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The burgeoning interest in young onset dementia: redressing the balance or reinforcing ageism?

By EDWARD TOLHURST*

Abstract

Critical evaluation is undertaken of social scientific conceptualisations of dementia in relation to ageing. In response to the societal tendency to associate dementia with old age, there is a growing body of literature that seeks to explicate the particular challenges faced by younger people with the condition. While recognition of the distinctive impacts presented by dementia at different ages is crucial, an age-related conceptual model that focuses on a lifecourse divide at age 65 is problematic: it promulgates a sense that younger people with dementia have “unique” experiences, while dementia for older people is typical. This also reflects a societal ageism, under which concerns are focused on those situated within “productive adulthood.” Moreover, a straightforward chronological marker cannot adequately represent a social world shaped by significant demographic changes. A more textured appreciation of ageing and dementia is required to help articulate how distinctive experiences emerge across the lifecourse.

Keywords: ageing, dementia, third age, social location, young onset dementia.

* *Edward Tollhurst*, Faculty of Health Sciences, Staffordshire University, UK

Introduction

Dementia is defined as “young onset” when it occurs before the age of 65. While dementia disproportionately affects older people, a significant number of younger people have the condition under the age of 65. For example, it is estimated that 850,000 people have dementia in the UK and, of these, approximately 42,000 have young onset dementia (Alzheimer’s Society 2014). The development of research into young onset dementia has occurred as the needs of these younger people with the condition have been insufficiently recognised. Dementia is traditionally perceived to be a disease of old age (Harris 2004), and research has tended to sample all age groups together, with the result that the particular needs of younger people have been difficult to discern (Clemerson et al. 2014). The manner in which social scientific research has addressed younger people with dementia requires closer consideration to assess the extent to which it positively redresses this imbalance. Additionally, scrutiny is required as to whether any unintended consequences are generated by this approach, which could have negative implications for people with dementia and their family members.

The importance of conceptualising ageing in relation to dementia relates to the concept of “personhood.” Dementia has principally been understood as a terminal biomedical condition defined by neurodegeneration. Such a perspective prompts a tendency to perceive the experience of the condition in homogenised terms, with the deleterious effects of the condition seen to determine experience. The person with dementia’s experiential domain, however, is a complex phenomenon: it is not only affected by neurological factors, but by relationships and social contexts. “Personhood should be viewed as essentially social: it refers to the human being in relation to others” (Kitwood & Bredin 1992: 275).

Recognition of the complexity of social and relational influences contributes to an awareness of the uniqueness of persons (Kitwood 1997). Age is one such attribute that contributes to this uniqueness. An appropriate representation of personhood thus requires recognition of heterogeneity of experience, and this includes recognising how lifecourse positioning shapes the socially situated basis of experience. Acknowledging the influence of characteristics, such as age, can thereby help to prevent the illness trajectory from being viewed as the central orientating aspect of experience (Bartlett & O’Connor 2010). An effective age-related model of

dementia research is therefore required to advance a positive and enabling conceptualisation of personhood.

This article presents an overview of the present social scientific context of young onset dementia and how this has developed. This overview provides a platform for the evaluation of several strands of the current social scientific model of ageing in relation to dementia. Insights are accordingly offered into how this conceptual model might assist or impede understandings of the experience of living with dementia.¹

The Academic Context of Dementia and Ageing

Young Onset Dementia: Redressing the Balance

The requirement to address the needs of younger people with dementia has received increasing academic attention over the last two decades. Keady and Nolan (1994) highlighted that there was a particular absence within research of the perspective of younger people with dementia. Since this time there has been a steadily growing body of literature on young onset dementia, with output on the topic increasing in the last decade. The atypical nature of young onset dementia, in terms of the age of onset of the condition, has prompted researchers to explore its distinctive experiential dimensions. For example, Killick (1999) states that special emphasis needs to be placed upon communicating with the younger age group of people with dementia. Furthermore, they are “often much closer in age to the central concerns of their lives than older people” (Killick 1999: 171); these include family events, relationships and working roles.

Harris (2004) highlights the distinctive needs of younger people with the condition: “Though there are some similar experiences with people of all ages who have dementia, the strength and depth of the impact is greater

¹ The nomenclature relating to younger people with dementia is debated within academic literature, with it referred to *inter alia* as “early onset dementia” or “young onset dementia.” The latter of these terms is used principally in this article. It has been highlighted that “early onset” runs the risk of being conflated with “early-stage” dementia, that is, the initial stages of dementia rather than the age at which the condition is diagnosed (Koopmans & Rosness 2014).

for younger people and their families" (Harris 2004: 33). This is underscored by Harris and Keady (2009) who highlight that "for the younger individuals with dementia and their family members, the disease occurs 'off time', not in their older years, as most often expected, but in the prime of their lives" (Harris & Keady 2009: 442). In addition, Svanberg et al. (2011) argue that people with young onset dementia might have additional needs as a consequence of the "non-normative" timing of the condition. Challenges of young onset dementia thus relate to the position in the lifecycle at which dementia is diagnosed: developing the condition in middle age limits people's ability to fulfil age-related goals linked to the sharing of skills and expertise with wider society, "thereby disrupting life-cycle hopes and expectations" (Clemerson et al. 2014: 462). The distinctive positioning of young onset dementia is reinforced by Chaston (2011) who states that younger people are more likely to be sexually active, and are also prone to encountering particular challenges associated with having dependent children.

The perspective that younger people with dementia and their families have different needs and require additional support/specific services has been reinforced in a number of papers (e.g. Armstrong 2003; Beattie et al. 2004; Johannessen & Möller 2013; Lockeridge & Simpson 2013; Roach et al. 2008, 2016).

It is also important to acknowledge how the overall configuration of services shapes conceptualisations of age-related aspects of dementia. The historical development of healthcare in the UK has separated mental health services into general psychiatry and old-age psychiatry, with the demarcation between these services being age 65. The traditional separation of general psychiatry and old-age psychiatry is still likely to impact upon the experience of services, with many younger people falling through the net of health and social services (Royal College of Psychiatrists and Alzheimer's Society London 2006). This perspective is endorsed by Werner et al. (2009) who state that the lack of special services for younger people with dementia might "be attributed to the fact that professional staff in general psychiatric services frequently lack adequate knowledge and training to recognize and treat such disorders. At the same time, elder care services ... are inappropriate for younger persons with dementia" (Werner et al. 2009: 634).

Recognition of the Threat of Ageism

While the principal orientation towards young onset dementia has been a promotion of the specific needs of this age group, recognition that this focus might generate some unwanted corollaries has been recorded. For example, it has been acknowledged that there might be an ageism inherent in approaches that set out to establish distinctive age-based requirements of older people: "At best these arguments relate to different positions in the lifecourse, at worst they may be seen as inherently ageist in their implicit acceptance of older people's reduced social roles, anticipated poor health and disability" (Tindall & Manthorpe 1997: 244). It has also been noted that 65 is an arbitrary divide that perpetuates ageist assumptions, but that the focus on younger people with dementia is required to redress an inequitable balance in service provision (Cox & Keady 1999).

In addition, Reed et al. (2002) reported on an evaluation of a project that was developed to offer "age-sensitive" care to younger people, and used a range of data sources including qualitative interviews with people with dementia, carers and project staff. People with dementia did not discuss particular age-related issues, "but talked about the distress and confusion that could be expected of anyone who has been given a diagnosis of dementia for themselves or a family member" (Reed et al. 2002: 110). The responses of those using the service were very positive, but this reflected the fact that a well-resourced team was able to offer extensive support rather than address any age-specific needs.

A further key advantage of specialist services for younger people is that they are differentiated from those for older people: services for older people are generally viewed as low-status (Reed et al. 2002). Greater social and political interest is likely to be generated in dementia by highlighting that it affects younger people and is not, therefore, just a disease of old age: this aligns the debate with broader age-related values of society, which prioritise youth ahead of old age (Segal 2013). A key advantage to the construction of a definable cohort of younger people with dementia is that it distinguishes them from societally undervalued and stigmatised older people.

Despite these recognitions, cautionary notes with regard to a focus on young onset dementia have become submerged under a persistent unitary discourse that sets out to promote the distinctive requirements of younger people with dementia. Alternative perspectives which might engage

critically with, and enhance, this discourse have not been developed, with a mode of groupthink on dementia and ageing seemingly taking hold.

Older People: The Absence of Age-Related Experiential Factors

It is vital to recognise that dementia does not just affect older people and literature that focuses on younger people assists with the promotion of this recognition. This offers some counterbalance to dementia research that has tended to overlook the impacts of the condition on younger people. In addition, the focus on young onset dementia highlights that life-cycle positioning will shape the experience of the condition, and that services should be attuned to these age-related influences. Nevertheless, a new imbalance has been generated by the focus on young onset dementia, as it means that age-sensitive approaches to dementia are almost exclusively oriented towards younger people. As highlighted above, young onset dementia literature, while only a subset of the field as a whole, does actively scrutinise age-based dimensions of experience. Alternatively, while most dementia research may address older people this tends to be presented in age-neutral terms.

