZulu-Natal

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

VF+ – Freedom Front Plus

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Chapter One: Strike While the Nostalgia is Hot!

1.1 Introduction

Here are two stories from many thousands of kilometres apart. What, if anything, ties them together?

Early one morning, in the heat of late summer, a political science class I was tutoring at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) came to an abrupt and raucous end. A knock on the door was swiftly followed by an invasion of young people in yellow, green and red t-shirts. Chanting, singing and beating the doorway with sticks, the human tornado rushed in, overturned several desks, and then burst into the teaching room next door. One of the last rioters out turned around and shouted over his shoulder: "Class is over for today. Strike!"

Coming from the much more subdued American academic context, I'd never experienced anything like it before. The sight of hundreds of marching, chanting young people, many wearing shirts screen-printed with hammers and sickles, African National Congress (ANC) emblems and black and white lithographs of resistance fighters was exotic, intoxicating and evocative of another era. Through its heady idealism tinged with the promise of violence, I felt immediately transported back in time; flashbacks of old newsreels – Paris 1968, Soweto 1976 – unspooled into my memory, so that the eventual arrival of riot police and the hollow pops of tear gas canisters felt uncannily like déjà-vu.

The students were demanding that the university make good on a policy to provide all eligible newly-accepted first years with accommodation and financial aid. Many had journeyed from the rural countryside and camped out on campus for days, accepted but unable to register for lack of funds to cover the necessary fees. The problem was a very contemporary one, stemming from the post-Apartheid government's commitment to universalising access to higher education, particularly among previously disadvantaged populations. Yet the spectacle of the marching students reached beyond this problem, and into the past. Drowning out demands for bursaries and dorm places were renditions of old struggle songs not related to education at all: *Shoot the Boer*, *Mshini Wami.* It all felt like a ritualised enactment of history. As a member of the student union told me - as he temporarily ducked out of the march to take a breather in the shade of a monument to King George VI - "I feel like I was born in the wrong time; thirty years too late".

"For those who have something to remember", reads the marketing slogan for one of Russia's most subscribed satellite TV stations: the *Nostalgia* channel (Nostalgia Channel, *http://www.nostalgiatv.ru/385/*). Founded in 2004 by the NTV network, *Nostalgia* is devoted to showing old Soviet and Eastern European films, music and news programmes. Every evening, the channel plays an authentic re-run of a vintage Soviet newsreel from a corresponding day in the past. A typical broadcast would begin with the familiar introductory montage, followed by news of a bumper harvest, a space achievement, an act of imperialist aggression somewhere in the world, and maybe the visit to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) of a fraternal Eastern-bloc statesman or Socialist celebrity.

After dinner, my dad loves to turn on the *Nostalgia* channel and nod, half ironically, half sentimentally, at the stifling cadences of the grey suited anchor announcing the over-fulfilment of quotas, a South American peasant rebellion, an impending ice hockey match against the Czechs. What's the use of watching the real news, he jokes, when the state-controlled TV in contemporary Russia is already a parody of the Soviet era? One might as well watch the real thing.

What are Russian people doing watching obsolete Soviet newsreels over twenty years after the collapse of Communism? And most importantly, given television's power to influence our daily life, how do *Nostalgia's* viewers behave and see themselves politically, culturally and socially?

A spectre is sweeping transition societies: the spectre of nostalgia. Nostalgia, the act of missing or fondly looking back at the past, commingles desire, sadness and idealism (Boym, 2001b). While its full meaning will be fleshed out in the following chapters, nostalgia ranges from a bittersweet recollection of good memories to a utopian drive to actually reconstruct the past in the present. Empirical studies consistently find majorities of Russian citizens to be nostalgic for the Soviet past. The 2005 New Russian Barometer poll found that 70% felt positive about the USSR (Munro, 2006). In 2008, 57% of Russians largely or entirely agreed that the demise of the USSR had been a 'disaster', while nearly two-thirds (64%) favoured the re-integration of the former Soviet republics (White, 2010). In terms of trends, nostalgia has been rising, not falling, with the passage of time following regime change.

Is this the case for other societies in transition? And why do I, a young person who has few memories of life in the USSR, seem to be as drawn to the channel as my father?

1.2 A Personal Note

This research project was borne out of a very personal preoccupation, if not obsession. I was born in 1984, in the city of Murmansk, beyond the Arctic Circle, in the final decade of the Soviet Union. The year was significant as the last chapter in what had come to be known as the "Five Year Plan of Lavish Funerals", a period from 1980 to 1985 that saw the death of three general secretaries in quick succession – Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko (Raleigh, 2006). Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet leader when I turned one, marking a break with the former governing gerontocracy and the beginning of the country's last, fateful chapter.

The onset of *perestroika*, Gorbachev's policy of economic restructuring, affected me very directly. It came just as my father, following a distinguished career piloting commercial fishing vessels, was made vice president of the Murmansk Trawl Fleet, the country's largest fishing conglomerate, with a staff of 117,000 (Rowe, 2009). Relatively young (he was in his mid-30s), English-speaking, energetic, and a demanding manager, he would have faced an uphill battle against the entrenched cronyism and inefficiencies that defined most Soviet industries. However, with Gorbachev's ascent, he now suddenly embodied the political leadership's new emphasis on dynamism and meritocracy, and it was not long before he attracted the authorities' attention as someone who could help reform the Fleet along more rational, market-based principles.

In 1989, the year of the European revolutions, and the year before I was due to start school, my father was selected to go to America, where, alongside managers from several other key industries, he was to study business at the George Washington University before returning to continue restructuring efforts at the Trawl Fleet (or maybe, as my father had hoped, even an assignment at the Ministry of Fisheries, in Moscow!). The "Soviet Executive Programme" was one of several *perestroika* projects that served both symbolic and practical value, as much cultural exchange as training exercise. In 1990, the three of us – my mother, father and me – headed over to Washington for what we assumed would be a two year stay. Little did we know that it would be my last time in the Soviet Union.

By the time the Soviet flag was lowered over the Kremlin for the last time, on Christmas Day, 1991, we were in Massachusetts. The program was over and my father had found himself forced out of his job when the Fleet was hastily privatised in his absence. He was hired by a US fishing firm interested in entering the Russian market; we were assured that we

would soon come back home. However, a year later, he transferred to a British company, and we moved to England. Eventually, my parents returned to Murmansk, where my father managed the firm's Russian branch, while I was placed in a boarding school on the outskirts of London.

In her work on former East German citizens coming to terms with re-unification and post-Socialism, sociologist Daphne Berdahl differentiated between the *wendegewinner* and the *wendeverlierer* – the so-called winners and losers of the transition (Berdahl, 2005). A 2009 study by the British medical journal *The Lancet* found that "privatisation programmes were associated with an increase in short-term adult male mortality rates of 12.8%" (Stuckler et al, 2009). My family was fortunate. Though our savings collapsed along with the Soviet rouble, we were not one of the millions of Russians who had lost their livelihoods or even lives in the traumatic transition to capitalist democracy.

Nevertheless, while we were not personally devastated by the crisis, my father remained profoundly dismayed by the collapse of the USSR, despite all of the opportunities that he had subsequently enjoyed. He was most disturbed by the destruction of the Trawler Fleet, most of whose over one thousand vessels had been sold off in a series of opaque transactions, eviscerating Murmansk's once dominant fishing industry. He often spoke, and speaks to this day, of his regret at the direction taken by the reforms that he had so eagerly embraced as a rising director. He is nostalgic for the city to which he came with so many hopes as a young man eager for adventures, and angry at what he sees as a betrayal of the Socialist values that had sustained it – and himself – for so long.

My father's reaction is not unique. Although for some time, prevailing wisdom had suggested that nostalgia would be more widespread among those who had lost out the most during the transition, quantitative studies have not been able to substantiate that claim. Most recently, in his examination of Communist nostalgia among Russians, Munro (2006) found wealth and social class to be poor predictors of nostalgia. In her seminal work, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym (2001b) isolates post-Communist nostalgia's conflation of time and space. And indeed, my father, by longing for Murmansk's Communist past, was experiencing a nostalgia that was both temporal and spatial: the USSR was a country that literally disappeared from the map. What was perhaps surprising, however, is that I was also experiencing it, despite never having consciously lived under the old regime. On the one hand, as a Russian expatriate living in England, I was homesick for my county. Yet while that

was a feeling which could easily be alleviated with a trip home during school holidays, I was sharply aware that I would never be able to visit the land of my parents' birth: the Soviet Union. That country had, in 1991, suddenly become an insurmountable conundrum of time and space. Though I could visit my parents' hometowns, and occupy the same geographic place, I would never be able to experience them as they did, growing up in the now-vanished land. I suspected that it was this inability to visit the place of my parents' youth – an important rite for many children – that ultimately prevented me from truly understanding them, and by implication, my own origins. My parents were Soviet, I am Russian. They may not have figured out how they fit into this new country, but at least they know who they were.

This frustration made me think about the way young people like me, who had spent their entire conscious lives under the new regimes, negotiated their relationships with the past. Then, a chance encounter inspired me to embark on a comparative study of Russia and South Africa. At an academic dinner in Washington DC, I was speaking with a middle-aged white South African who'd recently returned home after living in Geneva for many years. He had often travelled in the former Soviet Union on business, and, discovering that I was Russian, told me that when he had first come back to post-Apartheid South Africa, he was struck at just how similar the country felt to post-Soviet Russia or Kazakhstan. White South Africans, he said, spoke of the same kind of disorientation, uprootedness and nostalgia that he had heard from Russians in the wake of the Soviet collapse. Though they were living on the same land as before, a shared sense of dislocation had turned them into internal exiles.

1.3 A Brief Overview of Russian and South African Transitions

It is not entirely surprising that Russia and South Africa should share some common experiences: after all, their respective political transitions were intimately connected to one another. For a start, the very release of Nelson Mandela was made possible by Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the end of the Cold War, and the imperatives of the Soviet Union's economic collapse (Vanaik, 1993). According to Gorbachev's aide Andrei Grachev, these realities set the scene for an unprecedented collaboration between the United States and the USSR on the South African question (2008).

By the late 1980s, the Soviet government cut much of its funds for international liberation movements and began pressuring the ANC to resolve the South African impasse on its own,

using political means. Faced with diminishing financial and diplomatic support from their most important ally, the ANC was pushed to the negotiating table (Giliomee, 1995). South Africa's Apartheid government, meanwhile, was facing similar pressures from the United States, which felt that the USSR's less threatening international position diminished the necessity of maintaining South Africa as a strategic anti-Communist ally in the Southern hemisphere: an alliance that had begun to carry unjustifiable reputational costs to the United States due to its support for a racist state in the face of mounting domestic and international criticism.

Both Russia and South Africa came into being through relatively peaceful, negotiated transitions from authoritarianism. In South Africa, the transition had "occurred by pact between the moderate leaders of corporate factions in the government and the opposition" (Bratton and Van De Walle, 1994). A similar pacted transition took place in Russia, during negotiations between elites representing the central Soviet government (Gorbachev) and those (Yeltsin and others), representing the secessionist republics (Kotz and Weir, 1997).

Moreover, in both cases, the transition was accompanied by a concomitant adoption of free market reforms. In Russia, that entailed liberalising the currency and enacting a sweeping campaign to privatise formerly state-owned enterprises that made up the vast bulk of the country's industrial stock. In South Africa, which had already possessed a capitalist system, albeit a heavily regulated and parochial one – a somewhat more gradual approach was undertaken through GEAR, the Growth, Employment And Redistribution strategy, enacted in 1996 with the stated purpose of achieving growth, macroeconomic stability and attracting foreign direct investment (Turok, 2008). The policies differed in their emphases but both resulted, contrary to the expectations of the policies' architects, in dramatic increases in inequality, unemployment and poverty.

According to Sampie Terreblanche, "six years after GEAR's announcement, South Africa [was] faced with an oxymoron: the economic growth rate [was] unsatisfactory, the unemployment problem bigger, the distribution of income more unequal, and the poverty problem far more serious" (2005:128). As for Russia, privatisation was accompanied by "declining levels of output, taxes and exports, fiscal imbalances, great foreign indebtedness, and a massive flight of capital" (Benerji, 1993: 2817). These policies of economic liberalisation were accompanied by large degrees of social pain. From 1992 to 1994 – the first years after the transition from Communism – Russian life expectancy dropped from 62

to 57 years for men and 73 to 71 years for women, a fall that "coincided with the introduction of painful economic reforms in Russia, leading to a rapid decrease in real wages and pensions, nearly complete loss of personal savings, and a tremendous increase in the poverty rate" (Gavrilova et al, 2000:397). Meanwhile, post-transition South Africa quickly "surpassed Brazil as the most unequal society in the world, with 1.6% of the population earning a quarter of all personal income. Life expectancy is 52, the lowest it has been since 1970" (Rappleye, 2011).

Crime proved to be another stark consequence of the rapid socio-economic reforms in both countries. Durkheim first linked a rise in crime with political crisis on the grounds that, in a situation in which the collective is undermined or questioned, violence would erupt. Certainly, a fractured collectivity became a hallmark of post-transition Russia and South Africa; in a 2006 study, William Pridemore and Sang-Weon Kim found that Russian regions that had undergone the most political change were the ones with the highest rates of increases in violence. "It appears", they concluded, "that swift political change in Russia is partially responsible for the higher rates of violence following the collapse of the Soviet Union" (2006:82). South Africa presented an even more dramatic picture: between 1990 and 1994, rates of assault and rape respectively rose by 18% and 42% (Terreblanche, 2005) as the economic violence of unemployment and inequality became compounded by both the systemic violence of the Apartheid regime and the violence of the anti-Apartheid struggle.

Over the course of their shared histories of interconnected liberation and the movement towards polyarchy and economic liberalisation, the citizens of Russia and South Africa have developed a striking propensity for nostalgia, the sense of longing or loss regarding the past. Even though South Africa does not have anything comparable to the *Nostalgia* channel, a 2002 poll found 65% of white and 20% of black South Africans nostalgic for Apartheid (*New York Times*, 2002). The figures for Russia are, as mentioned previously, even higher. Some of this is nostalgia for the old regime – Communism or Apartheid; some of it is nostalgia for the struggle against the regime. Nevertheless, what unites all these nostalgic perspectives is the strong sense that something had been lost in transition.

Previous studies of nostalgia have spanned many disciplines: psychology, sociology, political science, history, marketing, cultural studies and even medicine. In the 18th century, nostalgia was considered a potentially fatal disease (Boym, 2001a). But what role does nostalgia for the past – for Communism, for Apartheid, and for the anti-Apartheid struggle – play in the lives

of people who grew up in transition-era Russia and South Africa? Despite its widespread prevalence in the former Soviet Union and South Africa, nostalgia's possible causes and political ramifications have largely escaped sociological study. This is particularly true of South Africa. In the early 1990s, during and shortly after the fall of Apartheid, there was a strong expectation of white irredentism from the part of extremist groups such as the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) as well as radical right wing political parties. As a result, most of the (few) studies of nostalgia in South Africa focused on the experience of whites (Baines, 2006).

In general, however, while the reality of nostalgia was acknowledged, it was not widely discussed because of the stigma associated with missing elements of a regime overwhelmingly condemned as racist and unjust (Dlamini, 2009). What examinations of nostalgia there were, focused on the experience of memory during Apartheid, particularly among groups targeted by the state: Mark Gevisser's work on nostalgia, geography and sexuality in Johannesburg (2011), Christopher Sonn's ethnographies of diaspora (2010), and Marco Bezzoli's exploration of coloured memory and identity in the aftermath of the razing of District Six (2002). Yet there has been only one major work preoccupied with black South African nostalgia: Jacob Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia* (2009), an ethnographic portrait of the former Apartheid township in which the author was born. Over the course of several interviews with middle aged and older residents, he broke a long-standing taboo by showing that black people could be nostalgic for many aspects of the Apartheid past, including radio programmes, food, patterns of life and even the Afrikaans language, that on the surface might be considered to have been oppressive. While there has been some research into nostalgia in Russia, Dlamini's work aside, little has been written about the phenomenon in South Africa – and almost no examination exists of nostalgia among young South Africans, white or black.

The triggers of nostalgia have been investigated in great depth in the psychological literature (Sedikides et al, 2004) but very rarely in the sociological and political science disciplines. And while nostalgia as a phenomenon has been extensively described, its interaction with identity, selfhood and politics continues to elude substantive scholarly scrutiny. How does popular nostalgia condition the way people feel about their lives in transition societies? Are nostalgics more likely to vote in a certain way or support certain kinds of policies than those who are not nostalgic? Are political parties using nostalgia as a means of generating support?

While the objective of this study is to investigate the way nostalgia enters the everyday lives of young people in Russia and South Africa, it strives also to be sensitive to picking up on any relationships between political nostalgia and political action. For example, what kind of politics attracts people who long for their old life under a previous regime, and what effect do nostalgia-based political messages have on citizens' identity, choices, political behaviours and lifestyles? The following questions attempt to further problematise the enquiry. However, because the study is a qualitative one, these questions serve merely as points of potential enquiry and not hypotheses.

- Is nostalgia a critical or reactionary impulse?
- Does nostalgia carry political agency, and if so, what kind of agency?
- Where do Russians and South Africans channel their nostalgic energies?
- Why does the ANC see the need to incorporate such struggle images in its materials?
- How much of Putin's popularity is connected to his co-optation of Communist nostalgia?
- Why do South African teenagers like to sing anti-Apartheid struggle songs?
- Would someone nostalgic for Communism prefer voting for Putin to voting for the Communist party?
- What role does nostalgia for the struggle play in the enduring popularity of the ANC?
- Does the idea of the ANC as the historic liberation movement outweigh its current status as a neoliberal party of power?
- To what extent does nostalgia make it difficult to unseat political incumbents?

Broader issues to be identified, and which are beyond the scope of the present study, include the relationship between material conditions and nostalgia proneness, as well as the centrality of culture and language to political nostalgia. As outlined above, the former aspect is not unproblematic because there has not so far been any conclusive empirical link between downward material mobility and nostalgia. However, that does not mean that material discontinuity is the only kind of discontinuity that should be analysed. With reference to Bauman (2001), internalised perceptions of discontinuity may be strong determinants of nostalgia even in the absence of significant deterioration in actual material conditions.

The key preoccupation of my study, however, is not the causes or effects of nostalgia, but the ways in which it is experienced by young people. Why is this an important topic of investigation? Studies using qualitative and survey methodology have shown that, contrary to expectations that such feelings might be confined to the older generation, large numbers of young people in Russia and other regions of the former Soviet Union express a fondness for the USSR, and even Stalinism (Mendelson and Gerber, 2006). At the same time, there has been no detailed qualitative examination of how and why they feel that way, and what bearing their attitudes might have on the countries' democratic consolidation.

What's more, despite overwhelming evidence for nostalgia for Apartheid, Communism and the anti-Apartheid struggle among South Africans and Russians, popular support for political programmes that claim to offer a return to the policies and systems of the past has been steadily diminishing. Amongst white South Africans with the highest levels of Apartheid nostalgia, for example, the share of votes for the Freedom Front Plus (VF+), a right wing Afrikaner party, has been falling dramatically since 1994 (Jung, 2000). In Russia, too, there is a growing chasm between feelings of nostalgia for Communism, which have been rising or remained steady since the early 1990s, and support for the Communist Party, which has been declining since reaching a high point in 1996 (Nikitin, 2011). Nor does nostalgia for the old regime necessarily directly correlate with a fall in material conditions. For example, *Nostalgia* channel claims that its viewers are more than twice as likely to have attended university as the national average, and also have above average incomes. Of course, those who had fallen on hard times as a result of the transition also look back fondly on the stability and welfare provisions associated with the Apartheid and Communist regimes, but nostalgia is far from the preserve of the defeated.

We know from the empirical and quantitative studies cited above, that large pluralities if not majorities of citizens living in transition societies experience nostalgia for previous regimes. But how is this nostalgia experienced by ordinary people; how does its experience interact with the identities and political world-views of those who experience it? Qualitative research "involves analysing and interpreting texts and interviews in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of a particular phenomenon" (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003:3). The following study, then, will be an examination of nostalgia as it occupies the Husserlian *lebenswelt*, or life-world, of several young people in South Africa and Russia. I do not exclude myself from that group, for I am also a young person, born in Russia and now living

in South Africa, who has experienced nostalgia, and whose present research cannot be separated from his personal preoccupation with the past.

Why study the experiences of young people? There are three main reasons. Firstly, understanding the relationship of the first 'born free' generations – those born just before or after the fall of Apartheid and Communism – to the old regimes is key to gauging the robustness of democratic consolidation. Secondly, it is very difficult to separate nostalgia's social and political determinants from the simple and universal longing for one's own youth. As a Hungarian writer recalls, "it is good to be young in any system…That's when we chased girls, that's when we were drunk, that's when we were young" (Nadkarni and Shevchenko, 2004). One way to try to disentangle these two kinds of nostalgia, to distil the political, is to speak to young people who don't have a youth spent under a previous regime for which to pine. Conversations with young people may reveal more about any enduring collective and social nostalgia that may outlive the generation that actually witnessed the previous systems, and continue to shape identity and politics long after their disappearance. Thirdly, and perhaps obviously, young people are the future of their societies; understanding their relationship with the past can help us gain a better understanding of the developing political (self-)identities of transitional countries. After all, in Gevisser's words, nostalgia "tells us more about ourselves than about the past for which we seem to yearn" (2011:4). Certainly, finding definitive answers to these questions would be beyond the scope of this research masters dissertation. That would require deeper, more targeted engagement and/or a much larger cohort. The purpose of this study is, rather, to provide a tentative overview of the problem, raise more questions, stimulate debate, and establish directions for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

What are the relevant fields of study for an investigation of nostalgia in post-transition Russia and South Africa? As observed above, nostalgia is a conceptually slippery, unclearly defined subject that straddles the fields of psychology and sociology. But it is also closely related to studies of memory, identity, political action, critical theory and literature. The present study's focus on transition and post-transition Russia and South Africa threatens to broaden the applicable literature even further, into aspects of transition studies, Russian and South African history, authoritarianism and race. On top of this, exploring nostalgia's political application can take in democracy, voter and choice theories as well. The potentially infinite inclusivity of the topic, then, requires disciplined circumscription.

2.1 Collective, Cultural and Social Memory

Maurice Halbwachs, the Durkheimian pioneer of collective memory studies, believed that remembering is a group, rather than an individual act. "Individual memory", he writes, "is a part of or an aspect of group memory…to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu" (1992:53). Halbwachs defined collective memory as an organic, living connection to the past, rather than the static, impersonal relationship connoted by history. Moreover, collective memory is a reconstruction of the past affected by the events and perceptions of the present, as "the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society" (Halbwachs, 1992:51). Without using the word nostalgia, he also alluded to the notion that collective memory, crafted and nurtured as it is in the present, can bring on "a kind of retrospective mirage" by which it becomes possible to "persuade ourselves that the world of today has less colour and is less interesting than it was in the past, in particular regarding our childhood and youth" (Halbwachs, 1992:48). Elaborating on Halbwach's insights, Jan Assmann (2006) came to see collective memory as a way for future generations to actively reconstruct a society's cultural identity. This rests on social memory, which Crumley (1992, in Climo and Cattell, 2002:39) defines as "the means by which information is transmitted among individuals and groups and from one generation to another…especially through emotional and practical ties and in relationships among generations".

What separates collective, cultural and social memory from nostalgia? Nostalgia shares much with all of these memory-related fields. When the concept was first formulated in the 17th

century, it referred to what was then considered a medical condition - the debilitating homesickness suffered by Swiss soldiers stationed abroad (Davis, 1979; Boym, 2001b). Over time, the term shifted from denoting a yearning for home, a place, and came to signify a yearning for time. Today, nostalgia studies are confined mainly to psychology and sociology, but the two disciplines have very distinct approaches, with psychologists focusing on personal nostalgia as a component of character, and sociologists studying it as a social phenomenon. In the latter framing, nostalgia - like collective, social and cultural memory - is both emotive and social, as much a longing for an expression of, and search for, meaning. "What we are nostalgic for reveals what we value", writes Wilson (2005:26). Equally, it connotes identity and validation by invoking "sources of identity, agency, or community that are felt to be lacking [in the present]" (Tannock, 1995 in Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles, 2000:421). Yet the major aspect that sets it apart is the component of desire. Nostalgia must include some degree of desire or longing for a particular element of the past, whether imagined or experienced.

