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# I'll never forget: Remembering of past events within the Silent Generation as a challenge to the political mobilisation of nostalgia

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## Abstract

The political mobilisation of nostalgia is increasingly preoccupying social and political psychologists. A key concern is with rising populism and the use of an imagined golden past to foster threat through anti-EU and anti-immigrant sentiment. This article introduces two key concepts, anemoia – imagining a past not experienced – and prolepsis – how the past influences actions in the present aligned to future goals – to argue that actual recall of past biographical events potentially counters the influence of nostalgic rhetoric designed to influence political decision-making. The focus of this article is a single Scottish case study, Rachel, a member of the Silent Generation of citizens aged over 75 years, who have a living memory of World War II and its aftermath. A dialogical analysis was carried out identifying key *I*-positions and chronotopic analysis of the dialogical self, relating to experienced extreme childhood poverty and deprivation, anti-Semitism and limited mobility. This demonstrated how living through a historic event and its repercussions, rather than imagining a past not experienced, mitigates against nostalgia. This raises the question of how much mobilisation of the events of a glorious past and anxieties about the future rely upon the unexamined silence of those who recall those same events.

## Keywords

Silent generation, nostalgia, prolepsis, anemoia, dialogical approach, chronotopes, case study

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## Summary

This article argues that the political mobilisation of nostalgia works through two key concepts – anemoia, the imagination of a past that has not been experienced, and prolepsis, how the past influences actions in the present aligned to future goals. Resistance to nostalgia is explored dialogically through a case study of a member of the Silent Generation (aged over 75 years) who has lived experience of World War II and its aftermath.

Nostalgic rhetoric in political decision-making is arguably designed to entice voters to make choices based on the return to a glorious past (Gaston & Hilhorst, 2018; Kenny, 2017; Lammers & Baldwin, 2020). This is likely to have influenced political decisions that have led to the election of populist leaders in countries like the UK, USA and parts of Europe, and the leave vote in the UK–EU referendum. Nostalgia as a persuasive force is well recognised; however, what is less understood is whether recalling lived experience of the past can mitigate against nostalgic rhetoric and reduce its persuasive power. Nostalgia as an imagined, rather than an experienced, past hints at the role of lived experience in resisting the ‘uncharitable deceptions of the politics of nostalgia’ (De Brigard, 2017, p. 171). This article questions the parameters of the political mobilisation of nostalgia and whether its reliance on anemoia, the past imagined by those who did not experience it, can be resisted by those who experienced and can remember the past. We examine this question by focusing on a single case, that of 79-year-old Glasgow citizen Rachel, a member of the Silent Generation – the cohort of citizens over 75 years old – whose early life experiences include World War II and its aftermath. Alongside a growing number of social scientists who draw upon chronotopic analysis (e.g., Marková & Novaes, 2020; Zittoun, 2020) to explore how the past is used dialogically in both present and future orientations, we look at how Rachel recalls an impoverished and difficult past when asked about belonging, acceptance and mobility. Rachel’s case study will begin to address the question of whether older citizens with a lived experience of past events resist romanticised nostalgic rhetoric around fictitious historical glorification.

## Nostalgia in political decision-making: The role of prolepsis and anemoia

Nostalgia as a device to politically persuade is not new and has permeated politics for decades. In the UK context, politician Enoch Powell’s views on immigration demonstrated its ‘potential and peril’ in the early 1970s (Kenny, 2017, p. 265). It has influenced voting in presidential and federal elections in France, the USA and Germany, as well as the UK–EU referendum in the UK (Gaston & Hilhorst, 2018). The power of nostalgia to influence has been explained in terms of the exploitation of insecurities (Inglehart and Norris, 2016), dissatisfaction with the present, alongside anxiety about the future (Mols & Jetten, 2014; Spruyt et al., 2016) and a fear of being left behind (Busher et al., 2018). It has been linked to the rise of populism, growing anti-immigration attitudes and backlash politics (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Mols & Jetten, 2014; Mahendran et al., 2021a; 2021b).

Early theories of nostalgia proposed an association with autobiographical memory, and a psychological yearning to return to something experienced and remembered from the

past, often aligned to home (Boym, 2004; De Brigard, 2017). More recently, a new ‘variant’ of nostalgia has been recognised and named as ‘anemoia’ or ‘nostalgia for a time you’ve never known’ (De Brigard, 2020, p. 4). The power of anemoia is significant particularly in populist rhetoric designed to influence political decision-making. De Brigard proposes that ‘improving the accuracy of our memory for the past could indeed be the best strategy to curb the uncharitable deceptions of the politics of nostalgia’ (p. 8).