Examples of research studies which directly state that they address the perspectives of older people are Steeman et al. (2007); Cowdell (2010); and Dalby et al. (2012), but specific age-related features of experience are generally overlooked in these papers. Even studies which explicitly address older people and identity do not interrogate research participants' particular age-related requirements or attributes (Caddell & Clare 2013; Cohen-Mansfield et al. 2000). Furthermore, Hulko (2009) adopts an approach which is sensitive to how social location shapes the experience of dementia for older people. Evaluation of social location requires sensitivity to how the person's experiential context is shaped by characteristics such as gender, ethnicity and class. However, despite adopting a direct focus on social location, age is the particular characteristic that does not receive close scrutiny. When the specific impacts of age are referred to directly within dementia literature these do not tend to be explored extensively and focus on factors such as negative societal perceptions of old age (Hubbard et al. 2003), or the increasing losses associated with old age (Preston et al. 2007).

Within the corpus of dementia literature, the exploration of specific age-related factors beyond a focus on young onset dementia is therefore marginal.

The discourse associating dementia with old age means that the distinctive aspects of age-specific experience are apparently considered to have less significance for older people. This renders the experience of dementia for older people age-typical. Accordingly, literature which addresses older people utilises this designation as a descriptive sample characteristic rather than as an analytic driver, with “older people with dementia” and “people with dementia” essentially synonymous.

Evaluation of the Binary Model of Dementia and Ageing

As discussed above with reference to personhood, it has been perceived that a shortcoming within dementia literature has been the conceptualisation of the condition in homogenous terms. The focus on young onset dementia addresses this to some extent via its proposal that the condition is experienced differently by younger people. This prevents an entirely uniform perspective on dementia with reference to age from being promoted. Nevertheless, the alternative model proffered, which divides people with dementia into two groups at the age of 65, presents its own potential impediments to understanding the experience of dementia: a homogenous age-neutral model has been replaced by a binary model. The focus on a divide at age 65 prompts a sense of two age groups and thus promotes a dichotomous perspective of dementia experience. The following sections address some of the potential, and unwanted, outcomes of this binary model.

Underplaying the Challenges of Dementia for Older People

Several authors refer to the “unique” challenges of young onset dementia (Chaston 2011; Clemerson et al. 2014; Harris 2004; Harris & Keady 2009). The use of this absolute term pushes the sense of difference between age groups to an extreme, and beyond the reasonable assertion that younger people are *more likely* to encounter particular challenges. Ascribing unique experiences or challenges to a large and varied group of people (which is narrowly demarcated from another large and varied group of people) is surely to misdescribe a complex reality. It suggests that people under the age of 65 have experiences that are incontrovertibly distinct from all people aged 65 and over. This is not just a matter of semantic and conceptual

quibbling: the use of the term “unique” indicates the manner in which age-related discourses associated with dementia research have become skewed excessively towards younger people. A commensurate focus on the unique age-related challenges of older onset dementia is much less apparent within the literature.

The binary model is thus underpinned by two broad categories: firstly, younger people (aged under 65) whose experience is shaped by specific age-related factors; and secondly, older people (aged 65 and over) who provide an inert control group against which the greater challenges of younger people can be contrasted. The use of other terminology such as “off-time” and “non-normative” in relation to young onset dementia also implies that the dementia for older people is “on-time” or “normative.” In fact, Harris (2004) endorses this perspective, highlighting that dependencies encountered in old age are experienced as “on-time.” This use of terminology actually embeds a sense that dementia is a feature of normal ageing, when it is well documented that this is not the case (e.g. Graham & Warner 2009; Hughes 2014). Even in terms of prevalence, people aged 95 and over with dementia are outnumbered by those who do not have the condition: 41.1% in this age range are estimated to have dementia (Alzheimer’s Society 2014).

The association of dementia with a sense of normalcy, typicality or expected timing for older people is not just misleading, but could also lead to the experiential impacts of the condition for older people being underplayed. The fact that dementia is a terminal condition will present substantial emotional challenges to people with the condition and their family members. Moreover, the neurodegenerative impacts of the illness, which often affect memory, behaviour and communication, are also likely to present very intense difficulties. These challenges are likely to be encountered as disconcerting and painful regardless of the age at which dementia is diagnosed. Highlighting the distinctive challenges faced by younger people does not, of course, intrinsically diminish recognition of more generalisable challenges of dementia (Tolhurst et al. 2014). However, a persistent imbalanced focus on the particular age-related dimensions of young onset dementia (and its associated terminology) does generate a sense that an expectation of decline in old age will render the experiential impacts of dementia easier to manage.

A *zero-sum* situation is thus constructed whereby the promotion of the “unique” needs of one age group (younger people) leads to a diminution in recognition of the needs of another group (older people). The personhood debate sets out to illuminate the uniqueness of persons by highlighting the breadth of relational and social factors that shape experience. A partial focus on the particular challenges faced by people with young onset dementia has the scope to diminish our apprehension of the distinctive experiences encountered by people aged 65 and over. While a uniformly negative representation of the condition should certainly not be promulgated, dementia does present intense and multiple difficulties to those living with the condition.

While dementia has been conceptualised in homogenous terms, it is also important to note that older people have also been socially defined as a homogenous group. For example, there is a tendency to equate old age with illness states and such a conceptualisation contributes to later life being bracketed off as a homogenous category (Higgs & Rees-Jones 2009). Developing a model of research under which dependency in old age is considered to be an “on-time” occurrence is commensurate with this homogenising tendency. The endeavour to overcome monolithic representations of dementia via a focus on younger people has generated the unfortunate outcome of reinforcing monolithic representations of older people. It is not just the case that a focus on young onset dementia is at risk of underplaying the significance of the condition for older people, but that this orientation could also compound negative, homogenising representations of old age. Therefore, a model that underplays the intensity and breadth of experiential challenges presented by dementia to older people should be resisted.

Reinforcing a Societal Focus on “Productive Adulthood”

Particular social and cultural values also impact upon age-related statuses and experiences. For example, the traditional means by which labour-market participation and retirement have been constructed shape definitions of old age and, as a corollary, influence health service configurations and models of age-related research. The process of defining people as old at the age of 65 became institutionalised through state policies related to labour-market participation, retirement and pension entitlements

(Higgs & Gilleard 2014). This was the age at which it was expected working life would come to a conclusion, followed by a shorter period of retirement. State policies were accordingly devised upon this assumption and this, in turn, reinforced definitions of old age based upon the age of 65. While the state pension age is set to rise in the UK, and the default retirement age was rescinded in 2011, the influence of these aforementioned definitions endures.

The productive endeavours of those engaged in paid employment are highly valued in society as they offer the means by which economic contributions are generated via taxation. The individual accumulation of wealth through personal endeavour accordingly takes on a moral virtue: heightened expectations of rationalism and economic productivity therefore “inevitably influence our sense of worth of a human life” (Post 2000: 5). These values are particularly favoured within neo-liberal societies which promote the sovereignty of the self-sufficient, autonomous individual. A socio-economic context of neo-liberalism has shaped social conditions in the UK since the early 1980s and this represents a broad shift from collectivist models of social welfare to a more individualistic model of self-reliance (Bauman 2011). The uncritical retention of age 65 within dementia research as a key marker thus reflects a societal and cultural promotion of “productive adulthood” as the sovereign lifecourse stage.

Such rhetoric can render the experience of ageing morally challenging. The prevailing climate of benefit retrenchment and targeting those perceived to be undeserving welfare recipients means that older people with genuine need still feel the threat of stigma related to dependency. Older people are situated in a troublesome position as a consequence of discourses that associate paid work with productivity, and accessing support as contributing to economic hardship. The additional support needs prompted by dementia can also exacerbate feelings of dependence. Those who do require external support might therefore feel a sense of guilt that they are unable to measure up to societal values of independence and self-sufficiency, and could accordingly feel a social burden. “Dependency is a sign of not being healthy, of being passive, of not being self-reliant and not being a ‘proper’ person in society” (Weicht 2011: 214).

The fact that young onset dementia is sometimes referred to as “working age dementia” (Alzheimer’s Society 2015), with some NHS

services employing this term, reinforces the perspective that discourses on ageing, dementia and adult productivity are aligned. The utilisation of the “working age” term underscores the association between conceptualisations of ageing and employment status. Dementia for those under 65 therefore prompts particular public and academic interest as a consequence of the collision between an “off-time” illness and cultural expectations of adult productivity.

