Abstract: Quite a number of Russian writers could not accept the October Revolution in 1917 and left the country. Their nostalgia for their motherland in emigration is a well-known fact. The Russian-born American writer Ayn Rand (1905–1982) was also driven out of Soviet Russia by a hatred for communism, yet her nostalgia is of a different kind. The purpose of this study is to describe the nature of Ayn Rand’s nostalgia. Discovering, on arrival in the U.S., a reality different from the image she bore in her mind, she did not start missing her homeland but continued longing for her ideal—19th century America. This ideal is fully reflected in her self-made philosophy known as “objectivism”, which underlies her novel *Atlas Shrugged*. Though philosophically substantiated, the ideal appears to be embodied in trivial myths of the American mass consciousness. The study highlights four of the most popular national myths in her novel. As a result, Rand’s literary works represent popular literature that are not within the mainstream of the Russian émigré literature of that period.

Keywords: émigré writers; lost ideal; nostalgia; myths; popular literature

1. Introduction

The theme of nostalgia in literature is most relevant with émigré writers. Owing to great historical cataclysms in the first half of the 20th century, Russia produced a number of prominent émigré writers. The most illustrative names among them are those of I. Bunin, I. Shmelev, A. Tolstoy, B. Zaitsev, D. Merezhkovskiy, and A. Kuprin. The Russian-born American writer Ayn Rand (Alisa Zinov’yevna Rosenbaum) (1905–1982) is also part of this illustrious group, despite the fact that her emigration was caused by the same historical events, she differs from the aforementioned émigré writers in that she started her literary career only after emigration and never wrote in Russian. While the nostalgia of Russian émigré writers for their homeland has commonly been mentioned in reference books on Russian literature, Ayn Rand’s nostalgia has not been elucidated thus far, and the present study on nostalgia in her literary works, due to its specific nature, can contribute to nostalgia studies. The specificity of Rand’s nostalgia is reflected in the fact that she neither missed her homeland, nor felt quite at home in her adoptive country, and the interaction of these features results in nostalgic complexity.

Born in Saint Petersburg to a well-to-do family, after a few years under the construction of socialism in Soviet Russia after the October Socialist Revolution (1917), at the age of 21, Ayn Rand emigrated to the US, hateful of her native land and enthusiastic about the country to which she was heading. There, she became the author of three novels, two of which, *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), were ranked in the top-list of bestsellers. Her first novel, *We the Living* (1936), inspired by her own bitter life experience in Soviet Russia, was also reissued several times.

Her major novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, reflects Rand’s assessment of the state of things in the US on her arrival. Although the novel is partly fantastic, some of its details such as geographical names,
remarkable sights (like the Statue of Liberty), the national currency (the US dollar), dates in the names of certain enterprises (like “The Twentieth Century Motor Company”), prompt thoughts of the US of the 20th century. The plot centers around a secret strike of the most efficient businesspeople of the country, representatives of various professional fields—industry, economy, science, culture—who, indignant at the state’s encroachment on the results of their work, stealthily abandon the country, which involves the complete destruction of its economy. Meanwhile, in a hidden gulch in the mountains, the strikers build up a thriving community without a government to decide how much of their earnings must be withdrawn as taxes to maintain state officials and meet the social needs of those who do not produce anything. In other words, life in the Gulch is regulated by the ethical and economic rules identical to those which, as Rand sees them, were the norm at the very outset of US history.

With respect to nostalgia, in *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand longed for her cherished vision of the USA from Soviet Russia, which, upon arriving in the country, she found greatly distorted. As a consequence, she fancied that the ideal she bore in mind had been left behind in the 19th century—the “Golden Age” of American history. So, she compensated for that loss by creating in her novel a mythologized world, substantiated by her self-made materialistic philosophy, which she called “objectivism”, upon which she later issued seven books. The quintessence of Rand’s philosophy is the ethical idea of rational egoism, which, in its economic and political expression, results in the ardent advocacy of unfettered capitalism.

