Towards an Inclusive Approach?: Theorising Nostalgia through Social Constructionism

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Social Constructionism and Nostalgia

- Nostalgia’s different manifestations:
  - Aesthetic style.
  - Memory.
  - Emotion.

- Social constructionism:
  - Rejecting “the positivist position ...[where] language is unproblematically representational, a mirror of ontological reality” (Ray 2000: 26)
  - Extending Boym’s idea – nostalgia as “a historical emotion” (2001: xvi)
Social Constructionism and Nostalgia

• Nostalgia as a discourse:
  • Previous allusions – Kuhn (2002), Keightley (2010).

• Features of nostalgia’s “interpretive repertoire” (Edley 2001: 198):
  • “it is always the adoration of the past that triumphs over lamentation for the present” (Davis 1979: 16)
  • “[u]ncertainty and insecurity in present circumstances create fertile ground for a sentimental longing for the past, or for a past fondly reconstructed out of selectively idealised features” (Keightley 2006: 925)
  • Expressions of nostalgia mobilising a “regressive narrative …depict[ing] a continued downward slide” (Gergen 2001: 254).
Primeval (ITV/Impossible Pictures 2007-11)
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- **Primeval**, Genre and Nostalgia:
  - Employing conventions of the “temporal contrast” (Burling 2006: 8) time travel narrative:
  - Constructing ‘societal nostalgia’...
  - ...or, more specifically, ‘present-orientated nostalgia’ (see Garner 2012)?
Primeval (ITV/Impossible Pictures 2007-11)

- *Primeval*, nostalgic discourse and the televisual context:
  - The context of ITV:
    - Budgetary considerations.
    - ITV’s imagined audience and intended market position.
  - Scheduling:
    - Saturday evenings = family audiences (see Johnson 2005: 133).
Conclusions

- In summary:
  - Discussions of nostalgia need to move beyond solely redeeming certain (ideologically salient) manifestations.
  - Social constructionist approach = nostalgia as discourse; shaped by contextual factors.
  - Case of *Primeval* – impact of various institutional factors shape its discourse of nostalgia.