Nostalgia also has an affective component which explains the way in which citizens’ emotions are easily exploited, particularly around fear and anxiety about the present and the sentimental and ideational promise of an ‘enchanted future’ with utopian promises that are associated with a return to the past (Kenny, 2017, p. 261). The role of nationalism leading to calls for citizen mobilisation has also been linked to nostalgic rhetoric associated with the nationalist rhetorical triad (Levinger & Lyttle, 2001). Nostalgia has also been associated with collective memory when used as an orientation to the future, or even a mobilisation that directs action towards an imagined future through a process of prolepsis (Brescó De Luna, 2018; Cole, 1996).

Prolepsis, where the past influences actions in the present that are directed towards the future, is illustrated well by the behaviour of parents who make choices in the present based on their memories of the past in their projections of their children’s future (Cole, 1996; O’Toole & de Abreu, 2005). Brescó De Luna argues that prolepsis plays into the nationalist rhetorical triad and identifies how the imagined future adds to the distortion of the past to the point at which ‘political imagination, in the form of utopias and promised lands, has often led to tragic endings’ (Brescó De Luna, 2017, p. 290). Nostalgia’s dependence upon the distortion of the past, though, will only work if that past is imagined and not lived. The intersection of past, present and future lends itself to chronotopic analysis (Bakhtin, 1981; Marková & Novaes, 2020; Mahendran et al., 2021a; 2021b) within dialogical accounts of life experiences which involve the time–space trajectory of remembering and its influence on interpretations of the present and future.

Boym’s philosophical analysis of nostalgia describes how much of nostalgia’s power comes from a yearning for a home that ‘no longer exists or has never existed’ (Boym, 2004, p. 7) reinforcing the view that too often the emotive desire created by nostalgic rhetoric alludes to a fictional rather than a real past. The role of lived experience to inoculate against the use of nostalgic rhetoric provides a way of exploring de Brigard’s (2020) assertion that accuracy of memory reduces nostalgia’s ‘deceptive techniques’. This claim is explored here using Rachel’s case study to examine how chronotopes of now-and-then, here-and-there (Zittoun, 2014), resist the political imaginaries presented by nostalgia, dismantling the rhetorical triad and eliminating the power of nostalgic fictions to persuade.

## The role of memory in nostalgia

The question of whether lived experience of the past can help resistance to nostalgia requires consideration of how memory and history intersect. De Saint Laurent compares the ‘memory work’ of a grandparent to the ‘doing history’ of the grandchild when together they talk about World War II (De Saint Laurent, 2018, p. 151) and the dilemma when the

child recounts this of whether it is remembering or representation. The interaction of the child and the grandparent is the beginning of collective memory – the child takes away from the interaction a version of the past generated within the social and cultural context of the interaction. The memory, once shared, is different from the original recounting by the grandparent. Exposure to media representations of World War II may further distort the original account.

Collective memory is socially negotiated, as well as constructed, and is subject to distortion and appropriation for political purposes. This is demonstrated politically when slogans such as those used in the UK–EU 2016 referendum by the campaign to leave – ‘take back control’ – and those used in the US by Trump – ‘make America great again’ – are used to persuade the receiver of a truth (we are not in control, we are not great) that helps them to make sense of their present (De Saint Laurent, 2018). When collective memory is hijacked by a group, it becomes challenging to reflect upon what actually took place (De Saint Laurent, 2017). Yet being reflective, or in De Brigard’s (2020) terminology, increasing the accuracy of memory, may be the antidote to nostalgia, nationalism and the production of the ‘glorified national novel’ (De Saint Laurent, 2017, p. 276).

Future orientation is influenced by past experiences in a form of prolepsis, and imagination of how the future can be has been described as an ‘imaginative loop’ (De Saint Laurent & Zittoun, 2018, p. 12). This acknowledges a ‘double history’ of events as reported and events as remembered. When remembering the past as experienced, individual autobiographical memory can conflict with collective memory that has been socially negotiated sometimes to sanitise past behaviours (Zittoun, 2017a). Rachel’s case study will explore whether prolepsis or anemoia contribute to her recollections of the past. It will also explore whether the collective memory of the sanitisation of post-war anti-Semitism, reportedly arising from an emerging awareness of horrors of The Holocaust (Goldman, 1984), matches Rachel’s experience as a Jewish child on the streets of Glasgow.