Rand’s nostalgia for an idyllic free-market America that never really existed prefigures the historical narrative underlying President Trump’s slogan “Make America Great Again”, which, according to Steven Conn, played a decisive role in the presidential election in 2016 (Conn 2017). Moreover, as Rand’s version of nostalgia chronologically precedes Trump’s felicitous political invention, the latter may be reduced to a contemporary manifestation of its predecessor, despite the difference in the dating of the period of glory—if with Rand it was the 19th century, Trump seems to admire the 1950s of the 20th century. In his essay, Conn elaborates on the importance of national myths, stating that while historical scholarship does everything to eliminate myths from history, there is a strong need among people for an inspiring myth about their nationhood (Conn 2017). Rand’s version of nostalgia, just like “Make America Great Again”-ism, fills this void, which accounts for the value that Rand’s novel still holds for readers today. Thus, the study of Rand’s version of nostalgia helps comprehend the state of things in the contemporary US, particularly in its politics, which bespeaks of the importance of the study in a narrower sense.

Two cultural studies, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Boym 2001) and *Retrotopia* (Bauman 2017) serve as the methodological basis for the present study. Svetlana Boym’s work, in which she elaborates on different varieties of nostalgia, helps to establish ties between nostalgia and popular literature through the process of myth-making in Rand’s novel. Zygmunt Bauman’s work, with its deep insight into the specificity of present-day nostalgia, sheds light on the peculiar nature of Rand’s nostalgia. Additionally, as Rand’s nostalgia for an imaginary 19th century America was fed by myths of the American mass consciousness, the present study resorted to the myths outlined by the Russian literary critics Zverev (1991), Morozova (1982), and Cherchesov (1991) in their work on modern American popular literature. Since the study was built upon the contrast of the Russian and American identities of the author, it seems appropriate to regard the American mass consciousness through the Russian assessment, considering the outside view to be more critical than the inside one.

The aim of the present study was to single out the peculiarities of Rand’s nostalgia through the analysis of her novel *Atlas Shrugged*. The aim was achieved by means of tackling the following objectives: tracing how certain events in Rand’s biography made her nostalgic for the US 19th century, and showing that the image of the American 19th century in Rand’s works was closely related to a number of major myths of the national American consciousness.

The conclusions that the present study arrived at are that Rand’s nostalgia has some individual peculiarities, yet, in its core, is typical since it is based on myth-making, therefore, Rand’s major
novel, resorting to popular myths of the national American consciousness, can be classified as popular literature, thus remaining beyond the mainstream of the Russian émigré literature of that period.

2. Biographical Background

The nostalgia of émigré writers is usually autobiographical in nature. In full accordance with a number of definitions of the phenomenon in Boym’s work such as “longing for the homeland”, “homesickness”, “an expression of patriotism”, “a rosy reconstruction of the past”, “a romance with the past” (Boym 2001), nostalgia in the work of the previously mentioned Russian émigré writers shaped itself into a yearning for their past life in their motherland, which was seen as a happy one compared with their post-emigration experience.

The source of Rand’s peculiar nostalgia is also rooted in her biography, which necessitates a brief biographical detour. The consequences of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 left a considerable imprint on Rand’s life, which can be traced throughout her future literary and philosophical works. In 1918, her father’s business, one of the biggest pharmacies in Saint Petersburg, was confiscated for the benefit of the people and the family had to face desperate conditions. Rand bitterly resented the ideology approving of the robbery of individuals for the sake of common advantage.

In 1921, Rand began studying social pedagogy at Petrograd State University. According to Rand’s biographer Anne Heller, during her university years, her only emotional outlet, due to her unwillingness to resign herself to the post-revolutionary reality, was the cinema. Heller presents some calculations: in 1924 Rand watched 47 films, in 1925 she watched 117 (Heller 2009). She also kept a special journal where she created lists of her favorite films and wrote film reviews. Heller asserts that owing to the cinema, Rand discovered America—an ideal world that was so different from Russia (Heller 2009). Rand’s attitude toward her mother country is expressed in her direct confession referring to that period of her life:

My feeling toward Russia at that time was simply an intensified feeling that I’ve had from childhood and from before revolutions. I felt that this was so mystical, so depraved, rotten a country that I wasn’t surprised that they got a Communist ideology—and I felt that one has to get out and find the civilized world (Peikoff 1995).

