

Transitions and Turning Points

MEMORY AND THE MUTABLE SELF

In her account of herself as a child growing up in Egypt during the 1930s, Penelope Lively (1994, p. 1) begins by describing how the interplay of ‘now’ and ‘then’ first came to her with the force of a startling revelation: ‘I can look back upon myself of now, of this moment. I shall be able to think about myself now, thinking of this—but it will be then, not now’. There is a spatial dimension to this—going by car from Bulaq Dakhrur to Heliopolis, travelling along a road lined on either side with oleander and jacaranda trees, all of them bright and laden with flowers—but as she sits on the tacky leather back seat of the car she realizes that there is a temporal dimension to it as well, for in a few hours they will return by the same route and ‘pass the same trees, in reverse order’, and then, but only then, she will be able to look back at herself ‘of now, of this moment’. This realization wonderfully illustrates the dawning of self-awareness in which she sees herself as moving through time and being defined in herself by the cross-temporal and cross-spatial distinctions between ‘now’ and ‘then’, ‘here’ and ‘there’. It endures in her adult memory as one of those moments ‘in our childhood where we come alive for the first time’, and to which, subsequently, ‘we go back... and think: this is when I became myself’ (Dove and Ingersoll 2003, pp. 136–67).

Alongside this, the spatial and temporal dimensions of remembering extend long forward to the much later period of her autobiographical

writing as she considers the relationship between childhood memory and adult hindsight. Across time, at the point of writing, she also thought ‘with equal wonder of that irretrievable child, and of the eerie relationship between her mind and mine’ (Lively 1994, p. 1). The child Penelope Low, living in Egypt, became Penelope Lively, the grown-up married person with children of her own, living in England. There is clearly some relation between them, as she remains known by the first name she was assigned by her parents, but what kind of presence does that child now have within the mind of the mature woman she became? Although tantalizing pieces of the past remain with her, the child she once was is gone. Between the child and the adult are waves of development and change within the self. These make our experiences in the distant past unlivable again in the form they were lived through at that time.

George Herbert Mead ([1932] 2002, p. 58) made this point with admirable concision in the same decade as that of Lively’s childhood:

When one recalls his boyhood days, he cannot get into them as he was, without their relationship to what he has become; and if he could, that is if he could reproduce the experience as it then took place, he could not use it, for this would involve his not being in the present within which that use must take place.

As we change we lose the ability to experience and make sense of events and happenings in the exact same way we did in the past. At the same time we gain the ability to engage with our experience in quite altered ways, some of which were not available to us in the past and some of which may help us to see the past from a perspective that sheds new light on it. This does not mean that the once-lived past has completely disappeared, for clearly there are traces that remain, some of them perhaps with a brilliant allure or resilient echo, and there is certainly an interconnecting sense of identity between our temporally specific selves. Thomas de Quincey ([1821] 2003, p. 94) wrote about this in the following way:

An adult sympathises with himself in childhood because he *is* the same and because (being the same) he is *not* the same. He acknowledges the deep, mysterious identity between himself, as infant, for the ground of his sympathy; and yet, with this general agreement, and necessity of agreement, he feels the differences between his two selves as the main quickness of his sympathy.

Along with the differences is the abiding knowledge that the child grew up and, however haphazardly, became the person who is still going strong. It is in part because in any adult person, the child is in some indeterminate way still there yet definitely no longer there at all. She can feel haunted by an old childhood photograph of herself, with the photograph seeming to provide incontrovertible truth that she did once exist, in some former flesh-and-blood version of herself, but that ‘she’ as she was then is now irretrievable. ‘Then’ and ‘now’ correspond, but only across an insuperable gulf. Again, and despite this, there remain those eerie residues of what was then in what is now, even though we cannot grasp with any hard-and-fast certainty quite what relation exists between who we were and who we are:

All morning I’d felt the strange disjuncture that comes from reconnecting with your past. There’s such a gulf between yourself and who you were then, but people speak to that other person and it answers; it’s like having a stranger as a house guest in your skin. (Kingsolver [1990] 2004, p. 40)

Within the temporary abode of our current selves, our past selves are like this, familiar strangers, or strange familiars, whom we know and yet no longer know because we have changed, because we have forgotten as well as remembered and because our orientations, motivations and purposes in remembering are specific to the present even as they relate to the past or the future.

In this chapter, we shall explore at least some of the many features that are involved in the changes we undergo across the vicissitudes of time, and we will discuss how we manage the complex relations between who we were at various stages in the past and who we are now: a person immersed in a lived present but who is of course still changing and will in certain ways be different in the future. How do we navigate these differences in who we have been, who we are and who we will be, and somehow make them part of the same story? In considering these questions, our main interest in the chapter is in the process of looking back and all this entails. The colloquial phrase ‘looking back’ intrigues because it is at once commonly used and semantically vague. It seems to us worth thinking about for both reasons as we try to unpack what it involves and put forward at least some reasons for its prevalent usage.¹

Looking back is done in a wide range of different ways, but perhaps most significantly over the course of a life it refers to the sense of having

been embarked on a journey, regardless of how many diverse places are encountered along the way or how many twists and turns have been taken in movements between ‘then’ and ‘now’. At various points along it, looking back across this journey involves a series of assessments of the different directions we have taken and the cumulative but ever-shifting pattern that has developed. In this way, looking back is the necessary ground for seeing ahead, as in the Kierkegaardian dictum of having to understand life backwards but needing to live it forward. Its range of reference as a term of retrospection is also broad. In its colloquial usage, and maybe in its strongest sense, looking back refers to concertedly active forms of recollection, with these acting at times in close alliance with how we draw on elements of the past and in doing so manage change and maintain a cross-temporal conception of who we are. This is what is intriguing. The reference may appear simple enough, but quite what is entailed in its vernacular connotations can be subtle, equivocal, unsettling and striated with a sense of both loss and gain. What appears straightforward can, on inspection, be found to harbour unexplained implications or unexpected switchbacks of meaning. This is particularly so when ‘looking back’ is a term we use to think about how we came to be who we have become, and the journey we have taken in the accomplishment of this.

Memory thus seems to be our main resource for looking back, and in this respect it is vital to the constitution of selfhood.² Obviously the past does not live on in its entirety, for if it did we would be completely burdened by it. It would utterly swamp the present, and this is palpably not the case. Those aspects of it which we make intentional use of in our ongoing lives are selectively chosen, with the operative word here being ‘we’, for while we like to think of at least some aspects of the past as our own, individual to ourselves, the past is for the most part a shared resource, added to and taken from by those with whom we are closely associated, whether families or networks of friends. We do have our personal participation in it as a shared resource, and we do shape the past in certain ways that are quite personal to us, but even when we’re alone and remembering, memory itself is a product of social exchange and communication. We need in various ways to move between what seems intensely personal and the ways in which self-told stories of family experiences, say, ‘are embedded in relational structures that exist beyond individual knowledge’ (Widmer and Jallinoja 2008, p. 7). The value of this is that it gives us a transactional perspective, for as we move through our lives,

from one stage of development to another, we do so in the context of various social relations that help give form, substance and meaning to this movement. At the same time, however, in looking back across it, we think about the specific person who is for each of us centrally wrought up in it, and how that person has changed from one period of life to another. We then have to gauge and assess all that is involved in our successive selves, in what is retained and maintained and in what is altered and accommodated, across the diverse social contexts in which those selves have operated and developed.

This remains important in spite of the ways a viable sense of selfhood and individuality has been theoretically challenged or denounced in recent decades. At least as far as our ethnographic data are concerned, thinking about self in itself, along with self in relation to significant others, are vital issues in everyday accounts of our actions and exchanges, with notions of fluidity and fracture being notable mainly by their absence. In formulating our concept of the mnemonic imagination, we have shown elsewhere how it constitutes the central device through which these issues are handled, particularly in its contribution to the narrative schemas and frameworks within which we establish meaningful configuration in the midst of temporal succession.³ The mnemonic imagination is the means by which interlinkages are made between the remembered 'me' and the remembering 'I', the remembered 'us' and the remembering 'we'. These interlinkages, in their autobiographical and vernacular social combination, are crucial to the more or less coherent stories which give unity, purpose and significance to what is recollected and recounted across time.

At many points in the book we shall return to these interlinkages, and we shall insist throughout that memory is never simply an individual possession. Instead it must be located between a person's relation to individual self and the social world she or he inhabits. That is why our abiding focus is on the relation between self and what Jeffrey Praeger (1998, p. 60) calls the intersubjectiveness of memory. Selfhood and self-identity do not arise out some essential inner core. Forging and maintaining a sense of self is not a solely inner-directed process, emerging and changing as a result of acts of introspection; it is just as importantly built up on the basis of our outer-directed experience in the day-to-day settings in which we live and through the relations with others who are most influential or salient for us. By the same token, we should not confine discussion of the self solely to regulative institutional structures, imperatives

and pressures and lose any sense of the agentic capacities of the individual in developing a sense of her or his self-identity—a sense that may derive, as Edward Sapir ([1934] 1970, p. 197) noted, from ‘the ability of the individual to become aware of and attach value to his resistance to authority’. The trick is not only to distinguish between such structures, imperatives and pressures and what Sapir ([1934] 1970, pp. 196, 198) called ‘a person-defining value’, but also to try to keep both in our sights simultaneously.