Psychologists have long been interested in the relationship between nostalgia, character and identity. Nostalgia went from being thought of as a physiological disease to being designated, by the mid-20th century, as a psychiatric or psychosomatic disorder (Batcho, 1998). By that point, it was still equated with homesickness, and its victims were thought to be mainly sailors, soldiers, immigrants and students going off to study away from home. Yet in the latter half of the century, nostalgia gradually became differentiated from homesickness as such, and no longer considered a disorder. Indeed, the current consensus is that it is central to "the search for identity and meaning" (Sedikides et al in Greenberg, 2004:202).

Among psychologists, the main debates surrounding nostalgia turn on whether it is a positive (Sedikides et al, 2004) or negative (Holbrook, 1994) emotion; whether it is triggered by discontinuity (Batcho, 1995); and whether it reflects a narrative of redemption or contamination (McAdams et al, 2001 in Greenberg, 2004). A redemption scenario denotes that a person sees his or her life journey as implying vindication, while contamination suggests that life is a gradual process of good things becoming spoilt. Yet there is a general agreement that nostalgia is a defence mechanism that promotes a sense of psychological narrative, interpersonal connectedness and bolsters a sense of identity and self-esteem.

Outside of psychology, nostalgia's major theorists include Mark Lowenthal (1995), Pierre Nora (1998), Svetlana Boym (2001b), Fred Davis (1979) and Jeffrey Olick (1998). However,

writers of literary criticism and critical theory have also grappled with particular aspects of nostalgia, through the work of Walter Benjamin (1968), Jean Baudrillard (1995), Fredric Jameson (1992), Zygmunt Bauman (2001, 2003) and Linda Hutcheon (1998). According to Fred Davis, nostalgia can be a self-affirmation strategy in situations when "fundamental, taken for granted convictions about man, woman, habits, manners, laws, society and god [are] challenged, disrupted and shaken" (Davis, 1979 in Lowenthal, 1995:13). Recent studies in the field of consumer behaviour and psychology have backed up this 'discontinuity hypothesis'. Godbole, Shehryar and Hunt (2006) found that those with predominantly positive past life experiences were more likely to be nostalgic when faced with a bleak outlook for the future than those with more negative life experiences.

In his work *Yearning for Yesterday*, Davis (1979) distinguishes between three types, or orders, of nostalgia, from the simple, through the reflective and finally to interpreted. Simple nostalgia denotes an uncritical yearning for a return to the past, while the reflective and interpreted levels imply a more distanced, critical and ironic examination of the past and its allure. Svetlana Boym (2001b) creates a similar typography, differentiating between reflective and restorative nostalgia. Correlating roughly to Davis's second and third order nostalgias, Boym's reflective nostalgia critically appropriates and sometimes even celebrates certain aspects of the past while accepting the impossibility of a return. It is playful, ironical and non-threatening (but also, not programmatic) and manifests itself in artistic, creative and literary pursuits. By contrast, restorative nostalgia, roughly equivalent to Davis' first order nostalgia, is literal rather than literary; political, reactionary and, she suggests, inherently illiberal.

There are two main grounds of contention surrounding nostalgia in theory, and in transition societies specifically. The first is a debate about whether nostalgia contains an implicit criticism of the present. The second is whether nostalgia is connected with a decline in life conditions or rise in instability. Davis (1979), Lowenthal (1995), Lasch (1991) and a significant majority of nostalgia theorists believe that nostalgia is intrinsically tied to current dissatisfaction. Sol Yurick (in Pieterse and Parekh, 1995) writes that, in conditions of flux and disorientation (such as that of a political transition), "subsets of the population look longingly backwards to happier times precisely when things begin to change" (Yurick, in Pieterse and Parekh, 1995:207). This statement mirrors Davis's 1979 "discontinuity hypothesis" which states that nostalgia is a reaction to discontinuity in people's lives. So,

perhaps, citizens of Russia and South Africa – disorientated by the rapid political and economic changes, disappointed and betrayed by the material promises of freedom - have become gripped with nostalgia as a result. As the Slovenian sociologist Mitja Velikonja declares, "the more disappointment [there is] with unfulfilled wishes and promises, the more nostalgia" (2009:538). There is some philosophical ground for such assertions. According to Pierre Nora (1998), the appeal of nostalgia was heightened by a rupture with an organic past that led to an opposition between memory and history. When collective memory – *milieux de memoire* - lost its power, it is replaced by *lieux de memoire*: sites, or realms of memory detached from the formerly internalised idea of historical memory. Because rupture is a frequent accompaniment of nostalgia, the condition is particularly acute for societies in transition.

Recent studies in the field of consumer behaviour and psychology have backed up this "discontinuity hypothesis": Godbole, Shehryar and Hunt (2006) found that those with predominantly positive past life experiences were more likely to be nostalgic when faced with a bleak outlook for the future than those with more negative life experiences. As Baines (2009:10) writes, "nostalgia is a shared emotional response to changed circumstances". So it is perhaps not surprising that it has enjoyed such a proliferation in post-transition societies. However, despite the allure of such inferences, there has not been unequivocal empirical support for this "discontinuity hypothesis". Batcho (1995) was unable to find a correlation between disruption and nostalgia from a psychological point of view. Moreover, there did not seem to be any link between nostalgia and a negative assessment of the present. Coming from a specifically sociological angle, and looking at Russian nostalgia, Munro (2006) also noted, as mentioned earlier, that nostalgia has no connection with current economic hardship or political disappointment. If anything, he found that nostalgics tend to be better educated, wealthier and more politically informed than the average. Moreover, while the prevalence of nostalgia in Russia during the 1990s was coterminous with high dissatisfaction ratings of the ruling Yeltsin government, nostalgia levels remained broadly unchanged even as satisfaction with government rose dramatically during Vladimir Putin's first term. Nostalgia seems to supersede class barriers.

Another controversy surrounding nostalgia is whether it is a progressive or reactionary impulse. Boym (2001), Hutcheon (1998), Lasch (1991) and Davis (1979) share, to various degrees, the belief that nostalgia, or particular types of nostalgia, are essentially reactionary.

For Boym and Davis, who differentiate between different kinds of nostalgia, only the reflective, and not the restorative variants, are considered compatible with a liberal, forward-looking way of life. Indeed, some scholars consider nostalgia to be a fundamentally negative concept. For Christopher Lasch, what distinguishes nostalgia from memory is that nostalgia wallows in the past while memory draws lessons from the past in order to enrich and enhance the present. Nostalgia, he believes, prevents us from making rational sense of the past (Lasch, 1991). Linda Hutcheon, too, sees nostalgia as a reactionary force: "Nostalgia is fundamentally conservative in its praxis, for it wants to keep things as they were - or, more accurately, as they are imagined to have been" (1998).

However, this is not a universal view. "We remain addicted to the grand rhetoric of dismissing the past" writes Alastair Bonnett (2010:3), without possessing an adequate appreciation of the potential place that nostalgia can have in radical politics and theory. Mark Lowenthal, too, warned against an over-hasty dismissal of nostalgia on such political grounds. Nostalgia's "attachment to familiar places may buffer social upheaval", he writes. "Nostalgia reaffirms identities bruised by recent turmoil" (Lowenthal, 2002:13). Velikonja, who distinguishes between a right wing/conservative top down nostalgia and an organic, left-wing/grassroots one, also sees positive potentials in nostalgia. While the former attempts to manipulate nostalgia in the service of authoritarian or nationalist projects, the latter contains agency and can be a way for people to create an independent memory space that exists autonomously from the state. A similar attempt to rescue nostalgia from the "reactionary" label has been attempted by Dlamini (2010) who found that the people he talked to use Apartheid nostalgia as a way of articulating and voicing criticism of current government policies. Moreover, according to him, the act of remembering certain aspects of their youth with fondness gives black South Africans a kind of narrative control over their lives, which is empowering and therefore progressive. Yet both of the "positive" kinds of nostalgias referenced by Dlamini and Velikonja are what might be considered reflective. Neither is attached to a contemporary political project. In fact, in the case of Dlamini's native nostalgia, it runs precisely counter to the prevailing, official narrative of South Africa's post-liberation history: that of "one long romance" that began in a prelapsarian pre-Christian golden age, was succeeded by a valiant resistance to oppressive colonialism and Apartheid, and ended with the election of Mandela, "the romantic figure par excellence" (Dlamini, 2009:12). Such reflective nostalgia is critical, subversive, but not strictly speaking constructive, in the sense of offering or endorsing a particular project.

2.2. Nostalgia in Post-Communist Russia and Post-Apartheid South Africa

To paraphrase Marx, in the dramatic move away from the oppressive certainties of authoritarianism, "all that was solid seemed to melt into air", leaving in its wake a generation of internally displaced people, disorientated, rejected, obsolete; what Zygmunt Bauman (2001) has called "human waste". And if Lowenthal (1985) metaphorically titled his book on history and nostalgia *The Past is a Foreign Country*, then for citizens of Russia and South Africa – two of the world's biggest cases of political transition - this statement is literally true. In the post-Communist and post-Apartheid landscape, not only is it impossible to go back in time, but also to go back 'home': there is literally no longer a place called the USSR, or the Ciskei Republic; those who spent their lives living in Leningrad suddenly found themselves in a new city – St. Petersburg. As an interviewee tells Boym, "The whole of the Soviet Union went into immigration, without leaving the country (2001b:328). Similarly, when Dlamini spoke to an octogenarian community elder at the Thandukukhanya township, she told him that her town "had become foreign to her", a place and time "out of joint", and she had become displaced without going anywhere (2009:4).

In the South African context, political nostalgia seems to appear where one would least expect it. In the early 1990s, there were widespread fears that the Afrikaner-right might succeed in using restorative nostalgia to destabilise the nascent democracy by advocating a return to racial separation (Jung, 2000). One group had even established an autonomous community – Orania – designed to become a future, independent Afrikaner homeland. However, fears of a white South African restoration did not materialise. As historian Godfrey Mwakikagile writes, "Orania continued to fade through the years" until "all that was left was a dream" (2008:111). With each year after 1994, white votes for restorative parties like the VF+ fell precipitously; even in Orania itself, the centrist, liberal Democratic Alliance (DA) is making unprecedented electoral headway. The DA itself has gradually decreased the nostalgic element in its campaigning; Helen Zille's leadership has distanced the party from its ex-National Party (NP) supporting holdovers and as a result has gained, not lost, votes.

Perhaps it's not surprising that nostalgia has enjoyed such a proliferation in post-transition Russia and South Africa. As witnessed by the Eastern European debates about releasing secret police files and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee, "issues of memory and forgetting have emerged as dominant concerns in post-Communist countries [and] dominate public discourse in South Africa" writes Andreas Huyssen (2003:15). South

Africa's Afrikaners engage in both kinds of nostalgia: reflective and restorative, though as Nadkarni and Shevchenko (2004) note, the two forms are not clearly distinct. An example of the first kind is the cult popularity enjoyed by a country music song called "De La Rey", by the Afrikaans musician Bok Van Blerk. According to Baines (2009), the popularity of the song, about a doomed Boer War general's last stand against English troops, among Afrikaners stems from their search for a constructive ethno-cultural identity in the wake of lost political and ideological power, as well as their anxieties about an uncertain future. Yet, the nostalgia expressed in the song, however tinged with bitterness at the Afrikaners' dwindling post-Apartheid stature, is predicated on the irreversibility of the past; allusive and abstract, it coexists with an acceptance of the political status quo.

In contrast to the appetite for reflective nostalgia, the Afrikaner propensity towards restorative nostalgia has been much less pronounced. Political organisations, from the fringe paramilitary AWB to the moderate conservative VF+ party, that seek to translate the abstract senses of loss and identity crisis into concrete irredentism have met very little popular support. As Courtney Jung writes, "although they may feel strongly about their language, culture and heritage, their identity as Afrikaners is not politicised" (2000:138). She calculated that in the 1994 elections, fewer than 25% of Afrikaners voted for the nationalist Freedom Front. Jung attributes the low mobilising power of Afrikaner nationalism to strategic voting and electoral pragmatism by Afrikaners as well as the ideological limitations of a traditionalist platform in attracting votes from liberal and middle class Afrikaners. Thomas Blaser (2007) also identifies the various contradictory and contingent identities made available to Afrikaners by globalisation and capitalist democracy as factors that have precluded Afrikaner political consolidation along ethnic lines.

At the same time, nostalgia among black South Africans may be becoming increasingly politically prevalent. As could be expected, many fewer black than white South Africans are nostalgic for the times of Apartheid. But the rise in the recent so-called service delivery protests is accompanied by a political lexicon that takes Apartheid era standards as a frequent reference point. For example, it is often heard that it was easier to get a job back in the day or Reconstruction and Development Programme social housing is worse than even the homes that were built for blacks during Apartheid (Rappleye, 2011). The perception of rising crime since 1994 has also placed in stark relief the relative security of black townships during the old regime. Rising feelings about the now recalled merits of material life under the Apartheid regime became so prevalent that by 1999, the COSATU secretary general was forced to

declare: “Some even claim that it was better under Apartheid. This is similar to those who despite having been liberated from slavery in Egypt, later claimed that it was better under Pharaoh. These people forget that a few years ago they would have been arrested as blacks if they were found in town after a certain time” (COSATU Pamphlet, 1999).

If criticism of the ANC involves implicit or explicit references to the Apartheid era, then the ANC itself often relies on nostalgia for self-promotion, by billing itself as the party of liberation. During elections, a common tactic involves implying that, because the ANC was the party that had liberated South Africa from Apartheid, a vote against the ANC is somehow tantamount to a vote in favour of Apartheid. Does this kind of appeal amount to restorative nostalgia? Does the ANC propose to restore the anti-Apartheid struggle in a similar sense that the AWB might advocate the restoration of Apartheid itself?

Former ANC Youth League president Julius Malema frequently uses the language and imagery of the anti-Apartheid struggle to attract followers to the Youth League’s political and economic project, which involves nationalisation of key industries, expropriation of white-owned land, and radical redistribution of wealth (Forde, 2010). He appeals to the idea that the struggle has not been fully completed because of the compromises that accompanied the negotiated settlement. “What drives him?” asks reporter Stephen Grootes (2012). “One of the answers to that has simply got to be some sort of nostalgia for the struggle he wasn't a part of”. Malema’s audience are young people who have no direct memory of pre-Apartheid South Africa, yet who perhaps regret having been born too late to have participated in its overthrow. The nostalgia of young people for a past they did not experience appears to have been key to Malema’s and the ANCYL’s popularity. Similar scenarios have been observed in the post-Soviet landscape, which contains a documented high level of nostalgia for the USSR. Polls throughout the last decade have consistently cited majorities in Russia wanting the return of the Soviet Union (Chauvier, 2004). And, validating Davis’ notion of nostalgia as a reaction to present hardships, these sentiments correlate strongly with indexes of dissatisfaction with the transition (Pew Research Centre, 2009). Nostalgia goes beyond memory or reminiscence by comparing the present to the past and desiring to return to the past, whether to time or place.

Why does this matter? Political nostalgia may not yet have been of tremendous interest to scholars, but it is a subject to which political practitioners themselves appear very sensitive. If the black South Africans nostalgic for Apartheid that populate Dlamini’s book are reflective

nostalgics without an accompanying political position, then the youths nostalgic for the struggle are often active participants in ANC politics. How much of the ANC's popularity can be attributed to the nostalgia of its members and voters? On the other hand, it is possible that people can be nostalgic for certain things and then vote for a party offering something very different. If that is the case, then political nostalgia could serve as a kind of false consciousness; causing people to get their wires crossed, as it were.

In exploiting popular nostalgia to boost his own popularity, by resurrecting Soviet symbols and certain aspects of Communist rule and then creating policies that may actively undermine the kinds of things that people actually missed about life in the USSR, could Vladimir Putin be engaging in a sort of bait and switch? Similarly, if someone votes for the ANC on the basis of nostalgia for its struggle against Apartheid, during which the ANC advocated a set of policies that it no longer subscribes to, are they getting what they think, or hope, they are getting? In considering both of these cases, it might be worth asking to what extent nostalgia might be complicit in shoring up political incumbents. After all, neither post-Communist Russia nor post-Apartheid South Africa has as yet witnessed the coming to power of an opposition party. Nostalgia has a long and successful history of being employed in commercial marketing and advertising; is nostalgia in this sense a variety of political marketing?

Why might a Russian person nostalgic for the USSR vote for a party headed by a man, Vladimir Putin, who had spent his entire early political career as a key ally of the anti-Communist President Boris Yeltsin – the man most closely associated with dismantling the USSR? And if, as argued by most scholars, nostalgia correlates strongly with disappointment in the present, then why have rising nostalgia levels correlated with increases in the percentage of Russians voting for the incumbent? What can explain the gap between people's variegated longing for aspects of the past and their reluctance to act on those feelings in political ways? In a related sense, where does this "excess" or "surplus" nostalgia get channelled, and which political projects are benefitting at the expense of those that offer to revert to the old systems?

2.3 Politics and Nostalgia-Marketing in Russia

Since the collapse of Communism, both Yeltsin and Putin consciously mobilised nostalgia as part of their electoral and power-maintaining strategies. Indeed, one of Boris Yeltsin's first acts in power was the rehabilitation of Imperial Russian symbols: the double-headed eagle replaced the hammer and sickle as the national coat of arms, Glinka's imperial national anthem was reinstated, and the Russian Orthodox Church was given a prominent quasi-governmental role (Smith, 2002).

According to a pioneering examination of Soviet tropes in post-Soviet advertising by Susan Holak of the City College of New York, the period from 1990 to 1995 was marked by a widespread cultural revival of 'traditional' Russian aesthetic and practices. Many of these were visible in print and TV advertisements. Television advertisements were very new to post-Communist Russia (in the USSR, all television was publicly funded and there were no commercial breaks), and many of these featured old fashioned or pastoral images from an imagined, pre-Communist past. These included commercials for *House in the Country* branded dairy products, *Bochkarev* beer, and *Peter the Great* cigarettes (Holak et al, 2007). The pinnacle of Tsarist nostalgia culminated in the construction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, the original of which had been destroyed in Stalin's anti-religion campaign, and the ceremonial re-burial and canonisation of the Romanov family (Boym, 2001b). However, as popular criticism gradually switched from targeting the Communist regime and its legacy to pressing contemporary problems, such as poverty, corruption, crime and living conditions, nostalgia's focus also switched.

Towards the mid-1990s, as Russia faced economic and geopolitical crisis, people started to long for Soviet times. This longing took several forms and concentrated on two distinct epochs: Stalinism, from the 1930s to the early 1950s, and Brezhnev's 'stagnation' period, from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. With hindsight, the Stalin period has come to be associated, for many, with strength, stability, international respect and law and order, nostalgia for which has been explained as an implicit criticism of the prevailing state of political chaos, international weakness, economic instability and widespread criminality. Nostalgia for the repressive cultural component of Stalinism, which cracked down on "cosmopolitanism", a concept that included foreign influence and Jewish culture, coincided with an influx of foreign consumer and cultural products into Russia. Most citizens had never been previously exposed to much foreign material, whether consumer products or cultural

output. Even the Latin script appeared bewildering. The contrast between a culturally and commercially closed society dominated by a small and familiar set of products and signs and one quickly deluged with unfamiliar commercial and cultural artefacts, combined with the disappearance of many Soviet brands and objects, may have contributed to a common sense of besiegement.

At the same time, the Russian privatisation programme resulted in the emergence of a class of well-connected billionaires collectively termed the oligarchs, the most well-known of which were Boris Berezovsky and Mikhail Khodorkovsky (Hoffman, 2002). The oligarchs were reviled in Russian society for getting rich through an opaque carve-up of the formerly publically owned natural resources and state monopoly corporations. Many had a public image of reckless playboys with a lack of patriotism verging on disdain for the country whose wealth they were busy appropriating. This attitude was most notoriously articulated by Alfred Kokh, who served as Privatisation Minister in Boris Yeltsin's first government. In a radio interview in New York, the former minister called Russia "hopeless" and said that the "masses are responsible for their own suffering" and "deserve their miserable fate" (Kokh, in Cohen, 2009:156). On top of this, the fact that the overwhelming majority of oligarchs, including Kokh, were of Jewish ancestry, played into the old anti-Semitic Stalinist trope of the supposedly disloyal, cosmopolitan and avaricious Jews out to sabotage society from within (Kostyrchenko, 1995).

One of the two major currents of nostalgia, 1950s nostalgia, is most strongly manifested in the commemorations of the Second World War. Annual 'Victory Day' parades were, alongside May 1, International Workers' Day, the pinnacle of the Soviet holiday calendar and an occasion to exhibit the latest military hardware, including Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. When this practice was sidelined by Gorbachev and Yeltsin as a diplomatic gesture towards the disarmament process, it reinforced the popular notion of a weak Russia "selling out" to the triumphant (and triumphalist) West. The post-Soviet time, or Russia's withdrawal from Eastern Europe and the loss of the "near abroad", seemed like the ignominious undoing of the fruits of that victory, which was so hard won by so many millions of people. Even more upsetting to many, this undoing was accompanied by its own heavy death toll, as unemployment, alcoholism, and heart problems conspired to reduce male life expectancy by over a decade. The mid-1990s witnessed a revival of the myth of Stalin as the triumphant wartime commander who made Russia powerful, orderly and united. Stalin nostalgia was

generally confined to the right wing and the "patriotic left"; for more liberal Russians, there was an alternative nostalgia, for the 1970s (Hermant, 2011).

1970s nostalgia, popular among the "baby boomer" generation born after the war, consists of a longing for the times of the so-called "stagnation", when Soviet economic growth levelled off from its 1950s highs and the political system, recoiling from Khruschev's socially and economically disruptive reign, clamped down on reform in favour of social stability. But although economic growth declined, the 1970s represented the high point of Soviet economic development as the gains from previous periods made themselves felt, through relative plenty in the shops, increased housing stock and rise in the availability of consumer goods. The era was called "stagnation" because it was marked by absenteeism, declining productivity and a loss of ideological enthusiasm. The upside was greater leisure, stability, and relative comfort. The generation that came of age in the "stagnation" period would have been approaching middle age in the mid-1990s; therefore, in addition to the objective, material conditions (austerity, precariousness, violence) that contrasted unfavourably with the social situation of the 1970s, their own, universal human nostalgia for youth also involved a nostalgia for the epoch of that youth (Cohen, 2010). As a Slovenian political scientist observed, "nostalgia for Tito is more than anything a nostalgia for the days when you could walk up to the fourth floor without becoming out of breath" (Velikonja, 2009:536). Thus, there were personal as well as social reasons why 1970s nostalgia became a particularly prevalent phenomenon in transition-era Russia.

The two kinds of nostalgia existed as both organic and manufactured phenomena. After the initial stage of referencing pre-Soviet times, companies also began to use Soviet nostalgia in their marketing. Russian shops experienced a revival of Soviet brands, particularly those associated with either World War Two and Stalinism, or Brezhnev's "stagnation" period. Among the first were *Prima* and *Belomorkanal* cigarettes, featuring the *papirosa* design that uses a hollow cardboard tube instead of a filter. The name *Belomorkanal* explicitly referenced Stalin's ambitions for a canal that connected the White and Baltic seas. Constructed by forced labour in the 1930s, the prestige project involved the deaths of an estimated 100,000 labourers and ended up being too shallow for large modern vessels, but symbolized the achievements of Soviet mastery over nature (Ruder, 1998).

On the other hand, items associated with the 1970s recalled a period of greater openness, technology and rising affluence, a time when many Soviet consumers had first become

exposed to foreign goods. Thus, the 2000s saw the "return" of Ceylon tea in its distinctive Soviet packaging, featuring an elephant and the Taj Mahal on a bright yellow background with the words "Indian Tea, First Class", stamped on the box. The re-launched packaging includes the altered name: *That Very Same Indian Tea*, specifically referencing its nostalgic credentials (Holak et al, 2007). Other 1970s items that had returned to Russian stores at the turn of the millennium include Baikal soft drink and *Soyuz Apollon* and *Tu-134* cigarettes. Around that time, the Russian national carrier Aeroflot reneged on its decision to scrap its stylised hammer and sickle logo in the face of public protests.

The *Nostalgia* Channel is another example of this trend. It is not politicised, avoids Soviet propaganda and sees itself as part of a process to normalise Russians' relationships with their history, away from judgement and opprobrium. In fact, *Nostalgia's* internet homepage is decorated with a collage that includes the Beatles and Elvis among Gagarin and Khruschev. One of the channel's cultural programmes concerns the work of the long-time BBC Russian DJ Seva Novgorodtsev, a figure banned in the USSR; and the *Nostalgia* manifesto refers to both official and underground culture. Thus, the channel is an example of nostalgia without politics.