A sample of films Rand used to see in Soviet Russia can be drawn from an episode in We the Living, which the writer herself called “the autobiography of an idea” (Rand 2011), where the main characters go to the cinema to watch a foreign film. Even though the subtitles to the film are Soviet and speak about the sufferings of American workers under the capitalistic yoke, the image on the screen is American and shows people, who “laughed happily, danced in sparkling halls, ran down sandy beaches, their hair in the wind, the muscles of their young arms taut, glistening, monstrously healthy” (Rand 2011, p. 158). This description fully reflects the views that cinema helped to shape.

However important it was, the cinema could not have been the only source of Rand’s enchantment with the US. In her reminiscences, Rand stated that since her early childhood, stories about valor—heroic persons and their heroic deeds—had mostly attracted her attention. Outlining her philosophical premises, she summarized: “My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of a man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute” (Rand 2007, p. 1170). That declaration explains Rand’s admiration for the country’s past, which, like the cinematographic image of the contemporary country, is based mostly on fantasy.

While studying at university, Rand attended a course in scriptwriting, and in 1926, under the pretext of learning cinematography, Rand managed to emigrate to the country she admired. However, her expectations of the US were disappointed. A considerable part of American society of the 1930s was infatuated with communism. She found that government policy, and namely Roosevelt’s New Deal agenda, to also be along the same line. For her, there was little difference between a communist insurrection and how fast the American federal government, supposedly acting in the best interests of
the underprivileged, was increasing its power. All these political, economic, and social factors strongly violated the ideal she bore in mind—the ideal that was rooted in the 19th century, the “Golden Age” of American history, lauded by her as an epoch of “Romanticism in aesthetics, individualism in ethics and capitalism in politics” (Rand 1975), that is to say, a time of prosperity in every sphere of American life.

All of the aforementioned biographical facts related to Rand’s nostalgia lead to clarifying its three-part nature:

1. Hating her native land;
2. Being disappointed with her adoptive country; and
3. Dealing with both of these problems by indulging in nostalgia for the imaginary past of her new country.

By way of summarizing, compared to typical nostalgia for a motherland, Rand’s feeling is of a reversed nature. Additionally, it is based mostly on the idealized (like cinematographic) image of the object of her nostalgia, which on actual encounter appeared to be far from reality. In this respect, Rand’s version of nostalgia fits into the type specified by Boym as “nostalgia for a promised land” (Boym 2001), yet still bears an individual peculiarity. It is not a future promised land, it is a promised land from which she is forever cut off, since it is trapped in an unrecoverable past.

3. Myths of the American Mass Consciousness in Rand’s Novel *Atlas Shrugged*

Rand’s unusual type of “promised land” nostalgia reveals itself most in *Atlas Shrugged*, a novel where a group of powerful twentieth-century Americans decide to recreate nineteenth-century ideals. Therefore, the novel embraces a number of contemporary myths that idealize the 19th century as a time of individualism, daring, work ethic, and achievement; the very myths that were singled out by the Russian literary criticism with reference to American popular literature. The presence of the myths in *Atlas Shrugged* fully exposes the fact that Rand’s nostalgia was fed by her fancied-up historical vision. Each of the myths shows one of the facets of Rand’s delusion, thus completing the whole image. The myths, and consequently the facets, are interrelated since they were all aimed at the valorization of the orders of life that Rand believed to be established at the dawn of the country’s history.