It is worth dwelling for a moment on how a person-defining value may become attached to a particular memory, for we shall come across various instances of this throughout the book. For it to arise, recalling your presence in some past scene or setting is not sufficient in itself, even though this is a specific form of memory which may influence the intertemporal perspective in which the memory is placed. In this form of memory, your presence makes, or perhaps affirms, your individual participation at the time, which then contributes to what happens in the memory and perhaps modifies how it is remembered. There are occasions when we require knowledge of self-presence in this way, for the simple reason that evidence of being there at that time is necessary for the recollection and use of that recollection in a particular present, but this is quite different to what is established in the relationship between memory and selfhood. It is often the case that this specific form of memory is important for the constitution of selfhood, but it only becomes important when a person-defining value is associated with it, as for example when authority is resisted or convention is transcended in the execution of a social practice. What is then vital is the interpretation of what happened and of our personal participation as contributing to our sense of the person we have subsequently become. The mnemonic imagination is actively involved in the retrospective assessment of this and the post hoc assignment of value to the experience, and that is simultaneously achieved by embedding the memory within an attendant narrative whose purpose is to show how the memory in question has been formative in contributing to a sense of who we are, at the time we construct and recount it. Our understanding of the person-defining value of certain memories directly generates the perspective within which these memories come to stand, so that the way we see them is shaped by how they inform our personal identities: ‘Change presupposes a certain position which I take up and from which I see things in procession before me: there are no events without someone to whom they happen and

whose finite perspective is the basis of their individuality' (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2002, p. 477).

Over the course of a life, people weigh up different goods and values against each other, reject some of these and take up others. Even when such rejection or adoption involves radical shifts of identification and allegiance, the task is to fit them into an overall narrative that situates such changes within a broader explanatory framework and, through the workings of the mnemonic imagination, manages whatever they seem to betoken, in either the short or the long term, by creating a sufficient sense of unity capable of convincing us and our close associates that in certain ways at least, we remain the same person despite the differences manifest at successive stages in our lives. Yet even as we move through these successive stages of the life course and encounter changes that are profound in their consequences and repercussions, we should be careful not to exaggerate them artificially. We should try to keep equally in view how selves acquire a sense of similitude across time in quite a different manner as they 'become routinised, lodged, committed and stabilised' (Plummer 2003, pp. 524–5). It is important to be clear about this. The self is mutable, for even though we might rhetorically use the expression 'he hasn't changed a bit', in an implicit judgement that can be either positive or negative, and even though we may regard someone as highly stable, steadfast and unwavering, with largely affirmative evaluations attendant on this estimation of character, we definitely do not remain the same person throughout our lives. We change as our lives change and as we move through the successive stages of the life course. In light of this, we shall operate throughout the book with a firm conviction in the concept of successive selves, chronologically unfolding out of each other while also becoming changed over time because of the varying contexts of particular remembering occasions, but we shall also endeavour to unravel how our successive selves are always in some way or other a complex mixture of elements of continuity and discontinuity.

If our self-identities did not extend over time with a fair degree of continuity, there would be no coherence to them; they would fall apart into disconnected fragments. We strive to refit the temporal fragments we're left with in our memory into a subsequent pattern of sorts, but the very fact of succession also implies that the pattern we present conforms with a current self-conception. Our identities are always in process, though they may change more at certain times or junctures than at others. We live through such change, and in the moment of its happening

we may be caught up in the very flux and flurry of it. But as time passes we strive to glean from it what is most worthy of retention, or most rewarding in relation to how we have reflexively considered it, with the effort at this manifest in the ways we absorb experience in light of previous experience and use our mnemonic imagination to bring particular aspects of change into dialogue with others. Attempting to find some kind of balance between continuity and change is what is of paramount concern in thinking about the relationship of self and memory.

John Locke ([1690] 1997, p. 302) is usually credited with first equating self and memory. For him memory is what makes someone a person across the course of time, and personal identity consists of a continuity of consciousness in such a way that ‘as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now as it was then’. Memory provides continuity, and this continuity is the *sine qua non* of the self, established over time. As a result, we gain personal identity to the extent that we actively recall our own actions in the past and take responsibility for them. Otherwise put, we are accountable for those actions because we remember them. The problem here is not that we need to have a conception of ourselves as persisting subjects in order to be moral agents, for this is clearly the case, but rather that memory has definite limitations. This was Thomas Reid’s objection to Locke’s equation of self and memory (we cannot remember everything, and in any case memories change over time), but to some extent at least Locke recognized this, acknowledging that memory is selective and far from comprehensive. Memory can also be disturbed or alienated, with individuals ‘cut off from significant areas of their own life that had become inaccessible to conscious recall’ (Danziger 2008, p. 106). Locke’s conception of selfhood is therefore defined by memory, which we are consciously aware of and which we can intentionally bring back to mind. This helps provide the continuity necessary for the formation and maintenance of personal identity as well as enabling us to act as moral agents accountable for our past actions, and also on this basis able to think ahead and take actions which will have an outcome in the future, even if this is not always the one we anticipated.

This has been an influential account, and in many ways it is persuasive, with its influence in a more conceptual manner evidenced through its rearticulation and refinement in psychological continuity theories which view personal identity as the linking together of past and present

through autobiographical experience and the memories we have of it. Psychological continuity is established through connections within memory, which then underpin and secure personal identity. Unresolved issues here are exactly how many such connections are required in order to establish personal identity in this way, what particular sets of connection warrant sufficient evidence of ‘sameness’ in a person at different points in time and what forms of connection we commonly seek in developing a relatively coherent self-conception both in and over time. A further problem lies in the way in which memory itself is approached. In Locke’s initial conception, the storehouse metaphor was used to explain how memory exists and is put into operation, with experiences being stacked away in safe storage, to be retrieved when needed (Keightley and Pickering 2012, pp. 39–40). Marya Schechtman (1994, pp. 6–7) has suggested that a latent picture of memory as a storehouse is present in psychological continuity theories, underlying the kinds of connections they seek to establish, and seeing ‘memory as a straightforward link between a present moment and a single, well-defined past experience’.

Schechtman’s objections to this view are worth summarizing. First of all, she points out that autobiographical memory is only one form of memory. In itself it is hardly monolithic because it includes direct reproductions of specific events alongside cumulative memory of certain periods in our lives and generic memories of certain kinds of experience reiterated over the course of time, such as high days and holidays. Some memories are recalled in vivid detail, while others are vague and indistinct. Summarized-experience memories and memories which lack any clear definition do not fit into the requirement of psychological continuity theory for connections between two firmly established moments of consciousness, one in the past, the other in the present. Fittingly, Schechtman (1994, p. 10) emphasizes the ‘immense complexity of the relation “memory of”’. It is because this relation is complex that the further relation between selfhood and memory is not one that can be satisfactorily accounted for by conceiving of it in terms of any simple or direct reproduction of the past in the present.

Despite her critical objections to psychological continuity theories, Schechtman unfortunately retains too strong an insistence on the need for stability of self-identity over time, and empathic access to who we were in the past, for the development and maintenance of a narrative sense of self.⁴ There are various problems with this, the most serious being that, while elements of continuity are evidently of huge

importance in relation to the passage of time, temporal succession also entails modification, alteration, mutation and discontinuity, which is precisely why we are able to distinguish between different stages in our lives and develop the sense that we have either grown, diversified and developed into a more mature person, or come into the realization that we were previously misguided, naïve or foolish: ‘I used to think back sometimes on the plans that Valentine and I had made—living together in Paris on French bread and coffee and writing—and I didn’t feel nostalgic or regretful, I only felt contempt for my deluded previous self’ (Hadley 2013, p. 115). This is strongly phrased, expressing an abrupt turnaround between past self in her callow youth and mature personal identity in the present, and indeed at extremes we may feel moral repugnance or emotional turbulence when we consider the person we used to be: ‘Once in a while I still see in my dreams that person who used to be me, or who I now believe was me, and wake up drenched in sweat’ (Pamuk 2009, p. 6). Such extensive change belies both an idealized conception of stability of self over time and the necessary desirability of sympathetic feelings for the person who used to be me.⁵

Even at these limits there is still an articulation between the past self and the person we are now. The later appraisal doesn’t mean that her or his previous self-understanding was not important earlier in life, for ‘even when someone’s self-interpretation is erroneous, the way in which that person understands himself is still a crucial feature of his identity’ (Abbey 2000, p. 59). Although this needs to be recognized, what these examples show is that in the narratives we construct out of what we remember, there is always potentially an interspace of evaluative response to both the past self being narrated and the present self doing the narration, as a result of which what we think of ourselves back then, or what we think of how we thought of ourselves back then, may change, sometimes radically, and such change has to be managed in the subsequent narratives we tell of ourselves. The mnemonic imagination is centrally involved in these reflexive manoeuvres through which my narrative is revised ‘in the light of my own response to what I think through in narrative form’: ‘Our past thus remains permanently open for reassessment. Just as one’s response as a reader or audience of a great novel or drama can change as one gets older, so one’s response to one’s narrative thinking about one’s past can change over the years’ (Goldie 2012, p. 42). Such change may involve seeing matters in a profoundly new light, and this may plunge us into revising our own deeply held traits, as a result

of which, however briefly, we may enter into a period of conflict and turmoil. We may then say that in the longer term, conflict and turmoil, even though distressing and painful at the time, ‘can be a good thing as a necessary part of a psychological progress of profound change in one’s values, and in particular in one’s defining traits, traits with which one identifies’ (Goldie 2012, p. 142).

Profound change of this kind is relatively rare, while lesser discontinuities of various kinds are not. A developed awareness of discontinuities is of great importance for personal identity because without it, we would not be able to learn from experience, as for instance in assessing the difference between what we did then, and having reflected on this, what we do now as a result of certain decisions we have made. Here the contrasts between ‘then’ and ‘now’ are key points of reference in validating the decision we took to change some aspect of what we did or thought. This demonstrates that our understanding of certain experiences may change over time, as, for example, when we come to re-evaluate certain strong feelings we had about someone in the past, now seeing and thinking about her or him in a different light as we look back and take stock. Either directly or indirectly, this affects our self-interpretation as we would usually see such alterations as marking us out as now more perspicacious, generous or wise. What I do is in some sense expressive of who I have become, and yet what I do now may also affect who I may become in the future. When I enter into or undergo an experience, there is an expectation that my response to it will fall into an established pattern that stems from the character I have developed over the course of time, but of course only to the extent that the experience I encounter does not change this pattern in some way, for it is also be expected that what happens over the course of time does not consist only of what is familiar and predictable. ‘Then’ and ‘now’ by definition register different temporal contours.