But politics quickly caught up with this shift in commercial and popular nostalgia, as the Kremlin began to actively distance itself from Russia's imperial heritage and embrace the Soviet past. The process took off after Putin came to power in 2000 (Lloyd, 2012). As president, he reinstated the Soviet national anthem, and got the same man who had penned the original lyrics –Sergei Mikhalkov – to write a new edition, which turned out to be a thinly reworked version of the former (Oushakine, 2010). He also brought back the tradition of large scale military hardware during Victory Day celebrations, and reinstated the Soviet era red star as the insignia of the air force (Isachenkov, 2002). During this time, terrestrial, state-controlled Russian TV became saturated with Soviet films and documentaries about the Soviet period. Putin also created a Komsomol-style patriotic youth organization called *Nashi* or "Our People"; in many of its activities and symbolic language, such as camping trips and uniforms, *Nashi* mimics the old Soviet organisation.

Russia is not the only ex-USSR country to experience Soviet nostalgia, which can also be observed in former Soviet republics with large Russian populations; particularly those countries, like the Baltic states. In Lithuania, the Baltic country with the most inclusive citizenship laws, ethnic Russians are widely regarded as the vectors of Soviet nostalgia

(Repeckaite, 2009), so much so that several 'anti-Soviet theme parks have sprouted to combat it (Hancox, 2011). But Soviet nostalgia in the Baltics is not confined to ethnic Russians. Latvian Giedrė Beinoriūtė's film *Balkonas*, a wistful love story set in the 1980s USSR, is underpinned by a longing for "values like honesty, modesty, [which] got lost in the breakup", according to its director (Kloss, 2009). Meanwhile, in Estonia, the writer Andrus Kivirähk was at the front of a movement by the so-called cartoon generation (Estonians who spent their childhood during the Brezhnev era, when Soviet cartoons were common on TV) to playfully indulge in wistful memories of their Soviet youth (Grunberg, 2009). They have subsequently been attacked, particularly by representatives of older generations, for making light of the Soviet occupation, only to retort, in Lowenthal's words, that "a past nostalgically enjoyed does not need to be taken seriously" (1995:7). And while Nadkarni and Shevchenko (2004) rightly caution against reading politics into nostalgia and nostalgia into politics, the two are both inextricably linked and opaque in their co-interaction.

2.4 A Nostalgia Gap?

What is the relationship between nostalgia's wistful longing for a particular past, and an active quest to reinstate it? As mentioned above, Munro's (2006), findings that increased nostalgia does not translate into support for political projects that specifically promise to bring back the longed-for former regime seem to be borne out by the electoral failures of the Russian Communist Party and the South African VF+. Both parties offer the closest thing to the reconstruction of the USSR or Apartheid South Africa – but continue to lose votes every election cycle, despite the strong ambient pool of nostalgia among their target populations. Clearly, while the prevalence of nostalgia cannot be denied, it is not always being channelled into the most expected outlets.

However, that is not to say that nostalgia is irrelevant as a political motivator or even commodity. Long recognised as an effective advertising tool, (Naughton and Vlasic, 1998; Elliott, 2012) nostalgia has attracted surprisingly little attention as a tool of political mobilisation. This is especially unusual given the longstanding use of commercial advertising techniques in electoral campaigning: if nostalgia can shift products, can it also promote political action? Its appeal is certainly not being ignored by politicians and governments: both the ANC and the government of Vladimir Putin consciously and frequently deploy nostalgic imagery and even policy.

The question of what role signs play in nostalgia has been raised by social anthropologist Serguei Oushakine, who asked "what happens when the retrofitting of old/already available narrative and semantic clichés/forms becomes a dominant way to communicate new development and trends" (2010:440). Using the metaphor of the mental condition aphasia, he suggested that at least part of the reason for the proliferation of nostalgia in the post-Soviet space is the failure of the national vocabulary to catch up with political, social and economic developments, leading people to "retrofit" old words, symbols and practices in the service of this new reality.

What research has been done about post-Soviet nostalgia in Russia itself? One of the most interesting attempts to deal with nostalgia in a qualitative way has been Munro's previously referenced 2006 study. Defining nostalgia as "a positive view of the old regime, based on a holistic evaluation of its faults and merits", Munro distinguishes this from "reaction", a desire to see the old regime reinstated, as well as from the expectation that the past regime will be restored, which is value neutral. "Over time," he discovered, "the trend in nostalgia is up" (2006:5) even though, according to the 2005 New Russian Barometer poll, 58% of Russians oppose an actual return to Communism, with only 41% in favour, a more than 15 point drop over five years. Munro tested three scenarios: "retrospective re-evaluation", according to which the fact that the past regime is so unlikely to actually come back leads to its re-evaluation in a more negative light; "persistence", which states that nostalgia encourages reaction, which in turn encourages expectations of regime return; and "diminishing persistence", according to which people's view of the past affects present preferences, but not future scenarios.

Munro (2006) found that nostalgia correlates with reaction but only moderately correlates with expectations of restoration. He also found that a higher social status is correlated with higher levels of nostalgia, concluding that "nostalgia does not have much to do with the economic hardships associated with transformation to a market economy, nor is it much affected by the current improvement in the economy" (2006:14). The thrust of Munro's paper was that nostalgia was more about norms and values than material characteristics, and that it was an identification with Soviet norms and values that most highly correlated with nostalgia: "explanations...in terms of pocket book grievances and macro-economic evaluations rely on spurious correlations" (2006:16). As Communism has decayed, an ideological vacuum has taken its place, a vacuum that Putin has (somewhat successfully) attempted to fill with rhetoric and use of symbols in a process that Munro terms syncretism, or the mixing and

matching of diverse points of view. Because syncretism "exploits an ambivalent attitude to the demise of the old regime" and "relies on a preparedness to sift through Russia's various pasts to find the elements that are most suitable to justify current purposes" (2006:22), it can be a way for the regime to prop itself up.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

During the time of the transitions from Communism and Apartheid, millennialist predictions abounded about the death of Marxism and the end of history. But while Marx may have arguably failed to predict the "victory" of capitalism around the world, he remains one of the most accurate observers of its human costs. Indeed, something that is often ignored in an obsessive focus on the accuracy of his conception of "objective" class struggle is that in addition to being a no-nonsense economist, Marx was also a passionate humanist, as deeply concerned about the "softer" aspects of existence – what it means to live as a person among other people – as he was about impersonal historical processes and antagonistic class forces.

In fact, what is most wrong about the exploitation and inequality generated by capitalism is less their inherent injustice than their assault on human *gattungswesen*, or "species-being" (Santilli, 1973). For Marx, the point of a person's life is "free, conscious activity": to be a self-actualising, fully realised human being who gives flight to his imagination and desires and creates his own narrative in communion with other people and nature itself. It is this very freedom that is denied us by capitalism, resulting in a "sickness of the self" (Wartenberg, 1982). Marx didn't just see this freedom in lofty, theoretical terms, either: on a practical level, realising one's species being can mean painting and fencing, buying books, going dancing and falling in love, hitting the pub or the theatre with friends, playing piano and talking about philosophy. Key to all this is the idea that people are meant to experience existence as "a common life" lived in full concert with other people; this is the "social essence" of humanity that Marx juxtaposes to the alienating picture of a capitalist society based on a lonely and atomised individual preoccupied with "his own activity, his own life, his own spirit, his own wealth" (Marx in Santilli, 1973:79).

Set against this backdrop, the theoretical framework of my study is rooted firmly in the Marxian tradition, focusing as it does on the collective and interpersonal aspect of how young people experience nostalgia in the wake of their societies' transition to "capitalist

democracy". However, for a qualitative analysis with a necessarily small sample size, it would be inappropriate to use the classically Marxist concentration on macro, over-arching phenomena such as class, which is more suited to quantitative and empirical study. In their focus on the primacy of individual experience, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism might appear, prima facie, to stand in contradiction to the Marxist belief that ideas are rooted in social relations and material conditions. However, as Joachim Israel and others have argued, symbolic interactionism and Marxism should in fact be seen as complementary, rather than conflicting, approaches (Cronk, 1973). Indeed, it is possible – and necessary – to take seriously the specific ways in which people view their lives and interactions without losing sight of the greater, objective determinants of ideas and social relations in general.

Using purposive snowball sampling, a target population of twelve young people was recruited to participate in a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Half of these people were students at UKZN in Durban, who had answered my ad and word of mouth invitation to participate in a study that I described as being about "nostalgia and youth politics" and did so without any form of compensation for participation. Some of them were my former undergraduate students from my time as a politics and sociology tutor there; some were fellow post-graduate students. The Russian participants were not students at UKZN, but, in the absence of a significant presence of Russians in Durban, were recruited remotely and interviewed over the internet using Skype. Participants were selected through my personal network of friends and family in the Moscow region, who were tasked with recruiting volunteers for a project billed as an investigation into nostalgia, youth politics and identity. Demographically, five participants were black South African women, two participants were white South African men, three were white Russian women and two were white Russian men.

All but three interviews – the Russian focus group, which numbered five participants, and the one-on-one encounters with Mark and Kevin – took place in groups of two or three. This facilitated discussion and created the atmosphere of a mini focus group, allowing participants to respond to each other, disagree, and exchange ideas. Interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Extra care was taken to make the transcriptions of both the questions and responses as accurate as possible, including intonation, grammatical mistakes, and pauses.

As a prompt prior to the interview, all participants were given a questionnaire to complete that asked them to consider various aspects about their relationship to the past, their identity, and current politics; respondents were asked to mark or circle questions that they found interesting, or with which they disagreed (see Appendices). The questionnaires were divided into three points of inquiry: 1) a series of multiple choice questions targeting nostalgia proneness; 2) a series of questions exploring their attitudes to the past and present; and 3) a series of questions about their political activity and preferences. The surveys employed a Likert-type scale in combination with close-ended multiple choice to generate a unified starting point for discussion; however, most questions were open-ended to allow for individual input and deeper qualitative engagement.

Rather than being collected and analysed in their own right as part of an empirical data-collection, the questionnaires were designed to frame and stimulate the debate. Respondents were invited to use them as starting points in the ensuing discussions. Participants were encouraged to share their memories and feelings about the Soviet Union or South Africa, their experiences of the transition and the new regimes, what they feel nostalgic about, their political orientation and level of political involvement. These conversations, which lasted on average between 30 minutes and one hour, were audio-recorded and later fully transcribed. Discussions commenced with the researcher (me) asking them which questions they circled, and why, after which the conversation proceeded in a free form but often touched on many of the areas of the questionnaire. The transcribed interviews were then subjected to a series of close readings to uncover a hierarchy of overarching themes, which were then analysed in light of the available nostalgia theory. All names and other identifying characteristics have been changed to protect the respondents' anonymity.

2.6 Why Phenomenology?

Phenomenology is the study of lived experience, of how people perceive their existence, other people and the world around them. More a philosophical school of thought than a concrete methodology, it is first attributed to Edmund Husserl and was further developed by his pupil Heidegger as well as Merau-Ponty, Herbert Spiegelberg and Sartre (Zahavi, 2003). "The phenomenologist…seeks understanding through such qualitative methods as participant observation, open-ended interviewing, and personal documents. These methods yield descriptive data which "enable the phenomenologist to see the world as subjects see it"

(Bogdan, and Taylor, 1975:3). Phenomenology deals in subjectivity, or the way people perceive the world around them and interpret their place in it. As such, while it is not suitable for establishing correlations or objective relationships – between nostalgia, race, class, and gender – for example, a phenomenological approach allows for a descriptive and inductive close examination of nostalgia from the point of view of the consciousness of those who experience it. For phenomenologists, "the foundation of any inquiry – sociological, psychological, natural or social science – is the understanding of everyday life; therein lies the source of social meanings central to and implicit within inquiry" (Smart, 1976:80).

What can a phenomenological approach contribute to the study of nostalgia? On its face, the methodology may not seem ideal for gauging the links between nostalgia feelings and political attitudes; after all, it is neither equipped to reveal cause effect relationships nor establish the kind of macro trends that might be unearthed by quantitative techniques involving large populations subjected to statistical analysis. It is true that the present study would not be able to demonstrate whether or not, or to what extent, nostalgia can account for different levels of political participation. But the advantage of phenomenology is its capacity to unearth the underlying meanings that might provide the deep clues to political identity, clues equally important to understanding the way nostalgia affects the lives of these young people. It is predicated on the conviction that "the imaginations which people have of one another are the *solid facts* of society, and to observe and interpret these must be a chief aim of sociology…The object of study is primarily an imaginative idea or group of ideas in the mind, that we have to imagine imaginations" (Cooley, 1981 in Collins, 1985:261).

Husserl did not leave many specific instructions for using phenomenology as a social research method. It took Herbert Spiegelberg (1982) to lay down the most widely accepted procedure consisting of three main elements: intuiting, analysing and describing. The researcher must attempt to understand the subjective experience from the position of the person experiencing it. To do this, he or she should suspend all judgement or preconceived notions, or at least have heightened consciousness about them; formally, this suspension of judgement or preconceptions is known as "bracketing" or performing a reduction, but different proponents of phenomenology as a research method recommend various degrees of formality when it comes to this step. Perhaps the most important aspect of the phenomenological approach concerns the necessity of describing, rather than explaining. The thoughts, feelings and self-conceptions of the people studied must be faithfully recorded and analysed without, initially at least, being subjected to theoretical analysis or most especially,

any kind of hypotheses. Interpretation, looking for hidden meanings, teasing out textures of thought and language – these are the main investigative tools of the phenomenological social researcher.

2.7 Why Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis?

Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a phenomenological, interpretative, and idiographic rather than nomothetic research method (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). It is phenomenological in that it is concerned with the way people make sense of their lived experience, and interpretative in relying on an open-ended, close reading of interview texts. It is idiographic rather than nomothetic because it privileges the exploration of the individual meanings in a unique, personal experience over an attempt to derive a universal law or truth from the data.

IPA strives to be emic as well as etic (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Emic and etic are terms coined by the linguistic theorist Kenneth Pike in the 1950s that later came to distinguish between two types of anthropological enquiry: the emic, or "insider" and the etic, or "outsider-observer" perspectives (Headland, Pike, and Harris, 1990). This is a particularly important consideration for the following study, which casts the researcher into a state of permanent code-switching between insider and outsider: he is both a visitor to South Africa and a fellow transition citizen; both a compatriot and an exile.

Because of its focus on subjective interpretation and search for meaning, IPA is particularly suited to exploring the way individual people experience nostalgia in their daily lives. It is therefore optimised for small but very in-depth samples. At the same time, it is not methodologically equipped to answer broader, more structural questions or to test hypotheses. Moreover, in its emphasis on description and use of the individual as its point of reference, IPA, like much phenomenology, is not generally considered to be an example of emancipatory sociology. It is neither sensitive to issues of class nor appropriate to be applied to the study of social confrontation.

2.8 A Brief Note on Reflexivity

The presence of the researcher, with whom many of the respondents were personally acquainted, also played a crucial role the testimony. “Researchers are reflexive when they are aware of the multiple influences they have on research processes and on how research processes affect them” (Gilgun, 2010:43). I have attempted to remain as open and alert as possible to these influences. In conducting the study, it was necessary to straddle the fine line between a Weberian detachment and the full immersion of participant observation. Moreover, the nature of the relationships between subject and researcher contained varying elements of intimacy and power. Three of the undergraduate interviewees were my former students, three more were my acquaintances and fellow graduate students, one was a friend of a friend, and five were people I had never met before, and was seeing on a computer screen. Gender and racial makeup, too, was no less potentially confounding: though black South Africans outnumbered white South Africans by a reasonably demographically representative ratio of five to two, all the black South African respondents were female, while all the white South African respondents were male. My various identities as a white male “other”, a “fellow” white male, a teacher and authority figure, a fellow student, a countryman and a video-mediated spectator have doubtless coloured our interactions.

Not only that, but my very research agenda is likely to have affected the interviews. From the outset, I made clear to all the interviewees my highly personal quest to investigate nostalgia and situate the South African and Russian experiences into the broader transition schema. During the interviews, I frequently injected this objective into our conversations. This was done quite deliberately. As Pierre Bourdieu asks in *The Weight of the World* (2000): how can we avoid making the interview and its analytic prologue look like a clinical case preceded by a diagnosis? “The analyst's intrusion is as difficult as it is necessary, he concludes. “It must proclaim itself openly and yet strive to go unnoticed” (Bourdieu, 2000:1). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodology is particularly well suited to accommodating such reflexivity – the act of reflecting on both the relationship between the researcher and the data, and the inter-subjectivity between researcher and subject.

“Rather than attempt the impossible task of seeking to diminish the researcher’s role”, write Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008:17), “IPA makes the positive step of acknowledging and exploring her role. The interviewer’s thoughts and feelings are admitted as explicit and thus

legitimate components of the enquiry, and their congruence or divergence from those of the participant are matters of proper enquiry". After all, nothing is more false than the premise that the researcher must put nothing of himself into his research: "He [or she] should, on the contrary, refer continually to his experience" (Bourdieu, 2003:288).

2.9 Study Limitations

Though I have made every effort to account for and mitigate errors in design and execution, other, non-structural limitations are inevitable. One such limitation concerns the omission from the sample of any Indian or coloured students; the purposive sampling methods employed to recruit the volunteers did not result in any such students joining the study. Nevertheless, while it would have been nice to get a broader cohort of respondents, representativeness is not a requirement in qualitative research (Marshall, 1996). Another limitation is that the time, distance and financial constraints of a one year long Master's thesis have not allowed for an in-depth research trip to Russia to conduct interviews and focus groups in person. As a result, and as stated earlier, I was forced to hold my Russian focus-group interviews over the internet using Skype videoconferencing. That meant that I was able to talk with the larger Russian focus group for less time than the other, smaller and face to face interviews, resulting in a smaller amount of testimony per person. In view of all of the above, this thesis, then, should be considered a preliminary investigation that can be expanded and broadened by future research.

Chapter Three: Results and Analysis

3.1 Cast of Characters

I first met Leonie and Lebo (not their real names) at the University strike. They are second year sociology students active in student politics. Leonie is a member of the South African Students Congress (SASCO) student union and Lebo, though not a formal member herself, often accompanies her friend to rallies and events. Both women grew up on the outskirts of Newcastle, once a largely Afrikaner city in the north-west of KwaZulu-Natal. Newcastle, home to a large steelworks and rubber plant, is a major industrial stronghold and the province's third city, but Leonie comes from a family of smallholders and itinerant domestic workers on the city's periphery. While Leonie is vocal and proud of her modest roots (she is the first of her family to have completed the Matric exam), Lebo considers her family to be middle class because her father was a police clerk and her mother had a high school education.

Despite this difference, both women grew up in aspirational, socially liberal families that pushed them to succeed and allowed them the space to explore the different identities available to black people in the new South Africa. Lebo says her parents were free spirits who tolerated her "crazy" personality. "In my family and how I grew up, all the things that usually black traditional families do, I've never done any," she told me. "Some Zulu people would say that I'm not living the way that I'm supposed to live, you know, in terms of culture and stuff like that, because I don't participate in any cultural things and events. But still, it doesn't make me any less of a Zulu, according to me". Leonie shares Lebo's enthusiasm for the broader cultural space permitted to young people of her generation. While Lebo likes opera, Leonie has been learning to skateboard. "We're lucky to have grown up in a society which allows you to be whatever you want to be", she says. "If you want to skateboard, doesn't mean because you're black you can't do it".

Unlike Lebo and Leonie, neither Buyi nor Zandile are involved in left-wing politics, though Buyi, a stylish and sharp-tongued final year psychology major, is passionate about international relations. She is learning Spanish and volunteered as an usher at the COP 17 international climate summit. Her friend Zandile is studying law but spends her free time salsa dancing and learning sign language. Both women come from comfortably middle class

households – Buyi's father is an engineer at Telkom and Zandile's parents work in the local administration – and spent time living in Indian areas of Durban because of the perception that Phoenix offered more safety and better education opportunities than could be found in their native Umlazi. They attended a predominantly Indian school, where, despite encountering racial discrimination, they excelled academically (Zandile was offered a place at the University of Cape Town but her family was unable to raise the necessary funds to enable her to go).

Their relatively privileged upbringing has allowed Buyi and Zandile to feel comfortable around people of other races, and even participate (as volunteers) in an election rally by the DA. However, it has also made Buyi feel divided and bitter about black middle class identity. "We want to be white", she observed bitterly. "We want to do things how the white people do it, and I think that's what they may be laughing about, because like, we want to be more like them anyways. And they don't want to be like us. It's not like they go and do the things that we do, but we do everything that they do. We look down upon each other, you know?"

Fikile is very shy. The second year law student is so soft spoken that it is hard to hear her voice on the tape recorder that was placed only inches away during the interview. Possibly she is self-conscious because of her thick Zulu accent: a constant reminder, in the urbane law department, of her rural upbringing. Fikile's mother is a domestic worker, but her father, after a lifetime of teaching primary school, has recently been promoted to principal. She decided to participate in my study because her father frequently talks about the past. Even though he remains bitter about having been barred from his dream of attending university because of the oppressive racial laws, he nevertheless looks back fondly on the predictability and simplicity of life under Apartheid. "He used to say that now education is so weak, the whole education, and before, education was stronger than this", she says, recalling also her parents' lament about the ever increasing rise in prices. "They say everything was cheaper than now. Like mealie meal: it used to cost four rand and now it costs one hundred and something. They used to say that things, they were cheaper than now. Everything needs money nowadays". Fikile is not politically active and refuses to get involved in ANC or student politics, claiming that university student union officials had tried to extort bribes from her in exchange for financial aid. Though she is over 18, she did not vote in the municipal elections. Part of the reason she gives for wanting to become a lawyer is to protect people from corrupt officials.

Nevertheless, Fikile is optimistic that things will get better in South Africa. “Life will continue to improve”, she half-whispers in a soft but determined voice.

Kevin is a postgraduate student writing his dissertation on agricultural economics. Tall, broad shouldered with large, clear blue eyes and a well sculpted chin, he has the archaically handsome look of a 1940s airman from a World War II postcard. Kevin grew up on his parents’ farm outside of Pietermaritzburg and learned to speak Zulu at an early age from interacting with the farm workers and rural neighbours. Politically liberal but an introvert with a passion for the countryside, he is not involved in campus politics, and feels alienated by the increasingly violent and radicalised discourse on campus. “Certain causes that I would usually get involved in, I’d rather not because I know the nature in which the protests will be carried out are not something that I’d agree with, so I’d rather not get involved”, he told me. Kevin is concerned with the increasing materialism of South African society and what he believes are rising levels of political opportunism and their uncritical acceptance by many students on campus. He became interested in participating in the study because, coming from the countryside, he is nostalgic about the sense of community and the vibrancy of the smaller farms, which have now become very large, commercialised and bureaucratised. Nonetheless, he believes that life has improved, on balance, in the last twenty years. Kevin is glad about the end of Apartheid because he feels that it allowed him the opportunity to grow up with more open-minded beliefs: “Having been born in the era that I have been, I think I had the unique opportunity of growing up with I think less prejudice than I would have if I’d grown up earlier”.

Anglophile, cosmopolitan, economically centrist and classically liberal, Mark is conscious of his upper class background when he interacts with fellow postgraduate development students and faculty, who tend to be much more left wing. Sensitive, witty and with a self-deprecating sense of humour, Mark comes from an enlightened, progressive household. His father is a business consultant and his mother is an artist whose family, now scattered between Johannesburg, Durban, London and Canada, have been living in South Africa for close to three hundred years. After graduating near the top of his class at Michaelhouse, Mark got his undergraduate degree at the University of Cape Town but did not like Cape Town and decided to continue his studies in his home province. Of all the participants in the study, Mark, reflective and wistful by nature, had the most openly nostalgic personality, with a particular affinity for the literary landscapes of pre-industrial England. A political pragmatist,

he eschews rhetoric and ideology in general. “I don’t think I have an ideological position”, he says. “I have an outcome of what society I would like to see, but I don’t think that getting there is furthered by any particular ideology. Depends on the question, and when you listen to political rhetoric, you wouldn’t think that that’s the case. Evidence is kind of secondary to the nice rhetoric, you know?”

However, while he votes DA and condemns, with a Hayekian flourish, the ANC’s programme of “economic freedom” as so much “economic serfdom”, Mark equally decries what he feels is the morally evasive and irresponsible attitude of the white elite to the crimes of Apartheid. It is a subject about which he feels intense political guilt, and which prevents him from feeling any nostalgia for the old regime. He is equally incredulous about the minority of black people who miss the Apartheid era. “People were worse off economically, and were less free”, he says in exasperation. “So I just don’t, I don’t know what there is to be nostalgic about”.