3.1. Myth 1: The Myth of Individualism

The most noticeable among the myths used by Rand in the novel is the one that relates to the social aspect of her delusion “of an active individualist, free of social determinism” (Zverev 1991). In other words, it is the myth of individualism, which dates back to the adoption of the American Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed every American’s right to the pursuit of happiness. The leading role of that myth in Rand’s novels is conditioned by the writer’s philosophical and artistic views. Philosophically supporting individualism in all of her novels, Rand regards romanticism, which she subjectively reduces to the admitting of a person’s right to freely choose objectives and actions aimed at achieving them, as the only type of artistic expression capable of adequately expressing individualism. These two major propositions are responsible for the fact that Rand’s hero is an individualist arranging their own life circumstances in accordance with their own free choice.

The purest expression of the individualistic myth in *Atlas Shrugged* is embodied in its life descriptions of its heroes’ (Dagny and Francisco’s) grandfathers: Nathaniel Taggart, whose vast railroad network covered the whole country; and Sebastian d’Anconia, the biggest owner of copper mines on both American continents. Starting as penniless adventurous individuals, they both developed the biggest enterprises in their business fields. The symbolic meaning of these two little plots is demonstrated by the fact that both of the characters are representatives of the 19th century. These characters embody the image of a self-made person, which is typical of American literature on the whole. However, they also bear some traits that are characteristic only of Rand’s heroes, which create for each of them an individual image. These traits are most vivid in the sphere of the characters’
interaction with the state. For instance, while defending his property rights, Nathaniel Taggatt murders a state official and the author’s sympathy unmistakably lies with her character.

The plot lines of the contemporary protagonists resemble those of Nathaniel Taggatt and Francisco d’Anconia. Like their ancestors, they represent the ethos of the 19th century: the pursuit of material success through hard work. One of them is the oil producer Ellis Wyatt, who gave “a shot of adrenalin to the heart” of the Colorado mountains, which “had brought new towns, new power plants, new factories to a region nobody had ever noticed on any map” (Rand 2007). His story of success, the author specifies, reminds her of stories from history textbooks about people who lived, in the author’s metaphor, “in the days of the country’s youth” (Rand 1975, p. 9).

The national individualistic myth in Rand’s presentation is refreshed by introducing into it a certain amount of new content, which still reinforces its fancied-up nature. Nineteenth-century individualism, in Rand’s vision, is inseparable from reason, which she calls “the Aristotelian sense of life” (Rand 2007, p. 103). Such a beautiful combination of individualism and reason is represented in the novel by the philosopher Hugh Akston, who is identified as “one of the last great advocates of reason” (Rand 2007, p. 142). He is the favorite professor of three highly intelligent protagonists: Francisco d’Anconia, John Galt, and Ragnar Danneskjöld. During the pinnacle events of the novel, Professor Akston’s name becomes so hallowed that a certain young lady, on hearing at a social event that Francisco studied under him, becomes shocked. She thinks he must have been one of those great names from an earlier century. d’Anconia confirms that, in spirit, Akston’s name belongs to the 19th century, while in reality he is still alive. He resigned from his university career and started cooking in a roadside diner. Professor Akston’s university position is taken over by Dr. Pritchett, who at the same social event is explaining to the young people that “nothing is anything” (Rand 2007, p. 141). d’Anconia reacts to the latter comment that Professor Akston taught them that “everything is something” (Rand 2007, p. 142). In this episode, Rand resorts to the Aristotelian law of identity that “A is A, everything is the same as itself”, which is the basis of objectivism philosophy. According to Rand’s own comments in Atlas Shrugged, she showed respect for Aristotle by naming all three chapters of her novel after his laws of logic: Non-Contradiction, Either–Or, and A is A (Rand 2007).


Professor Akston’s sub-plot also emblematizes the myth of “American exclusiveness and the advantage of the New World over the Old One” (Morozova 1982), since the country of daring individualists equipped with “the Aristotelian sense of life” could not possibly fail to be superior to the rest of the world. This myth manifests Rand’s historical delusion. The positive charge Rand attaches to the myth becomes especially striking in contrast with the capitalist relations in their current form, as viewed by the author, thus bringing the idea home to the reader.