Sabat (2001) proposes that people have a range of attributes and social personae that should be recognised to prevent people from being positioned in limited and negative ways that undermine their personhood. This “malignant positioning” occurs if the focus of those seeking to support people with dementia becomes the perceived neurological effects of the condition, rather than the multiple factors that shape a person’s subjective and relational being. The problem with an age-related model of dementia shaped by the centrality of “working age” is that it focuses excessively on social personae related to employment. This might accordingly marginalise the apprehension of a person’s social and relational being that is unconnected with wage-based productivity. Lifecourse expectations are defined with reference to an idealised notion of productive adulthood; but by contrast, “children, young people, elders and disabled people of all ages have been constructed as lacking the kind of attributes upon which full personhood and citizenship are premised” (Priestley 2004: 97).

The aim should be to promote the personhood of all people with dementia, but a model with “productive adulthood” at its core could actually contribute to a malignant positioning of older people (and also younger people with dementia who are no longer able to work). Employment might of course have key intersections with the experience of dementia, and work is very often a key element of people’s lives; but utilising it as the defining aspect of a model of age-related dementia research (or for the designation of specialist services) elevates its experiential significance too greatly.

Conceptual Misalignment: Tertium Non Datur

A conceptual challenge with a binary model, which relates to the arguments detailed above, is that it promulgates a sense of opposing states defined by difference. Young onset dementia literature is defined by the aim to differentiate the experience of younger people from that of older people. It is

therefore less accommodating of the similarities and experiential overlaps between the two groups.

A further shortcoming of a binary approach that promotes a focus on difference is that it rhetorically skews the two categories towards the extremities of the continuum. To appropriate a term from logic, the binary model thus generates an “excluded middle” – *tertium non datur*. The conceptual framework is built upon two oppositional states defined by difference; the third group which converges in the middle of these two groups is overlooked. Likewise it should be recognised that the two groups generated by the current age-related model of dementia research are very broad, that is, under 65, and 65 and over. An essentialist binary age-based model ascribes an illegitimate experiential unity to these two groups, and also prompts a misleading sense of dichotomy between these same groups. Consequently, it does little to promote the heterogeneity of the experience of living with dementia.

By promoting a sense of binary opposition, this model overlooks the ages at which the model converges, that is, the age of 65. The rhetoric of young onset dementia, as discussed above, is potentially misleading in that it is most readily associated with people in the centre of their working careers, and with dependent children. However, the prevalence of dementia increases with age: the period between the ages of 60 and 65 is the time when people who meet the “young onset” definition are most likely to be diagnosed with dementia. While generalisations should be avoided, this is the age range where people are increasingly likely to have grandchildren and be considering retirement. The binary model is therefore at risk of failing to represent the experience of the majority of people with young onset dementia: its predication on oppositional states means that it is oriented towards the youngest people with the condition. In addition, dementia for those over 65 is defined by what could be termed “extreme old age” and its associations with comorbidity, dependence and decline.

The people most likely to be misrepresented under a binary model of ageing and dementia are those just over the age of 65. People diagnosed at this time are not represented by the “young onset dementia” definition, but neither is 65 considered to be a meaningful indicator of the commencement of old age in contemporary society. This is explored below with reference to the “third age” concept.

Failing to Account for Demographic Change: The “Third Age”

In the UK the average life expectancy at birth for men is 79.1 years and for women it is 82.8 years. In 1980, it was 70.8 and 76.8 years respectively (ONS 2015). On its own this substantial increase in life expectancy suggests that a fixed conceptual distinction is unlikely to offer enduring utility when offering insights into the nature of age and ageing. This demographic trend means that: “We are at the end of the old ‘old age’... If we ignore the implications of the longevity revolution and fail to plan for the radically different world that will soon surround us, crisis will be upon us” (Kirkwood 2001: 17). As a consequence of the promotion of the age of 65 as a fixed demarcation between young and old, the present conceptual model of dementia and ageing is ill-equipped to account for this longevity revolution.

It is not simply the case that life expectancy is increasing, but also that longevity and demographic changes are altering the experience of ageing. Longevity means that later life is becoming more complex, and is shaped by a “third age” that describes the increasingly lengthy period of the lifecourse following paid employment and before physical decline. “The third age has been established on the basis of a materially secure retirement, realized through the participation of an increasing number of social actors occupying diverse identities and statuses, across widening social spaces” (Gilleard & Higgs 2005: 17). The period following retirement is viewed as a time offering possibilities and freedom: people within the parameters of the third age can, within broad limits, live their lives as they please, before encountering a “fourth age” of decline (Weiss & Bass 2002).

As a consequence the third age has been referred to as “the crown of life” where the individual occupies a lifecourse position that is distanced from both the obligations of younger adulthood and the infirmities of old age (Gilleard & Higgs 2010). This is a consequence of the ageing population but also rises in living standards which have changed expectations for retirement (Higgs 2013). The “third age” concept demonstrates that it is vital to recognise how the changing nature of the lifecourse intersects with the experience of dementia. This could be overlooked if the age-related focus remains fixed on dementia for those under 65, with people over this age remaining conceptualised as a homogenous group. It is argued that a simple chronological marker is no longer sufficient and this argument is

centred on “the changing nature of what old age has become and how it has been successively changed from being simply retirement from the labour force to becoming a distinct part of a more culturally and diverse later life” (Higgs 2013: 213).

The notion that young onset dementia occurs off-time and accordingly dependency in older age is a “normative” phenomenon (and is therefore likely to be felt less acutely) does not account for the changing nature of ageing in societies. Retirement, for example, will offer an increasing sense of extensive possibilities and potential for many people. The tone of current literature on young onset dementia could prompt a belief that ageing and breadth of experience have a straightforward inverse relationship. However, retirement itself might offer opportunities to engage in volunteering opportunities, take on extra responsibilities with grandchildren or other younger family members, or pursue travel plans. Dementia is likely to present substantial challenges at any age, but emotional difficulties might be felt particularly acutely if it coincides with a period of the lifecourse where new possibilities and time-freedom were anticipated. Disruption of life-cycle hopes and expectations is not, therefore, exclusive to those aged under 65.

Discourses on the third age, and associated concepts such as successful ageing, also present a framework of social expectations by which people judge the quality of their own lives. Failing to measure up to these expectations could present challenges to older people, as positive views of ageing are explicitly or implicitly set against unsuccessful or negative ageing (Higgs & Gillett 2015). The argument is not, therefore, that the third age/ fourth age distinction offers a sufficient alternative model to explicate the experience of dementia and ageing, as this approach raises potential challenges of its own. What is being argued is that these insights from the sociology of ageing underscore that the lifecourse is a more complex phenomenon than that represented by the binary framework of ageing currently defining dementia research.

Perspectives on the third age demonstrate that the current age-related dementia model is unlikely to represent the experience of a very substantial proportion of people over the age of 65. The number of people experiencing a period of affluent and healthy ageing is expanding, with a fourth age of decline an ancillary social category. Nevertheless, the current age-related

model of dementia research does not map cogently on to these social conditions. With its uneven focus on the distinctive challenges faced by younger people, this model fails to account for the changing nature of old age: the burgeoning third age is actually overlooked as a consequence of the “excluded middle” which inheres within its young/old dichotomy. Instead, the suggestion that challenges and dependency are experienced as “on-time” for people over the age of 65 means that they are aprioristically aligned with the “fourth age” category.

Conclusion

The lifecourse is a complex phenomenon which intersects with a range of subjective, interactional and social factors. This article has demonstrated that it cannot be properly understood with reference to a dichotomous model: an age-sensitive approach to dementia research must be founded on a more sophisticated basis than a socially constructed divide at age 65. As has been noted above, the current focus of age-based scrutiny is on one side of this dichotomy, that is, young onset dementia. The present model thus sets inflexible and skewed parameters for research; however, reframed conceptualisations of ageing and dementia can encourage researchers to reorient their empirical approach. The boundaries of samples in age-related research, for example, do not need to be devised solely with reference to the age of 65. A variegated approach to sample composition would contribute to a mode of enquiry that is more receptive to the complex intersections between dementia, ageing and the experience of living with the condition. The current model also prompts an approach to analysis concerned with experiential divergences between younger and older people with dementia. A more credible analytical method would be attuned to the identification of divergences *and* commonalities of experience that feature across *various* life stages.

In defence of the current model, its well-meaning message has arguably required persistent iteration, as the oft-stated need for more age-specific provision for younger people remains unheeded (Roach et al. 2012). However, the understandable eagerness to promote the particular needs of younger people has unfortunately elevated the age of 65 from an arbitrary dividing line to a sovereign (and spurious) experiential boundary.