It is perhaps worth saying a little more about the issue of character at this point because it is directly pertinent to the difficult question of the interrelations of what is taken as consistency in selfhood and how this is accounted for in the face of cross-temporal change. The argument that we should move from thinking of self-identity in terms of *idem* or sameness to thinking of it in terms of *ipse*, which ‘implies no assertion concerning some unchanging core of the personality’, is central to Ricoeur’s project in *Oneself as Another* (1994, p. 2). One way of bringing about this shift is by conceiving of personal identity as a matter of character,

which Ricoeur describes as a ‘set of lasting dispositions by which a person is recognised’ (p. 121). The challenge in such recognition is not to equate what is lasting with sameness but instead to square it with alteration over time. As we argued in *The Mnemonic Imagination*, some measure of self-constancy is quite compatible with the temporal extension of the self, and we referred there to character and its intersubjective assessment and endorsement as the key dimension of such constancy, with a leading example of this—keeping one’s word—coming from Ricoeur. Keeping one’s word both presupposes memory and (more importantly) implies evaluative judgement of the remembering subject because remaining faithful ‘to promises or commitments’, and being ‘trustworthy and reliable despite the vagaries of experience and the relentless passing of time’ is commonly accepted as a laudable aspect of good character (Keightley and Pickering 2012, p. 22).⁶

Developing and displaying certain self-defining traits over time requires an ability to think of ourselves as conscious subjects whose experience correlates with who we have become, but as we have seen, this does not preclude considerable disruption, change or alteration in one’s self-defining traits in terms of who we have become since we experienced such disruption and change. For this reason in particular, our approach departs from a neo-Lockean psychological continuity view of personal identity which places too strident an emphasis on ‘the holding of overlapping chains of *strong* connectedness’ (Parfit 1984, p. 206). Tracing a trajectory through life in looking back over time is not dependent on such a view even though cross-temporal connections are vital to it. For us, the abiding point of Locke’s conception of personal identity lies instead in what is made retrospectively out of what consciousness holds onto, or out of what memory may bring back unbidden, assessing experiences in light of their multiform qualities and how they contribute to our character or personality over time, adding to this the further dimension of selfhood that arises out of how we act reflexively on changes in our lives and what happens to us, week on week and year on year, thus changing in our own self-conception as well, with the mnemonic imagination being our conceptual template for explaining and understanding such processes.

Having recognized the necessity of both continuity and discontinuity for the formation and management of selfhood, we need to emphasize the dialectical relationship between them. First of all, as we noted earlier, the mnemonic imagination performs the important function of

reinforcing a sense of consonance between the remembering ‘I’ and the remembered ‘me’.⁷ Without such consonance, all conviction of going on being me would fall apart. Such consonance also serves to offset the complications introduced by chance, unforeseen twists in events and the muddle into which events sometimes descend:

If I’ve learned anything in Kabul, it is that human behaviour is messy and unpredictable and unconcerned with convenient symmetries. But I find comfort in it, in the idea of a pattern, of a narrative of my life taking shape, like a photograph in a darkroom, a story that slowly emerges and affirms the good I have always wanted to see in myself. It sustains me, this story. (Hosseini 2014, p. 378)

The effort to establish cross-temporal continuities and a reasonably coherent narrative interlinking of I/now and me/then thus derives from the need we all have of creating some selective inclusion and thematic ordering of the past in the present, without which there would be no story we could tell to express who we were, who we are and who we may hope to be. Although in a court of law we should try to make our testimony as empirically accurate as we can, in processes of long-term recollection, there is no sharp divide between remembering and imaginative engagements with what memory provides, particularly where such inclusion and ordering are involved. That is why for us remembering well is about creative uses of the past for the sake of self-renewal, with the mnemonic imagination rearranging and re-evaluating the past in order to maintain an intelligible saga of ourselves within ‘the perpetual slide of the present’ (Lively 1994, p. 302).

Yet, secondly, certain events and experiences may disturb the relatively coherent narrative pattern we have built up in making sense of our lives, and we ourselves may come to see who we thought we were in the past as deluded, and thus we move on and change in our self-conception. From day to day and year to year, we keep track of what we have done and how we have responded to certain situations or developments, but at times we may stray from the trail of selfhood we have been following. We have to struggle to re-establish some viable sense of direction, purpose or motivation. In selecting from, organizing and reconstructing aspects of the past, the mnemonic imagination is engaged in an ongoing process of synthesis as new experiences are assimilated into an already established pattern, and changes accommodated into an existing narrative, or made

to extend, refine or transform that narrative. The effort nevertheless always involves movement towards the (re)establishment and (re)affirmation of some pattern and order in the way we look back and see how our lives have unfolded, distilling from this what is of greatest value and significance in our experience as we bring such esteemed qualities to bear on the present.

The knowledge this gives us is self-knowledge, but such knowledge is not solely derived from memory; it is achieved through bringing imagination to bear on the mnemonic resources derived from experience, condensing and reconfiguring it in the process of interpreting and understanding what it means to us. 'Anomalous events may thus be recast, representative ones emphasized, and other changes undertaken to make one's past more smooth and comprehensible' (Schechtman 1994, p. 11). Through such features of narrative reconstruction, the mnemonic imagination acts as a skilled artist stitching together salient pieces of the past to form that patchwork tapestry of personal development we call a life. The sense of self-identity we have over time allows our consciousness to extend backwards—not by finding straightforward connections between discrete, temporally isolated moments, but rather by striving for a more coherent integration of different processes and forms of experience, seeing this within the overall context of what we believe we have done and felt and thought, and thus we come into ourselves. Having a cross-temporal sense of being an experiencing subject and attaining a complementary sense of development and growth as this emerges from reflections on our experience and the extent of our self-awareness are crucial steps in attaining personal identity. In taking them, while we can see that memory is vital for the constitution of selfhood, selfhood is not formed solely of out of memory. Memories are certainly in many ways organized 'along the string of the self' (Mead [1934] 1974, p. 135). They are indispensable in locating ourselves at one point in time to ourselves at another, in an earlier stage or several earlier stages in our lives:

Maybe the hiss of the simmering water was what brought back, all at once, a scene from the earliest days of her marriage. Whenever she had felt particularly lonesome, she remembered, she used to set a tumbler of club soda on her nightstand. She used to go to sleep listening to the bubbles against the glass with a faint, steady, peaceful whispering sound that had reminded her of the fountain in her family's courtyard back home. (Tyler 2007, p. 61)

Yet however tightly or alluringly they interconnect across time, and however cohesively they are managed and maintained, memories are not sufficient in themselves for the formation and maintenance of selfhood. Memory alone does not allow us to arrive at knowledge of those thematic structures, arrangements, anomalies, alternatives, consistencies and inconsistencies, the breaks and points of refiguration that help form our sense of self in time and over time. Perhaps most critically, it does not give us the means for distinguishing between the wheat of significant experience from the chaff of trivial experience. When we talk of having learned from some experience or of cherishing what some experience has bequeathed to us, it is this process we have in mind, and it always occurs through the intersubjectiveness in which our own mnemonic imagination acts in dialogic communication with the mnemonic imaginations of others. Such interplay enables us to think and act reflexively as we change perspectives, exchange views and values and move in and out of consensus in negotiating the relations of self and other, situating ourselves within those relations and shifting among those relations in the continual exchange between personal identity and variegated sociality.

OUR SELVES AND OTHER SELVES

We hope by now to have strongly reaffirmed the sociological tenet that selfhood is not defined around a fixed, stable centre from which a relationship with the world is forged on its own masterful terms of thinking, willing and knowing, and that it cannot be conceived as antecedent to the multiple and diverse experiences which it assimilates yet also unaccountably transcends. Selfhood is braided within various networks of relationships, and it is mutable over time; indeed, self-awareness is only possible as a result of social interaction and as a consequence of having changed through successive, temporally distinguishable stages. The socialized self is also a historicized self. This means that the narrative account we give of it remains open and revisable, and that through this account and its relation to what we do, we are serially accountable to others. The narrative configuration of selfhood has also to explain change and discontinuity. In doing so, it provides a counter to relentless temporal succession and places discordance and divergence into the larger pattern which retrospectively we see as the trajectory our life has traced, always bearing in mind that this configuration intersects with other narrative accounts through the dense web of social relations

in which our lives are lived. Sustaining a sense of selfhood across time requires not only ‘a certain narrative unity’ in how we recount our lives, but also acquiring and keeping open a sense of how we fit into ‘the wider story of various collectivities’ (Appiah 1994, p. 160).