In Atlas Shrugged, businesspeople who cannot endure absurd and burdensome laws any longer desert the country and build up a new hidden capitalist community in the Gulch, which is based on the philosophy of reason and individualism. In a by-plot, Rand identifies America of the past with legendary Atlantis, and the latter with the Gulch. Using one of her protagonists, Francisco d’Anconia, as a mouthpiece, Rand explains that the US, born as a rational product of the human mind, is currently facing a number of social problems because self-made people of the past accepted a social system which declared that the property they had earned by right was to be theirs not by right, but by permission of a bureaucrat. The Gulch, where businesses do not have to face bureaucracy due to the absence of any government, therefore symbolizes the US with unregulated capitalism. Rand highlights the idea that life in such a society is built on the rational laws of logic. Rand enunciates the theme of the novel as the role of reason in human life through the words of one of the characters, John Galt, who explains the meaning of creating a hidden gulch as a strike of intelligent people. Since these people are natural adherents of the law of identity, only objective values are recognized in the Gulch. For example, only coins made of gold and silver are in circulation there, because only they can serve as a real equivalent of the commodity value. When Dagny asks in surprise in the name of which country
the coins are minted in the Gulch, John Galt responds that the name of the country is minted on both sides of each coin. Dagny sees the head of the Statue of Liberty on one side, and the words United States of America—One Dollar on the other. The author’s idea is rendered through the feelings of her heroine—Galt’s Gulch resembles to Dagny the great country of their ancestors, which is contrasted with the existing state of affairs. Thus, in Rand’s presentation, the coin in the Gulch signifies a return to true American values, as they are seen by Rand; values that modern America, much to Rand’s disgust, has repudiated. Rand renders both of the opposing positions in the remark of one of the Gulch dwellers:

It [the dollar sign] stands on the vest of every fat, piglike figure in every cartoon, for the purpose of denoting a crook, a grafter, a scoundrel—as the one sure-fire brand of evil. It stands—as the money of a free country—for achievement, for success, for ability, for man’s creative power—and, precisely, for these reasons, it is used as a brand of infamy (Rand 2007, p. 683).

3.3. Myth 3: The Myth of Equal Opportunities

Rand’s delusory belief in fair unregulated capitalism, being a manifestation of her economic views, is rendered through the myth of America as a country of equal opportunities. By means of this myth, the exalted past is presented through its opposite, namely the disastrous consequences that the obnoxious deviation from this basic principle of capitalism has produced. Therefore, the myth is also realized in a dystopian way in the plot line of Dan Conway, President of the Phoenix–Durango railroad. Having started with a shaky little railroad in Arizona, whose net revenue could be compared to a successful grocery store, in 10 years, he turns it into the best railroad in the Southwest and starts competing with the largest and oldest railroad company—Taggart Transcontinental. In reply, James Taggart, President of Taggart Transcontinental, scared by his competitor’s advance, initiates the acceptance by the National Alliance of Railroads of the “Anti-dog-eat-dog Rule”, which eventually drives Conway’s business out of Colorado. For Dagny, this is a blow not to Conway, but to the basic principles of capitalism. By offering Conway assistance in challenging the decision of the National Alliance in court, Dagny claims to be acting not “out of pity or charity or any ugly reason like that” (Rand 2007, p. 80), but out of need for a fitting rival. She promises to “squeeze” him to the wall in a fair contest without any bureaucratic tricks and drive him out of the state, if necessary. However, Dan rejects Dagny’s support, as he is already contaminated with altruism and has lost his will to fight.

The Dan Conway sub-plot conveys Rand’s ethical idea of “rational egoism”. Its opposite, altruism, is considered by Rand as a malady of contemporary America, which undermines the basics of capitalist relations such as equal opportunities for everyone to run their own business without the government’s interference in order to distribute privileges among competing companies on the pretext of caring about the weak. Thus, Rand’s depiction of the consequences of altruism morality sounds like a warning to the country, which was initially planned as a country of equal opportunities.