## **The Silent Ggeneration – lived experience as resistance to nostalgia**

Older citizens are often represented in research as a group that are judged by deficit or decline, reduced societal value and eventual loss (Hviid, 2020). Ageist attitudes can result in societal stereotype threats that undermine older citizens’ behaviour and performance (Lamont et al., 2015). Attempts to highlight the positive benefits of active ageing have led to subdivision of the ageing population into value-laden categories of third and fourth age, based on perceived contributions to, or a drain on, society (Gilleard & Higgs, 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic in the UK has led to further expansion of categories for older citizens, including being ‘vulnerable’, requiring ‘shielding’ and even being ‘dispensable’ as facts emerge about the impact on care homes of ageist policies around discharging hospitalised older patients into care homes without testing (Brooke & Jackson, 2020).

However, when research into the older citizen adopts a different ‘theoretical lens’ and focuses less on decline/loss and more on Cultural Life Course theory (Hviid, 2020, p. 8), ageing can be redefined as benefiting from a long life of experiences, an enhanced

perspective and ‘authority borne of age’ (p. 1). Despite stereotypical views of decline in cognitive capacity and memory (Lamont et al., 2015), there is a generation that has the ability to recall World War II and life immediately afterwards. This generation, those aged over 75 years, has become known as the Silent Generation. This label arose originally in the US to describe a generation who were too young to serve but who quietly worked hard to rebuild the war-hit economy through the post-war years. In the UK, they have been described as ‘silent’ because they have been reluctant to talk about their early experiences around World War II. Little is known about the political decision-making of the Silent Generation until they were recently blamed for the decision to leave the EU in the 2016 UK–EU referendum (Alabrese et al., 2019) largely as a result of the concealment of the voting decisions of this generation within 65 + polling data categories.

Arguably the aggregation of older citizens’ voting decisions into the 65+ category is an example of institutional ageist policies and practices similar to requiring retesting for driving licences (Hviid, 2020). Whilst pollsters are keen to explore voting comparisons between 25-year-olds and 40-year-olds, they seem less interested in comparing a 65-year-old with an 80-year-old. More granular level exploration of Eurobarometer data, however, suggests that older citizens do not follow the pattern projected by the 65+ clustering (Devine, 2019). Devine’s analysis reveals that the oldest citizens within this cluster were less likely to vote to leave the EU than younger members of the cluster. It is possible that those with the longest memories and lived experience are less Eurosceptic than those born after the war. Reports around World War II anniversaries where veterans talk about their experiences suggest a more positive attitude to Europe and appreciation of the pacific role of the European Union (Hutton, 2019; Phillips et al., 2020).

The lack of empirical data of these citizens in terms of their political decision-making contributes to the uncertainty about why this group may be more pro-European than aggregated polling data suggests. Resistance to nostalgic rhetoric used by Eurosceptic politicians before the UK–EU referendum may be part of the answer, including WWII metaphors which are known to be influential in voting decisions in elections and referenda (Flusberg et al., 2018; Saunders, 2016). Rachel’s case study suggests that the remembered past is highly salient when making judgements about the present and the future, providing a resistance to nostalgia.

## Rachel’s case study

The case study presented here was collected as part of a larger dialogical cross-Europe project led by the second author in 2012–2013 looking at European citizenship, migration–mobility, belonging and integration. Data were collected in five countries – England, Scotland, Ireland, Sweden and Germany – through interviews, recorded and transcribed, with migrant and non-migrant participants (Mahendran et al., 2015). Rachel Vacher<sup>1</sup> is a female member of the Silent Generation, born in 1934, living in Glasgow, Scotland. She was 79 years old at the time of the interview<sup>2</sup>, which was conducted in March 2013. The interview consisted of three parts, an open coded section followed by six questions which established Rachel’s position as position 1 on the migration–mobility continuum (MMC; Mahendran, 2013, Mahendran et al., 2015; Mahendran, 2018) and

ending with a section which involved presenting participants with stimulus materials relating to immigrant integration within the European Union. Rachel was selected for this case study as she was the only member of the Silent Generation interviewed in this project.