Of course there may be times, in looking back and thinking about the past, when this occurs in isolation: we take a lone walk through some deserted woodland or we sit by ourselves flipping through a photo album, but we commonly draw what happens then into the currency of our everyday social interaction, seeking out active corroboration, or at least implicit affirmation, of the memories we have communicated and the interpretation we have made of them. This way of accounting for ourselves, and of making ourselves count in the social circles we frequent, may seem somewhat at odds with the predominant conception of the self in Western discourse, with its roots in Cartesian philosophy and the European Enlightenment. Such a conception promotes a view of the individual person as bounded and autonomous, and of autobiographical memory as private and personal. In some ways, the genre of autobiography seems to encourage and endorse this view, placing the self as the major protagonist in a personal drama which is all pointed up and given emphasis by the plot and the main lines of the story, while at the same time being marketed chiefly through inflated claims of singularity and uniqueness.⁸ This ethos of the autonomous self is encapsulated in the title of the well-known song, ‘I Did It My Way’, popularized by Frank Sinatra.⁹ The fame and familiarity of the song attests to how deeply engrained the ethos is in Western culture, one which has until recently underpinned the whole Western psychology of memory.¹⁰

In rejecting it, we have to go further than the point we have made about the need for continual affirmation of what we remember and say that every memory, ‘as personal as it may be—even of events that are private and strictly personal and have not been shared with anyone—exists through its relation with what has been shared with others: language, idiom, events, and everything that shapes the society of which individuals are a part’ (Iniguez et al. 1997, p. 250).¹¹ This relationality always includes the person who remembers. As we have stressed from the start, the personal identity of the remembering subject is ‘formed *between* rather than *within* persons’ and so ‘needs to be understood not as belonging “within” the individual person, but as produced between persons and within social relations’ (Lawler 2014, pp. 17, 19). These twin points of emphasis are axiomatic for a sociological conception of

the rememberer's self-identity, and as a result, the powerful desire for a sense of self has to be understood as reciprocally related to our social roles and personae, for in operating with this individual sense of self, enduring in certain ways over time, the remembering subject always acts in and responds to the social world in which she or he lives and moves. Mead ([1934] 1974, p. 164) displayed pioneering insight in recognizing this interdependency when he wrote, 'Our own selves exist and enter as such into our experience only in so far as the selves of others exist and enter as such into our experience also'. Personal identity and social identity cannot be separated; they are interreliant even while distinct, with neither being prior to the other and neither being reducible to the other. Keeping this in mind is the task to be achieved, and for this reason (among others) the concept of experience figures centrally throughout this and our two previous books precisely because it traverses the vital space of this interreliance, thus helping us avoid both an oversocialized and undersocialized approach to selfhood: 'Experience is never exclusively personal or public, interiorised or outwardly facing, self-directed or the blind product of social forces. It crosses between these mutually informing categories and in that movement is formed the synthesis of self-definition and definition by others we call the self' (Keightley and Pickering 2012, p. 19). The upshot of this is that, alongside rejection of the mythical notion of a true self independent of the social weave of everyday life, we need to eschew those sociological approaches which in the past have sidelined individuals or theorized them out of picture, thus providing no recognition of self-identity and the capacity to be both accountable and counted on. This point extends to memory because of its importance in providing the autobiographical material that helps us construct and sustain a sense of personal identity, rather than being merely 'a cog in the wheel', 'a slave at the sink' or 'just another brick in the wall'.

In addition, personal identity is important in relation to remembering practices because it is through such identity that reflexivity occurs, with the mnemonic imagination being its key agent in its retrospective modalities, as for example when thinking of why a photograph or piece of music means so much to someone in the always-under-assessment relation between 'then' and 'now', 'here' and 'there'. Thinking about this in a deeply personal sense is still a social process, not least because it invariably involves other people and because it is sometimes shared with them in an intimate way (pathological cases aside, to be deeply personal is not

to be deeply insular). We cannot be reflexively self-conscious outside of the social world we inhabit because we cannot think about ourselves in ways entirely divorced from the attitudes and values of other people, or from the course of our continual exchanges with them.

For reasons such as these, our subjective viewpoints and the perspectives of significant other people are caught up in a perpetual if uneven process of intermediation, and it is this which enables us to grasp both the first-person perspectives of selfhood and the intersubjective contexts in which they form and are maintained, or at times disrupted and altered. At the centre of this intermediation, the mnemonic imagination moves between past, present and orientations to the future which are prevalent within a particular way of life, and coordinates them in the interests of achieving narrative coherence of self and the trajectory of self through life. In this process temporal succession is transformed by the mnemonic imagination into a series of coordinated strands of experience, turning what would otherwise be fragmented or heterogeneous events or episodes into relatively cohesive, interconnecting accounts that bring the three temporal modalities together within the same overall frame of reference. Particularly at those key moments, when the question of our identities is at issue, it is through the interanimation of these different modalities that the mnemonic imagination relates them in some applicable, pivotal sense to our sense of ourselves in the present.

There can be contradictions between how you understand yourself and how you present yourself, or between your own self-conception and how others perceive you or between your identity in the past and your identity in the present. These are all examples of potential obstacles that confront mnemonic imagining, and they may cause such imagining to fall short of its synthesizing actions. Yet at the same time, in looking back, such imagining helps us realize delusional aspects of ourselves in the past and the need to change for the sake of developing a more sustainable self-narrative. The development of such a narrative goes hand in hand with what we refer to as self-exploration. The reconstructive process of recollection is symbiotically related to the development of an individual self because drawing on and thinking reflexively about the past is necessarily vital to self-exploration, and the mnemonic imagination contributes to it through its active and ongoing interweaving of past and present as we seek both to maintain and renew our sense of who we were and who we are.

In this, as Montaigne was one of the first to stress, ‘each of us has to discover his or her own form’; each of us has to ‘look for our own being’ (Taylor 1989, p. 181). At the same time, as we have already insisted, the construction of individual identity is conducted in dialogue with others, and because we are all immersed in particular cultural formations and particular modes of sociality, we necessarily share certain features and facets of self with other people through our relationships with them, as for example in the domains of work and family life. It is important that we keep insisting on this dialogical process, not least because its absence from discussion can easily lead into either a sideways endorsement of asocial atomism, or into a tacit acceptance of consumerist narcissism.¹² These would be unfortunate traps to fall into precisely because a ‘decline in civic participation, an increasing sense that all relations and commitments are revocable, and the growth of increasingly “instrumentalist” attitudes towards nature and society, are manifestations of “the slide to subjectivism” to which modern culture is prone’ (Rogers 1992, p. 6). Yet this slide, along with its various concomitants, does not invalidate all that the modern project of selfhood entails. All it does is point us to practices that fail or fall short of aspirations to freedom, authenticity, self-knowledge and remembering well.

Remembering well is part of that dialogue with others we have noted as central to the formation of self-identity, and thus it is central to how we arrive collectively at agreed meanings of specific events or experiences in the past. Sue Campbell (2006, p. 374) has put this well in noting that the ‘integrity with which we remember has to do both with how we understand our own past in ways that contribute to self-knowledge, identity, and the shape of personal responsibilities and possibilities, and also with whether others can rely on our memories not only for what they do not know but also as a contribution to a social grasp of the significance of a shared past’. To this we should add that remembering well provides the basis for responding to and thinking about what and how other people remember, for imagining how they feel or think through their own memories. An impoverished or thwarted imagination makes it difficult, if not impossible, to see the world through another person’s eyes. This aspect of remembering well is another mode in which the mnemonic imagination is applied, for exercising our own mnemonic imagination is a precondition for viewing a past event through another person’s experience of it. That is how we may come to share the pain of

another's loss, recounted again after several years; the death of a young daughter, for example, may still be felt with much of its initial rawness and experience of vulnerability. In everyday life, developing an understanding of what the past, or particular elements of it, means to other people is commonplace. It is in part how friendships are formed, as we ask each other questions about our past, and through such dialogue we begin to move along the continuum from feeling kinship with someone to feeling that we are kindred spirits. Looking back is thus integral to the process of developing an understanding of other people's thoughts, feelings, attitudes and values, and not only in relation to the past. It is also important for learning to view ourselves through other people's eyes and ears. Looking back is central to social encounter and exchange while also being at the heart of sustaining a sense of self over time. Alongside this process, the mnemonic imagination is essential for how our life story comes to fit in with other stories—the stories of other people and other social groups, and ways of life beyond our own—or indeed how it comes to be defined in some form of distinction from them.

The cultural practices of remembering through which this interplay of ourselves and other immediate selves is continually set in motion are integral to vernacular memory and the process of making our own, which we have defined as a process based around acts and attributions of localization utilizing a wide range of mnemonic materials in the effort to establish and maintain cross-temporal transactions within a mobile present (Pickering and Keightley 2015, pp. 8–18). This process operates in the interspace between personal and popular memory, and it occurs over various levels across both time and space. Throughout this book we shall see how such differential scales of remembering are played out in vernacular settings and milieus, as for example in becoming implicated within them as points of reference in time or as markers of variation and mutation across time. Building the scalar dynamics of remembering into our thinking of how collective and individual memory are multiply interconnected, even when they may be directly in conflict with each other, is a further strategy we deploy in striving to avoid both individualistic conceptions of remembering processes and their obverse, those reifications of the collective dimensions of memory which deny the agentic capabilities of remembering subjects. These dynamics are conceived in terms of a continuum from micro (subjective and intersubjective) through meso (vernacular) to macro (national and cross-national) orders of remembering, with media-generated memory and memory associated with

media content shifting back and forth across the various scales involved in this continuum. It may seem that one of the pitfalls of an interscalar approach to the sociological study of memory is to regard these various scales as static or unchanging, with only memories themselves shifting in meaning and value as they move between macro, meso, and micro dimensions. While it may be that these shifts in meaning and value occur more frequently and continually, the scalar platforms of memory transmission are also subject to mutation and modification, in however gradual or piecemeal a way.¹³

Registering these moves is a further aspect of managing change, and they may of course be the catalyst for generating the senses of loss, lack and longing that are key components of nostalgia, as this becomes a font of creative renewal or, as in its commercial exploitation, a mode of re-typing in which the pain of loss is neglected and longing for a falsely enchanted past is exaggerated (Keightley and Pickering 2012, Chaps. 4 and 5; Pickering and Keightley 2014). The engendering of loss, lack and longing in response to various manifestations of change raises a major consideration which we have so far only touched on lightly. This is the experience of transition itself, of moving from one situation, stage or set of conditions to another. Processes of transition are multifarious, relating to movement from one state to another in assorted mundane ways as well as in life-changing disruptions and sharp turns of direction in our state of affairs, our world outlook or our thinking about significant aspects of our lives. We can think of the experience of these processes on a before/after temporal axis and a change/continuity spatial axis. These two axes interrelate and inform each other, with the second following from the first and involving an effort at identifying and maintaining lines of continuity in particular locations within the present as well as openly registering and coming to terms with change. Maintaining or overhauling those lines of continuity is part and parcel of managing change, with the mnemonic imagination forming the central means for doing both in their relationship with each other. So for example, as we shall see later in the book, photo images and pieces of music as these are acted on by the mnemonic imagination are vital elements of everyday accommodations to change, with these being related to the rate, tempo and degree of change involved as well as the extent to which we gain and maintain control over the changes we experience in our lives. The successful operation of the mnemonic imagination in the manoeuvres involved in these efforts over control form another link to practices of remembering well,

for this is in part about being able to exercise at least some degree of agency in the attainment of narrative coherence across the varieties and vagaries of experience, and in part about re-establishing control over the fallout from radical changes that have happened to us, at whatever stage in our lives, particularly when such changes occur in an unforeseen or unplanned manner.