3.4. Myth 4: The Myth of an Honest Business

In full concord with the myth illustrated by Dan Conway’s plight is the myth “A good business is an honest business” (Cherchesov 1991), since both of them originate from the same ethical premise. Within the frame of this myth, honest businessmen in the novel are contrasted with bureaucrats, who are considered as “looters”. The most representative example of a businessman who follows the code of honor of the Founding Fathers up to the letter is Hank Rearden. As the last to leave the outside world for the Gulch, he is involved in the main ethical conflict of the novel throughout the whole plot. The history of the interactions between Hank and the state is presented in black-and-white coloring. If Hank is a profound embodiment of morality, the other part is pure immorality. Hank invents super alloy, and the government bureaucrats do everything within their power to hinder its production because they are rightfully scared that he will drive all the iron and steel companies belonging to them out of the market. First, they enact a law against private property that is targeted at Rearden.
When the law does not bring the desired effect, Hank is prosecuted in court as a greedy enemy of society, who puts his own interests above those of the public. When this measure also fails, Hank is blackmailed to sign a Gift Certificate and pass all the copyrights pertaining to his invention to the Unification Board.

In the writer’s presentation, a real businessman such as Hank Rearden is always a creator. Rand places her words about creators into the mouth of Francisco d’Anconia in the episode when he talks to Dagny, who is devastated after the shut-down of her railroad line by the efforts of government bureaucrats. He urges her to think of those who were the first to make a steel girder, a bolt, a rivet, a power generator. New York itself is “the frozen shape of human courage” of those who brought the people ‘crouched in caves, at the mercy of any pestilence and any storm, out of the cave” (Rand 2007, p. 512). Alongside Francisco d’Anconia and Hank Rearden, there are quite a number of such businessperson-creators in the novel: John Galt, for example, is the inventor of a miraculous engine—Galt’s motor—that converts static electricity from the atmosphere into the power for its own work; and Ellis Wyatt is the discoverer of a technological process of extracting oil out of shale, which was thought impossible. Among the other inventions of the Gulch dwellers are a screen of refractor rays or a Gulch mirage that creates the phenomenon of a mirage by obscuring the real view with the image of some distanced locality; and a Gulch power station that is capable of replacing all of the country’s power stations, thus saving people’s time, effort, and material resources for higher goals. So, by such an introduction of scientific discoveries, which were far ahead of their time, i.e., elements of science fiction, into her novel, Rand demonstrates her advocacy for both technological progress and the high work ethic of honest businessperson-creators. The author’s metaphor for them is “the motors of the world”—they are those who enable the next step of humankind’s progress. The utopian features of these characters are obvious. In this regard, Dr. Albert Ellis, an American psychologist, writes that the image of a capitalist businessperson created by Rand is so ideal and so far from biological and social reality that it simply does not exist. He further asserts that Rand deludes herself by believing that people are like the images she creates. Not surprisingly, she was often disappointed by real people (Ellis 2006).

4. Peculiarities of Rand’s Nostalgia

This review of the national myths in Rand’s novel reflects her delusory historical vision, which is furthermore enhanced by her own myth-making. In the US, Rand, dissatisfied with the current state of things, continued longing for her dream of America as she had envisioned it back in Soviet Russia. Boym accentuates this phenomenon as one of the traits of emigrant consciousness that is characteristic of many people who left their homeland (Boym 2001). Under those circumstances, Rand had to create a substitute for what she had been seeking but failed to find, i.e., engage in myth-making.

Rand’s myth-making is most evident in Atlas Shrugged in the dystopian image of the country, where social relationships are turned upside down and it is not the rich who exploit the poor, but the poor, who with the help of the government, exploit the rich. The altruistic ethics of the government results in a country with a destroyed economy and demoralized population. Alexander Etkind qualifies this depiction of Rand’s as her warning against repeating the Soviet experience in the US (Etkind 2007). However, despite the originality of the myth Rand created, in her resorting to myth-making, she does not differ much from a common emigrant.

Therefore, myths, both national and her own, constitute the central part of Rand’s nostalgia, thus exposing its typical side. However, in order to visualize the phenomenon in its complexity, it is necessary to specify its individual features.