Single participant case studies from a dialogical perspective provide significant value for providing in-depth insight into how participants use *I*-positions, the importance of temporal orientation, theory building and development of models (Zadeh & Cabra, 2020; Zittoun, 2014, 2017b). The longstanding debate between inductive and abductive generalization and the role of the unique case has arrived at recognition of the value of the single case for laying the groundwork for necessary models and theories to emerge (De Luca Picione, 2015; Salvatore & Valsiner, 2010). Dialogical epistemology applied to social justice and social change research include single case studies that have ‘given voice’ to the voiceless (Markova, 2017; Zadeh, 2017). The citizens of the Silent Generation have unheard and undervalued voices which, if listened to dialogically, could provide insight into how political decisions are made by those who have the longest life experiences.

Rachel’s childhood was located in the Gorbals, an area of Glasgow in Scotland that was historically a deprived area, suffering further from government intervention which cleared inner city tenements and replaced them with high-rise concrete blocks. The area was described as the ‘most notorious slum in Britain’ by the mid-20th century (Taylor, 2013, p. 128), although there were more middle-class Jewish communities in other parts of the city. Rachel’s great-grandparents arrived in Scotland as refugees from Europe and Russia, settling in Glasgow, joining a community of which over half were Russian Jewish migrants. At the time of her childhood (1940s), Rachel would have lived within a densely populated area with recognised overcrowding and a lack of basic facilities in most homes. It was estimated before World War II that most of Scotland’s Jewish community lived in the area (Taylor, 2010), and this would have included Rachel’s extended family who shared a small residence with no indoor bathroom facilities. Families routinely used public bathhouses for personal hygiene. Between the 1920s and 1960s, many of the original properties were cleared and replaced but the use of high-rise towers and poorly designed replacement homes led to further social deprivation and resulting health issues for residents.

### *Analytical steps*

A four-step dialogical analysis was conducted initially by the first author in 2020 followed by a further co-analysis by all three authors, identifying (i) her use of *I*-positions, (ii) where she drew upon multivoicedness when referring to others, (iii) the use of chronotopes where she moved between past, present and future, and (iv) use of social representations through the interview (Mahendran et al., 2021a, 2021b). Analysis of *I*-positionality is taken directly from Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1981; Mahendran et al., 2015), as opposed to Hermans’ Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans, 2001). From this analysis, two key dimensions were identified which reflect how Rachel moved between the past and the present in response to the interviewer’s questions about belonging, acceptance and mobility and what these dialogical positions revealed about changes in identity, the limitations of poverty and increased opportunities in the present.

### *Dimension 1: Anti-Semitism and evolving confidence in her Jewish identity*

Rachel spontaneously drew upon the past in the interview revealing how her identity as a member of the Jewish community was threatened in childhood by the anti-Semitic attitudes of that time.

In Extract 1, Rachel talks about a childhood experience of anti-Semitism which left her with an intense feeling of fear that continued into adulthood. The interviewer asks whether there has been a time when she had felt unaccepted or on the outside, and Rachel's immediate recollection went back 70 years to how an incident had made her feel, before moving forward 40 years when given the opportunity to confront and challenge the perpetrator's original behaviour. From a dialogical perspective, Rachel moved from an *I*-position of fearful victim to one of confident challenger, illustrating the sociogenetic nature of these changing positions over time, and the different 'meaning and intensity' of these positions (Marková & Novaes, 2020, p. 134).

Extract 1:

Rachel: Oh yeah at the very beginning. Oh aye. I'm (.) I'm talking about when (.) I remember when I was seven (.) I was out playing and this boy, he says 'a Jew a Jew a Jew a Jew' and the feeling of fear that went into me and I was only seven and it never ever left me and I ran up to my gran's because in they<sup>3</sup> days, your grans and your aunts and uncles, we all lived (.) lived together. We were known as the Jews of Lochill<sup>4</sup> because that's where Papa got offered a job (...) But I'll never ever forget the fear and about forty years later in the shopping centre I was with my cousin and his wife and this [boy] (.) [My cousin] says 'oh there's (.) there's John, Rachel' so he came over to speak and eh (.) [My cousin] says 'you remember Rachel' and this (.) [My cousin] says 'and this is John'. 'Oh' I says 'I (.) I will never forget John'. He says 'How is that? Because I was handsome and that?' and I says 'No' and I told him. He says 'Rachel, I don't remember and I'm sorry'

In this extract, Rachel uses three voices – her own, her cousin's and John's – as she recalls the encounter in the shopping centre and her opportunity after 40 years to address the fear felt profoundly as a child ('I'll never ever forget the fear'), revealing the intensity of this interaction.