Approaches to the theorising and research of dementia certainly need to be cognisant of the format of services, as the recommendations of practically oriented studies must relate to what can be feasibly implemented. However, there is no requirement that the call for greater young onset services should define the entire age-related dementia model. In fact, one of the curiosities of the young onset dementia debate is its determination to replicate the age-based parameters of psychiatric services (which are themselves framed by outdated societal definitions of old age related to economic productivity).

This article in no way sets out to challenge the principle of age-specific services. Health services or support organisations might opt to select an age-divide for the delivery of provision, even if it is recognised that this can only be an approximate indication of different needs within the population. A conceptual model built upon these professionally constructed foundations, however, does not inhabit the optimal vantage point from which the utility (and implications) of such service configurations can be evaluated. The way that we research and think about dementia, in relation to age, does not need to be determined by a professional division of services. Societal norms and the configuration of services are factors that will, of course, shape the experience of dementia. But the aim should be to explore and illuminate how social structures and cultural values shape experience, rather than unreflexively endorsing these phenomena and further entrenching their impact.

Crucially, the current age-related model focused on younger people with dementia is incommensurable with the broader intentions of experientially oriented research. This article has demonstrated that this is not just a conceptual debate: models of ageing have the scope to reinforce ageism and impact negatively upon the experience of dementia. Repeated statements on the particular needs of younger people run the risk of compounding homogenising and exclusionary discourses on older people. Assumptions of on-time dependency and older people existing beyond the prime of their lives could actually contribute to a malignant positioning that undermines the personhood of those with dementia aged 65 and over.

A new conceptual approach can address the way in which emergent experiential factors related to age shape experience across the lifecourse. This will also accommodate the requirement to promote the needs of

specific age groups, without compounding negative societal representations of old age. This more nuanced model would not promote an ontologically flat model of ageing, which denies that particular experiences are more likely to arise at different ages. What is being promoted is an approach that recognises age as complex experiential continuum, which is not readily compartmentalised into two stages divided by a static chronological marker.

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Corresponding Author

Edward Tolhurst, Faculty of Health Sciences, Staffordshire University, Blackheath Lane, Stafford, ST18 0AD, United Kingdom. Email: e.tolhurst@staffs.ac.uk

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Comparative analysis of national and regional models of the silver economy in the European Union

By *ANDRZEJ KLIMCZUK**

Abstract

The approach to analysing population ageing and its impacts on the economy has evolved in recent years. There is increasing interest in the development and use of products and services related to gerontechnology as well as other social innovations that may be considered as central parts of the “silver economy.” However, the concept of silver economy is still being formed and requires detailed research. This article proposes a typology of models of the silver economy in the European Union (EU) at the national and regional levels. This typology was created by comparing the Active Ageing Index to the typology of varieties and cultures of capitalism and typology of the welfare states. Practical recommendations for institutions of the EU and directions for further research are discussed.

Keywords: active ageing index, regional development, silver economy, varieties/cultures of capitalism, welfare state.

* *Andrzej Klimczuk*, Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw, Poland

Introduction

Population ageing is characterised by an increase in the length of human life, which favours the development of goods and services for older consumers and ageing societies. Increasing interest in this context has led to the concept of the “silver economy.” The silver economy is usually broadly described as “all types of goods and services for older adults and an ageing population, including extending the working life, volunteerism, and active citizenship of older people” (Klimczuk 2015: 77) or in a narrower sense a combination of suitable conditions of supply of goods and services and the growing purchasing power of older consumers (European Commission 2007: 96). Age-friendly products and services associated with the use of gerontechnology and social innovations may be considered as central parts of the silver economy. Age-friendly solutions are complementary to the United Nations’ (UN) concept of “society for all ages” and the implementation of the *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* (MIPAA). This document, which was adopted in 2002, is a set of obligations and guidelines for strategic management in the area of social policy towards old age as well as social policy for older adults (also called together as the ageing policy or public policy on ageing) in each member state of the UN (cf. Błędowski 2012; Ervik & Lindén 2013; Szatur-Jaworska 2006).

The Active Ageing Index 2012 and 2014 (AAI) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the European Commission is a practical tool to monitor the implementation of the MIPAA and it clearly shows that population ageing is not only differentiated in demographic terms but also in the socio-economic fields, which are crucial to the development of the silver economy on national and regional levels. However, there is a need to deepen the explanations regarding the clustering of countries in the domain-specific indices to support the development of national and regional economies that will meet the needs of ageing populations.

The central thesis of this article is that the Active Ageing Index (AAI) due to the comparison with the clustering of countries in (1) typologies of varieties and cultures of capitalism and (2) typologies of welfare states may be used to explain the emerging differentiation of models of the silver economy in the countries of the European Union (EU). The methodology

of this article is based on a literature review and case studies. The analysis focused on the identification of national and regional factors relevant to the development of the silver economy together with outcomes of active ageing.

The first part of the article includes the literature review of theoretical concepts associated with the silver economy and the implementation of the UN and the EU strategies for an ageing population. The second part focuses on comparisons of the AAI and its domain-specific indices for different clustering of countries. The third part includes selected findings of the in-depth analysis of the selected cases of regional models of the silver economy.

Conclusions contain practical recommendations for institutions engaged in ageing policy and suggestions for further research.

Relations between the active ageing policy and the silver economy

According to the World Health Organization (2002: 12), active ageing may be defined as “the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age.” This approach, in particular, draws attention to the life course perspective on ageing, diversity of older adults, and a holistic approach to determinants of ageing including: crosscutting factors of culture and gender; health and social system; behavioural factors; personal factors; physical environment; social environment; and economic factors (WHO 2002: 19–32).

Active ageing also draws particular attention to the need for policies to reduce healthcare and social security costs associated with noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) that are more common among older people (WHO 2002: 14, 42). Many NCDs may be avoided or delayed by health promotion, prevention of chronic diseases, promotion of healthy lifestyles and safety at work that reduces the risk of disability and promotion of independent living and “ageing in place.” All these areas require the use of appropriate products and services for older adults and ageing societies.

Moreover, technological development allows wider use of solutions that will partially complement labour shortages associated with demographic change (population ageing and population decline) through the growth of labour productivity and replacement of many physical activities with

machines and robots (Ervik 2009). However, not including these effects can lead to a new form of digital divide in the EU called the “robotics divide.”

This brings us to the concept of the “silver economy,” which is often seen in the narrow sense as the “silver market” that includes goods and services for older adults and solutions for ageing workers. However, such an approach may lead only to changes in marketing (mainly to create the so-called “age brands”) while there is a need to focus also on reducing ageism and using age-friendly solutions in public spaces and homes. Thus, the wider approach to the silver economy also includes education, research and development (R&D), a cross-sector set of goods and services from already existing sectors, and career opportunities in the silver industries (European Commission 2007: 96). The silver industries or segments of the silver market include health care; smart living, housing adaptations and supported living services (increasingly based on information and communication technologies, or ICTs); education and culture; ICTs and media; service robotics; mobility; recreation; travel; fitness and wellness; clothing and fashion; care services; insurances; and financial services (Enste et al. 2008: 330–331; Moody and Sasser 2012: 464).

Gerontechnologies and social innovations can be considered as essential components of the silver economy. The first term refers to the study of technology, products and services dedicated to older people, designed to assist them in almost every aspect of life, in particular, health and self-esteem, housing and daily living, mobility and transport, communication and governance, and work and leisure (Burdick 2007: 627–629) – designing electronic aids for daily living such as telework solutions, detectors, alarms, sensors, equipment to overcome impairments in hearing and sense of smell and bathroom systems. Social innovation refers to new strategies, concepts, products, services and organisational forms aimed at satisfying the needs that arise, in particular, on the edges of various sectors of the social system (O’Sullivan et al. 2010). Examples include innovations emerging at the interface between cooperation and competition in the public sector, commercial sector, the social economy sector or the informal sector. Such innovations have social objectives, social means and generate new social relations and co-operative ties. Examples of such innovations include the use of new technologies in a creative way “for and by” older people; new models of care, including combinations of formal and

informal support; age-friendly environments; and mobilising trusted networks (circles of support, self-help groups).

However, various barriers to the development of the silver economy at national and regional levels can be observed (Klimczuk 2011). For example, the small interest of market entities in these concepts in some regions, perception of the silver economy as goods for wealthy older people, unfavourable patterns of consumption by seniors and low attractiveness of some regions for older migrants and travellers. Another barrier may be the little interest of business entities in the development and implementation of the silver economy in some peripheral regions such as rural regions and borderline regions. Moreover, the focus of companies on goods and services only for the affluent older adults might also be an obstacle. The detrimental consumption patterns of some older adults might be an issue, too (e.g. the orientation on products that meet basic needs and health, distrust towards new solutions and technologies). In addition, some regions may guide the development of the silver economy in attracting older migrants and tourists, but this strategy may not bring the expected effects of the development due to, for example, their low attractiveness in comparison with metropolitan areas or deficiencies in social infrastructure.