Ekaterina, Daria, Natalya, Dmitri and Oleg are friends from Moscow. Ekaterina, Natalya and Oleg are in their final undergraduate term at university, while Daria and Dmitri, who are one year older, are now working as a trainee accountant and telecoms engineer respectively. They met at high school in the suburban town of Fryanovo, one of a series of former villages that now make up an industrial belt around the Russian capital, and all attended different universities. Because they still live at home with their parents in Fryanovo, they were able to keep in touch often and remain friends.

Oleg and Ekaterina dated “for a terrible split-second”, laughs Ekaterina, but, though they are no longer together, they have remained close friends. Ekaterina is studying mathematics at Moscow State University, but, as a child showed great promise as a dancer and was convinced that she would become a ballerina. The dream was cut short when her ankle was damaged in a 2007 car accident, but she uses her ballet school experience to coach and choreograph part time in the evenings at a private theatre company. Oleg is majoring in aerospace engineering at the Bauman Academy, an elite institute famous for having supplied talent to the Soviet space programme, based in a nearby town in a complex called Star City, but now struggling to find work for graduates. “Growing up around Star City”, he says, “I dreamt about space when everyone else was already busy dreaming of making money. I guess as a result, making any money with this degree will probably be nothing more than a

dream". Oleg says he still wonders about this anachronistic passion. "For some reason, my interests were closer to those my dad had, growing up with Sputnik".

Natalya, a marketing student at an agricultural institute, can't wait to leave Fryanovo and settle in Moscow. She has already applied to several creative agencies and is hoping to get an interview. Driven and combative, with a caustic turn of phrase, Natalya claims not to have a nostalgic personality. However, as her parents, a music teacher and electrical engineer, are currently going through a divorce and dividing up their possessions, she has come across many old resurfaced photos from the Soviet times and started thinking about the difference between life then and now, something she had never talked to her parents about before. Dmitri works as a technician for *Bee Line GSM*, one of Russia's major mobile phone carriers. As a result of his good job, of all the focus group, he is the only one in the process of buying an apartment of his own. Until 2009, Dmitri used to be a member of the United Russia Party because Putin restored Soviet pride, but is now supporting the opposition leader Alexei Navalny. He calls himself a "rational nationalist", saying, "I'm all for people coming here to work, but I just don't want them sleeping in my hallway and I don't want my tax money spent feeding Putin's friends in Chechnya when our own people are struggling". Daria is a trainee accountant at an oil company. She was only hired two months ago and still feels like she is on probation, "tiptoeing around the office like a convict". Bubbly and extroverted, she says she wanted to participate in the study because she always loved the stories her aunt used to tell her about her youth in 1970s Moscow. "It was straight out of [the film] *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears*", she exclaims. "Now we've seen it all and everything is so boring!" Few respondents admitted to having nostalgic personalities. In fact, all the Russian women claimed at first to be totally un-nostalgic, indeed, anti-nostalgic. However, in the course of our conversations, everyone revealed specific nostalgic attitudes by fondly talking about particular aspects of the past and lamenting the disappearance of some of these features.

Some qualitative participant observation studies prefer to separate out their findings by interviewee, so that the reader is introduced, sequentially, to different "characters" of the sociological story. However, I have decided that dividing the interviews by subject would be more consistent with a phenomenological approach, which privileges patterns and thematic grouping. The different groups will then be discussed with reference to topical literature. The following section contains a processed version of the transcribed interviews, organized according to subject and theme in an attempt at a holistic but nuanced description of the main

nostalgic preoccupations of the participants, and connects these findings with the available theory.

3.2 "We Want to Live That Life": Nostalgia in Space and Time

One of the key concepts that respondents talked about was the relationship between the spatial and temporal in nostalgia. When asked what they were nostalgic for, many respondents, irrespective of race or gender, brought up a specific place, either associated with a particular time of their life (eg. childhood) or a particular aesthetic preference (eg. pre-industrial life). The place evoked tended to be rural: a farm, the countryside, or even an idyllic hillside in 19th century England.

On other occasions, a rural place was evoked in a political sense, to illustrate the injustice of dispossession and express a desire to return to a conceptualised antediluvian, agrarian prosperity.

> *Lebo:* I mean the people that had farms, that [*sic*] owned land, that owned cows; that was taken from them. And how are you going to say to a man: 'you have your freedom' when he's still living in a shack, you know what I mean? It doesn't make sense.
> *Leonie:* When he knows that his father owned a farm.
> *Lebo:* Uh huh. The youth are mad. That's what I think. And that's why it seems as though, from other countries, they think we're out of control, you know, violent, but we just, we want to claim back what was rightfully owned by our grandparents and our parents, and we feel like we want that back, we want to live that life.

Another respondent connected his nostalgia to two different kinds of places: an actually lived experience and a fantasy. In answer to the question of "What are you most nostalgic for?", Mark wrote, "My grandparents' farm". I asked him to elaborate.

> I guess it sounds a little bit silly, but, depending on which year you take Apartheid to have ended, I was 2 or 6. The years that I was 2 to 4, we actually lived in Botswana, not in South Africa, so I don't really remember very much at all. And I guess the highlight of my life when I was little was going to my grandparents' farm, and play around. So if there's one thing I miss, and it's

> not unique, they had the farm till 2007 so it's not that it's unique to that period, but if there's something during that period that I can remember, it's that, and it's something that I miss quite a lot, actually.

When asked what about the farm particularly appealed to him, he answered:

> Just the fun, freedom, out of the city, playing around. Um, ja…I'm not nostalgic for that period in South Africa. I'm probably nostalgic for other things that, I'm probably nostalgic for like, old England - 19th century England I'm quite nostalgic about. I'd very much like to have lived in the pre-industrial England, in the country. It's something I spend quite a lot of time thinking about.

However, having said that, Mark added the following reflective caveat:

> It's [the love of 19th century England] probably associated with the whole missing the farm, country style kind of thing; maybe they're related.

Kevin also connected his rural childhood with nostalgia: "Coming from a farming district, there was a lot, I think, uh, there was a lot more community sense" when he was growing up in the rural areas.

None of the Russian women professed to be nostalgic for anything except, in the words of Daria, "maybe deep childhood, village memories", though she quickly added, "but really, nothing." On the other hand, Oleg volunteered that it might be possible to become more nostalgic in the future. "Ask me in 40 years, and I'll tell you how much I miss this interview", he joked.

3.3 "You Needed Your Neighbour's Cabbage, and They Needed Your Potato": Lamenting Lost Community

Personal nostalgia also expressed a tension between community, individualism, and materialism. In different ways and with different emphases, each respondent noted a decline in social solidarity that accompanied the transition.

> *Lebo:* I don't think we have that same sense of unity as we did before, that sense of community; it's less, you know, less significant.

This statement indicates that a sense of community used to be stronger in the past, and that it has, for some reason, declined. Why was it stronger before?

Lebo suggests that a sense of common oppression can be a good bonding mechanism: "When the laws are being made to make people's lives difficult, it's easier for them to mobilise as a people and try to move forward".

This concept of mobilisation is closely connected to a sense of strong emotional engagement, symbolised for her by struggle songs. For Lebo and Leonie, singing struggle songs alludes to the strong feelings experienced by those, involved in the anti-Apartheid struggle, who had composed the songs. In addition, it helps to create a narrative continuity with their own identity.

> *Leonie:* I think for a lot of us as young people growing up, we don't really, we can't say we know what it was like to be in the struggle. We can't say we know what our grandmothers went through to get us where we are. So I think those songs, they resonate with our past, resonate with who we are, and they help us to remember, to just appreciate what we have now. And to live a life that celebrates the memory of where we come from, and the people that fought for us to get here.

In terms of the emotional component, she continues, "whenever those songs are heard and sung, besides the angry songs, the messages in those songs, you can actually feel the people who wrote the songs or composed the songs back then were actually feeling something, because they just have that feeling, you know, it's like you go back to where they were, even though you weren't, and sort of like…", "…You feel their pain", interjects Lebo. "Exactly, you feel the pain that they were in when they composed those songs", concludes Leonie.

For Lebo and Leonie, the link between emotional engagement and social solidarity is strong; in contrast to what they imagine as a painful and emotionally charged past, contemporary society appears to be emotionally flatter, and therefore also less socially cohesive. "People were feeling something at the time of the struggle", says Leonie, "and maybe [singing

struggle songs] was the only way that they could, sort of, come together, and sort of like, mobilise towards making a difference".

"To be nostalgic", writes Dlamini, "is to remember the social orders and networks of solidarity that made the struggle possible in the first place" (2009:17). And for the two young women, singing struggle songs today, at political rallies and university actions, is also partially an attempt to achieve the kind of mobilisation and mutual understanding that had inspired the songs in the first place. Talking about the song *Shoot the Boer* popularised by ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema, Leonie explained the metaphorical re-imagining of the struggle songs for a present-day context.

> White people should not be threatened by these songs. It's not literal. Nobody's going to go out and shoot a white man just like that, you know; it's a different context, we're asking for something different, but the emotion, the passion, is still the same. We're still fighting, mobilising for a better future.

The second reason they give to explain what they see as a diminished sense of community is a rise in materialism. "It's like people now, their personal relationships aren't as strong as they were, because right now, money is the focus, you know", Lebo says. "The relationship between people and money is more important than the relationship between a person and the next person".

She illustrates this claim with a hypothetical situation from "the olden days".

> In the olden days, you actually could go to a neighbour when you're lack of something, but now you can't really, you know, go to a neighbour and ask for something. So there's that lack of community-ship if I may even call it like that.

"People, I think people have become more materialistic", agrees Leonie. "We are more focused on making life better for ourselves and our families. The next person, your neighbour, is not as important to you as they would have been before. Before, you knew that you needed the neighbour's cabbage, and they needed your potato". They laugh together.

> You would have got along much better, cause I mean, it was about survival back then, it wasn't about how much you had, and who you knew. It was about just getting through each day, you know what I mean. So you had to get along with the people around you to survive. It was a matter of survival.

Similar feelings are shared by Buyi and Zandile. "Part of me misses the past so much because there was so much sense of community", says Buyi.

A diminishing sense of community also preoccupied the Russian focus group. According to Ekaterina, the rise of mobile phones and information technology has created a culture of spontaneity in which people don't have to make much effort to stay in touch; paradoxically, that has devalued the nature of friendships, which, in the Soviet days, had to be actively curated.

> Before, there weren't mobile phones. Now you can call whoever and meet up, but before, people would schedule to meet. Even my mom would say, they would schedule meetings, get together. People met more often, did things together. Now it's Facebook and basta.

Daria enters the conversation with an explicitly political interjection.

> *Daria:* Before, there were these communes, pioneers, Octobrites, they were drawn together by something.
> *Natalia:* Doing some sorts of mass hikes, or cultural programmes.
> *Daria:* Now everyone is, in principle, by themselves. On the contrary, they try to move away from other people. Like instead of sending their kids to an ordinary school, they send them to some sort of closed boarding school with intensive language training and no distractions.
> *Natalia*: With individual instruction rather than a class of 25.

Ekaterina adds: "You have to always rely on yourself. Everything is becoming more cruel".

> *Daria*: Yes
> *Interviewer*: What do you mean, more cruel?

Ekaterina: In the sense that trust is falling off, that justice, too, that we talked about. Everyone for themselves, that's all.
Daria: You have to learn to hustle and not depend on anyone.
Ekaterina: Depend only on yourself, not the government, not some policy that they will approve in like 100 years.

The juxtaposition of cruelty and individualism is contrasted to an implied relationship between community and humaneness. Nevertheless, none of the participants expressed a hypothetical desire to return to Communist times.

Daria: Yeah, thank God we weren't there! That time...
Natalia: I think it was quite hard back then. All those compulsory things, Octobrites and stuff. Pioneers. Very hard.
Daria: Maybe it was good for someone.
Oleg: For those people who lived through that epoch, it has its particular joy, and I think many of that generation that grew up in that time, they are not against returning to that time.
Natalia: I still think it would have been hard to live then. There weren't any of those things that we can have now. Things that they got from abroad with great effort, even milk, my dad had to queue at the milk factory for baby formula, because you couldn't get it. Now everything has become accessible.
Dmitri: Yeah. I think we live 100 times better than our parents.
Interviewer: So despite the fact that some things have got worse, from the point of view of spirituality…
Natalia: …Morality.
Interviewer: It's still better that we quit Communism?
Ekaterina: It's nice to live in the modern world.

Perhaps curiously, the very things that the focus group members had earlier listed as positives, such as the enforced communal activities of the Pioneers and the Komsomol (the Communist Youth League) were also the things that they are most happy to have avoided. Moreover, one of the most salient advantages of modern life listed by the respondents – technology – was paradoxically also the key element blamed for the erosion of communal life and the advent of cruel individualism.

Ekaterina: In fact we expect things to get even better. Some kind of technology that will come. Even now it's not bad.
Daria: We're used to this system, and haven't seen anything else. We grew up like this, maybe if we had grown up in that time, we would think differently.
Oleg: My grandparents would not mind returning to that time, because they have other moral values, and all this internet and new technology, jeans and sneakers, the things that now are everywhere but weren't there before, they don't even need them.
Natalia: For them it's enough what they had.

3.4 Watching Your Back all the Time, Even Though you Have "All This": Danger in Abundance

A perceived rise in crime is another manifestation of this social alienation. "You could play in the streets", recalls Buyi.

> Nowadays you can't, your child can't be on the streets; you have to look out for your child. Because you know somebody's going to come there and rape the child, or take the child away. There was less, I think there was less crime, because there was so much of the sense of community that people bond so much that my neighbour's child was my child – sort of thing. So I, I think that's what I miss mostly about the past. Now we're not, as much as maybe we're, things are better in terms of resources, but the cost of it all, like, the way we have it now it's – were not comfortable, we're, it's like you're looking out, you know. Watching your back all the time even though you have all this.

For Lebo, Leonie, Buyi and Zandile, Apartheid and the struggle against it are deeply associated with positive traits borne out of hardship, traits that they believe have become less salient with the advent of democracy, relative prosperity and freedom – assets that their generation "takes for granted". This nostalgia, expressed through the singing of struggle songs, is consciously associated with an objectively negative period - of oppression, struggle for survival, and material shortage – but one that nevertheless produced some positive externalities: community, solidarity, generosity and emotional gregariousness. What's more,

the recent past is also conceived as a time of greater moral clarity, before a straightforward racial divide gave way to a more ambivalent class distinction.

According to Leonie, “it’s no more about race; it’s more about class now”.

> The rich people are the ones who own everything now. You know, in order for you to be recognised, it’s either you have to be connected with the party that is in charge, so now it’s all about status. And the focus is more on, it’s not really about whether you’re black or white, cause when you look at our government now, the whole hate speeches and all those things, it’s more black people fighting against each other, rather than us fighting against, you know, racists.

Nostalgia for the struggle also establishes a kind of inter-generational narrative continuity, one of the key uses of nostalgia according to psychologists. This narrative continuity manifests itself in two primary ways. One is the desire, discussed above, to use songs and other cultural artefacts to resuscitate the camaraderie of the struggle as well as to draw a link between the here-and-now and the past: the actions and sacrifices of their predecessors have directly created the freer and more comfortable conditions in which they now live.

The other plays out in a kind of deeper nostalgia, the desire to reinstate an imagined pre-Apartheid justice: “Claiming back what was taken from us”, in Leonie’s words.

> We just, we want to claim back what was rightfully owned by our grandparents and our parents, and we feel like we want that back, we want to live that life”. This imagined life is one in which people “had farms, owned land, owned cows, that were taken from them.

“How are you going to say to a man: ‘You have your freedom’ when he’s still living in a shack, you know what I mean, it doesn’t make sense” she asks rhetorically. Adds Lebo: “We feel like, because we now have all this freedom, we want to fight back for them”.

3.5 "I Wish I Was a Part of It": The Struggle and its Double

This sentiment embodies another, complementary kind of nostalgia, and that is a wish to have participated in the anti-Apartheid struggle, and perhaps to do it differently, better, more completely, than those who actually were part of it in the first place.

Young people "weren't really in the struggle, so they're trying to like, I think, make up for it, you know", says Lebo.

> Like because of all the stuff you hear, like from our parents, and you're sort of like, want to, not really revenge, but something along those lines. You sort of like, want to stand up for them; you know, act out for them, because they couldn't and now we can, because we're living in this free South Africa, you know, so we can do whatever that we want, but our grandparents couldn't because they were oppressed by the law.

Buyi and Zandile shared similar feelings. "Sometimes you are angry because you feel like, 'I wish I was part of it somehow'. I wish I was part of the struggle, you know", says Zandile, before adding, playfully: "I mean, you want to be those who survived".

There is a sense that the struggle was not brought to its conclusion, that the previous generation missed an opportunity that the current generation yearns to fulfil, at least on a symbolic level, such as through the singing of struggle songs.

> *Zandile:* We're stuck in the same position [as during Apartheid], you know, so we sing those songs. And sometimes it's like payback, or something like that, because it wasn't really, South Africa did not – it's one thing that I like, though – South Africa did not say, 'Let's fight back'. We stopped it. And we moved on. So I think that's the anger within young people now, it's that we didn't really do anything about it. You know, it was like, 'Let's just let it go'. And even though that letting go gave them power as well, it's like, 'Did we do it wrong?' You know, was it wrong of us to just say 'Let's move on'? You know, because, nothing happened, really.

There is a current of disappointment with the older generation. “They wasted an opportunity”, she says.

> It’s like someone was given the opportunity to go to a tertiary institution, and then you waste it, just drinking or doing whatever. You’ve got it all in your hands. You know, they could have just grabbed it and made a, I don’t know how to put it, made the best of what they had. But it’s like they had it and then now, they relaxed.

“We feel that as young people, after the transition, after 1994, our parents or the old generation didn’t do what they were supposed to do, or didn’t do much”, Buyi added.

Other respondents, however, expressed no such desire to have witnessed the past. “I’m glad I was born in the time that I was, because I was old enough to see many of the good things that have come out of it”, says Kevin. “And I don’t think, if I look back, I don’t think I would have been the kind of person who would have gone and stood on the street fronts and thrown rocks at the police. I just don’t think that’s sort of in my nature”.

Zandile’s use of the education metaphor highlights the primacy all the students placed on education as a key milestone in South Africa’s transition from Apartheid, listing universal and equal access to education as the most important aspects of democracy. Russian respondents, on the contrary, lamented what they felt was the loss of the educational standards and accessibility that had been taken for granted under Socialism. “Now everyone is scrambling to send their kids to a private school”, says Natalia at one point. “They have amazing gyms and silver cutlery in the cafeteria, but their students leave without being able to read and write properly. My dad’s village school had one room, but used it better”.

3.6 From “Survival” to “Survival of the Fittest”

Buyi, Zandile, Leonie and Lebo all invoked the term “survival” to describe their idea of life during Apartheid. However, Buyi, Zandile and Kevin went on to contrast it to a situation of “survival of the fittest” that characterises, for them, life in modern, capitalist South Africa.

This is how Buyi and Zandile described it in the following bit of dialogue.

Buyi: The focus has shifted from, uh, empowering us as black people to, it's, you know, all about money.
Zandile: Opportunism.
Buyi: It's now, uh, you know, survival of the fittest: I'm gonna do what I've got to do, you know, to get money. But it's not for 'us' now, it's for the individual.
Zandile: Uh huh.
Buyi: For *you* only.
Zandile: Before, they worked together. They had a common ground, you know, to fight against Apartheid. Now that we have democracy, they're like, Ok! Now it's like…
Buyi: …Like you know we were in a team, now you do your thing and I'll do my thing.
Zandile: And I'll do my thing.
Buyi: Now it's like we've lost, we've lost it. Before, it was really great, because we were on the same page and we had the same goal, we were united.

This is contrasted to what they perceive as the attitudes held by their parents. "It's survival of the fittest. I don't think we value life as our parents did", says Zandile.

I wish we'd have that, uh, their ways of doing things, you know? The way they did things and the way, when they wanted something, they'd fight for it. The zeal in them. You know? Even the courage to even fight the Apartheid government that they had. And I don't think that right now we would, even if Apartheid came again, we would have that courage. Because we're so divided, you know? Before, our parents, when they were given the opportunity, they grabbed it. And they made good use of whatever they had.

There is an implicit contradiction between these twin conceptions of the previous generation as, on the one hand, having missed the opportunity to fundamentally rewrite South Africa's script, of having "relaxed" after winning democracy, and on the other, as dogged, resourceful and tenacious.

For Kevin, the decline of a sense of community paralleled not the end of Apartheid, but the end of the post-Apartheid honeymoon, during which "everyone was sort of bending over backwards to accommodate for each other. There was a general sense of community in the whole nation, which I think over time has definitely sort of dwindled and been reduced, and has now become a state of every man for himself". That phrase – "every man for himself" – is one to which he frequently returns.

Kevin believes that that positive feeling was a "response to the ills of Apartheid and the fact that people became aware, became acutely aware, of the inequalities that were sort of, sort of at play".

> But, after you know, as time has gone on, those sort of feelings of indebtedness have been replaced with almost a tired, or a sense of uh, I don't know what you'd say, been replaced with more of everyone just looking after themselves and forgetting about, I don't know, forgetting about where they came from, and more sort of focused on right now, every man for himself.

Like Buyi and Zandile, he places the blame on class, and the expansion of a more globalised, free-market capitalism into South Africa, rather than on the end of Apartheid itself. "I think that there hasn't necessarily been a direct relationship [between a decline in community spirit and] Apartheid ending, it's more of a case of farmers getting larger and communities getting smaller, um, for various reasons, but I think that's primarily more business oriented".

> I do think that, in general, the consumer nature of today where everything is commercialised and uh put a price on and that sort of thing, it definitely has increased dramatically, I mean everything from sport which has become overpaid and excessive, to little things which, you know, I don't know, previously I wouldn't have thought there's a market for, there's just so much money being pumped into every sort of corner of society.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Ekaterina, the part-time Russian ballet instructor, during the following focus group conversation.

Ekaterina: In general, these days it's everyone for himself.
Natalia: Yeah
Dmitri: Agreed. But what can you do? You just have to do your best not to be the one getting screwed.
Interviewer: What do you mean?
Ekaterina: Well, everyone for himself. In other words, maybe you're sort of with everyone else, but you're alone. At any moment, someone can betray you or set you up, in this world of ours.

Though the world-weariness of the final line was evidently ironic, Ekaterina's statement nevertheless expressed a surprising juxtaposition with the general feeling of the focus group, which was that life now is definitely better than during Soviet times, and would continue to get better in the future.

Unlike Kevin, Ekaterina, Natalia, Daria and Dmitri did not attribute this increased individualism to political or economic factors, but rather seemed to consider it a normal part of growing up and working in a big city. Oleg, on the other hand, blamed the new market culture.

Daria: In school, childhood, even in university, if you're friends with someone, then later there's competition and other factors and naturally you lose that sense of connection.
Natalia: And sometimes friends just move apart. You meet other people and you just stop being in touch, not even because there was some quarrel or something, just become farther away, people get their own families, you can call them and stuff, and that's good, but you start to share more with your own family, about your problems and what not. And friends, it's cool and fun with them, you can still meet, sit around, soulfully, but your problems you try to solve with your family. Either with parents or husbands or I don't know, like that.
Dmitri: I'm at the office by 8, sometimes home by 7, passed out by 10. When am I expected to find the time to hang out with some Pavel from 8th grade?

Oleg: But don't you think that that's exactly the problem? Half the people can't find work, and the other half work too much to live. That's capitalism! Our parents never had this complaint.

3.7 "More Respect for the Law Back Then": Corruption in Transition

One implicit consequence of the fissuring of social cohesion and the rise in the salience of class and materialism, according to most respondents, has been an increase in crime and corruption. According to Lebo, "people had more respect for law back then, and now it's different", she adds. "I think with independence and freedom, people are abusing it, I feel like there's a lot more corruption".

Buyi and Zandile echo these sentiments, claiming to remember a time in their early childhood when it was safer to be outside than it is now.

Buyi: I remember that, you know the whole freedom of, when I was young, you know, you were free, to actually go anywhere. You knew that you're not gonna be raped, there's not gonna be anything done to you, the crime issue - I do remember that.
Zandile: You weren't scared, you know. It was, we were, we were just free. But now, as things got better, people got more moneyed, things are now you know, corrupt.

A safe childhood also came up in the Russian focus group as one of the key differentiating points between "then" and "now". "In the times, I don't know, before *perestroika*, for every person there was like a kindergarten, a school, they were normal and not dangerous", said Daria.

Fikile lists corruption as the primary reason why she does not exercise the right to vote that was so hard won. "I didn't vote, I didn't vote because, politically, the ANC have a lot of corruption. Like Jacob Zuma was involved in the corruption cases; I can't vote for him. I don't trust him".