Further evidence of a shift of position from an external position and social representation of being Jewish and its association with anti-Semitism in childhood to an internal *I*-position of identity-confident can be seen in Extract 2. Although Rachel refers to a continuing positioning of the general public as holding hatred towards the Jewish community, she is now able to foreground her Jewish identity (Fivush et al., 2011) through confidence that comes with age (an *I*-position of older citizen).

Extract 2:

Rachel: Even (.) see even nowadays there's still that hatred and sometimes (.) (know) now as I'm older, you've got confidence now I mean I can stand up for myself. I wear the star (.) you know that's the Star of David ... see as you get older you don't have the same fear if you



know what I mean. You can handle yourself better but when you're young and vulnerable it affects you (.) you know.

Rachel also recalls the sadness of seeing how her father was a victim of anti-Semitic attitudes from work colleagues in Extract 3. She takes up the *I*-daughter position and describes her father's experience as embedded in self-other (self-work colleagues) where rather than addressing him as a colleague, they instead made use of racial slurs.

Extract 3:

Rachel: But at the beginning, the people (.) even although they saw all the hardship that the Holocaust had got, it didnae [did not] make them a wee [tiny] bit sad or anything like this. My poor papa was (.) oh he was the love in my life and he worked in [local business] and all his working days he was never called [by his real name], he was called 'The Yid' (.) you know which is Yiddish for (.) for Jewish and that was the mentality of them.

In this extract, Rachel reflects on an expectation that emerging news of the Holocaust would soften the negative attitudes of society towards the Jewish community. The historical record suggests sympathy and softening of anti-Jewish sentiment after World War II following an increase during the war (Goldman, 1984). Those with anemoia might romanticise about a welcoming post-war society for Jewish survivors, but Rachel's experience shows that anti-Semitic attitudes were still prevalent. Writings of Jewish survivors support Rachel's experience, that the horrific images emerging from the liberation of the camps in Europe that we might have imagined would reduce anti-Semitism in the UK or USA failed to do so (Kunz, 1997), although the full horror of the situation did not emerge for some years after the war ended. Rachel's recollection challenges historical accounts that have been sanitised by a form of 'cultural constraint' to a more acceptable version of the past (De Saint Laurent, 2017, p. 268).

## ***Dimension 2: Poverty and inter-generational positioning***

In the second dimension, Rachel readily recalls a childhood constrained by poverty and deprivation referring to the use of shared bathhouses for hygiene and pawn shops for economic survival. In Extract 4, Rachel responds to the interviewer's question about her experience of belonging to Glasgow, immediately recalling the past and her early life in the Gorbals. She describes the deprivations of cramped accommodation shared by large family groups, sharing space with 'big grown-up men' and accessing a single toilet alongside many others.

Extract 4:

Rachel: I mean see honestly in the Gorbals in the forties and fifties, even when we moved to Lochill<sup>5</sup>, oh the houses were poverty. An outside toilet for three families and some of the families had seven and eight in a room and kitchen and they were all big grown-up men. I mean my husband's mother and father and his three brothers and two sisters stayed in a room and kitchen and then the other two houses and they all shared the same toilet (...) and I

honestly don't remember my grandparents ever going up to the hot baths. Must have been stinking. No but I mean (.) but I didnae [did not] remember them stinking. But we went to the hot baths on a Friday but I don't ever remember (.) they must have had a bath and a wash in the house or something like that.

In this extract, Rachel recalls a life where personal hygiene was limited and decisions about when to bathe had to be made alongside others and the availability of a public bathhouse. Although she fails to remember older family members bathing or washing, or the 'stinking' that must have been a feature of her life, this chronotopic recollection of the past is of a child fighting for space alongside larger adults and dealing with the unpleasantness of poor sanitation.

In Extract 5, she continues to talk about the poverty endured by all family members and the need to make use of the pawnshop in order to survive from the beginning to the end of the week.

Extract 5:

Rachel: And the poverty was (.) oh god. And the pawn shops were everybody's life saver, the pawn shops because my (.) even my granny, do you remember (.) you wouldnae [would not] remember (.) the old irons that you put in the fire? Well she used to pawn that on a Monday for seven pennies and that bought her (.) bought her a meal (.) you know for the whole family. Oh they had it so hard. Now look what they've got nowadays.

Rachel's recollection of this time seems to be overwhelming ('and the poverty was (.) oh god'). She adopts a 'week' chronotope to articulate a tightly constrained hand to mouth existence, relying on selling household items to buy food each week. Her horizons within this chronotope open at the end of her account when she makes the comparison with present day ('now look what they've got nowadays'). The comparison made here between the overwhelming experience of acute poverty and the reality of present-day affluence demonstrates how Rachel would be resistant to sanitised or even glorified versions of the past that she remembers in all its deprivations.