The ageing policy of the EU already includes a number of intervention areas and focuses on mainstreaming ageing (European Commission 2005, 2009, 2011, 2012). These activities are oriented to consider ageing in specific policies such as employment policy, equal opportunities policy, innovation policy, scientific policy and lifelong learning policy. However, the development of the silver economy requires an increase in the scope of coordination of policies, cooperation between top-down and bottom-up initiatives (see Enste et al. 2008: 330; Ferry et al. 2006: 31–33, 80–90; “SEN@ER” network 2014), the cohesion of strategic documents, a multilevel governance, the development of statistical indicators, integration and reorganisation of public services in co-production with citizens and the creation of structures and forms of dialogue between communities and administration (Katsarova 2008). This article suggests that the regional silver economies may also be associated with smart specialisation strategies within cohesion policy 2014–2020 because in some regions there are already strong development centres of gerontechnologies and social innovations for

ageing societies (cf. Eatock 2015; European Commission 2015a, 2015b; Foray et al. 2012).

The AAI in the context of varieties of capitalism and typologies of welfare states

The AAI includes comparisons between the 28 EU member states, including indicators divided into two dimensions and four domains that are further subdivided by gender (Zaidi et al. 2013: 6). The first dimension is “actual experiences of active ageing” (domains: employment; participation in society; independent, healthy and secure living). The second dimension and domain is “capacity and enabling environment for active ageing” that is related to Amartya Sen’s (2009) notion of capabilities understood as opportunities and empowerments to improve well-being and quality of life. Regarding active ageing, the second dimension and domain were defined by measuring of human assets (e.g. remaining life expectancy), health capital (mental well-being indicators) and human capital understood as educational attainment indicators. The countries performing the worst on the overall AAI are sometimes better in some domains than in others. For example, Hungary has one of the lowest overall ranks but is performing relatively well in the field of independent living. In addition, the indices for all three domains of actual experiences of active ageing are positively correlated with the index of the capacity and enabling the environment for active ageing (Zaidi et al. 2013: 26, 29, 32). In other words, countries that are better prepared for ageing in terms of infrastructure, human capital and social capital are also better at solving the challenges associated with the ageing of their populations. Moreover, a positive correlation of the AAI with gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was noted, which suggests that the countries with relatively higher standards-of-living are generating better capacity and enabling environment for active ageing (Zaidi et al. 2013: 21).

However, the AAI in proposed form only partially allows us to explain the differences between the emerging silver economies in the countries of the EU because it does not include indicators related to the consumption, production, and R&D of goods and services for ageing societies. Thus, it can be extended through the adaptation of, for example, elements of typologies of welfare states and varieties of capitalism. A well-known

concept of different welfare regimes was proposed by Esping-Andersen (1990) and includes the decommodification index and impact of benefits and social services on social stratification. This theory explains that countries with a social-democratic regime, such as the Nordic countries, tend to have a high degree of decommodification (i.e. more opportunities for a person to maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market. This does not mean that private providers of care and social services are not present or that their quality of care is better or worse than that provided by state entities or NGOs), universal care and nursing services provided by public entities, high wage replacement by social benefits, full employment policy and the firm position of labour unions (cf. Lindbom 2001). In a conservative corporatist regime, such as in Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Japan, the state supports the family; social security depends on the position of individuals in the labour market; and social care insurance and nursing care services are primarily delivered by informal carers, NGOs and local communities. Public administration intervenes only when indicated entities are not in a position to cope with the problems (principle of subsidiarity). The last group of countries (e.g. the United Kingdom and the United States) represents a liberal regime, which is characterised by individualism in the field of social security, low decommodification and social benefits, benefits based on income, widespread commercialisation of care and nursing services, competition between different suppliers and a small role of labour unions.

Esping-Andersen's typology has been repeatedly tested, criticised and modified by many scholars (Arts & Gelissen 2006). The criticisms were related mainly to (1) the non-systematic inclusion of the Mediterranean countries, (2) description of the Antipodean welfare states as liberal regimes and (3) simplification or avoidance of the gender dimension in social policy. This article will refer to the modification of Esping-Andersen's typology proposed by Kazepov (2010: 52–63), who extended this typology by two types of welfare states. Kazepov's theory focuses on "rescaling" and co-governance of social policy that takes into account not only the decentralisation of services in a way that the focus is on the transfer of service implementation through outsourcing by the entities of the central level of state to local authorities but also to make it even more targeted towards the development of mixed forms of social welfare

(welfare mix) at the regional and local levels, which means the implementation of social services in the form of various cross-sector partnerships. The first, familistic system (among others, Spain and Italy), focuses on fewer resources that are targeted at family policies and overload of the family in social caring responsibilities, the gender segmentation in the labour market, local differentiation of particularistic interests and different forms of governance and weak prevention of poverty. The second, welfare system in transition countries, refers to an emerging model in most Central European and East European countries. The reforms are taken here in the context of financial constraints and with ambivalent consequences. Some countries focus on privatisation (e.g. in pension reforms) while others invest in the coordinated market and social policies. In addition, there were significant reforms of the territorial organisation oriented to move away from central regulation towards more decentralised levels.

Table 1 covers comparison of selected countries concerning the AAI and typologies of welfare states. This table shows that social-democratic regimes (e.g. Sweden)¹ and liberal regimes (the United Kingdom) cope relatively better with the population ageing than corporative regimes (France), familistic regimes (Italy) and regimes in transition (Poland). Deepening explanations concerning the differences between these systems is possible by analysis of the achievements and challenges of selected countries representing different models of welfare states presented in the *Synthesis Report on the implementation of the MIPAA in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Region* (2012). Most of the liberal, social-democratic and corporative states achieved the MIPAA commitments 1 (mainstreaming ageing), 4 (adjust social protection systems to demographic changes) and 7 (ensure the quality of life at all ages and maintain an independent living). In the case of challenges, socio-democratic states tend to have problems with commitments 2 (ensure full

¹ At this point, we need to highlight that the term “social-democratic regimes” is still being used although the social-democratic political parties are no longer dominating the parliaments in the Nordic countries in recent years. Moreover, a variety of reforms related to privatisation and marketisation of social benefits and services have been introduced, that are sometimes described as “dismantling” or “retrenchment” of the social-democratic welfare model (Lavelle 2008: 143–168; Lindbom 2001).

Table 1. The active ageing index and European welfare systems in comparative perspective

Welfare systems	Employment						Participation in society						Independent, healthy and secure living						Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing						Overall					
	Index			Rank			Index			Rank			Index			Rank			Index			Rank			Index			Rank		
	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014
Liberal (United Kingdom)	34.9	35.5	35.8	5	3	4	18.0	20.0	20.0	6	11	11	72.3	75.7	73.7	10	6	11	61.2	61.4	61.3	4	5	5	38.0	39.3	39.2	4	4	5
Social-democratic (Sweden)	40.8	41.0	43.4	1	1	1	21.0	22.6	22.6	2	4	4	77.4	78.7	78.6	4	2	4	66.2	69.5	69.2	1	1	1	42.6	44.0	44.8	1	1	1
Corporative (France)	19.3	21.0	24.1	21	21	16	20.5	22.4	22.4	3	5	5	75.3	74.6	75.9	5	9	6	57.5	57.8	59.1	8	9	9	33.0	34.2	35.7	9	12	9
Familistic (Italy)	19.6	20.9	23.0	20	22	19	18.4	24.1	24.1	5	2	2	67.9	69.9	69.0	15	19	17	50.0	52.8	53.4	17	15	15	30.1	33.3	34.0	19	15	14
In transition (Poland)	18.3	19.8	22.4	24	24	20	13.3	12.2	12.2	17	27	28	65.9	67.5	64.9	21	21	24	46.9	46.7	47.9	20	22	22	27.0	27.3	28.2	25	27	27
EU27 (2010–2012) / EU28 (2014)	27.1	27.1	27.9	–	–	–	14.9	18.1	18.1	–	–	–	68.7	71.7	70.6	–	–	–	52.4	54.2	54.4	–	–	–	32.0	33.8	34.0	–	–	–

Source: Own elaboration based on Kazepov 2010: 35–72; UNECE 2014; Zaidi 2014; Zaidi et al. 2013; Zaidi & Stanton 2015. The red colour suggests the highest ranks. The green colour shows the lowest positions in the ranks.

integration and participation of older persons) and 7 while corporatist regimes with commitments 4 and 7. There is no definite pattern of challenges in liberal states. Familistic regimes tend to achieve commitments 4 and 5 (an adaptation of labour markets to population ageing) but commitment 7 is a challenge. Regimes in transition tend to treat commitment 1 as an achievement while 4 and 7 are challenges. A summary of these considerations is included in Table 2. Thus, it can be stated that the transition countries have some similarities to the countries of the conservative–corporate regime, which can be explained by geographical proximity and perhaps by the related diffusion and adaptation of similar regulations and practices. This resemblance seems to confirm a similar weakness in the AAI of the conservative–corporate systems in terms of the effective promotion of employment among older adults.