She also claimed that corruption had penetrated SASCO, the nationwide activist student union: “Last year, I didn’t have financial aid or a residence. SASCO told me to pay if I want financial aid, they would give it to me if I paid them”.

Her impression of the entire political scene was scathing.

> The South Africans, politically, they are so, they are involved in corruption, you know. That’s why I’m not going to vote for them. Maybe I could vote for ANC if the president of the ANC was Nelson Mandela. He worked hard for South Africa. But Nelson Mandela is gone.

Kevin concurs.

> Your political links have got a definite, uh, correlation to the path of your success. And in any field that you sort of go into, the more, the high linked politically you are, the more chances you’ll have of becoming rich and famous, so I think there’s definitely a big personal motive and agenda there. People know that they can become very wealthy by having the political links.

The Russian focus group also decried what they felt was a rise in corruption.

> *Daria*: You can even buy a medical diploma and treat people in some elite clinic, without knowing medicine. Or you can legitimately earn a Ph.D and live in squalor on your pension and no one will care that you have a Ph.D and no one will care about your status.
> *Interviewer*: Do you think that’s bad, does it make you sad, or do you think that this is unavoidable?
> *Daria*: No, it’s bad of course.
> *Natalia*: Of course, some fake doctor can mess up your leg.
> *Daria*: Even people taking dance classes pass themselves off as choreographers and try to teach in schools.
> *Ekaterina*: Why are you looking at me? What are you getting at? [laughter]
> *Ekaterina*: But true, even if like a new car comes out, and you get on the list, and then comes some guy, pays a certain amount of cash on top and becomes

> first in line. Even like that, that's also injustice. Someone was in the queue first, and then he comes, all connected, and
> *Daria*: Someone stands in the queue for 5 hours, and then someone else comes waltzing in ahead of you. Of course, it's nice to have connections.

But instead of desiring to return, Daria also indicates a preference to adapt to this new way of doing things instead: "That's how I got my registration plates too", she admits.

An alternative perspective on corruption was provided by Mark, who noted a difference between "embezzlement", which he believes increased after Apartheid, and a general corruption in moral, philosophical terms, which decreased.

> Monetary embezzlement is probably much higher, but the whole system was corrupt beforehand, so it's a bit of a false comparison. It's like within this rotten system, you know, maybe it was more efficient or something, but it's yeah, I guess it depends on the definition of corruption.

Many of the respondents saw a link between corruption and racial polarisation.

Interestingly, Fikile referred to Jacob Zuma's corruption and what she considers his racism in the same sentence. "He's involved in many things like corruption. He was involved. And he discriminates a lot. Like he was singing that song *Shoot the Boer*. I think that is racism."

Buyi and Zandile explicitly said that the ANC uses racialist rhetoric as a means of drawing attention away from its record of corruption and poor service delivery.

Referring to "the whole corruption thing", Zandile says:

> Obviously, if they [the ANC] are guilty, I wouldn't think it would be easy for them to talk about class. Because if you touch on that issue, they become sensitive. When you talk about providing for the people, and talking about the economy, and the usage of the money, it's a sensitive issue. They don't like discussing that. So, sometimes I always think they just divert the whole issue

and put it, like it's only the race. The reason why South Africa is suffering is because of…

"…Racism", interjects Buyi. "The white people", Zandile adds.

Indeed, ANC leaders frequently refer back to the memory of the struggle as a kind of dog-whistle: "We know they're corrupt, and we know that service delivery is very poor, but we'll still vote for them because we would say that it's a revolutionary party or um, which says things like that which like are you know, they took us out of the struggle", says Buyi. Zandile likens this tactic to a "mind game".

3.8 "A Certain Kind of Depravity": Perceptions of Moral Decline

In general, respondents agreed that the transition to democracy accompanied an overall decrease in morality. Loosely defined, the idea encompassed issues of respect, treatment of elders, social etiquette, violence, permissiveness, sexual openness, selfishness and materialism.

Daria and Natalia felt that society has become less moral because it is less inhibited.

Interviewer: Do you think society has become more or less moral?
Daria: Less moral.
Natalia: I also think, less moral.
Interviewer: Less. What do you mean?
Daria: People are more disinhibited.
Natalia: In the Soviet Union there was no sex! [laughter]
Interviewer: What was that?
Natalia: In the Soviet Union there was no sex!
Dmitri: Thank God it collapsed then! [laughter]
Daria: Even the TV shows today, I think they are almost by definition amoral.
Natalia: And the internet!
Oleg: I don't know if it's less moral, maybe just dumber?

Daria: Even in kids from an early age they inculcate a certain kind of depravity.
Natalia: A kind of anti-culturedness.
Daria: Back then, the culture was different, the mentality.
Ekaterina: People worked all together, in factories, you know, "Higher, stronger, faster!"
Natalia: Slogans and things. [laughter]
Ekaterina: You know, it was maybe more elevated. The moral principles were totally different. People were more cultured.
Dmitri: Sad but true. *Bee Line* have slogans too, but "Free Roaming" doesn't quite pack the same punch as "Workers of the world unite!". [laughter]
Daria: But at least *Bee Line* make phones that work, which is more than the Soviets achieved. [laughter]

For Buyi, the most important evidence of this decline concerns young people's renegotiated relationships with their parents.

> Even our parents, we've lost that sense of respect now. It's not like the olden days when, you know your dad, when he comes, you just shake in your boots and when you're sending something to them you use a tray and a saucer. Now you can just take something and your mother won't mind. But before, you had to use a saucer, and don't even look at them in the eye. But now we look at them in the eye and we have conversations. We just, we've lost it there. Because you don't know where to draw the line, because they don't say, no, now you can't do this, so you don't know, you don't know what to do and what not to do anymore.

"Our values have dropped", agrees Zandile.

Zandile: Back then your neighbours would help you. Your neighbour was more like your parents. Your neighbour would even spank you.
Buyi: They'd see you on the street and say, "What are you doing on the street?" But now I can stand, kiss my boyfriend. It's not what we do. Ok, the "we" - black people. We, it's not what we're used to. I won't stand in the

> street and French kiss my boyfriend and see people walking past. You do it in secret, or at least you'll look around, you know? [laughter]
> *Zandile*: Because you can't just kiss.
> *Buyi*: I think it's the whole westernisation thing has affected us because we, our Africa, we have our own culture, but I think it does sometimes clash, Westernisation and African culture.

The standout exception was Mark, who questioned the premise that an increasingly permissive society should be equated with a decline in morality.

> We've moved from a sort of conservative Christian regime to a liberal democracy, so I would imagine a lot of people would say that morals have declined because you've allowed all sort of things, but I think the flipside is that we've actually got much more moral, because we, we've moved towards a secular humanist society I guess more, which is more moral than what used to be, so, I think it's got better.

3.9 The Price of Talking Back: Status, Money and Respect

Many of the respondents tackled what they perceive to be the changing nature of status in transition societies. Whereas before, status was governed largely by social conventions and ritual, today it is most often expressed through money and material accumulation. Buyi and Zandile brought up the changing nature of status in terms of family relations. For them, the advent of more progressive family legislation has actually weakened the authority of families; a case of freedom being misused. Zandile described this as an erosion of respect:

> It's like we've lost that respect because we know our rights. And we'll just, we'll talk anyhow. There's no respect where – it's an adult, respect them. Even though you want to get your point across, but don't be rude, you know. We're now very rude, you know, towards each other.

On the other hand, they also note a positive aspect of this new, more assertive culture: the erosion of what they see as an ingrained sense of deference towards white people.

Buyi: Old people, they respect white people, they have that. Compared to us, it's like, "Uh!". You don't like have that, "Oh my gosh, it's a white person we have to worship" thing. Cause even the domestic workers, the way they worship their "baas", they have a sense of respect for them, they don't say whatever they want, even though they're right, but they wouldn't, especially if it's a white person, they'll just tolerate forever.

These days, young people are allowed to speak out and talk back to authority figures.

Zandile: Now you can even question your boss, you can even you know, fight with your boss, because you want to show them that it's fine that I can, even though I'm wrong here, but it doesn't mean you can treat me like that. It's like we were dying inside, and you wanted to say something but you couldn't say it because he's your boss. Now you can actually challenge your boss.

However, both women feel that the old mentality of deference has not fully been eradicated. The freedom to talk back to authority figures has not necessarily resulted in the displacement of those authority figures, and the two women believe that, in some ways, white power has come to exercise an even greater hold over the black imagination.

"Maybe the whites, before, the Apartheid guys had a hold on us, because we moved from being Africans, and we wanted to be like them, so its now, we don't wanna wear, for example, wearing what you wear traditionally, now we wanna modernise things, and wear this", says Zandile, pointing at her tank top.

Zandile: You know. It's like black people in the countryside use cow dung to [insulate the walls], and we're like, "Oh my god, don't do that!", but that's how our grandparents used to do it. You know. Get into the habit of doing it, it's like they did it. It's like now we wanna be white, you know?
Buyi: Uh huh.

Somewhat paradoxically, freedom from white political oppression has been accompanied by an even greater conformity to "white" modes of living and thinking. The liberal rights and

democracy embraced by the ANC after liberation have also had the effect of clashing with traditional African values.

> *Interviewer*: How can someone get status now?
> *Buyi*: It's what you have. It's all about material. Material stuff. And I think sometimes they abuse the whole thing of you know, the whole rules, the laws, the bill of rights, I think we don't read or implement them properly, we just misuse the whole thing. The laws. Like, the bill of rights for children, you know. Kids will just use "I have freedom of speech" as an excuse to do this, do that.
> *Zandile*: We can actually divorce our parents. And for, I think, uh, the black community, it's like, "Ok, divorce me, and you'll see, just you try to divorce me!" And it's like, we have this thing where, "Ok no corporal punishment!", but I know I know that if my mum wants to hit me, she will. And I can't go to the police, go and say, "My mum hit me". I know she has the right. As long as you're under my roof, I'm the boss. They always say that.

For Ekaterina and Natalya, the change of status was most notable in the commercialisation of consumer relationships that had been previously guided by economies of scarcity.

> *Ekaterina*: Before, in order to get something, it was enough to stand in a giant queue and have some way of getting that thing you wanted, but today, you can get anything, but for that you need money.
> *Natalia*: Yeah.
> *Ekaterina*: And those who don't have money, they can get stuffed.
> *Interviewer*: So everyone can stand in the queue, but not everyone has money
> *Ekaterina*: Yeah.
> *Oleg*: It's become really hard. Everyone is against everyone else. At least before, it seems like people were more patient, more stoical, because they were all in the same boat.
> *Ekaterina*: Yeah, and now some people have speedboats and others…
> *Oleg*:…Others are in the water, in their underwear, getting mauled by the propellers.

Status was also mentioned when it came to working in particular occupations.

> *Daria*: Before *perestroika*, to work as a street sweeper was in principle a decent, normal job, and now simply no one would take a job like that. And that's why they invite these guest workers, and they have overrun the city and cause, honestly, many problems
> *Interviewer*: Are you saying that before, it was considered ok to be a street sweeper, and now it isn't? You consider it degrading?
> *Daria*: Degrading.
> *Interviewer*: You think status, the way we think about status, has that changed a little bit? Before it was possible to not make much money but still have a decent status, like a doctor or teacher today?
> *Natalia*: Yes, before, doctors had a good status
> *Interviewer*: Today, can you have status without money?
> *Natalia*: No.
> *Ekaterina*: Today, no. In any case, if you have status, you've got to have some sort of income.
> *Dmitri*: I don't see what's necessarily wrong with that. If you want money and status, don't do those jobs, do something that pays.
> *Oleg*: Still, no offense, but I will have studied longer than you, Dima, and will probably never get your salary.

The equation of money with status was also implicitly criticised by Zandile, who recounted a story about how a white beggar had approached her for money outside of a supermarket.

> He said, "Hey miss, please!" And I'm like, "No! You call me miss just because you want money, but otherwise you would not. No!"

The implication is that, while there is official political equality between the races, white people still do not see black people as having an innate status, but rather, adjust their level of respect depending on how much money they are perceived to have.

3.10 From Bantu to Ubuntu: Race, Education and Contested Opportunity

Though not directly implicated in nostalgia, race was one of the most voluminously discussed themes among most participants. This is not surprising in a country that remains acutely, and arguably morbidly, fascinated by racial identities and relationships. The changes in racial attitudes during the transition away from Apartheid have been mostly positive, according to respondents, but not unambiguously so. Unmistakably the most frequently cited positive change in race relations has been the democratisation of the education system, something hailed by blacks and whites alike.

For Leonie, "the only thing that I can say is actually better [after 1994] is the education accessibility.

> *Interviewer*: So you think education has got better?
> *Leonie*: Yeah I think so. Its accessibility, rather. I think so.
> *Interviewer*: And that makes things worth it, you think?
> *Leonie*: Yeah, because I mean, without education you will not get far, that's what I think. You will not get far. And I think that's the one powerful thing that the whites before 1994, that's the one powerful thing they had, you know.

Kevin also argued that "the educational experience of going to a school where there is not just one race group, I think that is sort of the extra, what do you call it, learning out of the classroom".

> "Learning to interact with people across racial groups has definitely improved and I think that's a great positive that I think there's not necessarily a monetary value you can put on that, but I think it's certainly, that's the only way I foresee the eradication of ingrained racism, when from a young age people are exposed to interracial relationships".

Fikile, too, felt that one the most important reason why she would not like to have lived during her parents' time was because "they were not exposed to many things, like education, yes, education".

Mark believes that, while the education system is not as good as it could be, it is much better than during the Apartheid time. “I mean, the education system is crap, but it’s better than it used to be. You can actually go to school to Matric; before you couldn’t do that, at 16 you were kicked out and made to work in a field or something”.

The ambivalence expressed by Mark was present, in various forms, in the other testimonies. There was a general consensus that while the education system had become more just, diverse and accessible, it also decreased in quality. Kevin feels that standards have dropped as a result of the strain that the extra numbers of people now admitted into schools have put on the education system.

> I think a lot of those schools have taken on a lot of strain as a result of um, not having as focused an attention from government, because obviously government has to spread the finances for education across a much broader base, so I think the, um, those sort of what would previously have been white schools, have certainly I think decreased, a lot of them have sort of dropped in standard slightly, and have, um taken a bit of strain, and those are often the affordable schools which the sort of working class person can send their child to, and the private schools, which, um, which seemed to maintain a pretty high level of education are becoming exorbitantly expensive.

“It’s so ironic”, says Lebo, that “under Apartheid, the education system was high during that time”.

> Now that we are free, the education system that we have now is not worth it. Even though we now have free education, the quality of the education has decreased. Back then, the system was very effective, you know. But now our education, even in Africa, we are like below, we’re below average.

At the same time, she accepts, like Mark, that it marks a tremendous improvement over the previous system, and inadvertently makes a poignant slip of the tongue between “bantu” and “Ubuntu”.

Lebo: For me, it's like a 50/50 thing, because if you look at our forefathers, or our grandparents, what they were studying was Ubuntu.
Leonie: Bantu!
Lebo: Bantu. Bantu education. That, that you know, it wasn't even education. That wasn't education. It was just, just another way of the Boers having control over people, because the education was so much limited that they couldn't do anything with it, they could just write their names, and that's it, for them. While their children, the Boers' children, they went overseas, you know because they could afford it.

Overall, they agreed that the education system "has improved. It has improved but not at the level that it should be. "It's not world class", says Leonie.

Education also remains racially coded, as Zandile and Buyi recalled when talking about their experiences of going to Indian, white and coloured schools. According to them, Indian schools were both better quality and more racist.

Interviewer: You went to an Indian school, and you went to a model C school
Buyi: An Indian school too.
Interviewer: How did that work, I'm just curious, how did that happen?
Buyi: It's funny cause we did not expect Indians to be…
Zandile: ...Racist
Buyi: Racist. Ha ha! But they are the most racist individuals. [laughter] So it was quite funny for us to actually experience that. I don't know whether they felt, I don't know, they felt intimidated by us. I think they were.
Interviewer: You are pretty intimidating. [laughter]
Buyi: Yeah! It's like blacks invading!
Zandile: Yes. It's like "blacks coming to our school!". Because they, they focused on you when you, I remember I went to an Indian school and, at first, ok I went to a black school firstly, and then I went to an Indian school, and after that I went to a white school. And then I came back to an Indian school, so I went to a lot of schools. So when I came back from the white school, I used to, like you speak a lot in English, and I came back to an Indian school, I didn't even notice it was in me, but I was speaking in English, and this Indian

> teacher I remember, I don't know which class we were in, and she's like, "Speaking in English!". It's like, why is it a surprise that I am speaking English fluently like this? Do you want us not to speak fluently?
> *Buyi*: In an Indian school, I found they were very racist. Even the teachers there. They were very surprised when a black person was in a club or something. Like, oh, ok! Wow! They want to know what you can do better than them".

Buyi and Zandile talked of their struggle between being good students and avoiding derision from their fellow black pupils, who sometimes accused them of acting white.

> *Zandile*: Other black people were like, "You're speaking a lot in English". And I was like, "Why can't we all show them that we can?" You know? That's where we lose it, because there's gonna be that black person that shows that "I am capable", and there are going to be other black people who'll think – you think you're better cause you are capable. Cause I noticed, sometimes in black schools, they should speak in English fluently, teach them to speak in English fluently, because English is the medium of instruction everywhere. When you go out there, when you look for a job, you need to speak in English. But you find they don't want to empower, we don't want to empower ourselves. You know, teach each other: that this is the way of doing things. Just if I say 'I know', you're acting white, but sometimes it's not acting white. You need to teach your children that this is the way that you're going to achieve, you know? Go out there, join organisations, lead. You can lead! You know?

According to Buyi and Zandile, a black-white race conflict is being displaced by one between blacks and Indians.

> *Zandile*: My mother noticed that Indians, they have a tendency to bring down a black person, so, what is the use of actually doing that?
> *Buyi*: Looking down upon black people. Because we live in, funnily enough we live in an Indian community. And I once lived in Phoenix, in an Indian community, and now we live in [inaudible], you know, and we experienced

this with our neighbours. It's like, when you have something, "Wow!", you know? And it's, I don't know why they need to focus on what you have and when they see your house: "Where are you working?" You know? "Oh! You have a car! Wow!"

Zandile: They even bring police! Like they wanna investigate

Buyi: Yes! So it's like, why are Indians now, it's a, I don't know, it's a bit, it's funny. And I'd like to one day raise that issue and question why are Indians and blacks in this conflict?

Zandile: Especially here in Durban. I think that's where, because this is the factory of Indians, you'll find most Indians in Durban. Because the ones in Joburg and elsewhere they're more open-minded. I think it's the exposure, and the mix of different…

Buyi: …Cultures.

Zandile: Cultures, because here it's just narrow, like Zulus and…

Buyi: …Yeah.

Zandile: There's so much conflict between the Indians and blacks. Cause I'd prefer, personally I'd say I'd prefer a white boss to an Indian boss, because um, I think a white boss, I think what I usually say is that, if a white person does not like you, they just don't like you

Buyi: They're just frank.

Zandile: But, but they will stick to the book. If this is what they're supposed to do, they will do it. They will not put you under pressure because of your race. If they just don't like you, they don't like you, just like that. And an Indian will act as though they like you when they don't. You think you're on the same page, and you're not. Its better if someone shows you from the start, I don't like you, but you're here to work, give me your work and that's it.

Not that white-black relations have fully normalised. Buyi and Zandile recounted their experience of what they considered a patronising attitude towards blacks by members of the DA political party, in which they had once served as campus volunteers during a visit by Helen Zille to UKZN. According to them, the party cynically recruited black street kids to participate in order to make the event look less white.

Buyi: There was a time Helen Zille came…

Zandile: …To Durban.
Buyi: And she was campaigning, and what I noticed there was the fact that she tries to portray this picture of democracy, when it's not really democracy.
Zandile: The rainbow nation.
Buyi: The so called rainbow nation. While it's not really. Cause, as much as there are things that she will do which will actually degrade a black person. You know, when she was doing the whole campaigning thing, what she did was took kids, like street kids, and brought them into that campaign, just for the sake of…
Zandile: …The news, the media.
Buyi: The media, you know? So, that was like, a huge question mark. Is it really democracy? Yeah.
Zandile: So those kids, I'm sure were given food, you know? So they were just given the t-shirts to wear so that they now fit, so it's like black and white, coloureds and, so it's not only white.

Kevin, on the other hand, feels that the ANC is similarly guilty of racial manipulation.

> The ANC plays the politics of racial divide. It's popular politics and that's what sort of gets votes. The politics that has been played out within the ANC, hasn't been necessarily a unifying politics, has been a divisive politics, which is understandable, but because of the demographics of the country, it plays in their favour to play divisive politics along racial lines, because that's the majority of the vote, and you're going to effectively, even if you are marginalising, sort of, minority groups, it's not that important because the majority vote is going to vote in your favour as a result of that kind of politics.

By contrast, while acknowledging the divisive rhetoric of the ANC, Mark places most of the blame for continued racial tension on the unwillingness of white people to recognise their guilt and make proactive efforts to reach out and embrace the black community.

> White guilt is a totally legitimate thing that people should feel. And some of my friends are like, "Shut up, why are you wasting your time thinking about

> it?" And I'm like, "What? I spend all my time thinking about it, sometimes paralysed by it!" And they think it's the funniest, I've never seen people laugh so hard in their whole lives. They thought it was the funniest concept and idea ever. Why would I spend my time feeling guilty?

Mark believes that many wealthy white people continue to live in much the same way as they did before the transition – in racially homogenous bubbles of privilege.

> *Mark*: Certainly, wealthy white people, I don't think the way they interact with each other has changed very much. Certainly, maybe people who are a little bit older than ourselves, like, in their 30s, 40s, see white people hanging out with exclusively white people in white hangouts, and regard everyone else with suspicion. Or this like, "I'm sure you're very nice but we would never have anything in common to be friends" kind of attitude. So maybe formally it's changed but substantively, not sure. Go to places like Stellenbosch University, it's 90% rich white kids, you can't tell which era you're in, it could be any time in the last 60 years, and I don't think that's an exaggeration.
>
> So I think it's possible that there might be less nostalgia than would be expected, because for a lot of people it hasn't changed much – they were living the same in 1990 and 2010. Live in basically the same white gated estate. Hang with white rich people and party. I don't know. Had there been some more forced change then you'd find them more nostalgic, but people might not think there's anything to be nostalgic about, because it's the same substantive, the same life that they live. I have some older cousins in their early 30s and I think some of that may apply to them. Nothing has changed. Not that they're anti-change or anything, just that you know, my guess is that people like that would say, "Good for everyone else that its mixed, but this is just the way we live". You know what I mean, they weren't pro-oppression or anything, but just, in the way, their sphere of life hasn't changed, at all.

According to him, it is this kind of insular behaviour that makes other racial groups upset.

> I think that explains a lot of, like turmoil, in public life, that Apartheid ended, but then, after being oppressed for a whole long time, all the non-white people realised that the white people still, not only did they, were they advantaged, they also then didn't have to do anything post-Apartheid, they just carried on with their normal lives, and go "Everyone can do what they want now, yay! We wouldn't have voted for the Nats anyway". So for the last 20 years they didn't have to do anything either, so I think people get legitimately angry about that.

Racial tensions were also noted in the Russian focus group.

Daria refers to the proliferation of guest workers in Moscow, most of whom come from the Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

> I really regret that before, before *perestroika*, in our town, there were not so many guest workers and day labourers, because now they have totally overrun the city…and cause, honestly, many problems.

Dmitri shared her preoccupation, expressed from an economic point of view: "Our government acts like it has a greater responsibility to them than to its own people. No wonder these things [xenophobic attacks against foreigners] happen: people are angry and resentful".

3.11 Freedom: A Means or an End?

The notion of freedom was explored at length and from a variety of perspectives by most respondents. One of the central debates surrounded the question of whether freedom is a good in and of itself, or a means to an end. On this, the respondents appeared to have been evenly divided. Mark was adamant that freedom was what the transition was really about, and that equality, in general, is the means with which freedom can be achieved.