Rachel's strong tendency to go to the past throughout the interview is typical of older people with a limited temporal future, and whose dialogical age loops tend to be past-oriented (Zittoun et al., 2013). They are more likely to revisit past experiences than think towards the future unless it is vicariously through the lives of younger family members. However, throughout Rachel's account, she does not reflect on the past as 'golden' or 'glorious' but recalls a fearful, impoverished childhood with limited opportunities and sees the present as better than the past. She rejects the idea that the present is somehow stalled or degraded, a feature of prolepsis within the nationalist rhetorical triad (Levinger & Lytle, 2001), and instead shows appreciation for the opportunities that exist in comparison to her own childhood and youth. Appeals to a nostalgia that constructs the past as golden (Bresc  de Luna, 2018) are absent from Rachel's account.

## Discussion

The rhetorical and persuasive power of nostalgia relies upon anemoia – a past that is imagined and not experienced – compounded by a process of prolepsis in which the past is brought into the present to influence actions oriented towards the future. However, Rachel's recall of past experiences of anti-Semitism and poverty with acknowledgement of how this compares with a prosperous present serve to question the effectiveness of the mobilisation of nostalgia amongst those citizens who can recall key events from the past. Rachel's case study demonstrates how the role of prolepsis in nostalgic rhetoric, relying on a version of the past that plays into a dissatisfaction and anxiety about the present, loses its power when the past is experienced and not imagined. An important future line of inquiry could shed light on the phenomenon of anemoia by bringing younger citizens into dialogue with those who can recall key political events and their impact.

Single case studies such as the one presented here can be thought of as the first step on the ladder, starting with the particular and moving to the general (Morgan, 2014). As a dialogical case study, Rachel is 'actively making sense of embodied, interested, socially positioned, agentic self-other dialogues' (Cornish, 2020, p. 142) and, by so doing, she reflects both macro-historical contexts (post World War II anti-Semitism) with her own lived experiences and the socio- and ontogenetic processes contributing to self. In this article, the case is made for more social and political psychological research into the Silent Generation who are currently hidden by a tendency to adopt either a deficit model in relation to them or aggregate their views about the world within public opinion polls.

Whilst acknowledging that Rachel was not asked about nostalgia, or her thoughts about the use of political rhetoric drawing on World War II metaphors, her vivid recollections of a difficult past, the misery of anti-Semitism and week-to-week poverty, provides an element of resistance to politically presented idealised visions of the past. She comes back to the present repeatedly to talk about opportunities that were not available to her ('look what they've got nowadays') and in other parts of the interview appreciates how her children and grandchildren have benefited from a changed and improved society. The ability to reflect on an experienced rather than an imagined past may challenge the power of nostalgic rhetoric based on anemoia, for example, the descriptions of the utopian future outside of Europe.

This opens up the intriguing possibility that further research with the Silent Generation could provide understanding of the influence of nostalgia on political decision-making, and explore the potential for improved, realistic memories of the past to inoculate against the deceptive promises of those who draw upon nostalgia to persuade.

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## Notes

1. Pseudonym.
2. Rachel was interviewed by Rachel Rotter, research assistant to second author.
3. Scottish dialect.
4. Place name changed.
5. Place name changed.

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**Dr Kesi Mahendran** is a Senior Lecturer in Social Psychology at The Open University. Her research programme seeks to support dialogue between citizens and their governments on vexed political questions such as migration, sovereignty, European and Global citizenship. She is particularly interested in the conditions when people move from public opinion to public dialogue. She is the co-editor of the book *Discursive Governance in Politics, Policy and the Public Sphere* (2015, Palgrave Macmillan), the Chair-Elect of the British Psychology Society, Political Psychology Section and has recently established the Public Dialogue Psychology Collaboratory at the Open University.

**Sarah Crafter** is a Professor in Cultural-Developmental Psychology in the School of Psychology and Counselling at The Open University. Her work is broadly interested in children and family migration experiences and how they impact on their everyday lives, particularly non-normative transitions to adulthood. Her theoretical and conceptual interests are grounded in sociocultural theory, transitions, critical-developmental psychology and dialogical understandings of the self. Her main strands of work are on the child language brokering and separated child migrants care of each other as they navigate asylum and welfare systems.