Typologies of welfare states in conjunction with the AAI may explain the differences between potential models of the silver economy in particular with regard to social benefits and services. It is reasonable, however, also to take into account the differences in socio-cultural factors that affect the practice of business in individual countries and thereby their economic policies. In reference to the theory of Peter A. Hall & David W. Soskice (2001), we may narrow down our description of the emerging models to three models of the silver economy in the EU. It should be emphasised that the typology of Hall and Soskice, similar to the cited typologies of Esping-Andersen and Kazepov, highlights the impact of the level of individualism and activities of trade unions on the differences between the countries of the EU.

Liberal welfare regimes (not only countries from Europe but also Australia and the United States) correspond to the liberal silver economies, which are characterised by competitive market arrangements and inter-firm relations; equilibrium achieved through the demand/supply and hierarchy; direct product competition; complete and formal contracting; freer movement of inputs; full-time employment in case of general skill and short-term employment in specific skills; wage bargain at the firm level; focus on formal education from high schools and colleges; low rate of unionisation; unequal income distribution; radical innovation; comparative advantages in high-tech and service; and policies aimed at deregulation, antitrust and tax breaks.

Table 2. European welfare systems and main achievements and main challenges in the implementation of the regional implementation strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA/RIS) 2002

The ten commitments of the MIPAA/RIS 2002	Main achievement in welfare systems	Main challenge in welfare systems
1. To mainstream ageing in all policy fields with the aim of bringing societies and economies into harmony with demographic change to achieve a society for all ages	- Liberal (United Kingdom) - Social-democratic (Sweden) - Corporative (France) - In Transition (Poland)	- None of the selected welfare states
2. To ensure full integration and participation of older persons in society	- Liberal (United Kingdom) - In Transition (Poland)	- Social-democratic (Sweden)
3. To promote equitable and sustainable economic growth in response to population ageing	- Familistic (Italy)	- None of the selected welfare states
4. To adjust social protection systems in response to demographic changes and their social and economic consequences	- Liberal (United Kingdom) - Social-democratic (Sweden) - Corporative (France) - Familistic (Italy)	- Corporative (France) - In Transition (Poland)
5. To enable labour markets to respond to the economic and social consequences of population ageing	- Familistic (Italy)	- None of the selected welfare states
6. To promote lifelong learning and adapt the educational system in order to meet the changing economic, social and demographic conditions	- None of the selected welfare states	- Familistic (Italy)
7. To strive to ensure quality of life at all ages and maintain independent living including health and well-being	- Social-democratic (Sweden) - Corporative (France) - In Transition (Poland)	- Social-democratic (Sweden) - Corporative (France) - Familistic (Italy) - In Transition (Poland)

Table 2 (Continued)

The ten commitments of the MIPAA/RIS 2002	Main achievement in welfare systems	Main challenge in welfare systems
8. To mainstream a gender approach in an ageing society	- None of the selected welfare states	- None of the selected welfare states
9. To support families that provide care for older persons and to promote intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity among their members	- None of the selected welfare states	- Familistic (Italy)
10. To promote the implementation and follow-up of the Regional Implementation Strategy through regional cooperation	- None of the selected welfare states	- None of the selected welfare states

Source: Own elaboration based on UNECE 2012.

Most of the social–democratic and corporative regimes correspond to coordinated market economies (including Japan). Thus, we may assume that the silver economies in these countries are based more on non-market relations, equilibrium achieved through the strategic interaction between firms and other actors, collaborative inter-firm ties; differentiated and niche production; incomplete legal system and informal contracting, monitoring and sanctioning institutions, shorter hours of employment in case of specific skills and long term for immobile jobs, wage bargain at the industry level, apprenticeship imparting industry-specific skills, high rate of unionisation, equal income distribution, incremental innovation, comparative advantage in manufacturing and policies focused on encouraging collaboration of firms.

Hall and Soskice argue that the third model of capitalism may emerge in Mediterranean states. These countries are characterised by a large agrarian sector, the influence of non-market coordination in the sphere of corporate finance (entities of the social economy such as social enterprises, co-operative banks, cooperatives and non-government organisations engaged in business activities) and liberal arrangements in the labour relations. Thus, respectively, the third model of the silver economy would have features specific to the social economy, solutions based on the ideas of

self-help and self-organisation and the related use of the strengths of rural areas (e.g. tourism, recreation, spa services and medical and geriatric rehabilitation).

However, it should be noted that Hall and Soskice in their typology do not take into account countries that are undergoing system transformation. The concept proposed by Andreas Nölke & Arjan Vliegenthart (2009) may be used to supplement that gap. These scholars suggest that in transition countries, it is possible to observe the emergence of “dependent market economies” and thus the dependent silver economies characterised by dependence on intra-firm hierarchies within transnational enterprises, foreign direct investments and foreign-owned banks, control of transnational enterprises by headquarters, appeasement of skilled labour, company-level collective agreements, limited expenditures for further qualification, intra-firm transfer within transnational enterprise and assembly platforms for semi-standardised industrial goods.

Deepening the analysis of the AAI results can also be based on the Charles Hampden-Turner & Fons Trompenaars’ (2000) model of national culture differences. This model is used in the context of management and includes seven dichotomous dimensions. In the dimension of “universalism–particularism,” nearly all countries of the EU are characterised by the first dimension, which focuses on standardisation and rationalisation of activities, goods and services. In the dimension “individualism–communitarianism” we may assume that liberal and social–democratic regimes and regimes in transition underline individual behaviour while others focus on the group. In the dimension “specificity–diffuseness,” the liberal and transition regimes tend to concentrate on analysing phenomena by collecting detailed information rather than the integration of knowledge. For example, focus on the development of various assistive technologies (nearly 40,000 products and services based on gerontechnology or related concepts are available in the United States market) rather than on few complex robotic solutions for older adults (such approach was promoted in Japan) (cf. AbleData 2016; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japanese Government 2006). In the dimension “neutral–emotional,” the liberal, social–democratic and corporative regimes tend to be neutral in expressing emotion, and business relationships are typically instrumental. Societies of

regimes in transition and familistic regimes are emotional, which is, for example, important in negotiations. The models of the silver economy in the EU countries may be divided into the dimension of “achieved–ascribed status”: liberal and social–democratic regimes tend to focus more on achieving, while corporative and familistic regimes, and regimes in transition tend to have more hierarchies. In the dimension of “internal direction–outer direction,” the EU societies tend to control the environment, for example, companies and governments are convinced that they can control nature and population trends as well as relations within and between social groups to achieve socio-economic goals (e.g. diversity and age management in organisations). The EU societies are different, in particular, from Japanese society, which seems to be more controlled by the environmental factors. For example, in Japanese society, there is a tendency to understand cooperation between people and nature, including in their attitudes towards demographic trends. There are also tendencies to avoid conflicts in organisations to achieve socio-economic goals (e.g. the seniority wage system). Broad consistency is also seen in the case of “sequential time–synchronous time” as societies of the EU tend to have a linear concept of time. This concept allows performing tasks in the shortest possible time. Meanwhile, in the extreme, there is a Japanese society where the recognition of the cyclical concept of time allows for long-term planning. We have to underline that although this model indicates the similarity of national cultures in the EU, it also distinguishes them from the United States and the Asian countries, in particular, from Japan where the silver market emerged in the 1970s (Coulmas 2008).

The above considerations allow us to conclude that in the EU we may observe the development of at least four models of the silver economy: liberal (liberal welfare regimes), coordinated (social–democratic and corporative), mixed/hybridised (familistic) and dependent (in transition). The main features of these models are included in Table 3. However, there may be more configurations at the regional level.

Features of selected regional models of the silver economy

This section focuses on the synthesis of diffused descriptions of selected cases of regional models of the silver economy in the EU.