> *Mark*: You have that question like, "Is the society that you want free or equal?" or something. And it's interesting, and it's of course a totally easy thing for somebody who's not poverty stricken to answer, and I'm aware of that, but I chatted about this quite extensively to a friend of mine. Even

people who were pro-equality, to a certain extent, I don't think anyone can be for pure equality. I'm suspicious of egalitarians, but I still think that people want some sort of equality so that people can be free. No one actually wants equality for equality's sake, just like you don't want a car and a house and healthcare, well, they are ends in themselves to a certain extent, but the reason they're desirable is because, if you have that, you can self-actualise and do what you want. And so we need to bear in mind, when we're making trade-offs, which are inevitable, and maybe initially you need to make equality versus freedom trade-offs, but bearing in mind that the whole reason we're trying to do this is so that we can be free in the end. Maybe that was the French experience, something about that. It's been something I've been thinking about. You look at Libya, they had free healthcare, free education, and no one got upset about it for forty years, and then suddenly, Gaddafi is the worst thing ever. But you know to a certain extent, people had a price that they were bought out at. Freedom was traded off for material stuff, and then eventually it wasn't enough anymore. It wasn't good enough. And so, I think that proves that freedom is really something that probably we hold as more important. But then again, that's easy for me to say, [laughs], but I still think it's true.

The Russian focus group also expressed a unanimous preference for freedom over equality.

Interviewer: What do you think, what's more important, freedom or equality?
Natalia: Freedom.
Daria: Freedom.
Ekaterina: Freedom is always more important than everything.

By contrast, Lebo and Leonie feel that freedom is a means to an end.

Interviewer: Do you think freedom has value on its own?
Leonie: I don't think freedom has value on its own. Freedom in terms of us being able to vote, in terms of…
Lebo: …Education!

There was also a fierce debate regarding the meaning of economic freedom.

For Mark, economic freedom as it is used in ANC political statements is an "oxymoron" because he believes that government intervention to compel businesses to comply with racial and class quotas has a constraining, rather than liberating, effect on the economy. On the other hand, Buyi and Zandile feel that economic freedom is the logical next step after achieving political freedom. For them, economic freedom means guarantees of equal access to economic resources just as political freedom meant equal access to political resources.

3.12 "People Were Feeling Something at That Time": The Hollowing Out of Emotion

One key facet of these young people's attitude to the past concerned the desire to feel – a yearning to experience what they perceived as more authentic or stronger feelings that people used to have in the past.

Consider this exchange between Lebo and Leonie:

> *Lebo*: Whenever those songs are heard and sung, besides the angry songs, the messages in those songs, you can actually feel the people who wrote the songs or composed the songs back then were actually feeling something. They just have that feeling, you know, it's like you go back to where they were, even though you weren't, and sort of like…
> *Leonie*: …You feel their pain.
> *Lebo*: Exactly, you feel the pain that they were in when they composed those songs, you know?
> *Leonie*: Songs like *Shoot the Boer*, a lot of Afrikaners are very uncomfortable about the song because they feel threatened by it, but I feel they're missing the point. They don't want to see the other side of the picture. As a black person, it's not just a song. It arouses a lot of emotion.
> *Lebo*: Cause, you know when, I don't know much history based on the song, but I know that the person, or the people, who composed that song, I don't think they just sat down and just wrote the song. It was because of whatever they were going through at that time that the song came to be. So I don't

> think it was meant to, you know, that it was because maybe people were being racist. It's because people were feeling something at that time.

The implicit assumption here seems to be that feelings and emotions are no longer experienced as sharply, as fully, as vividly. These statements harmonise with Bauman's concept of "liquid love" (2003), which identifies the destruction (literally – liquidation) of social bonds as an essential component of post-modernity. It also evokes the "hollowing out of identity" identified by Lyotard (McGuigan, 2006:10), itself a symptom of the "thinning and hollowing out of existence" itself (Fraskas, 2002:97) and the attendant neoliberal "hollowing out" of the state.

3.13 Turning the Tables: Interrogating the Interrogator

What of the interrogator? Alone to have attended all the interviews and focus groups, he (I) was far from a neutral party to the conversation about nostalgia. There were two dominant ways in which the interrogator made his presence felt. Though he is the researcher, he could easily have been the subject.

Born on the threshold of *perestroika* but having grown up in the West, his investigation of nostalgia in young people who have grown up in transition is decidedly personal. Confused about his own identity, disconnected from the lived experience of his parents, marooned both temporally and geographically from the land of his birth (the USSR), he is determined to fill an emotional and narrative void. He is an inveterate hoarder, obsessed with forgetting and loss. Long a left-wing Socialist, his politics have steadily drifted towards increased humanism at the expense of theoretical radicalism, which may be a consequence of a burgeoning embourgeoisement. He is nostalgic for the USSR, but is beginning to wonder what, exactly, that means or entails.

Over the course of the questioning, the interrogator exposes many of his beliefs and opinions on the subjects that he is investigating. Below is a chronicle of some of his prejudices and preoccupations, as revealed in his questions and asides during the interviews and focus groups.

Some of these preoccupations betray themselves in the following exchange with Buyi and Zandile:

> *Interviewer*: I often think about this, because in Russia we went from Communism to capitalism and I sometimes talk to people, and I think about it, and I'm like, "I don't actually remember what it was like".
> *Buyi*: Yeah.
> *Interviewer*: I feel like I know what it's like, and I ask myself, "How do I know that?" How do I know what it was like, or that it was better? I don't know the answer to that question.

Tellingly, when Buyi says that it used to be safer before people got greater freedom and wealth, the interrogator uses that opportunity to comment: "Ironic: When you had no freedom, you felt more free", before asking: "Are you guys happy that you're living now, where you are, or do you wish you were born in another time?" – a leading question?

The interrogator reveals his position that the freedoms gained after the transition from Communism were, for many people, impossible to actualise, and, therefore, somehow not fully authentic.

> In Russia, they were like, "OK, now you have democracy!", but everyone is still poor, and only a certain, very few people are able to use that freedom. So what was the point? A lot of people are like, "What was the point of democracy? What was the point? It did nothing for us". That's why a lot of people in Russia feel upset, and they like the fact that now we are ruled by a very strong man who doesn't care about democracy very much, because they're like, "We don't care about democracy either!"

He continues:

> And now we're free, and we don't live as well as our parents, and we can't use our freedom. It's like, "What does it mean to be free?" Like, you can travel now. Our parents weren't allowed to go to Europe, weren't allowed to leave Russia. Now you can go anywhere, but who can afford a plane ticket?

> So sure, go ahead, you're free to go wherever, to America, well "Yeah, Ok, thanks!" It's almost like you're taking the piss, you're taunting me.

He also suspects that the world has become more liquid and uncertain, and that a retreat into the past might be the expression of a desire to return to more solid foundations.

> I wonder if there something categorical about slogans like that, those frumpy old slogans are so categorical. You know, they're like, "This is the proletariat, and this is the means of production, and were gonna say things like, "We say categorically". This word "categorically' pops up in the actual rhetoric a lot. "We categorically say that, you know, the expropriation of the this and that", and I wonder if that has something to do with the world becoming less and less categorical about everything, and we are trying to rescue categories.

Later, he expresses the opinion that the history of the Soviet Union was tragic because the country's demise stemmed from a case of ever-increasing and ultimately unfulfillable expectations.

> There's also this irony that like, I think, here's what happened is that the Soviet Union actually did a lot for the Russian people. When the Communists came to power we were peasants, literally just like walking barefoot. Orlando Figes wrote that book *A People's Tragedy*, it was an amazing account of life before, after and during the Revolution, and so, pre-revolutionary life in Russia is the most dystopian terror I've ever seen in my life, you wouldn't wish it on anyone. So anyway, they sort of created this country, and they educated, clothed, brought people up, and that's why the most fervent Communists were those who knew the old regime, they, no matter what Stalin's crimes, they will never forget, but then the young generation, who came into all those gifts, they didn't care anymore that their grandparents started off walking barefoot. Their frames of reference were too sophisticated. For them it was no longer good enough, so the Party, they became victims of the expectations that they raised for the country, victims of their own success.

> They could no longer deliver, they couldn't deliver. It's almost like, the analogy is the 5 year plan. If you over-fulfil it, you get a medal, but your next plan, the targets will be what you fulfilled last time. So if you over-fulfilled your last plan, you're basically setting yourself up for failure. And that's what the country did. So it was sad, cause you get diminishing returns but exponential expectations. So they start to diverge. So the party is like, "We are so powerful, we will give you anything!" And the people are like, "Fine, in that case, we *want* everything!" And the Party is like, "Shit!" I think it's a tragedy, in the Greek sense. The whole thing, the history of the Soviet Union, is like one great epic tragedy.

At one point during his interview, Mark orchestrated a surprising role-reversal, assuming the role of questioner and putting the interrogator under a biographical spotlight.

> *Mark*: So you were like 9 or 10 when the USSR collapsed?
> *Interrogator*: Yeah, 6 or 7.
> *Mark*: Were you in the country at the time or were you in England?
> Interviewer: I was in the States at the time. So we saw Gorbachev, I actually remember his resignation speech.
> *Mark*: What were you doing in the States, were you in school?
> *Interviewer*: My dad was in school, I guess. We saw Gorbachev give his resignation speech on TV.
> *Mark*: In DC?
> *Interviewer*: No at that point we were in Massachusetts. Before that, my dad was studying at George Washington, studying business, it was a Soviet programme. Gorbachev. It was a *perestroika* programme to bring Soviet executives to the States and train them in the new ways of doing business. And we were hoping that we would come back to Russia, maybe even get some Moscow post for my dad.
> *Mark*: Hectic!

Many of the words I use in the dialogue reproduced below – "collapse", "stranded", "return", "come back", "believer", "privatisation", "lost", "hard", "inflation", "freedom", "ruined",

"hustler" and "default" – follow a contamination arc of the sort proposed by McAdams et al (2001).

> *Interviewer*: Instead what happened was, it collapsed, they were just finishing up their second year, the programme was over, my dad's job was privatised, he got asked to go, and yeah, we were stranded, a lot of people were stranded, in the States. My dad was a true believer, he believed in *perestroika*, in the project, he thought, we were going to the States, he took it at face value, so we kept everything in Russia as it was, we expected to return, but none of the other people in the programme expected to come back. When we left, to go to DC, they took all their assets with them. The whole idea, we now realised, at least 60% of the idea, for this programme, was to get Soviet assets out of the country. We lost all our savings when the Soviet Union collapsed, but it was fine, because my dad found this job, but then he lost it again in 1998 [laughter]. Finally, that was hard. Since 1998, my dad was not really able to get back to that state where he was doing well, so that was hard.
> *Mark*: So what happened in 1990s to the currency and stuff? Did just everything stop going? Did it just implode? What happened if you had savings in Russia?
> *Interviewer*: Russia, under Communism, and this was the other glitch, actually, we saved up a lot of money when we left for the States, and we put it in Soviet savings binds, a lot of money was like, 3000 roubles, that would be enough to buy a car or a down-payment on a flat, and we thought when we came back, that was the plan. But when we came back, that money was worth, it became something like 30,000 roubles to a dollar. And we had like, you know, inflation and stuff, everybody lost absolutely all their savings. Everybody did. So, first of all, that, so when people are like, "In the 90s there was freedom", well, that freedom coincided with everyone getting ruined overnight. Uh, now, people who were clear-sighted kept their money in dollars, but you see, we didn't do that, and we were like upper-middle, like educated people, we didn't keep our money in dollars, we didn't. Besides, it was illegal.

The perceived injustice of post-Communist Russia's formative moments also comes through clearly in the following comments, which indicate that, even for this citizen that came of age in post-Communist Russia, a crisis of legitimacy continues to surround the very foundations of a market economy.

> *Interviewer*: You had to be able to hustle. That's how - the only people who came out well out of this whole thing were people who were kind of hustlers.
> *Mark*: Where did they get money to start off with?
> *Interviewer*: Well that's the thing. Many of these rich Russians were gangsters to begin with. They're not gangsters because they're rich, it's the other way round. And it's like, yeah it's funny. And then people finally clawed their way through it and in the 1998 default they lost their new savings all over again, and of course, people who kept their money in dollars then were Ok. So we didn't lose any money in '98. After that, nobody wanted to invest in Russia anymore. That was like the end.
> *Mark*: It's fascinating.
> *Interviewer*: Until 10 years ago, people kept their money in a refrigerator. Even now, you go to our house, and take a book off the shelf, and then a $100 bill falls out. My dad has terrible memory, so like anytime he gets some money he'll squirrel it away into a book. I'm like, "Dad!"
> *Mark*: It makes reading exciting! [laughter]

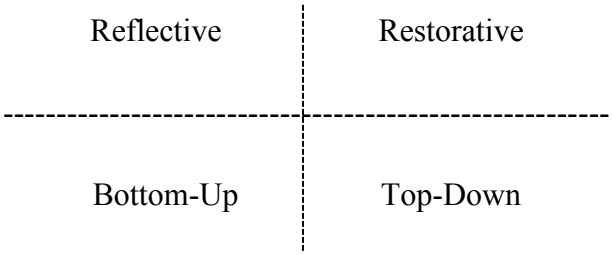
What is interesting about the above comments is how closely they reflect the values and experiences of an earlier generation. For example, in an oral history of Russia's baby boom generation, informant Natalia P. tells the historian Donald Raleigh that in Soviet times, "you could earn a lot of money only in some criminal way. Now there is a legal way to do so. If before our legal code prosecuted 'speculation', now it's called business" (2006:97).

3.14 Putting it All Together

What did the interviews and focus groups reveal about the way young people interact with nostalgia? The hermeneutic analysis structure chosen in this study precluded the use of hypotheses and other deductive techniques during data collection and the initial analysis stage

(above) in order to facilitate an open-ended approach to the data. Now that the data has been explored in this way, we can try to map it onto a more theoretical discussion of nostalgia.

Combining the two cleavages suggested by Boym and Velikonja, nostalgia can be thought of as a quadrant:



Where on this graph might different aspects of the above narratives be plotted? What follows is a series of reflections and attempts to contextualise and situate some of the above themes into the body of contemporary scholarship on memory, nostalgia, and (post)modernity.

As mentioned previously, the conflation of space and time is a fundamental element of all nostalgia, which itself had conceptually migrated from the spatial to the temporal over the last three centuries. This is compounded by an aspect specific to transition societies whereby a socio-political transition is seen in spatial and geographic terms. For example, following the transition from Communism, counties of Eastern Europe discursively "left" the East and "entered" the West (Oushakine, 2010). South Africa, too, was readmitted into the "international fold", and became a part of Africa rather than an outpost of Europe.

The majority of the nostalgic statements made by the respondents can be classified as reflective, an attitude to the past that is both romantic and critical. Even as some respondents indicated that aspects of life were better under the previous regime or during the struggle years, none showed any desire to actually have lived through those epochs. A somewhat problematic aspect concerns the stated desire, among two of the South African respondents, to "reclaim" the assets and opportunities that had been forcefully taken away from their black ancestors. This preoccupation seems to hew closely to Boym's definition of restorative nostalgia, the revanchist "anti-modern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths" that occasionally manifests itself in "total reconstructions of monuments of the past" (2001b:41). According to Boym, restorative nostalgia consists of two

primary tropes: “the restoration of origins and the conspiracy theory” (2001b:42). On the other hand, argues Janelle Wilson, people who appear to desire restoration are, in fact, longing to “recapture a mood or spirit” of that previous time (2004:26), which may explain some of my respondents’ preoccupation with a return to a more authentic level of feeling.

Similarly, in terms of the distinction between top-down and bottom-up nostalgia (what Velikonja (2009) termed, respectively, the *culture of nostalgia* and *nostalgia culture*), we can try to plot the interaction between the way young people think about the past and the way it is offered to them by culturally and politically dominant figures such as the ANC and its Youth League president, Julius Malema. The boundary between the culture of nostalgia and nostalgia culture is porous and shifting; each has a bearing on the other, and it is impossible to make definitive assessments regarding causation.

3.15 Nostalgia and the Second Transition

“Nostalgic explosions in general”, writes Boym, “flourish after revolutions” (2001b:43), and contemporary South Africa and Russia have undergone revolutionary changes during their political transitions away from authoritarianism. Yet their transitions were not simply from authoritarianism to democracy, and confinement to openness, but, broadly, from modernity into post-modernity. These two countries have arguably jumped forward in time. For example, prior to the fall of Apartheid and Communism, South Africa and Russia were, to varying extents, lagging behind their Western counterparts economically, technologically, and culturally. By the early 1980s, both countries had entered stagnation periods; in South Africa, an economic slowdown was compounded by an expansion in international sanctions. Therefore, by the time transition had started to occur in the early 1990s and the two countries entered the world stage, they were not just entering from behind a curtain, but from back in time. Over the course of the last two decades, economic, cultural and technological opening has speeded up the development trajectories of both countries, as well as standardising them to an external, global ideal, creating a new dichotomy between the local and the universal where before only the local existed.

What has all this meant for the societies in question and the people living in them? How have they experienced these changes on an individual level? One possibility is that the anguish and yearning of my young respondents could be seen as the lament of newly liberated moderns let

loose in a post-modern environment, a place where, as Terry Eagleton so aptly conjures it, there is "no reality which is not itself already image, spectacle, simulacrum, gratuitous fiction" (1985:65).

How does nostalgia fit into such a conception of this double transition, from authoritarianism to democracy and from modernism to post-modernism? First, it's necessary to try to set down what is meant by modernism and post-modernism in this context. Modernism, as used in this argument, contains three central characteristics: an idea of a movement towards progress and human perfectibility, an implicit anti-market bias, and a faith in newness and self-construction. To be sure, it is a destabilising force, bent on eradicating old complacency and pieties, but in the service of a higher truth or a better future for humanity writ large. Post-modernism shares many of these formal compulsions – the obsession with novelty, disruption, profaneness and flux, but not its deeper preoccupations. As Jameson put it, post-modernism is like "Surrealism without the Unconscious…Chagall's folk iconography without Judaism or the peasants" (1992:174).

Turning to Jameson's work is useful in teasing out some of those other differences. "The deepest and most fundamental feature shared by all the modernisms," he writes, "is…their hostility to the market". Post-modernism, on the other hand, expresses "a resonant affirmation, when not an outright celebration, of the market as such" (1992:305). In addition, post-modernism also lacks the "moral responsibility" so central to the modernist ethos. Jameson mentions Hilton Kramer's contrast between the "moral responsibility of the 'masterpieces' and monuments of classical modernism with the fundamental irresponsibility and superficiality of a post-modernism associated with camp and…'facetiousness'" (1992:57). Lastly, while modernism celebrated the new, post-modernism:

> Wipes the old completely out: nature is abolished along with the traditional countryside and traditional agriculture; even the surviving historical monuments, now all cleaned up, become glittering simulacra of the past, and not its survival. Now everything is new; but by the same token, the very category of the new then loses its meaning and becomes itself something of a modernist survival (Jameson, 1992:311).

Just as the first denizens of the new Russia and South Africa were preparing to start their new lives, it was as if the modernist project was suddenly pulled from under their feet. Confronted with the reality in which "there are no standards to keep up as the finish line moves forward

together with the runner" (Bauman, 1997:40), they find themselves adrift. Adrift, and nostalgic.

But nostalgic for what? Part of it could be an aptly self-referential "nostalgia for nostalgia, for the grand older extinct questions of origin and Telos, of deep time and the Freudian Unconscious, for the dialectic" (Jameson, 1992:156). Or engaged in what Zygmunt Bauman has called the "passionate search for tradition", an existential scuffle that occurs when, "with the drying up of the hi-tech artificial lake of universality, yesterday's putrescent bogs of parochiality glisten invitingly" (1997:79). Or, in Andreas Huyssen's more charitable conception, the quest to unearth "local memories" is intimately linked to the articulation of "unmet cultural needs in a globalizing world" (2003:27).

We can feel the pull of these 'bogs' in the voices of Leonie and Zandile. In the face of the new depthlessness, the young South Africans are pulled in several directions at once. They reach out to the primordial traditions (the village, the patriarchy) as well as to the modernist, revolutionary impulses that were originally supposed to target those backward, regressive practices; as well as the consumerist imperatives that have ended up, finally, triumphing over them both. Yet the dominant idiom and point of reference remains a nostalgic one – the anti-Apartheid struggle of their mythical forebears, its songs, slogans, lexicon and costumes. Why?

Nostalgia is one of the hallmarks of our interaction with the advent of the post-modern. As Marshall McLuhan declared while the United States hovered, tentatively, over the threshold into this new age: "When faced with a totally new situation, we tend always to attach ourselves to the object, to the flavour of the most recent past. We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future" (1967:25). Nostalgia is about loss, and because "it is only after the radical break with the past that a sense of loss could be properly experienced" (Boym, 2001:150), it stands to reason that the all-effacing nature of a post-modern rift would provide just the right sort of context for nostalgia to flourish.

How is this nostalgia expressed and enacted? It would be helpful here to refer to Karl Marx and Jean Baudrillard. In the *18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, Marx describes the similarly paradoxical affinity of the 1848 revolutionaries for the new and the old:

> Just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of

> revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language (Marx, 1937).

Is this what the students are doing, anxiously conjuring up the spirits of the past, when they sing struggle songs and throw in their lot with Julius Malema by calling for a nationalisation of the mines? Or has there been a rupture between the borrowed language of old-time revolutionary socialism and the reality that it represents or obscures? I want to argue that there is a fundamental difference between the misdirected militancy of Marx's '48ers and the current crop of would-be ANC radical youth. Though no-doubt a historical mediocrity akin to Louis Napoleon, Malema is not his modern reincarnation; not a bait-and-switch pied-piper of the working classes, a distraction from the 'real' revolutionary project. That might well have been his role in a previous, modernist age – perhaps as a garden-variety Quisling. But these are no longer modern times. Today, Julius Malema (and one might use his name as a sloppy shorthand for "ANC youth radicalism") is not a fake revolutionary obscuring a "true" revolution, but rather a fake revolutionary obscuring the fact that there is no real revolution happening in South Africa today. In this sense, he has become an embodiment of Baudrillard's simulacrum – the copy (of revolution) that conceals the absence of an original.

All this is not to say that the impulses of my interlocutors are less than wholehearted, or genuine. Indeed, their invocation of the struggle most closely resembles a form of Walter Benjamin's "revolutionary nostalgia", defined by Terry Eagleton as "the power of active remembrance as a ritual summoning and invocation of the traditions of the oppressed in violent constellation with the political present" (1985:68). Yet for all its ostensible earnestness, the most that this nostalgic zeal can do is, in Marx's words, reanimate the ghost of revolution rather than resurrect its true spirit.

It's possible that the young people themselves suspect as much; resisting this realisation, they wrap themselves in the shifting armour of eclecticism, resolving "not to swear consistency and loyalty to anything or anybody" (Bauman, 1997:89). And it is this very eclecticism that betrays their post-modern condition. After all, eclecticism, wrote Lyotard, "is the zero degree of contemporary [post-modern] culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonalds food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games" (1986:77).

Consider the following dialogue between Buyi and Zandile:

> *Buyi*: We're lucky to have grown up in a society which allows you to be whatever you want to be. If you want to skateboard, doesn't mean because you're black you can't do it. If you want to surf, then surf. Who you are is "whatever".
> *Zandile*: Or if you want to sing opera!
> *Buyi*: Mmm!
> *Zandile*: You can!
> *Buyi*: Take a bit of whatever is good for you, and just be yourself.
> *Interviewer*: That's good to hear!
> *Buyi*: Not limited to anything.
> *Interviewer*: Well you probably get judged a little bit, right?
> *Zandile*: Yeah…
> *Buyi*: You get judged, not even a little bit, but whatever…
> Zandile: Who cares!
> *Buyi*: What is it going to do for you to think what everybody else wants you to think but you are not living up to what you want to. So it's a matter of decisions: what do you want for yourself? Who are you?

"Who you are is 'whatever'": such hedging is coupled with anger at the "betrayal" committed by the preceding generation. Bauman was correct in noting that past experience, constructed retrospectively, becomes known mainly through its disappearance: "what we think the past had, is what we know we do not have" (1997:87). So what was it that they know they don't have, and which they blame their predecessors for squandering? As Leonie said, "You've got it all in your hands. You know, they could have just grabbed it and just, I don't know how to put it, but made the best of what they had. But it's like they had it and then they relaxed".

How similar these sentiments are to those expressed by a French rioter in 2006: "Our generation is saying we are angry that the [1968 students] didn't find a lasting solution" (Chrisafis, 2006). Or this, from an anonymous German writer quoted by Irving Howe: "There's no longer a society to write about. In former years, you knew where you stood: the peasants read the Bible; the maniacs read *Mein Kampf*. Now people no longer have any opinions; they have refrigerators. Instead of illusions, we have television, instead of tradition, the Volkswagen" (Howe, 1959 in Waugh, 1992:26). You knew where you stood. Or, indeed,

there was such a thing as standing, standing still, standing on solid ground. Today's young people are not just nostalgic for opinions; they are perhaps equally nostalgic for Volkwagens and refrigerators (and even, perhaps, the Bible itself!) – detritus of a welfare state capitalism that was defined by solid possession rather than liquid accumulation: these days, "no amount of acquisitions and exciting sensations is ever likely to bring satisfaction" (Bauman, 1997:40).

