



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Edinburgh Research Explorer

### The Nostalgia Factory: Memory, Time and Ageing

**Citation for published version:**

Russ, TC 2014, 'The Nostalgia Factory: Memory, Time and Ageing', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 205, no. 5, pp. 415-416.

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

The British Journal of Psychiatry

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



**Book Review: The Nostalgia Factory: Memory, Time and Ageing  
Douwe Draaisma (2013, Yale University Press)**

Nostalgia is often portrayed as a rather cosy emotion, for example the ‘Ostalgie’ for the former East Germany portrayed in films such as Wolfgang Becker’s 2003 *Good Bye Lenin!* or the “Nostalgia Shop” described in Woody Allen’s 2011 *Midnight in Paris*: “What was prosaic and even vulgar to one generation had been transmuted by the mere passing of years to a status at once magical and also camp.” Professor Draaisma, of the University of Groningen, reminds us of the painful root of the word nostalgia, invented in 1688 by Dr Johannes Hofer by translating the German *Heimweh* into Greek. Jaspers also described a case series of individuals who, in despair, committed arson and murder in order to get home – a world away from the “magical and camp.”

The essays in this engaging volume deal with ageing, normal forgetfulness and reminiscence and summarise a large amount of empirical research. One particularly fascinating chapter deals with the commodification of memory loss through memory training (which only seem to train you to be better at memory training games). However, in an interesting parallel to Barbara Ehrenreich’s “Smile or Die: How Positive Thinking Fooled America & The World” (Granta, 2010), the chapter ends with a thoughtful consideration of the implications of the maxim ‘use it or lose it’ and the unhelpful corollary that an individual might be considered responsible for their memory problems through not having ‘used it’ enough.

Interestingly, a nineteenth century prediction that nostalgia would become extinct due to increasing communications has not come to pass in our era of social networks. The Nostalgia Factory of the title refers to the resurgence in later life of childhood memories in émigrés, “[b]ut the real nostalgia factory is time, which makes emigrants of us all... [Y]our reminiscences impress upon you that you are no longer living in the land of your youth. You find yourself in a foreign country without ever having left.” (pp. 143-4).