The most striking one is observed in the fact that, although Rand’s nostalgia was for the past, it was not for the past of her own country. Moreover, she appeared to hate her country, not only for its communist ideology, but on a more general basis. In that, she greatly differs from her compatriot émigré writers, some of whom felt nostalgic not only for pre-revolutionary Russia, but also even for what they had so vigorously denounced. This difference is reinforced by the fact that Rand’s
artistic manner of expressing nostalgia correlates more with the American literary tradition rather than the Russian one. In her study, Boym, regarding nostalgia as a national feature, observed that the Russian and American nations were similar in their “lack of historical consciousness” (“forgetfulness of the past”), but different in how this forgetfulness was realized in the national consciousness. If with the Russians it shaped itself into “toska” (an untranslatable word that stands for spiritual longing), which became a manifestation of the Russian soul, the Americans created “a quasi-metaphysical entity called the American way of life” (“the American Dream”) (Boym 2001). The critic further differentiated between the varieties of literature in which these Russian and American counterparts were realized most fully. She claims that it is classical Russian literature that became a “repository of nostalgic myths”, while the American Dream is cultivated by popular American literature (Boym 2001). This statement corroborates the proposition that Rand’s novels stay within the domain of popular literature, contrary to classical Russian émigré literature.

Rand’s nostalgia is also specific in that it was for something that she had never experienced in reality, but had only imagined. This fact makes it close to both Romanticism, which she claims to be her creative method (Rand 1975), and popular literature, due to its obviously mythological (fancied-up) nature (Zverev 1991).

Additionally, Rand’s nostalgia is distinguished by her desire to recreate the imaginary past. This type of nostalgia is classified as “restorative” by Boym. Restorative nostalgia is further characterized as the one that “does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition” (Boym 2001), which is identical to the way in which a myth is perceived by its bearer. As is known, a myth presents the whole and self-sufficient truth for those who accept it, but from the outside is perceived as remaining far from reality. Therefore, restorative nostalgia lies within a mythological framework.

A different peculiarity of Rand’s nostalgia reveals itself when it is viewed through the prism of Bauman’s definition of the object of nostalgia as Retrotopia (Bauman 2017), which suggests a double negation that nostalgia has undergone since Moore’s Utopia to its present state. The critic’s idea is that Moore’s Utopia closely associates with the future and progress and as such, longing for it involves negation of the past. However, upon reaching the anticipated future and discovering the expectations to be frustrated, a longing for a better life turns in the opposite direction, toward the past and retrogression, which constitutes the second negation (Bauman 2017). Being a great advocate of technological progress, Rand could be expected to look forward to the future, in the traditional direction of progress. Instead, she looks nostalgically into the past, the 19th century US, the period which was, in her opinion, best conditioned for technological progress due to the ethical and economic rules established by the Founding Fathers. This discrepancy, which shows itself in the violation of the traditional dualities of “future and progress” and “past and retrogression” for “future and retrogression”, “past and progress”, results in the uniqueness of the dystopia her novel presents. Unlike some famous dystopias of the 20th century such as We by E. Zamyatin, Fahrenheit 451 by R. Bradbury, and Player Piano by K. Vonnegut, which depict catastrophic consequences of technological progress, and thus correspond with Bauman’s theory, Rand’s dystopia, in contrast, shows the catastrophic consequences of retrogression.

In conclusion, Rand’s nostalgia goes beyond the borders of typical nostalgia in some of its features such as its non-biographical, reversed nature, and association of the past with progress. Yet, at its core, it is the same as any other manifestation of nostalgia since it is based on myth-making. In the context of literature, the process of reproducing or creating myths is a major technique of popular literature. Rand’s myth-making is most evident in her magnum opus Atlas Shrugged and shows in a number of easily recognizable myths of the American mass consciousness. This factor enables the classification of Rand’s novel as popular literature, the study of which is undoubtedly up-to-date.

With regard to the relevance of the argument in a broader sense, understanding Rand’s unusual variety of nostalgia as a way of making sense on nostalgia in present-day American culture as a whole also seems quite important.
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