Is this all so much teenage histrionics? After all, didn't Halbwachs himself establish that "there is a kind of retrospective mirage that by which a great number of us persuade ourselves that the world of today has less colour and is less interesting than it was in the past, in particular regarding our childhood and youth" (1992:48)? Yes. Except that post-modern life *does* have less colour, if by colour we mean depth. In other words, we might be paranoid, but also, they really are out to get us.

Nostalgia, thus, is as much a manifestation of the post-modern condition as an attempt at revolt against it. In an age of perpetual obsolescence, nostalgia can "provide a bulwark against… disappearance, to counter our deep anxiety about the speed of change and the ever-shrinking horizons of time and space" (Huyssen, 2003:23). Seen in this light, an upsurge in nostalgia appears over-determined: caused by the psychic disruptions of free-market reforms and dissatisfaction with the material achievements of the new regimes, nostalgia for a "better" time may be the only solid thing left in a liquid world.

According to Boym, nostalgia is also at least partly a reaction to a new dichotomy whereby the nostalgic subject yearns to retreat back into the local and the particular. "Nostalgia is an ache of temporal distance and displacement" (2001b:44). It is a sentiment expressed by respondents who professed to being nostalgic for a farm, a village, or just the land, which also happened to be places that they used to visit when they were children. Mark's allusions to 19th century England is particularly apt in expressing the similarities between the flux and uncertainty produced by South Africa's present transition to a post-industrial, finance-based society and Britain's original industrialisation. As Janelle Wilson has written, nostalgia is "a psychological adaptation to circumstances of rapid culture change during which individuals fear becoming obsolete" (2004:29).

If we adopt Wilson's definition of nostalgia as a "longing for a past that was more simple and certain, and less materialistic and commercially driven" (2004:28), then we may begin to see

this new nostalgia as a potential reaction to the sudden opening of political and economic life. Fred Davis (1979) declared that nostalgia is a response to discontinuity. And what is a force of greater discontinuity than capitalism, turning all that is solid into air? Capitalism thus appears to be a perfect trigger for nostalgia, representing as it does the forces of materialism, commerce, individuality and flux.

Indeed, if nostalgia "is a direct or indirect comparison between past and current experiences" (Davis, 1979 in Greenberg, 2006:206), then it could be seen as a sentiment of criticism, even dissent, against South Africa's rapid integration into the high speed global financial system. At the same time, however, none of those who expressed disapproval of the commercialism, materialism and individualism of the present were willing to change their behaviour to avoid or circumvent those faults.

Many of the student narratives traverse the distinction made by the psychologists McAdams et al. (2001) between redemption and contamination. According to this classification, recounted earlier, the person nostalgic for the past either sees time as a narrative in which a historical bad has been redeemed, or one in which a historical good has been spoilt. Certainly, contamination is a recurring theme. According to the respondents, life in the recent past was better in many ways, and the trajectory of the last 20 years has included the erosion of community spirit, mutual respect, family values and personal safety. At the same time, many of the same respondents described a situation of redemption, for example in the way that the historical evils and injustices of Apartheid have been overcome through a more inclusive education system and the advent of racial equality. For the Russian respondents, redemption took place in the form of greater openness, personal choice and consumer freedom – aspects of life carefully suppressed under the previous regimes.

One of the central aspects surrounding the young people's fascination with the anti-Apartheid struggle relates to what Frederick Jameson has called the *nostalgia mode*, a means through which post-modernism seeks to reinvent the past through modern terms and something that Jameson considers to be inauthentic and wrong. Indeed, just as Jameson lamented the inability of post-modernist culture to express itself through anything other than references to the past, the contemporary South African respondents with whom I spoke seemed to almost universally couch references to present-day debates (over, say, education, or nationalisation and so-called economic freedom) in terms of the struggle.

It seems that nostalgia may not just be a (potentially dissident) response to the advent of globalised capital. It is also, on at least one level, conditioned by those same forces of globalised capital that Jameson had established as having been behind the original rise of post-modern culture in the West some thirty years ago. According to Batcho, nostalgia serves three main functions: self-enhancement, alignment with a cultural worldview, and the fostering of close relationships (1995 in Greenberg, 2006:210). In this way, feelings of nostalgia are closely connected with issues surrounding cultural identity, interpersonal bonds, and selfhood. One frequently occurring nostalgia expressed by respondents concerned a desire to return to "past" behavioural modes in which authority and respect were more strictly enforced. That mode is contrasted with the present, "Western" way of life in which it is acceptable to look one's parents in the eye, call one's siblings by their first names (rather than the more deferential "brother" or "sister") and even openly kiss one's boy or girlfriend on the street in view of the neighbours. In the past, this kind of behaviour would not have been allowed, for two reasons. One was the grip of traditional values on the part of young people, and the other was the greater interest and involvement of people in the lives of their neighbours. The decline in both of these tendencies is associated with the expansion of liberal capitalist democracy into hitherto autonomous areas of life; a kind of second colonisation. Respondents appreciated that with this come newfound personal freedom and agency, but at the same time, decry the intrusion of the 'universal' into what was formerly the realm of the "local".

What is identity if not the retention of an autonomous space governed by such localised and unique ritual? In his seminal text, *Between Memory and History*, Pierre Nora (1998) addresses just such a concern: the erosion, due to rapid change and progress, of spaces of memory in our daily lives at the expense of an encroaching sense of history, and the collapse of collective memory in favour of a democratising mass culture. Memory, in his conception, is ever-evolving, organic expression of a collectivity's ongoing narrative ("life"), while history is the reconstruction of something that has already happened. Something of this opposition can be gleaned from Buyi and Zandile's recounting of what they perceive to be an arrogant rejection of village life by upwardly mobile, middle class black South Africans. In looking down at people who use cow manure to insulate the walls of their houses, they are forfeiting their identity and seeking to become white. Because progress, in the form of contemporary global capitalism, is associated with the West and therefore whiteness, Buyi

and Zandile talked of the difficulty of embracing progress without relinquishing their racial identity and self-respect.

Just as Nora (1998) described the losing battle between localised memory and an impersonal, generalised history, Buyi and Zandile describe a losing battle between localised culture and the universality of white socioeconomic development. How does nostalgia fit into all this? The desire to return to traditional forms of upbringing is an attempt to salvage an aspect of "collective memory", without, for example, returning to plastering their houses with cow manure. Yet in its very targeted, piecemeal and *á la carte* approach to which aspects of culture to retain and which to let wither, the two women reveal themselves to be already operating in a form of post-modern, nostalgia-mode thinking. Of course, rather than condemn it as a-historical pastiche, another, more charitable way of conceptualising Buyi and Zandile's desire would be to view it as an example of Boym's reflective nostalgia. It is critical, selective and modern, involving the deliberate application of agency.

"The quest for memory is the search for one's history", declared Nora (1998:12). And indeed, there is a strong connection between identity, memory and nostalgia. The young people I spoke to did not openly refer to their impressions of the past as a way of rejecting, or even dissenting from, the present. Nor did they think of the past in terms of a goal towards which they can proceed politically, in the sense of a restorative vision. Instead, they viewed and used the past as a way to orientate themselves in the tumult of the present; a rather conservative way of thinking about nostalgia. Its prime purpose in the lives of these young people appears to be a means of helping them adapt to the world rather than radically reconfigure it or their place in it. As Wilson wrote, "What we are nostalgic for reveals what we value, what we deem worthwhile and important" (2004:26). But, for this group of people at least, nostalgia is not quite a roadmap or a battle cry.

3.16 Politics and Nostalgia

What are the possible political implications of such a relationship towards the past? Is these people's nostalgia a critical or reactionary impulse? Is it an expression of a grassroots political identity or the reflection of a pre-fabricated vision laid down by dominant socio-political forces? And what role does nostalgia play in their ambivalent relationship to the ANC and the United Russia party? In order to begin addressing the above points, it might be

helpful to consider to what extent has the anti-Apartheid struggle become a metaphor, and to what extent a simulacrum. According to Baudrillard, "when the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (1995 in Seidman and Alexander, 2008:233). In *Simulacra and Simulation*, he describes the "proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second hand truth, objectivity and authenticity" which accompanies this nostalgia. "There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared" (ibid).

Baudrillard's discussion of simulacra applies to the experiences of these young people in present-day South Africa. The struggle songs preferred by Leonie and Lebo can be re-imagined as precisely the performance of a *figurative* anti-Apartheid struggle in the wake of the disappearance of a *substantive* one; equally, Baudrillard's "myths of origin" concern the imagined, dispossessed agrarian past; and the jostling of a hunger for authentically-lived experience against that hunger's own basis in mere second-hand truth (about the struggle), salvaged from the media and scattered family anecdotes. Does the metaphorical struggle performed by these young people hide a "truer" struggle, or its absence? Does it bear witness to, or detract, from their engagement? For many of the respondents, the struggle against Apartheid is ongoing not in a literal sense, but in a metaphorical one. Nevertheless, the two are functionally and emotionally similar. Because of its implicit level of comparison between an attractive past and a less attractive present, many scholars of nostalgia view the phenomenon as a form of at least passive dissent. However, that does not appear to be the case with the young people I spoke to. Not all of them support the political status quo (though some do), but none seem to hold clearly defined oppositionist views. Moreover, and perhaps counter-intuitively, many of the respondents did not express a desire to avoid or overcome the negative aspects of modernity that they cited.

For example, the Russian focus group member Daria, having talked about the unfairness and inefficiency of Moscow corruption that allowed people to jump the queue at the motor licensing bureau, also admitted to having jumped the queue in such a way herself. Other participants decried the growing materialism of society while vowing to become rich themselves; berated the suburbs for being boring and Indian schools for being racist, and then proclaimed their plans to one day move to those very suburbs and enrol their future children in just such schools. Thus, whatever nostalgia they might have for past ways of doing things does not seem to have impeded their willingness to adapt to contemporary modes of living. In

this sense, nostalgia for imagined past times does not translate, among the participants, into concrete actions of dissent.

If nostalgia is not a protest strategy, then how does it fit into transition politics? For many of the participants, the nostalgic feelings they expressed were largely compatible with the political status quo. For example, one of the strongest nostalgia currents expressed by the black South African respondents involved a veneration of the anti-Apartheid struggle, a movement that they endowed with a host of positive features. According to the idea of the struggle expressed by Leonie and Lebo, it was a time of heightened social solidarity, sacrifice, lack of materialism and a greater sense of moral integrity than is present in modern times. While such nostalgia can be read as a criticism of the ANC-controlled government and its failure to deliver that kind of society, it is also fully consistent with the ruling party's vision of the struggle. According to this narrative, the fight against Apartheid was a mass popular struggle led by the ANC which successfully mobilised most black South Africans into a unified, selfless and coherent guerrilla warfare campaign that finally resulted in free elections and the end of white minority rule (Dlamini, 2009). As it is a vision that is very important to the Party's appeal, the fact that these young people's nostalgia endorses this conception can be seen as an endorsement, rather than criticism. It is also a vision that has undergone much critical scrutiny. According to Fiona Forde (2011), this narrative exaggerates not only the role of the ANC in the struggle but also the level of popular involvement in the anti-Apartheid movement.

As Dlamini and others have demonstrated, the average black South African did not actively participate in the struggle. Moreover, the anti-Apartheid movement was fragmented, often elitist, internally incoherent, and frequently engaged in in-fighting – a far cry from the idealised scenario propagated by the government and endorsed by the young people interviewed in this study. Moreover, those who voted for the ANC specifically attributed their support of the Party to its (idealised) role in the struggle, which suggests that this positive legacy overcame, in the minds of these young voters, the party's reputation for corruption, poor service delivery, racially divisive tactics and materialism. If that is the case, then the ANC has more to gain from nostalgia for the good old days of the struggle than it has to lose from any ensuing unfavourable comparisons between the heroic past and the tainted present.

Is the ANC actively curating the "nostalgia vote"? Though that question lies beyond the scope of the present study, there are reasons to suggest that the party is not unaware of the electoral attraction of its struggle mythology. For example, former Youth League leader Julius Malema actively and consciously features the party's struggle credentials in speeches at rallies and as part of electoral campaigning. The youngest senior member of the ANC, and the only one without significant struggle credentials, Malema has nevertheless managed to make himself synonymous with the anti-Apartheid movement. Largely, he has done this through symbolic means: the singing of struggle songs, the adoption of a military-style beret, and the appropriation of archaic, militant left-wing slogans. His name and policy recommendations are frequently employed during service-delivery and educational protests. Malema, himself, at 31, only slightly older than university age, is a particularly interesting figure because of his large visibility among South African youth, including the students I interviewed. While their assessment of Malema varied, many respondents agreed with his militant, old-school message and revolutionary style. However, while Malema often figures as a spokesperson of dissent, he is also a senior member of the ruling party; the education protests at which he is cited target the education policies of the government he serves. An argument can therefore be made that Malema – the embodiment of South African political nostalgia – has helped to funnel the nostalgia of other young people towards state-sanctioned goals.

In the case of the Russian focus group, political implications were more opaque, due partly to the less overt nature of respondents' nostalgia. Nevertheless, there is some reason to believe that a certain synergy between nostalgic desire and dominant government narrative exists there too. For example, the communal activities of the Komsomol that members of the Russian focus group fondly described have been resurrected, to a certain degree, by pro-Putin youth groups such as *Nashi*, which have appropriated many of the activities and some of the aesthetic of their Soviet-era predecessors.

Moreover, the respondents' ambivalence towards the Soviet past – a period characterised as better in some ways but archaic and unsuitable for the modern times – also faithfully mirrors the approach of the ruling government. Since coming to power in 1999, Vladimir Putin has invested significant political capital in merging the two main poles of Russian voters: those nostalgic for the lost Soviet Union and those who are pro-business and in favour of integrating Russia closer into Western-style capitalism. Putin's success in uniting these often contradictory strands of public opinion has been documented in a series of independent polls

that showed rising support for his government's pro-market policies among those nostalgic for the Soviet Union (Williams, 2011).

Indeed, in the Russian scenario, nostalgia for the Soviet Union cannot unambiguously be seen as a mode of political dissent. In the early 1990s, shortly after the collapse of the USSR and the start of Boris Yeltsin's tenure as president of democratic Russia, a surge of Soviet nostalgia corresponded with an acute worsening of the country's material situation. Between 1992 and 1998, Yeltsin's popularity ratings acquired an inverse relationship with levels of political nostalgia. In those circumstances, it became possible to characterise this nostalgia as an impulse of dissent or at least political criticism. However, after the inauguration of Vladimir Putin in 1999, the fever-lines of nostalgia and presidential approval came gradually together (Nikitin, 2011). By the mid-2000s, those nostalgic for the USSR were most likely to support the current government. What does Soviet nostalgia come to mean when it is decoupled from political critique?

One way to approach this question might be to return to Velikonja's nostalgia typology and ask: is the kind of nostalgia expressed by respondents an example of grassroots or top-down culture? It appears to be a mix of the two. This polyvalence is particularly apparent in the relationship between struggle songs, the people who sing them, and the government. Are struggle songs critical or reactionary? From one perspective, they are critical, because they are frequently sung during protest actions, many of which explicitly target the policies or failures of the ruling ANC government. The paradox of struggle songs, however, is that they are sung as often in protest at the policies of the ruling ANC government as at pro-ANC rallies, often by the same people, on these very different occasions. As one commentator observed, "if Thabo Mbeki comes round, or Mandela, to remember the uprising, people still see the need to go to the meeting and chant the slogans of the party of liberation: the ANC, slayer of Apartheid. But the next day, they are fighting evictions, and denouncing the ANC as a party of neoliberalism" (Desai, 2003 in Gibson, 2005:100).

How to account for such discrepancy? Nigel Gibson argues that both conceptions of the ANC are correct, and that there is no inherent contradiction in peoples' perception; rather, it is the ANC that has become schizophrenic. When it comes time to vote, the idea of the ANC as the historic liberation movement seems to outweigh its current picture as a neoliberal party of power: what role might nostalgia occupy in all of this return to the fold? The ANC certainly appears to encourage a sentimental nostalgia for the struggle. Symbols of the struggle are

widely circulated among black South Africans. The most common of these are struggle songs: chants and songs with political lyrics pertaining to liberation from Apartheid. The most famous of these is the controversial song *Shoot the Boer*, which originated as a militant hymn against white landowners, who were considered to be the lynchpins of the Apartheid regime. Struggle songs are seen to be relevant in modern South Africa by many people disenchanted with the standard of living, with ANC failures to deliver public and social services, and as a protest against what some perceive as insufficiently fast transformation. In this case, the democratic South African government becomes equated with the authoritarian Apartheid government, and the struggle for service delivery and economic opportunities equated with the struggle for freedom and democracy.

However, the very act of singing the songs involves the close group collaboration, sense of unity and common purpose, which are precisely the things that many black South Africans say have become lost in the transition to capitalist polyarchy. High levels of crime and inequality have ruptured black social fabrics forged in the common fight against racial injustice. Singing freedom songs recreates those conditions but also expresses a longing to return to the time of the resistance movement by applying the struggle to present day conditions, even though, in the narrowest sense, the goals of the original struggle – universal suffrage and majority rule, were achieved in 1994. The songs also contain a strong identity component, as most of the lyrics are in Zulu or Xhosa. This aspect gave the songs an additional force during Apartheid: an expression of racial/ethnic, as well as political solidarity.

Other forms of top-down nostalgia can be seen in the ANC's symbolism. The party's logo contains imagery previously associated with the MK armed wing, and the party's rallying cry remains "Amandla", or "power to the people", a slogan shouted in Zulu and Xhosa during Apartheid era protests in support of popular rule. The ANC Youth League makes prominent use of Oliver Tambo, with banners featuring his quote that "A country that does not value its youth does not deserve the future". Furthermore, both the ANC and the ANCYL used the names of prominent freedom fighters in promoting their "Business Networking Lounge", a chance to "interact with ANC officials of the highest level of the ANC structures…and have the opportunity to have breakfast with President Jacob Zuma and the President of the ANCYL, Julius Malema and many other special opportunities"; at the cost of 40,000 or 50,000 rand per person, depending on whether one opts for the "Anton Muziwakhe Lembede Founders Package" or the "Walter Ulyate Max Sisulu Recruiters Package" (Pule, 2011).

Selling exclusive access to elite businessmen does not have many immediate connections to the ANC figures depicted in the marketing, so why does the ANC see the need to incorporate such struggle images?

The ANC's core political brand appears to be predicated on its role as a national liberation movement that brought black majority rule to South Africa. Most of the party's support base remains within the black community, where the country's liberation from Apartheid is considered an event of unique significance (Gumede, 2005). However, there is a subtle difference between declaring that you are the party that brought about a historical victory and declaring that you are the party that continues to support the struggle. The nostalgic component of the ANC's marketing and symbolic positioning is not so much in referencing a historic heritage as in suggesting that the struggle is not over. Thus the party vacillates between recapitulating its achievements in defeating Apartheid, and denying that such a victory has yet occurred. It is the latter phenomenon that presents the more interesting elements of nostalgia, because of nostalgia's core properties of illusion, simulation, and symbolism. Do South Africans really believe that the struggle is continuing to this day? That would be an important question to ask in any follow up investigation. Another important issue to investigate might be the role nostalgia for the struggle plays in the enduring popularity of the ANC among the poor. Are people more drawn to the ANC's legacy status or its promotion of the idea of an enduring struggle? To what extent does the ANC's use of nostalgia – such as the use of struggle songs and regalia – help it gain votes? And, in a related way, to what extent does nostalgia make it difficult to unseat political incumbents?

As Serguei Oushakine argues, "the second life of a symbolic system is motivated not so much by historical or political motivations, but rather by the structural and communicative predicaments of that period" (2010:414). Thus construed, struggle songs and other nostalgic performances can be seen not as expressions of political agreement with ANC policies, but rather as the reaction to the absence of a new language to express the reality of the new times. Transition societies often struggle with redefining their national identities in the face of radical socio-political change. New concepts and ways of living emerge before language – verbal as well as symbolic – catches up with these shifts. One way to deal with this may be to appropriate and recycle the language of the recent past and retool it for a contemporary situation. "Semantic paralysis—one that manifests itself in a futile search for a "new beginning," for instance—is overcome", writes Oushakine, "through an endless exploitation of the formal potential of ready-made symbolic structures and forms" (2010:414). This way,

expressive deficiency is compensated by a stylistic regression. In his essay, Oushakine was referring to post-Communist Russia, but his concept could be plausibly applied to both Russia and South Africa. Let's examine some evidence for this claim. Here are Lebo and Leonie talking about the struggle songs that they sing at student protests.

> *Lebo*: Like, for example, during the [student] strike, we were singing the song *Shoot the Boer*. It's not *Shoot the Boer* that it should be, now it should be: these people, they came into our country, and took everything from us. We are still fighting for the soil, still fighting for better education, for better residential lifestyle. We're still fighting, it's just that context of what we're fighting for is different.
> *Leonie*: We do not mean it in its literal sense.
> *Lebo*: Yeah. We don't. That's why white people should not threatened by these songs. It's not literal. Nobody's going to go out and shoot a white man just you know; it's a different context, we're asking for something different, but the emotion, the passion, is still the same. We're still fighting, mobilising for a better future. We want, we want a decent standard of living.
> *Interviewer*: For me, I think it's interesting, because we talk about the future, but we talk about it in terms of the past. So we say, "we want a better future" but we're singing songs and acting in a way that's like from the past.
> *Lebo*: Yeah. History is repeating itself.

They are adamant that the songs are not to be taken "literally", but rather as expressions of a kind of empathetic kinship with the past. Of course, such desire for feeling is not strange if one considers (post)modernity to be accompanied by the depthlessness described by Jameson as the quintessential feature of the post-modern age.

3.17 Russia and South Africa: Similarities and Differences

While the responses of the Russian and South African interviewees were broadly similar in a number of ways, they also contained some important differences. Both groups repeatedly returned to issues of community, crime and materialism, vices that many felt had been exacerbated by the transition. However, certain subjects were unique to the respective groups. For example, South African respondents mentioned race and tradition as central aspects, but

neither of these subjects featured in my conversation with the Russian focus group. This discrepancy can likely be attributed to two main factors: unlike their South African counterparts, the Russian respondents were all from a single, dominant ethnic group; and race was and remains a much smaller aspect of the Russian and Soviet experience than of the South African. Indeed, because the Apartheid regime classified and segregated every citizen according to race, it would be impossible to talk about history without focusing closely on that issue. Russia is also a much more urbanised and less traditional society than South Africa. Russia's history of Europeanisation and secularisation stretches back much further than South Africa's; as a result, relatively fewer Russian youths are acquainted with traditional culture and upbringing than their South African opposite numbers.

Another interesting divergence between the Russian and South African respondents concerned technology. Every Russian interviewee expressed positive views about mobile phones or computers, aspects of life that were not commented on by the South Africans. It is difficult to speculate why this might have been the case, as both countries enjoy highly advanced and rapidly growing penetration of mobile phone networks. One tentative explanation might be the paucity of communications technology in the Soviet Union, in absolute terms as well as relative to South Africa, whose communication infrastructure, though state controlled and subject to occasional political monitoring, lagged less far behind the West.

Education, a subject very frequently invoked by the South Africans, did not receive such a prominent billing among the Russians. This again can be explained by recent history. Unlike under Soviet Communism, where free and universal education served as a central ideological tenet of the regime, in Apartheid South Africa, education was a very exclusive and bitterly contested area, the site of several tragic and politically significant confrontations such as the Soweto Uprising. It was also intrinsically connected to the entire system of racial identity and discrimination – access to top schools and universities was virtually prohibited to black South Africans, and the new freedom to pursue higher education and gain entry into certain hitherto foreclosed white collar professions is something that many of my black respondents named as the most important achievement of democracy. Education also came up during my conversations with the white South Africans. Kevin, for example, while approving of the new diversity in schools, also noted his perception that the standards and funding of the top level government schools, formerly known as "model C", have been diminished as a result of the pressure to spread out limited resources over a newly expanded pool of students.

Nevertheless, both white and black South African respondents agreed that the opening up of education was a significant net positive, even though a majority of them recognised and decried what they saw as a post-independence drop in academic standards.