TRANSITIONS AND TRAJECTORIES

Zygmunt Bauman (2004, p. 17) has observed that we ‘tend to notice things and put them into the focus of [our] scrutiny and contemplation when they vanish, go bust, start to behave oddly or otherwise let you down’. When our everyday world remains largely the same, when life is running smoothly and nothing untoward has happened, there is little to recount, to ourselves or each other, so it is usually only when the daily round changes in some marked respect, when what is habitual is disrupted or when what is anticipated is thwarted, that we are likely to develop a story to account for it. Once made into a story, an event or experience running against the grain in this way is far more likely to be remembered. Similarly, ‘deviation from a culture’s canonical pattern’ is by definition memorable, and because of this it becomes in itself storyable (Bruner 1990, pp. 49–50). A good deal of our daily lives is made up of ordinary, unvarying flow, and a good deal of our remembering within them is regularized and run of the mill, such as recalling where you keep your digital voice recorder or what time you need to leave the house to catch a local bus. This is quite different to actively concerted recollection and the work of the mnemonic imagination in reassembling certain pieces of the past and making them coalesce into longer-term narrative form. When we are faced with marked features of change, we rely on the mnemonic imagination to reorder and re-evaluate the transactional relations between past, present and future. Managing change thus means using our mnemonic resources in a creative and innovative manner.

For the most part, it seems, we strive to make sense of change as soon as we can. We may feel overwhelmed by it, unsure which way to turn and held in our tracks by the unfamiliarity of the situation or state we’re caught up in, but as we settle ourselves into the flow of any particular transition, we begin to talk about it, to find words that give it experiential figuration and narrative form. It may be that certain changes in our lives take a long while to assimilate and develop a satisfactory manner

of presenting to ourselves and others, but when they do, the story we stitch together helps to create understanding of whatever discontinuity is involved and so realign past and present in a new synthesis. The mnemonic imagination has a central role in this, but we do not simply exercise it on our own: all the time we are, as it were, comparing notes with other people in order to see what they think of what has happened in order to observe how they are applying their own mnemonic imagination in making sense of change, and seeking some form of reconciliation between time then and time now. Managing change is a collective vernacular process whereby pretransitional states are renegotiated in direct relation to whatever change has wrought. Change is then accommodated into some longer pattern, however drastic or radical its break with the past is felt to be. Nothing is ever ineluctably new. That is one side of where the mnemonic imagination moves, but as it roves between past and present it moves also to the side, where difference is registered in order to make meaning out of that difference and measure the extent of its alterations to what is anterior to it. When this effort after meaning is successful and we have incorporated the change into our lives, personally and collectively, we have laid the grounds for subsequent acts and practices of remembering well.

Transition always involves movement from one stage to another, but there are various types of transition and various ways of responding to transition. Although it always involves some kind of discontinuity and change, the movement is never of a piece, and it is only susceptible to the most general features, as for example with the life course which, apart from the commonality of an initial entrance and final exit, takes many different forms and develops in numberless different ways, even within the same social group or category. Even entrances and exits vary—there is more than one way to die, despite the fact of death's absolute terminus. There is always a temptation to generalize about such periods of turbulent transition as adolescence, and such generalizations may prove in greater or lesser degree to be valid, but the experience of such periods in life is felt in often highly personal modes, and it is important to keep these in our sights even as, at other times, we think of periods of transition in more prevalent or abiding terms.¹⁴ In this spirit, we can of course distinguish broadly between transitions which are intentional and those which are involuntary. So for example we may decide to give up smoking or take up hill-walking every weekend, and these decisions are seen retrospectively to have led to certain transitions in our

health or lifestyle which were both deliberately and effectively brought about. They contrast with a stroke (to which smoking may have contributed) that subsequently prevents us from walking, or, on a broader stage, with being forced to gather up one's family and flee to another country because of a civil war raging in nearby streets. The contrast is not of course always so neat. We all move through successive life changes, but these often involve individual combinations of both volitional and irresistible change. Getting married in early adult life, but then shortly afterwards grieving for a spouse killed in a traffic accident, are cross-ripping examples. At the same time, while both forms of transition are experienced in individual ways and accordingly handled, interpreted and evaluated in as many manifestations as any culture can assimilate and hold, what does seem valid in general terms is that the degree of disruption or upheaval caused by change affects the potential for remembering well.

Although they can be closely entwined, we can also make a distinction between social transitions and life transitions. The former involve change in the broader social order to which we belong and the various social milieus we move among. A wide spectrum of responses are made to such kinds of change, from feeling emancipated or creatively engaged, to feeling restricted, regretful or resistant. Life transitions are affected by social and historical context, as for example with recruitment to military service during times of conflict or war, but they are felt and responded to directly in terms of an individual's sense of selfhood and autobiographical trajectory. With such transitions we can develop a concern with how particular events or experiences have a lasting influence, guiding subsequent life-course patterns. These may or may not involve personal choice; child abuse, for example, is never chosen, and the traumatic experience of it may be at the root of later psychological illness or the poor quality of interpersonal relationships experienced in adulthood. Here again we need to be careful in keeping variability in view and avoid the problem that has at times in the past beset the sociology of work or of the family, where emphasis is placed on role allocation and performance, with sight of the heterogeneous individuals who inhabit social roles being all too easily lost. This can easily lead to facile assumptions of normative patterning or standardization. In her overview of sociological perspectives in life transitions, Linda George (1993, p. 366) notes the connection of this with a further problem in sociology of failing to make adequate links between micro and macro evidence about the causes and consequences of transitions. George Ritzer's (1989, p. 601) view was that

‘the issue of micro–macro linkage’ was ‘*the* central problematic of sociological theory’. Arguably, this problematic remains, along with the attendant weakness in finding any satisfactory resolution of it in social analysis, but we can at least try to obviate it in memory studies by attending more closely to the interactions between individual and collective memory, and the ways in which memory moves and changes between different spatial and temporal scales (Pickering and Keightley 2015, 2016).

One example of this involves objects we hold onto at times of change and transition in order to secure the memories associated with them. This occurs across various spatial and temporal scales. Of course we can say that whether through deliberate choice or through involuntary uprooting, moving from one place of residence to another inevitably entails the confrontation of change, for the change generated by such a move repudiates what is familiar and in place. But deciding to move locally of one’s own volition is quite different to being forced into exile or extensive cross-border migration. Jean-Sébastien Marcouz’s study of residential moves within the city of Montreal is, relatively speaking, spatially local. These moves nevertheless occurred across different time-scales and under variable existential conditions. He shows how moving forces us to face the memories that inhere in so many possessions, to think of what we want to recollect when resettled and to ponder over how this will help us through the transition from one place to another. Things embody memories, and moving becomes a means to reshuffle them ‘by bringing them back into consciousness... making them explicit’ and ‘deciding which ones to reinforce, which ones to abandon or put on hold’ (Marcouz 2001, p. 83). Where memory is constituted in and by objects, it is thus reconstituted through the displacement of those objects.

For those who suffer forced migration, there is little if any time for pondering or engaging in finely balanced deliberation over the differential values of particular mnemonic objects. The key overriding factor is whether or not they have time to gather together firstly what they may need for practical purposes and secondly for perpetuating individual and cultural identity. What is salvaged may have enormous symbolic significance, particularly when a planned or unplanned destination is reached. Encapsulated in personal mementoes, such identity may then be rearticulated ‘when suitable conditions of resettlement allow for the retelling of the stories’ that these objects may contain or be connected with (Parkin 1999, p. 314). As David Parkin (*ibid.*) has observed: ‘When people flee

from the threat of death and total dispossession, the things and stories they carry with them may be all that remains of their distinctive personhood to provide for future continuity'. While scalar dimensions are demonstrably important, the emotional consequences of huge, unprecedented change may be connected more to a specific temporal stage in the life course, as for example when everything is suddenly lost to a child, with nothing remaining from home or the past; she or he is then bereft of those domestic objects and scenes that have been invested with deep mnemonic associations and were testament to a still-crystallizing sense of selfhood and belonging. This is what happened to an Edinburgh child during World War II, when her father was drafted into the army and her mother then died during childbirth, after which she and her brother were placed in a care home for widowers' children, the word 'home' here being in sharp contrast to the warm, integrative working-class habitation she had so drastically lost:

You were given a number. You had your dignity taken away ... Your hair was cut off as soon as you got there. From the time I was seven, I had nothing. Everything was left behind. You didn't have anything and you didn't have anyone. No one really cared.