Table 3. Hypothetical relationships between the European welfare states and models of the silver economy

Welfare systems	Models of the silver economy	General features
Liberal	Liberal silver economy	Competitive market arrangements and inter-firm relations; equilibrium achieved through the demand/supply and hierarchy; direct product competition; complete and formal contracting; freer movement of inputs; full-time employment in case of general skill and short-term employment in specific skills; wage bargain at the firm level; focus on formal education from high schools and colleges; low rate of unionisation; unequal income distribution; radical innovation; comparative advantages in high-tech and service; and policies aimed at deregulation, antitrust and tax breaks.
Social-democratic Corporative	Coordinated silver economy	Non-market relations; equilibrium achieved through the strategic interaction between firms and other actors; collaborative inter-firm ties; differentiated and niche production; incomplete legal system and informal contracting; monitoring and sanctioning institutions; shorter hours of employment in case of specific skills and long term for immobile jobs; wage bargain at the industry level; apprenticeship imparting industry-specific skills; high rate of unionisation; equal income distribution; incremental innovation; comparative advantage in manufacturing; and policies focused on encouraging collaboration of firms.
Familistic	Mixed/hybridised silver economy	The silver economy is in part related to a large agrarian sector, the use of the strengths of rural areas (e.g. tourism, recreation, spa services and medical and geriatric rehabilitation). Market arrangements and solutions based on the ideas of self-help and

Comparative analysis of national and regional models

Table 3 (Continued)

Welfare systems	Models of the silver economy	General features
In Transition	Dependent silver economy	self-organisation, the influence of non-market coordination in the sphere of corporate finance (entities of the social economy) and liberal arrangements in the labour relations. Dependence on intra-firm hierarchies within transnational enterprises; foreign direct investments and foreign-owned banks; control by headquarters of transnational enterprises; appeasement of skilled labour; company-level collective agreements; limited expenditures on further qualification; intra-firm transfer within the transnational enterprise; and assembly platforms for a semi-standardised industrial goods.

Source: Own elaboration.

The findings of the study on “shrinking regions” created at the request of the European Parliament suggest that there are “two demographic Europes” with four sub-types of countries (Katsarova 2008: 18–19). “Shrinkage” is defined here not simply as depopulation but as a decline in the number of inhabitants of a particular city or region over the course of a generation (Katsarova 2008: iii). All the old member states of the EU (except Ireland) are characterised by a concentration of people aged 30–45 years and the growth in life expectancy. The countries of “west-old” (the Mediterranean region, Germany and Austria) are characterised by a decrease in the number of young people and insufficient immigration. The sub-type “west-young,” includes the north-western regions with a lower decline of a young population and high level of immigration. In comparison, “east” countries of the EU (plus Ireland) are characterised mainly by age groups: 45–55 and 20–35. However, the young population is rapidly decreasing due to emigration to Western Europe. There is a sub-type “east-old” (the Baltic States, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria) and a sub-type “east-young” (Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Malta, Cyprus and Ireland) (Katsarova 2008: 18). Moreover, “east” countries and peripheral areas have more “shrinking regions,” which tend to be significantly poorer than the average and are more dependent on transfer payments linked to direct regional aid, interpersonal solidarity and public investments in infrastructure and basic services (Katsarova 2008: 48–50). Shrinking regions are often characterised by agriculture, personal services and non-commercial activities or are former industrial areas (in Poland and Romania). Thus, such regions have fewer entities relevant to the development of R&D for the silver economy. Exceptions are the shrinking areas of the western part of the contemporary Federal Republic of Germany and the Czech Republic.

Research results of the project *Regions for All Ages* supplement above observations (Ferry et al. 2006: 14–19). They also show the urban–rural polarisation in the EU. Most of the urban regions have a positive demographic development due to inward migration, which directs them to focus on the integration of migrants into the labour force and society. At this point, we may only highlight that some projects in the EU are already testing solutions and services based on ICTs that will support informal carers and migrant care assistants. Such solutions include, for example,

communication with the care recipient; online consultation on long-term care services; peer support (e.g. online forums); training on caregiving; and the use of ICTs, automation and robotics to enhance care functions (Carretero et al. 2012: 27–29). Thus, the silver economy may cover care systems that will integrate both gerontechnologies and migrant carers to support, for example, long-term care in home care and older adults with physical and/or cognitive disabilities. In contrast, rural regions tend to have a negative tendency (Ferry & Vironen 2010: 4). The areas of liberal welfare states such as the United Kingdom and Ireland focus their policies mainly on the labour market, health care and reducing negative attitudes towards ageing. National-level strategies tend to have little influence on regional policies. The regions of social–democratic states focus on the anti-discrimination and flexible work arrangements for older adults, free counselling for companies in the field of ageing policy and institutional and financial resources for regions with dispersed settlements. The corporative regimes tend to focus on national reforms in the social insurance systems while the policies on a regional level are fragmented and lack coordination. The regions in familistic regimes focus on providing services, increasing the independence of older people and weakening incentives for early retirement. The regimes in transition focus on the restructuring of national economies. Thus, national and regional ageing policies gained importance in the European Year 2012 on Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. Moreover, case studies (Table 4) allow describing factors that contribute to effective implementation of regional interventions for an ageing population: political will and democratic legitimacy, preparing the ground and establishing a database, financial autonomy of local governments and agreement to evaluation (Ferry et al. 2006: 46–47). We may also add the high quality of human and social capital of change leaders, who are crucial for the development of the silver economy.

The research of the project *4 Leaf Clover Quality Model for Senior Service Sector* confirms the above observations and adds that in the EU there are three types of social care systems (AMU Nordjylland 2009: 10–17). The social–democratic regimes are characterised by a variety of services, typically tax prepaid; the mixed model in the corporatist and liberal regimes have both public and private responsibility but the recruitment

Table 4. Selected cases of regional models of the silver economy in the countries of the European Union

Welfare systems		Administrative status	Strategic focus	Policy delivery	Key issues
Liberal	North-West (England, UK)	Non-elected government bodies, development agencies and voluntary organisations	Raising awareness of ageing in regional organisations and development strategies; focus on engaging older people; productive ageing; redesigning communities	Mainly through partnership with regional-level organisations but increasing focus on inter-regional and sub-regional coordination	Combines mainstreaming and awareness-raising exercises; partnership has been a crucial principle in developing regional responses to ageing; benefits of decentralisation are apparent, but coordination across administrative levels is a challenge
Liberal	Wales (UK)	Elected assembly with limited legislative powers	Citizenship/ valuing older people; developing older people's capacity to continue to work; integrated care for older people	A combination of regional and municipal bodies, based on voluntary agreement and consensus on the ageing challenge	Role of devolution; focus on citizenship; combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches; extended partnership as a challenge to coordination, particularly with the private sector
Social-democratic	Kainuu (Finland)	Elected regional board with limited legislative powers	Welfare provision; limited labour market initiatives	A combination of regional and municipal bodies, based on	Regionalisation as a solution for services for older people in sparsely populated areas; role

Table 4 (Continued)

Welfare systems		Administrative status	Strategic focus	Policy delivery	Key issues
				voluntary agreement and consensus on ageing challenge	of ICTs; coordination between national and regional levels is challenging
Corporative	Nordrhein-Westfalen (Germany)	Elected land parliament with legislative powers	Labour market initiatives; post-retirement strategy (silver economy)	Mainly through implementation of land policies by government agencies	Strong focus on coordinated labour market issues and with barriers such as an ageist culture in business and inflexibility of older workers; an innovative silver economy initiative to strengthen markets for products and services for older people but may be limited to regions with relatively wealthy senior citizens
Corporative	Noord-Brabant (The Netherlands)	Elected assembly with legislative powers	Raising awareness of ageing and mainstreaming issue into regional and municipal policies	Publicity conducted by region but also with pilot projects involving	Demonstrates the value of awareness-raising exercises; political commitment and the participation of

Table 4 (Continued)

Welfare systems		Administrative status	Strategic focus	Policy delivery	Key issues
Familistic	Emilia-Romagna (Italy)	Elected assembly with limited legislative powers	Mainstreaming ageing throughout regional policy; focus on welfare provision and care	the region, municipal governments and voluntary associations on a voluntary basis Regional framework document implemented in partnership with municipalities	motivated individuals important Innovative mainstreaming approach; implementation method fosters strategic approaches to ageing amongst municipalities, extends co-financing opportunities; strong steer needed from the region to avoid fragmentation
In Transition	Malopolska (Poland)	Proposition of establishing Marshal's Representative on the implementation	Investments such as modernisation of hospitals, spas, old housing resources; development of	Publicity conducted by region and stakeholders; independent decisions at the local level	Inform local policy makers on the phenomenon of ageing; reinforce the regional cooperation; creation of consultation councils on the silver

Table 4 (Continued)

Welfare systems	Administrative status	Strategic focus	Policy delivery	Key issues
	of the silver economy	transport and communication; development of the "Senior Health Centre" network; creating healthy cities		economy; create reporting system; promotion of the silver economy concept abroad in centres of Polish immigrants

Source: Own elaboration based on Ferry et al. 2006: ix; Golinowska 2011.

and education of carers are left to the free-market forces; and in the familistic and transition regimes, the minor focus is on the welfare system.