Interestingly, none of the groups mentioned anything about foreign politics, patriotism or international standing. This seemed to be a curious omission, particularly for the Russian participants, because previous studies had found Russia's post-Communist decline in international status to be one of the key events associated with Soviet nostalgia in young people. For example, in her quantitative and qualitative study of attitudes to the USSR among Russian and Ukrainian youths, Olena Nikolayenko (2008) identified six main reasons why Russian adolescents regretted the fall of the Soviet Union, the first and most prominent among them being Russia's subsequent loss of influence in the world and the diminution of its leadership in regional cooperation, followed by economic decline and social insecurity; increase in crime; worsening of community relations; and 'unfair' treatment of ethnic Russians abroad (2008:251). As for South Africa, the absence of respondent commentary about international affairs also appears strange, but perhaps for the opposite reason: the fall of Apartheid ended the increasingly crippling trade and sports boycotts and resulted in a dramatic surge in the country's global reputation. Economic sanctions were lifted and the national teams were finally allowed to compete in international sporting competitions, a triumphant return to the fold crowned with South Africa's spectacular win in the 1995 Rugby World Cup. In light of all this, it's hard to explain why none of the respondents, Russian or South African, mentioned any of this.

Even in those areas in which Russian and South African concerns overlapped, there were some subtle but significant differences in emphasis and perception. For instance, while crime was listed as a concern by both sets of respondents, it figured as a more prominent fear among the South Africans. However, this does not reflect comparable differences in the relative post-transition change in crime rates between the two countries. While crime increased sharply in Russia following the fall of the USSR, respondents from that country withheld from using the kind of emotionally charged imagery that was common among the South African group (eg. child rape, murder), even though the increase in crime rates post-1994 was broadly similar.

Interesting variations were observed among the South African respondents, too. For example, none of the white male participants mentioned increases in crime, which was an important

concern for most of the participating black women. Yet perhaps the most fruitful insights can be gleaned from what the South African and Russian responses had in common. The major theme was the decline in community, followed by a rise in materialism and a denunciation of corruption. These modern vices were compared with a concept of life under the previous regime as being more communal, simpler, and with more integrity. However, the advantages of modern life were clearly accepted and recognised. These advantages include access to high technology, education and consumer goods. All in all, while some respondents expressed regret at having missed out on certain aspects of life in the old times, none expressed the desire to have actually lived in the past.

Chapter Four: Nostalgia, Struggle and Ambivalence: Conclusion

What can we glean from this modest research about the ways in which young South Africans and Russians experience nostalgia in their modern lives? What do we hear in the nostalgic experiences of these young people, born on the threshold of two monumental transitions? What sense can we make of their ambivalent feelings of loss and possibility, emancipation and persistent constraints; of their yearning for community that contends with a clear sense of its stifling anachronism?

Two over-arching themes can be identified. The first is that the recent past remains a primary reference point for the young people that I talked to, despite their lack of personal memories of that time. This feature appears to vindicate the Lowenthal-McLuhan contention that, in situations of acute change, we welcome the future through a rear-view mirror. However, such attitudes commingle with a decidedly post-modern approach to integrating the past into everyday life, which is the second theme. There is longing, but it is not of the unquestioningly restorative kind. The past is disassembled, its sights, sounds and flavours examined and rolled around in the mouth, tried out for size, reflected on; the past is looked at metaphorically, eclectically, electively, in keeping with the overall tenets of the present times. Yet there does not seem to be quite the kind of flattening out suggested by Jameson, the extreme lack of historicity that he identified as a hallmark of a post-modern relationship with the past.

So, are my interlocutors the perfect incarnations of Svetlana Boym's reflective nostalgia, carrying around a cool, ironic, contemplative and subversive attitude to the past? In many ways, that appeared to be the case. The word that would perhaps best sum up this sense is ambivalence. When speaking about the Soviet Union, members of the Russian focus group expressed both regret about the loss of certain aspects of Communist life, as well as acknowledging their ultimate undesirability. For example, despite bemoaning the decline in social interaction and communal engagement fostered by socialist youth organizations, Ekaterina quickly pointed out that, on the other hand, such organizations could also be coercive and repressive. Her comments, endorsed by her friends, reflected a strong real preference for freedom, even while acknowledging its high costs in other regards.

However, much of this freedom is framed in terms of consumption: in the possession of electronic gadgets, fashionable clothes, and foreign travel. Such a position may lack the crude reactionary impulses of Boym's restorative nostalgics, but nor can it be seen as wholeheartedly progressive. Bauman describes some of the dangers of conceptualising citizenship in consumption terms. These dangers include the much narrower and higher barriers to entry than even the most flawed forms of democratic politics. The "production of consumers", he writes in *Citizenship and Consumption*, "is one of the most wasteful industries on record" (2007:142). The word wasteful here refers to human waste, which for Bauman is a principal collateral damage of post-modernity: the unemployed, refugees, the excluded. "Quality control", he continues, "is strict and merciless, rejection is swift with sharply reduced chances of rehabilitation, and the ranks of the condemned – of flawed consumers or consumer invalids – swell with every successive advance of the market" (Bauman, 2007:143). The movement from a political to a consumer-defined citizenship is, for Bauman, a kind of retreat, not only from public engagement, but perhaps even more damagingly, from faith in a collectively forged solution, and in the state itself; a retreat irrespective of the personal attitudes of these ambivalent but proactive consumer-citizens, with their obliquely nostalgic yet essentially illusion-free attitude to the recent past. The situation holds equally true for the South African students, who combined the rhetoric of self-creation and desire to pick and choose future life scenarios from a range of past possibilities with a hard-headed acceptance that the freedom to actualise their lives remains dependent on material, rather than personal or collective, empowerment.

Thus, we come to a conflict or paradox between the emancipatory possibilities of the ludic, self-styling, eclectic and individualist aspects of post-modernism, and the oppressive and limiting medium of their expression: that of corporate citizenship. As can be expected, other possible interpretations exist. For example, Michael Schudson argued that "styles of consumer behavior can enlist and enshrine values that serve democracy" (2007:236). He brings up as two examples the consumption of coffee at English coffee houses in the 18th century and, rather more ambiguously, the consumption of McDonalds in contemporary China. And in many ways, my respondents were using consumption as a means to register dissent and widen their boundaries of selfhood, by living in areas they were previously not allowed to live, travelling beyond previously closed borders, and cultivating interests, tastes and behaviours that would have previously been proscribed. Indeed, the very act of "picking and choosing", whether it's about the extent to which one adheres to a traditional way of life,

or reconciles nationalism and liberal activism, can be seen as an empowering example of agency.

Marshall Berman describes modernity as "an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and at the same time threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are" (1995:15). To be modern, according to Berman, "is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air" (1995:345). This is the world that South Africa and Russia expected to find themselves in around 1991. For decades, theirs had, albeit to very different extents, been closed societies forcefully cut off from the rest of the West by political authoritarianism and parochial economic dirigisme. At the same time, the project that preoccupied those who struggled against the regimes was animated by the classic modernist impulses of justice, progress, newness and the determined unsettling of the existing ways of life. Yet the very victorious conclusion of these struggles ended up ushering not the culmination of their promised modernism, but rather, opening the floodgates (which had been kept artificially drawn for some 30 years) to an international post-modernism that threatened to unsettle and jeopardise the central goals of the liberation projects.

In 1991, Nelson Mandela was released from jail, Gorbachev was freed from his temporary incarceration in Yalta, the Soviet republics were let loose from their forced incorporation into the USSR, and the world at large threw off the stifling shackles imposed by the Cold War itself. The dismantling of the last of the second world authoritarianisms - in the Soviet Union and South Africa - was an active project, undergirded by a concept of historical teleology that circumscribed these emerging democracies in what Karl Popper, fifty years before, called "the perennial and dangerous struggle for building a better and freer world" (1966:viii). However, democracy and human rights were far from the only things of which Russia and South Africa had been deprived during their half-century of relative isolation. Both countries had also escaped two major developments that were already rapidly changing the face of Western economies and societies: a revolution in communications technology coupled with an unprecedented liberalisation of commerce. The social and cultural ramifications of these monumental developments have become known as post-modernism. Russia and South Africa found themselves unable to enter this new globalised world system without making

substantial and drastic changes to their own economic systems. Their ageing, labour intensive industrial economies, Keynesian framework and rigid labour laws geared up for promises of full employment were quickly exposed as antiquated and archaic. Yet it was exactly such economies that the ANC in South Africa had hoped to democratise and use for the benefit of uplifting the previously disadvantaged, and in which millions of Soviet people had hoped to become new shareholders and beneficiaries.

Thus, the long awaited modernist project collided with the reality of a post-modern world. The economic setup of this world did not permit the kind of nationalised redistributive project that the ANC had promised its supporters for decades; but more than that, the philosophical tenets of post-modernism also did not permit the very notions of perfectibility and progress pursued as much by Boris Yeltsin's market radicals as by Nelson Mandela's coalition of socialists, nationalists and syndicalists. Russia and South Africa became societies in transition, but the transition was now robbed of any end-point: it had become a permanent state of being. Yet if anything, my respondents – confident, educated, middle class, English-speaking, most in the process of acquiring a higher education – would stand most to gain from such a development. Indeed, other studies (eg. Munro, 2006) have shown that class and wealth bear little relation to the intensity of nostalgic feeling; the misgivings and mixed feelings shown by these people are not the bitter cries of the dispossessed, of those left behind by history. Nevertheless, the feelings are no less sharp for it.

In the 17th century, when nostalgia was considered a medical illness, doctors would often prescribe opium as a treatment. But in these post-modern times, has nostalgia itself become an opiate? Has it taken religion's place, in the famous passage from Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, as "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions"? An opium of the people, a chimera of liberation: is nostalgia a palliative so effective that it obviates the desire to extinguish the root causes of the pain that it treats? Marx was an unsparing critic of nostalgia, which he abhorred not only because it went counter to his teleological idea of history but also because, as Marcos Natali (2009) argues, he believed it reflected a preference for a less just and more oppressive time; nostalgia was, in the most classic sense, reactionary. "We say to the workers and the petty bourgeois: it is better to suffer in modern bourgeois society, which by its industry creates the material means for the foundation of a new society that will liberate you, than to revert to a bygone form of society which, on the pretext of saving your classes, thrusts the entire nation back into medieval barbarism" (Marx, 1849 in Natali, 2009:266). This way

of looking at nostalgia has had a profound influence on the left, a self-consciously "progressive" movement, going from Hobsbawm to Harvey to Jameson himself.

Why would a young person feel nostalgic for a time through which he or she has never lived, and what could that feeling tell us about the relationship between nostalgia free-market reforms, social cohesion and democratic consolidation? Is nostalgia an expression of dissent and dissatisfaction with the status quo, or a decoy that dissipates the desire for protest in a dulcet haze of resigned longing? My respondents mourn a perceived loss of community, morality, personal safety and social trust, with a concomitant rise in individualism, materialism and anomie. In coping with Russia and South Africa's belated and compressed transitions from modernity into post-modernity and rebelling against the new Baumanian liquid life characterised by economic precariousness and the fraying of social bonds, they neither reject nor endorse transition life. Instead, it is a site of profound ambivalence: of nostalgic regret at the human costs of the globalised capitalist polyarchy tinged with a very real yearning to exploit the freedom and opportunities that it offers.

This is not hypocrisy. Marx himself railed against those who defended the old ways in the face of capitalist progress. But in their search for feeling and human communion, my interlocutors were pushing against the "renunciation of life and of all human needs" that he identified as capitalism's "principal thesis" (Marx, 1959). They are the first generation in their countries that have faced so starkly the trade-off between life and capital, and are struggling with how to cope. "The less you are", wrote Marx in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, referring to the inverse relationship between one's worth in terms of capital and human experience, "the less you express your own life, the more you have, i.e., the greater is your alienated life, the greater is the store of your estranged being" (ibid.). What is nostalgia if not the search for a whole, unalienated life?

Keeping in mind the impossibility – and undesirability – of making generalisations from qualitative studies, none of the young people I spoke with expressed any actual desire to roll back the clock. Instead, their relationship to the (imagined) past was one of ambivalence, reflection and eclecticism – qualities in line with "reflective" nostalgia and very much of a piece with contemporary life. Nevertheless, there are other ways in which their nostalgia, reflective though it is, could be thought of in "reactionary" terms. This is if we take "reactionary" to either denote support for the political status quo and/or accept readymade

nostalgia from above. Far from the spectre of 1990s style state-sponsored irredentism *á la Serbia*, in both Russia and South Africa, a self-aware and eclectic, rather than restorative, attitude to nostalgia is precisely the kind encouraged by the state. Indeed, Putin and Zuma's governments both engage in a kind of *cultural bricolage* (Sherlock, 2011), weaving varied and contradictory references into a superficially coherent national narrative. Just as Putin honours Alexander Solzhenitsin and Andrei Sakharov alongside their former KGB jailers, Jacob Zuma's contemporary ANC is becoming a "best hits" album of nationalism, socialism, neoliberalism and Zulu revivalism. If eclecticism could be a subversive tool in conditions of modern solidity, it becomes distinctly mainstream, even accommodationalist, in conditions of state-enacted post-modern globalised capitalism. Perhaps there is no way out. Nostalgia, writes Boym, is a mourning "for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values", and yet, the nostalgic continues to seek something solid in its absence. "Encountering silence, he looks for memorable signs, desperately misreading them" (2001b:8). But even as they misread the signs – misread the ANC for a real party of liberation; misread technology for freedom – what they are mourning for, and hoping the signs will lead them to, is above all community, rendered chimerical by that same mysterious and deadly force by which everything solid melts into air.

In her essay about people evicted from Cape Town's District Six and forcibly relocated to the Cape Flats, Charmaine McEachern (2002) notes that nostalgia for community can be a powerful form of dissent. A remembered community is "a kind of critique – a remembered community based on stories of the society which is brought into being from the perspective of where they are now, in order to criticise the transformation of their lives under Apartheid" (2002:237). Yet if the principal object of this earlier critique was the Apartheid state, the present culprit is harder to pinpoint. My respondents struggled to identify the cause or source of the decline in community feeling; nor were they able to claim with certainty that community was in fact stronger in the past and that this decline occurred during the transition.

Maybe because they, themselves, are implicated. "We think it would be better [in the township], so much more sense of community than where we're living currently", says Zandile. In the suburbs, "you can die and be in there and your neighbour won't know. But in the location or in the township you know that someone would know that something is going

on. You see that community, looking out for each other". So I ask her whether she would like to bring up her kids in the township. "Obviously not in the township", she retorts, laughing.

I named this paper "States of (Be)longing" to reflect my respondents' noble but possibly doomed struggle, as contradictory and futile as the anti-Apartheid struggle itself often appeared, before victory and nostalgic hindsight rendered it coherent and inevitable. It is the struggle to commune and belong: to a new state, to *something*, and the attendant longing for a mythical past sense of solidarity that, as these young people are well aware, both cannot be meaningfully reconstructed in a post-modern, neoliberal environment, and, even if it could be, would not be able to accommodate their new taste for freedom and individual self-definition. Perhaps the only hope for a new kind of community may come from nostalgia – the very process of collective longing itself.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter from the University of KwaZulu-Natal

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN, 4000
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snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

01 November 2011

Mr V Nikitin (211551580)
School of Sociology

Dear Mr Nikitin

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/1116/011M
PROJECT TITLE: States of (Be)longing: The Politics of Nostalgia in Transition Societies

In response to your application dated 21 September 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.
PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor – Dr Noel Chellan
cc. Ms S van der Westhuizen

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Appendix B: Informed Consent Form for Respondents

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in my research. The purpose of this letter is to explain the reason for my survey, the research component of a Master's dissertation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa. My thesis focuses on the nostalgia for the past and for past political regimes in Russia and South Africa. My research seeks to investigate the links between nostalgia and current political behaviour and attitudes.

This letter serves to assure that I will keep your name and all identifiable personal information strictly confidential throughout my research. Most importantly, I assure you that a decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage. Please be reminded that your participation is strictly voluntary, and you can at any time withdraw from involvement of the study at any stage and for any reason. For further information, please contact my supervisors (contact details listed below).

I……(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

…….

Contact details of the researcher:

Name: Vadim Nikitin
E-mail: nikitin@post.harvard.edu
Phone: +27 763618838

Contact details of the supervisor:

Name: Dr Noel Chellan
Institution/Affiliation: UKZN
E-mail: Chellan@ukzn.ac.za
Phone: +27 31 2607526

Sincerely,

Vadim Nikitin

Place/Date:

Durban, 28th July, 2011

Appendix C: Questionnaire for South African Youth

Section 1: Background Demographics

1. Age: _____
2. Are you: Male (1) or Female (2)
3. Are you Black (1) White (2) Indian (3) Coloured (4) or other (5) Please specify_____
4. What is your mother tongue?
5. What is your occupation? Student (1) or other (2) Please specify_____
6. What is the highest educational level you have completed?

Section 2: Attitudes to the present and the past

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being happiest and 1 being least happy, how would you rate:

7. Your life before 1994?
8. Your life today
9. How you imagine your life in 5 years

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning totally agree and 1 meaning totally disagree, please respond to the following statements:

10. "People had it better in the old days"
11. "These are the best years of my life"
12. "Life is getting worse, not better"
13. Do you think society has become more (1) or less (2) moral since 1994?
14. Do you think true friendship has become harder (2) or easier (2) to find since 1994?
15. Has corruption (1) decreased or (2) increased since 1994
16. Do you think the gap between rich and poor has grown (1) or shrunk (2) since 1994?

17. On a scale of 10 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), rate the statement: "money has become too important since 1994"
18. On a scale of 10 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), rate the statement:: "there was more sense of unity and community before 1994"
19. Do you feel (1) safer (2) less safe or (3) same level of safety since 1994?
20. On a scale of 10 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), rate the statement: "Music used to be better before 1994"
21. On a scale of 10 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), rate the statement: "Television used to be better before 1994"
22. On a scale of 10 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), rate the statement : "life has become more honest since 1994"
23. On a scale of 10 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), rate the statement: Young people have become too materialistic since 1994

24. Do you think life has become more just (1), less just (2) or unchanged in terms of justice, since 1994?

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning perfect and 1 meaning terrible, please rate following:

25. Performance of the government today
26. Performance of the government before 1994
27. In what ways has life got better or worse since democracy?
28. What do you miss about life before 1994?
29. What aspects of life before 1994 are you happy to see gone?
30. Do you think the amount of trust between people has (1) increased, (2) decreased or (3) stayed the same before and after 1994?
31. Do you think relationships between people have become better (1) or worse (2) since 91/1994?
32. Do you agree with the statement: "I would like to go back to the old system" (1)yes or (2) no
33. Do you agree with the statement: Education quality has become worse since 1994
34. During the first 10 years of the transition, did your life (1) improve, (2) get worse (3) stay the same?
35. During the first 10 years of the transition, would you say you became (1) richer (2) poorer, (3) the same?

Section 3: Political preferences:

36. Politically, would you say you are (1) left wing [Communist] (2) Centre Left [Socialist/Labour] (3) Centre Right [liberal, pro-business] (4) right wing [traditionalist] (5)independent or (6) apathetic
37. Would you describe yourself as working class, middle class, or upper middle class?
38. What do you think is more important: (1) freedom/democracy or (2) equality/a decent standard of living
39. In the last election, did you vote for the ANC, for another party, or not vote at all?

40. If you voted ANC, what are some of the reasons why (circle all that apply)

a) I admire Jacob Zuma
b) I am black and the ANC is the party of Black people
c) The ANC is the party that liberated South Africa from Apartheid
d) The ANC is preventing the return to Apartheid
e) The DA wants to bring back apartheid
f) I am poor but the DA is a party for the rich
g) The ANC is continuing the struggle against Apartheid
h) The ANC is a revolutionary party
i) The ANC is the party of Socialism
j) The ANC believes in equal distribution of wealth

k) I admire Julius Malema
l) I support the ANC's partners Cosatu and the SACP
m) The ANC provides good service delivery
n) The ANC build stronger communities

41. If you did not vote for the ANC, why not? (circle all that apply)

a) Corruption
b) Poor service delivery
c) I have become poorer under the ANC
d) They exploit the race issue to win votes
e) They are riding on their Struggle reputation far too long
f) They have betrayed the promise of the struggle
g) They encourage racial divisions
h) I disagree with BEE
i) They are in power to enrich themselves
j) They are only concerned about money
k) They are too radical
l) They have not done enough to erase the legacy of apartheid
m) They are too nice to Robert Mugabe
n) They have sold out to the USA and the West

42. If you did not vote at all in the last elections, why not?
43. Do you think the Struggle ended in 1994, or is it still going on?
44. Do you know any Struggle songs? If yes, which ones?
45. When did you last sing a struggle song?
46. If you have recently sung a struggle song, why did you do it?
47. What meaning does the song *Shoot the Boer* have today, as opposed to before 1994?
48. Do you miss the days of the struggle? Why or why not?
49. How old were you when Apartheid collapsed?
50. On a scale of 10 (inevitable) to 1 (impossible), how likely do you think it is for Apartheid to return?

51. Would you have preferred to raise children before 1994 (1) or do you think right now is a better environment for raising children (2)?
52. Was the transition from Apartheid worth the hardship?
53. Are you nostalgic for life before 1994?
54. Are you nostalgic for the days of the struggle?
55. On a scale of 10 (very nostalgic) to 1 (not at all nostalgic), how nostalgic are you?
56. What are you most nostalgic for?

Appendix D: Questionnaire for Russian Youth

Section 1: Background Demographics

1. Age: _____
2. Are you: Male (1) or Female (2)
3. What is your nationality?
4. What is your mother tongue?
5. What is your occupation? Student (1) or other (2) Please specify_____
6. What is the highest educational level you have completed?

Section 2: Attitudes to the present and the past

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being happiest and 1 being least happy, how would you rate:

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On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning perfect and 1 meaning terrible, please rate following:

25. Performance of the government today
26. Performance of the government before 1991
27. In what ways has life got better or worse since democracy?
28. What do you miss about life before 1991?
29. What aspects of life before 1991 are you happy to see gone?
30. Do you think the amount of trust between people has (1) increased, (2) decreased or (3) stayed the same before and after 1991?
31. Do you think relationships between people have become better (1) or worse (2) since 1991/94?
32. Do you agree with the statement: "I would like to go back to the old system" (1)yes or (2) no
33. Do you agree with the statement: Education quality has become worse since 1991
34. During the first 10 years of the transition, did your life (1) improve, (2) get worse (3) stay the same?
35. During the first 10 years of the transition, would you say you became (1) richer (2) poorer, (3) the same?

Section 3: Political preferences:

36. Politically, would you say you are (1) left wing [Communist] (2) Center Left [Socialist/Labour] (3) Center Right [liberal, pro-business] (4) right wing [traditionalist] (5)independent or (6) apathetic
37. Would you describe yourself as working class, middle class, or upper middle class?
38. What do you think is more important: (1) freedom/democracy or (2) equality/a decent standard of living
39. How old were you when the USSR collapsed?
40. On a scale of 10 (inevitable) to 1 (impossible), how likely do you think it is for Communism to return?
41. Did you vote for Vladimir Putin in the last elections?

42. If yes, then why? (Circle all that apply): Vladimir Putin

a) is cleaning up corruption
b) is healthy and does not drink
c) is standing up to the West
d) helped to overcome the legacy of the 90s
e) made Russia richer
f) has prevented the return of Communism
g) has instituted policies that remind me of the Soviet Union
h) has sex appeal
i) stood up to the oligarchs
j) believes in God
k) is not corrupt
l) is the ideal Russian man

m) makes Russia safe from Islamic militants
n) is rebuilding the glory of the USSR
o) has made Russia more independent
p) is making Russia more like the Soviet Union
q) has made society safer and more orderly
r) has increased equality
s) is the true successor to the USSR

43. If you did not vote for Putin, why not? (Circle all that apply): Putin...

a) has reduced personal freedom
b) is corrupt
c) has weakened Democracy
d) is moving Russia back towards Socialism
e) has not improved the standards of living enough
f) is too macho and doesn't promote women's rights
g) is too traditionalist
h) is homophobic
i) has weakened media freedom
j) leads a government that commits human rights abuses in Chechnya
k) is too pro-business
l) has increased inequality
m) has eroded the independence of the judiciary
n) is only concerned with power
o) is authoritarian
p) is too pro-Western
q) has falsely imprisoned Khodorkovsky
r) is too socialistic
s) only pretends to care about common people

44. If you did not vote at all, then why not?
45. Would you have preferred to raise children before 1991 (1) or do you think right now is a better environment for raising children (2)?
46. Was the transition from Communism worth the hardship?
47. Are you nostalgic for life before 1991?
48. On a scale of 10 (very nostalgic) to 1 (not at all nostalgic), how nostalgic are you?
49. What are you most nostalgic for?