Subsequently, as an adult striving to work her way out of these radically contrasting childhood scenarios, she attempted to recreate the lost world of her first half-dozen childhood years through collecting, with this consisting of all sorts of things, from old photos to glass bottles, that discriminately linked to countless stories reconnecting her to the past. They became a means of symbolic self-completion (Hecht 2001).¹⁵

Extrapolating from these examples, we can at least suggest that expected transitions are potentially less likely to cause disruption in personal lives or the integration of established social groups, but whether or not they are anticipated, and regardless of whether they are voluntarily brought about, we remember certain changes in our lives as turning points, and we use these turning points as a way of gauging the degrees of continuity and discontinuity in the pattern of our lives and the lives of those close to us. It is through them that we gain understanding of how earlier events have continued to influence and inform later events. Any transition can become a turning point, but many do not; they remain fairly routine or ordinary while still being differentiated from what came before. There is no necessary reason for making too sharp a contrast

between them. Though Augustine, in one of the earliest autobiographical narratives, made his religious conversion the primary turning point of his life and so established such a momentous event as paradigmatic for such narratives, we should not see all turning points either as singular or as isolated in their magnitude from other events and experiences.¹⁶ They are diverse and can send us off along different routes with different long-term consequences, even though in the course of time these may diminish in strength or be altered by other turning points: 'Past critical events may fade in importance while earlier or later turning points may suddenly assume new importance' (Hareven and Masaoka 1988, p. 275). It is how they unfold as a process and how they are understood as a duration which affects how they are reconstructed, reordered and reassessed at any stage in the life course. There is no once-and-for-all finality to this. The work of the mnemonic imagination is ongoing, involving periodic reappraisal of experience and subsequent reorganization of key coordinates in how the life course is interpreted and made sense of longitudinally. The mnemonic imagination is applied as well in understanding other people's recollections of critical events and turning points, as for example those involving the experience of previous generations. We have already mentioned adolescence as a turbulent biographical period, but how this is recognized and interpreted depends on historical context as well as prevalent norms and values. The mnemonic imagination is thus required for any mutual appreciation to be possible in a young person talking to a grandparent about her or his teenage years and gaining a viable sense of how adolescent experience has changed across the generations.

Talking to your grandparents about their past experience is different to talking about memories that relate to broader periods of past experience, such as those involving war or economic depression. It is a matter of scale and scope, with the mnemonic imagination having much more material through which to participate in the stories deriving from those periods. Of course, when overwhelming change creates 'such a deep rift in history that the things old men and old women know have become so useless as to be not worth passing on to their grandchildren', the mnemonic imagination is cast adrift, deprived of any suitable sociocultural moorings or sense of cross-temporal passage (Frazier 2007, p. 412). That said, the same point about scale and scope applies to a significant public event when personal recollections of it intersect with general versions of what took place and general interpretations of why it was

significant. The mnemonic imagination weaves these together into what is neither personal memory nor vicarious memory but a complex mixture of both. Often there is also an internalization of other people's memories, and these too become part of the overall combination. Without the work of the mnemonic imagination, that combination would be no more than a random assemblage, with little narrative interrelatedness between its different elements and few points of convergence in detail, meaning and assessment.

In short, the mnemonic imagination is vital for the management of change in all its diversity, for coming actively to terms with different kinds of transition in our lives and for achieving narrative intelligibility in relation to those points in time which, as in drama and literary fiction, there is a radical change of emplotted direction.

MNEMONICS OF LOSS AND GAIN

Certain transitions in our lives involve us in the choice between two quite different alternatives, and as we look back from a subsequent time we remember both the road taken and the road not taken. The conventional emphasis in accounts of such transitions is on the melancholic quality cast by regret at the road not taken, but this is only one aspect of lost opportunities. There has been a critical neglect in memory studies of how lost opportunities are conceived and evaluated in everyday narratives, and of how they are related to current circumstances, plans, dreams and desires. In the rest of this chapter, we want to redress this neglect and reconceive the commonplace mnemonic motif of the lost opportunity in order to reach a clearer recognition of its simultaneous orientation to past, present and future, implicating both memory and imagination in its enactment.

The lost opportunity is a narrative feature common to autobiographical memory both in everyday life and in literary fiction. Thomas Hardy, for example, uses the lost opportunity as a device in both verse and novels. His poem 'Faintheart in a Railway Train' tells of a romantic encounter with a stranger which went unrealized, thwarted by fearful hesitation and rued from the window of a railway carriage, while in *Far from the Madding Crowd* Mr Oak's first proposal of marriage to Bathsheba Everdene is positioned as a key departure which comes to be recognized over the course of the novel as an opportunity most fatefully lost (Hardy [1925] 1968, p. 536; [1874] 1994). The narrative use of

lost opportunities is also found in vernacular culture. The English folk song 'Courting Too Slow' is a story of remorse over a lover lost as a result of hesitancy and caution: despite such gifts as rings for her fingers 'made of glittering gold', the singer loses out to a bold sailor who flatters and seduces his pretty Betty. In such examples the emphasis falls on the irretrievability of the experience only imagined, not enjoyed, while the chosen experience is characterized by a sense of absence or lack. This is in line with conventional assessments of the lost opportunity which see it as integral to a narrative mode that is necessarily regressive in operation because it is posed in terms of a future-driven relegation of the past to articulations of loss and mourning. It is as if looking back is then tainted by an intrinsic lack of transformative potential.

As with unexamined considerations of nostalgia, the sense of lost opportunities has been predominantly associated with an exclusively melancholic value.¹⁷ Such an evaluation has effectively been prolonged within a broader thesis of postmodern temporality. Frederic Jameson (1991) has argued that we have lost the capacity to engage with experience historically: contemporary encounters with the past are instead associated with a banal longing for an unrealizable ontological security. Symbolic environments characterized by surface style and mediated pastiche are said to deny us any durable temporal moorings. In place of situated dialogic relationships with the past which facilitate agency in the present and future, undifferentiated longing invokes a generalized sense of pastness and fosters retrosensibilities readily sated by the products of the heritage industry (Jameson 1991).¹⁸ The conception of lost opportunities in recollection which follows this pessimistic interpretive line prevents us from seeing them as effective modes of cross-temporal engagement. It presupposes that opportunities not taken have become completely disconnected from the present and are only available as a resource for mourning that loss. They offer little or no capacity for renewal.

The problem is of course broader than this. Even the statement of loss in the naming of these particular remembered events illustrates the one-dimensional understanding we have of them. By virtue of existing in the past, these opportunities are conceived of as lost, gone or unregainable, with the passing of time rendering them barren in terms of their potential to stimulate action or transformation in the present or future. The opportunity that once flashed for a moment is now displaced from the narrative continuity of biographical experience. The potential that

a particular junction of experience once possessed has vanished, leaving only the traces of what once may have been possible. We're haunted by unknown pleasures and taunted by what might have been: 'He had been thinking too much, these last two days—turning things over and over, figuring out how if just some single incident had happened, or hadn't happened, things might have been different' (Tyler [1966] 1987, p. 4).¹⁸

The received idea of the lost opportunity presupposes inevitable dissatisfaction with the present. Opportunities that are identified as not taken will, by virtue of their irretrievability, render the present deficient and unsatisfactory. The past cannot be reconciled with the present; it is set up as its perpetual adversary. This terminally negative relationship between the past and present leaves much of our experience of remembering choices and decisions which we have made unaccounted for. For us, the claim that we're unable to consider the paths we've chosen not to take in any other manner than as an expression of disillusionment is untenable. Although it is the case that remembering these experiential forkings of the roads we face can be an expression of an ineffectual desire to dwell pathetically on a past moment or period of time, they can also have creative and transformative potential. In the interests of a more nuanced appreciation of remembering lost opportunities, it is necessary to reshuffle the tenses in which they are normatively embedded. The past is undeniably a central referent, particularly those points in our experience in which we have intense emotional investment, or which we see as having been centrally formative in shaping our sense of self and subsequent experience. Yet we can see that the past is not our sole concern. We consider our past choices in relation to our lives in the present: our contemporary identity, our current conditions of existence, our estimated state of success or failure at this moment of time. These are not only narratives that reach backwards into the past; they are also narratives of becoming, stretching into the present and extending beyond it. Far from an abandonment of the present that seeks comfort in the putative securities of the past, remembering lost opportunities may be a mode of making sense of and reconciling our past and our present. Rather than positioning the past and present as conflicting sources of meaning, it is by moving between them that we are able to make meaning and value out of experience. Remembering lost opportunities is a key part of the ongoing autobiographical project of constructing and reconstructing narrative continuity, making our lives knowable and in doing so

achieving an always uneasy balance of continuity and discontinuity in our sense of self and of the world around us.

Lost opportunities as a site of mnemonic imagining involve a simultaneous orientation to both past and present. They are not exhausted by mourning chances we have foregone. They also provide ways of reconciling oneself to the changed conditions of the present in order to be able to move forward. The recollection and narration of lost opportunities are always ultimately contingent on the present, at least as much as the present is contingent on the choices we have made. The meaning of any given juncture in experience is made sense of in the interests of the present from which it is remembered. As time moves on, so do the meanings of these past choices—so much so that in time, they may not be recognized as points of opportunity at all. The self-knowledge generated in this mutual contingency is therefore, at least in part, oriented towards the demands of the present, enabling us to embrace change as well as achieve stability. But we need to go beyond this important recognition and acknowledge that reflection on a lost opportunity actually demands the involvement of multiple tenses. While the past is brought into consciousness from the perspective of the present and is made sense of according to its demands, it can implicate the future as we believe it might come to pass. The experiences we have chosen and those we have not lead us to particular possibilities for the future. By recognizing and narrating these chosen paths we are able to explore imaginatively the opportunities that remain open to us. Narratives of lost opportunities necessarily involve the future as it may have been. In returning to unrealized possibilities, we are able to speculate about what may still be.

Of course we can see how the invocation of two alternative futures can be conceived of as melancholic. Measuring them against each other may lead to dissatisfaction with the outcome which eventuated from the path that was taken, but this is not necessarily the case. It is how they are considered in relation to one another which reveals the transformative potential (or lack thereof) in the mnemonic imagining of this lost opportunity. Where the two accounts of the future are set up as competitive parallels, a melancholic yearning for the unattainable ‘lost’ future is perfectly feasible, but it is possible for these two senses of the future to overlap and inform one another. The future inspired by the path not taken is then able to stimulate, inspire and guide the potentially realizable future. Remembering lost opportunities should not be seen as inevitably involving irretrievable pasts and unrealizable futures. Experiential forks in the

pathways of the past can just as readily provide resources for renewal and transformation in the future, provided they can be reconciled with lived experience.

Conventional assessments which emphasize the backward-looking nature of these narratives highlight only the role of memory. If we are to recognize the multiple tenses involved in narrating lost opportunities, the faculty of memory cannot be considered in isolation. The interplay between memory and imagination which is generated by the mnemonic imagination is necessary in bringing what was and what might have been into active view of one another and in enabling them to be reconciled in the narration of experience. Attending to the work of the mnemonic imagination here allows us to move beyond conventional conceptualizations of lost opportunities which only permit loss and mourning, and instead allow creativity and transformative potential to be posed as well. Existing in the interstitial space between experience and absence, lost opportunities do not only implicate memory as the agent of their realization and communication. Imagination in combination with memory is vital if we are to successfully reconcile and bring what has been and what might have been into view of each other. Memory as a mode of temporal consciousness premised on lived experience cannot provide an account of imagined pasts or futures. Narratives of lost opportunities can only ever be partially constructed if there is no way of imagining the alternatives to our experienced past.

Operating analytically with the concept of the mnemonic imagination permits these narratives to be seen as fluid spaces of articulation, not only of loss but also of inspiration. Lost opportunities are thus far from irretrievable; they are essentially provisional, formed and reformed in our mnemonic imagination. The creative potential of the mnemonic imagination allows us to recognize the endless potential for reformulation of these forks in experience. Choices are never cast once and for all in a single figuration. They can be imaginatively reviewed, recontextualized and re-examined, permitting new meanings for both past and present. Just as past experience can take on new meaning in light of a changed present, lost opportunities that were once sources of sadness and absence can become relevant once more and play a revived role in the present and future. This is not always the case because our remembered lost opportunities can lose as well as gain in transformational potential; connections among the past, present and future can become fragmented as well as reformed. What is important is that their value and meaning are not seen

as fixed but rather subject to the shifting relations between past and present which the mnemonic imagination rides.

Recollecting lost opportunities provides us with a way of making sense of dilemmas and divergences in our lives, and in any particular instance this involves two roads: the one we have taken, and the one we could have taken. It's the way these two roads are reconciled in their narration, bringing the mnemonic imagination actively to bear on this process, which reveals the extent to which they provide us with resources for the present and future. Lost opportunities can implicate both melancholic yearning and future-oriented renewal, but they do so in different ways and at different times. In order to explore further what these alternatives involve, we turn now to the discussion of several concrete examples.

LOST OPPORTUNITIES, POSSIBLE FUTURES

Rani is a young British-Asian woman in her mid-20s. In the elaborate narrative she gives, she traces her desire to be a dancer through the time of her childhood and adulthood. She talks specifically about her potential as a child to be a successful dancer, and despite waning confidence in her ability, she insists that her desire to achieve this remains undiminished. The failure to realize what she conceives as her potential follows the trope of lost opportunity in a recognizable fashion:

When I listen to this music, I kind of sit back a little bit and reflect, but at some point I will want to get up and dance and I do find myself dancing in my room because it brings back again that musical influence ... and it makes me feel like I should be doing more with it because I know that it's there and something I'm passionate about ... I love dancing [laughs], all sorts of dances ... I dance in front of a mirror to see that I'm still doing the right moves, but I feel sad and disappointed with myself because when I was a child I was so passionate about things I did. Like everything I did I always put a lot of my passion into it whether it was school work, reading, or dance. But I was brilliant at dance, and when I was younger I always dreamt of myself as an actress. I always used to say to my sister I'm *going* to be an actress, I'm *going* to be a dancer and I'm *going* to be on stage, but obviously over the years [pause] it's not the kind of career you pursue [pause]. I think if I was focused more and I had the right support and guidance I probably would have got there. And I just wonder, where is that vibrant, passionate child, where has she gone to now?

That's how it makes me feel. It makes me feel like 'oh I wonder if I will ever do anything with my music or my talent, or with dancing, will I ever do anything'? And part of me just sees a closed door. Another part of me thinks there is still plenty of time, space and opportunity, and I like to think that there is another door there that is waiting to be opened. I know I will be content once I do that.

When I was a child I had no fear of performing, but I was really, really fat as a child as well, and I think that was one thing people around me used to think: 'you, you're not being realistic'. My sister would say that. We recently had a conversation about how I was a dreamer. Now I kind of like look to the future, you know, when I'm 27, 28 this is what I'm going to be doing. But all the things I said I was going to do, I'm not doing, so I feel, what's happened to my dreams? And I had no fear then and that's why I said to everybody, 'you watch, I'm going to do that' ... I think when I was a child as well there was a lot of the superficial side of it as well, the glamour and the celeb stuff. And me just feeling like, 'yes, I'm going to be on stage and you know, the audience and the attention'. That's me you know. If I work at it, I will not so much get the attention, but I will be rewarded for what I'm good at and it will work in a reputable way. Being famous as in being on TV, I wouldn't let anything get in the way. It was other people who used to put doubts in my head, like 'are you sure you're serious about this, are you sure that you know?'

And if you come from a background of migration from India, you're pushed towards being a doctor, lawyer, accountant, something that's considered as professional. Those rigid roles. Me being the way I am, is quite different in that sense, because I really thought 'I'm theatrical', that's just me, that's my character. So if I want to be famous and be an actress or a dancer, no, they can't take that away from me. Why can't an Indian girl dance in their twenties and their thirties? You've got actresses and choreographers and people who are doing classical dance in their forties and who go to classical dance school and I'm pretty sure my Dad would be the first to be there and be interested in what they're doing. So why is it then that a 'normal' girl, living in a 'normal' society, would not be able to pursue that? I knew then that I was very different from the rest ...

Listening to music stimulates Rani to think about professional dancing as an aim she has not pursued and an ambition she has not fulfilled. She recognizes this as a lost opportunity and constructs a typical-enough melancholic account of why the opportunity has not been taken and how this makes her feel. But she not only yearns for a point in her life

where she felt she had the opportunity to be a dancer; she also wonders about the 'vibrant, passionate' person she feels she was when that opportunity to dance seemed to be open and available to her. The pathos involved in her recognition of the present as lacking in what she most desired could be taken to suggest that her lost opportunity only speaks to the past, but this doesn't explain all aspects of the narrative. Through her mnemonic imagination, Rani constructs a diversified response in her account of the dissociation of aspiration and experience. Alongside the 'closed door' is 'another part' of her that retains the possibility of realizing her ambition. A strong affinity with the child she once was is retained. Is she still dreaming? Yes, but far from facilitating an abandonment of her desired outcome, Rani's narrative shows she still holds to it as she emphasizes that there 'is still plenty of time, space and opportunity' for her to pursue her dancing dream. She clearly identifies the present with at least some measure of dissatisfaction, and this stands in stark contrast to the past in which she was vibrant and passionate and 'very different from the rest', but she reorients herself to ways of achieving future satisfaction behind 'another door' by taking her bearings from the opportunities she hasn't yet pursued. She knows she will be content once she has achieved this.

Rani's narrative demonstrates that looking to the past to state her dissatisfaction in the present doesn't preclude future-oriented action. Instead it can facilitate it. Rani presents her adult life as it has so far been realized as somehow inferior to her childhood dream and what appears to have disappeared (hence the sadness that is part of her response), but she refuses to accept the commonsense view that disappointment has rescued her from a worse state of affairs. Simply because opportunity lost is identified in past experience doesn't necessitate a diminished capacity for action in the other tenses of experience. Although sharp comparisons between past and present are clearly evident in Rani's account, she actively goes on to reconcile them by reassessing herself in the present in light of the past and connecting it to a reimagined future. What could have been merges into what might be. Accounts of lost opportunities which only emphasize the contrasting constructions of the experiential tenses inevitably fail to identify the transformative potential of their subsequent reconciliation.

The articulation of lack and responses to it may take other directions. Louise, a white British woman aged 55, constructs the relationship between past and present in a more ambivalent way than Rani:

I'm a complete anachronism because I am a stay-at-home wife and mother and general pillar of the community. I'm a school governor and I run the autistic society and I'm secretary of the County Governors' Association and I've always been a volunteer, but I feel there won't be any more people that lead a life like I've lead ... No regrets, I don't think, about not having had a career or a life of my own. It's been a life entirely lived for and through other people, but that's been my choice. I've wanted to do it. It isn't so much a question of spending a lot of time thinking about the past, but being very much aware, especially seeing my children grow up, how much I am a product of my time, and how that influences the way I deal with my grown-up children and the advice I give them.

When I was 18 and got married, my parents were terribly disappointed at the choice I was making because I turned down a university place in order to get married and it seemed like [pause] the most important thing to me. We've been together for nearly 38 years, but to my parents, who were brought up in the 1920s, 1930s, I had such opportunities that they didn't have, so it was very disappointing for them that I wasn't going to go to university. I was the clever one of the family, and they both, my parents had both got scholarships to grammar schools in the 1920s, 1930s and, well the early 30s, and had both left at 16 and had felt very privileged from the background that they were coming from, and having been allowed to stay on at school till they were 16 and they both went into library work. It was a great leap forward as far as their family was concerned; they were in a profession, a white-collar job. For me to have the chance to go to university and have a career um [pause] seemed very important to them and they really, my mother in particular, really thought I was making a bad mistake, making the choice I did.

I find myself now saying to my very career-minded journalist daughter – she's got a lovely boyfriend at the moment, who she's very keen on and it's a very good relationship, but he's looking to move, they're both working together at the moment, he's looking to move – and I'm saying 'oh go with him then', you know, 'it's so important, just go with him, you might not have a journalism job straight away um, but you could always temp and you'll pick up something later, but don't let this relationship go, it's too good, don't let it go'. And I said to her 'Jenny, please ignore me' because what I'm doing, I'm doing exactly what my mother did. I'm imposing my ideas about what's important in life on her in the same way my mother tried to with me. She was projecting, if I had your opportunities and I'm projecting from my experiences that the most important is the relationship, don't let that go. You move where he goes. And I said 'Just

don't take any notice of me, I can see what I'm doing. You must make your own decisions ...'

That's the aspect of it which intrigues me. It's the feeling that you are, without realising it, a product of your own generation. My parents were very much so and my husbands' parents were; before the war their priority for their children was security. It was about 'you get a good job', 'you have a career, something with a pension'. Again it's such a different approach. Their ideal was a secure job and that you went to university and you became a teacher or something equivalent and you did that for the next 45 years and you got a pension at the end. You owned your own house, and that was their idea of the perfect life. For my children's generation, I'm saying to my daughter: 'why don't you go and have a year in Australia or something; you don't have to start work at 21, 22 and that'll be what you're going to do for the rest of your life'. People change jobs. There's no stigma attached to that anymore. There wouldn't be any stigma attached to coming back to this country and looking for a job in journalism and saying I went travelling for two years. It would perhaps be seen as an asset. But it wasn't like that for my parents, what they wanted for us was security. A pension, 'a job for life', that was what we used to talk about, 'a job for life'. That was the way they thought. When I was taking A-levels, A-levels were for five percent, it was a very small minority that went to university and so it was such a big deal and such a privilege, it was something they really wanted for me, and I thought 'oh well, when I'm a certain age I'll go and do my degree and I'll catch up and I'll get it done' but from the minute my children were born ... I just think 'no, no, I don't regret my choices at all'.

In her narrative Louise clearly identifies her decision not to go to university as the turning point at which her life could have taken an alternative route. Like the protagonist in Robert Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken' (1967), who believes he is keeping the path he did not choose to walk 'for another day' (p. 129), Louise suggests that at the time, she hadn't understood the exclusive nature of her decision, thinking she could return to university at a later date. Though she declares that this opportunity disappeared as soon as she had children, the irreversibility of the decision was realized only gradually and with hindsight. Louise identifies herself as a social anachronism and clearly highlights the diminished social and cultural valuation of being a stay-at-home-mother and undertaking community roles rather than having a self-warranting career, yet she denies any dissatisfaction with her choice. She insists she has 'no

regrets, I don't think'. This is interesting, for her double negative and additional qualifying clause introduce an ambivalent note, and pivotally, in her narrative this takes the place of a conventional pejorative construction of an opportunity lost (to have a career rather than a family). The ambivalence arises out of the tension between social meanings which have become attached to her life choices in a changed present, and the retrospective personal assessments she makes of her long-term experience. Lost opportunities are thus not divarications in experience identified at a purely personal level. They arise out of the intersection between social and personal modes of making sense of the life course.

In the process of making sense of her experience, Louise seeks narratively to construct a favourable evaluation of the major choice she made in her life. In order to do this, she has to utilize explanatory frameworks alternative to the contemporary sociocultural conventions which cast doubt on the value of what she has chosen. Instead she draws on temporally situated narratives of historical specificity in order to construct her experience as valid when seen in the historical context of its enactment. She refutes the facile appraisal of her experience as a *lost* opportunity as she reconstructs the choices she made as logical and sensible given the social conventions and expectations of the period. She assigns even more influence to these historical conditions than to her parents' desire to see her go to university. Far from mourning a more individually singular past, Louise shows astute historical awareness in the process of making sense of her experience. She assesses past and present both in their own terms and in dialogic relation with each another.

In Louise's account, the remembering of a major fork in experience facilitates the validation of individual action and a reassessment of her personal identity. But it also shapes social relationships in the present. Her lost opportunity is neither seen in a negative light nor regarded as a seductive alternative that would have led to a superior or more fulfilled life. She doesn't succumb to the sense that her present life was inevitable because it wasn't avoided, and she isn't complacent about her present life even though she knows that it has another possible history from the perspective of the past. In addition, she draws on both public and private dimensions of remembering in her narrative to make positive sense of her experience. As a result of recognizing the tension between contemporary social valuations of experience and the historical conditions under which they were enacted, Louise is acutely conscious of

considering her daughter's choices through her own historically derived evaluative framework. This self-awareness encourages her to advise her daughter to ignore her advice, or at least view it from her own generational perspective. She perceives and accepts the historicity of her own judgements while also seeing the limitation of accounting for this parting of two alternative pathways in the simplistic terms of an opportunity irretrievably lost. Both her account and Rani's account show us the dynamics of vernacular hermeneutics as they reflexively dwell on the relations between on the one hand the historical conditions shaping their experience and the autobiographical sense they make of it, and on the other hand the individual agency in making visible in new ways opportunities that appear to have been lost to time. They show that such opportunities are never lost in the absolute sense that they can never be found again. Instead, lost opportunities may contribute to remedying the very absences that they make visible.

In characterizing memories of lost opportunities as the divergent pathways of what has happened and what could have happened, we have shown once again that memory doesn't operate alone. Imagination acts in concert with memory, bringing these pathways to a new juncture of reconciliation between past and present. Such reconciliation isn't invariable, which is why we have stressed the commonplace occurrence of melancholic regret and mourning for opportunities lost. This is articulated in everyday reminiscences; it is also a conventional device in literature and traditional song. The mnemonic imagination can nevertheless act on remembered opportunities and derive from experience the means to take one's bearings for the future. The passing of time makes clearer the specific conditions of the past that constrained certain actions, whether these were gendered conventions or the unequal distribution of opportunities in the social class structure. This can lead to a speculative reliving of what happened in the new terms of what could have happened. The path we could have taken always remains in the shadow of the path we have taken, and a lost opportunity always holds the promise of a future possibility. This transformative potential in a mnemonics of loss and gain is what lies concealed in the way lost opportunities are usually conceived and narrated, but the tenses of memory are not irreversible. They can be reshuffled so that, as our mnemonic imagination acts on them, what was lost can be creatively retrieved as an immanent gain for the future.

NOTES

1. In addition to this, we make 'looking back' a recurrent analytical theme in order to signal the aspiration of moving between emic and etic perspectives, conceiving of these in terms of conceptual distinction rather than fixed binaries. This cross-relational movement is a defining feature of our ethnographic approach.
2. Theories of the self, self-identity and individual subjectivity are manifold, and they range across a number of academic disciplines and fields of study. It is not our purpose to review all these theories here. We draw on some of them, both directly and indirectly, when they inform our discussion, but our specific focus here is on the relationship between selfhood and practices of remembering, not with many of the issues raised by these theories. For general overviews, see Bauman and Raud (2015), Breakwell (1992), Burkitt (2008), Dweck (1999), Elliott (2014), Giddens (1991), Lawler (2014), Levin (1992), Solomon (1988) and Taylor (1989).
3. See Keightley and Pickering (2012), particularly Chaps. 1 and 2. For its application to studying the interrelations between media and memory, see Pickering and Keightley (2015).
4. With respect to this point of criticism, see also Schechtman (2001, 2004, 2005, 2011).
5. For a more developed critique of Schechtman, see Goldie (2012), Chap. 6.
6. The negative version of these qualities should be conceived in terms of a continuum, for this may involve judgements of someone acting 'out of character' as well as those being more comprehensively dismissive of 'bad character'.
7. We should perhaps point out that the distinction we make here between a remembering 'I' and a remembered 'me' is primarily temporal in reference. It is also quite different to Mead's distinction between 'I' as individual self-definition and 'me' as the internalized views of oneself among significant others, though we do endorse this as well. See Mead ([1934] 1974); see also Cooley ([1909] 1962, [1902] 1964), though Cooley ([1902] 1964, p. 184) takes this internalization further in his concept of the 'looking-glass self'.
8. For a critique of such claims, see Gass (1994), who bases his approach on the need to reconceive what it means to have a life worth living and worth writing about. Autobiography is of course a highly varied genre, encompassing a range of different self-conceptions and approaches to self-conception. For a general conspectus of the genre, see Weintraub (1975); for a fine collection of essays on different autobiographical forms, see DiBattista and Wittman (2014); and for one of the best academic treatments of autobiographical memory and the self, see Fivush and Haden (2003). It is perhaps worth adding that the rise of individualism has also been connected to the emergence and development of the novel

- as a literary form, and to the bourgeois lyrical song; see Watt ([1957] 1977) and Maróthy (1974).
9. The lyrics for this song were written by Paul Anka, with the music based on the French song 'Comme d'habitude', which was co-composed, cowritten and performed in 1967 with Claude François.
 10. See Wang and Brockmeier (2002, p. 50) for a comparative study of the Western independently oriented self with the interdependently oriented self in many East Asian cultures, a self that is 'fluidly designed and inextricably connected within a relational network that localises the individual in a well-defined social niche'.
 11. To this we can add a point made by Alasdair MacIntyre (1999, p. 249) about the requirement of thinking in cooperation with others for thinking for oneself: 'Even solitary monologues have to begin from what others have provided, and their conclusions have to be matched against rival conclusions'.
 12. On the latter, see Slater (1997, pp. 92–6 and 100–30).
 13. For further elaboration of this approach, see Pickering and Keightley (2016).
 14. While adolescence is widely regarded in the West as a time of emotional turbulence involving a crisis of identity, this in itself is experienced in greater or lesser degrees of intensity, while outside the West this life period is considered in quite a different light, a classic case being that of Samoa (Mead 1928).
 15. This is not as uncommon as it may appear. Another example is Suzanne Joinson's (2016) practice of collecting old photos from car boot sales and charity shops as a means of compensating for the lack of a photographic history of her childhood and growing up, her domestic photos having been lost when her parents' marriage disintegrated, and their council house was taken away because they no longer constituted a family.
 16. Augustine ([ca. AD 397–400] 1948); see Becker (2014) for helpful commentary on this text.
 17. See Pickering and Keightley (2015), Chaps. 4 and 5, for alternative conceptualizations of nostalgia.
 18. See Hewison (1987) and Samuel (1994) for both sides of the heritage debate.

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