A central problem of care services in nearly all regions of the EU is the black labour market, which does not meet any legal standards of personnel training. The regions in liberal, social–democratic and corporative regimes tend to focus on fostering independent living, home care services, support services at home and the use of ICTs. Job profiles in the care field in these countries tend to mix traditional, systematic and professional tasks. The regions in familistic and transition regimes tend to focus on social networks, informal care and dividing the help and care tasks into different job profiles.

Conclusions

This article focuses on the possibility of using the AAI to explain the emerging differentiation of models of the silver economy in the EU countries. It presents the basic theoretical concepts associated with the silver economy and the implementation of the UN and the EU strategies for an ageing population. It also presents comparisons of the AAI to different clustering of countries and selected findings from case studies of regional models of the silver economies.

The conducted analysis allows us to formulate at least four practical recommendations for institutions engaged in ageing policy in the EU. First, further promotion of the silver economy in association with the creative economy as well as social and solidarity economy (Klimczuk 2015). Each of these economic systems supports and uses different forms of older people's capital. Respectively, the human capital corresponds to the silver economy, the cultural capital and the creative capital correspond to the creative economy and the social capital corresponds to the social and solidarity economy. However, none of these systems alone can meet the needs of ageing populations and so far only the silver economy was seen as related to challenges of ageing populations.

Second, the integration between mentioned economic systems may generate various socio-economic benefits such as technological innovation and social innovation for ageing societies (cf. O'Sullivan et al. 2010). Recent examples of such innovations include grants for relocation in Singapore so

that children can live near older parents and help them; age-friendly environments including specially designed benches and outdoor gyms for seniors available in various cities in the EU; smart mobile applications including software integrated into the operation and usage of smart homes and telehealth services; self-help groups for household repairs, exchange systems and time banks, such as “care tickets” in Japan; and Silver Human Resources Centres also in Japan that offer temporary jobs for older workers.

Third, the AAI may be extended by indicators on age discrimination, intergenerational relationships, acceptance of new technologies, R&D in the field of ageing and patterns of consumption. The use of such indicators will allow further analysis of the silver economy and its variety including the development and implementation of smart specialisation strategies at the regional level.

Fourth, there is a need to foster the development of institutions specialising in the silver economy and their clusters (cf. Enste et al. 2008). As shown by the example of the “SEN@ER” network, the easy access of small- and medium-sized enterprises to experts in the field of ageing is crucial to identify potential business partners and establishment of offers to older consumers as well as to support and use the potential of older workers by the implementation of age management.

We can also propose at least six directions for further research: in-depth analysis of regional models of the silver economy, including their smart specialisation; the analysis of the silver economy in culturally diverse regions and shrinking regions; studies of migration policies and programmes related to older migrants; studies of the silver economy in the context of variety of mixed economies of welfare in the EU; studies of technology transfer and social innovation in the field of ageing; and examination of the development of potential international standards in the silver economy.

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Corresponding Author

Andrzej Klimczuk, Warsaw School of Economics, Aleja Niepodleglosci 162, 02-554 Warsaw, Poland. Email: klimczukandrzej@gmail.com

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“Equally mixed”: artistic representations of old love

By AMIR COHEN-SHALEV¹ & ESTHER-LEE MARCUS²

Abstract

Michael Haneke’s (2012) film *Amour* is used as a point of departure for discussing a spectrum of artistic representations of “old love,” a phenomenon that is still little understood. While most critics have focused on euthanasia when referring to the film’s dramatic climax, its late-life perspective of love has been marginalized. Analyzing *Amour*, as well as other recent cinematic and poetic texts, we challenge the widespread midlife and ageist perception of “April love,” contrasting it with different views from within old love. Our reading of *Amour* illustrates the effects of intense, all-encompassing, and sealed intimacy in advanced old age and sheds light on potential consequences it may have on the decisions and lives of the people involved. We conclude by discussing how certain forms of love, seen from within, unfold in tandem with age or life phases that affect the pace, emotional, and interpersonal nature of the partnership.

Keywords: aging in film, intergenerational relationships, long-term marriage, love in old age, marital relationships.

¹ Amir Cohen-Shalev, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Emek Yezreel, Israel

² Esther-Lee Marcus, Geriatric Division, Herzog Hospital, Jerusalem, Israel and Faculty of Medicine, Hadassah-Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

Only love and time, when reconciled,
permit us to see other beings
in their enigmatic, complex essence,
unfolding slowly and certainly, like a new settlement.
(Adam Zagajewski, "Epithalamium," *Eternal Enemies*, Poems, 2008:88)

Against all this [massive loss of memory], I stand astonished, celebrating the sensation that she lives the love between us to the fullest... marveling at the power of love to overcome even that monster encircling her round and round, the monster that tears her away from all those closest to her; [from all] except one.
(Amnon Shamosh, 85-year-old writer, "Good Morning Alzheimer," *Yediot Acharonot*, June 6, 2014 [Hebrew].)

Preface

Long-lasting love has recently moved center stage. A recent *New York Times* article on the subject (Brody 2013) appeared on their list of the 20 most-read stories of the year, ahead of stories on the conflicts in Iraq or the Middle East. After decades of suspicion and doubt concerning the possibility of meaningful long-lasting marriage, its triumph has recently captured more public and academic attention. Underlying the renewed interest in enduring marital partnership is, of course, a demographic phenomenon. As life expectancy is extending, it stands to reason that more people experience longer-lasting love relationships.

Three years after its premiere, Michael Haneke's (2012) film *Amour* is still widely and hotly debated in various academic, as well as public, circles. Judging by the sheer number of responses, reviews, academic articles, position papers, and commentaries it has inspired, it is certainly an important and timely film that epitomizes the steady cultural interest in matters pertaining to age and aging. The fact that it has attracted so much attention and great controversy is surprising; as a film about old age, it focuses on a topic unlikely to attract the attention of the wide movie-going public. Offering a new reading of *Amour* and its surrounding controversy, we use it here as a point of departure for discussing a spectrum of artistic representations of love in old age. The linkage between old age and films provides a fascinating yet still largely uncharted territory in humanistic gerontology (Cohen-Shalev 2009). Popular films continue to provide a distorted picture of age and gender that is dominated by a narrative of decline and disability (Chivers 2011). Similarly in gerontology, research on

late-life relationships is mostly geared toward the practical aspects of caregiving (Ask et al. 2014; Evans & Lee 2014; Godwin et al. 2013). Films like *Amour*, in contrast, can open up new understandings of old-age *coupledom* – that is, the intrapsychic, deeply felt though ineffable aspects of the sentiment generally referred to as *love*. Indeed, we are interested here in artistic representations that narrate anti-ageist counter-stories with the power to “let us see how older people exceed the limitations imposed on them” (Gravagne 2013). This preliminary examination of the artistic depiction of old love will thus also chart a dialectical cultural space between the constraints of decline and the perpetual possibilities of becoming in old age.

Amour is the story of Anne and Georges, an upper middle-class Parisian couple, retired musicians, whose close marital intimacy is disrupted when Anne suffers a stroke that leaves her partially paralyzed, followed by a second stroke, even more severe and debilitating than the first. Released from the hospital after her first stroke, before the second stroke, Anne extracts a promise from Georges that he will never re-hospitalize her. Faithful to his promise (even though he had hired someone to come in to help care for Anne before and also accepted the occasional help of a neighbor), he fires the helper and cares for her on his own, even after the catastrophic second stroke, refusing even their daughter’s somewhat tenuous offers of assistance. Inevitable deterioration ends in what seems, at least initially, a spontaneous act of violence, with Georges smothering Anne with a pillow, suffocating her to death. It is this act that stirred much controversy.

The scope and intensity of this controversy is impressive and extensive, encompassing opinions from “if it’s murder it can’t be love” (e.g. Gullette 2013, 2014) to “if it’s love it must be murder” (Grundmann 2012) and representing a wide variety of disciplines from philosophy to medicine and nursing, film studies and palliative medicine, theology and psychoanalysis. Almost every aspect of this act has been analyzed, dissected, and evaluated (Bosch 2013; Drake & Drake 2014; Gronstad 2013; O’Neill 2012; Ringstrom 2014; Rose & Rose 2012; Scalabrino 2013; Quinodoz 2014; Wijdicks 2013). Given the cumulative volume and epistemological breadth of the responses, it would seem there is little more to add. Yet, the opposite is true; as *Amour* is a film of the highest artistic merit (the only aspect of

the work about which there is consensus), it sustains, even demands, continued discussion, debate, and elucidation. Indeed, it is the immanent inexhaustibility of *Amour* that provides us with one justification for yet another search for meaning in, and through, this difficult and challenging cinematic text. Another reason for plowing this already over-trodden field is connected to the late-life perspective it offers, a late-life perspective that has been wholly marginalized by the dominant discourse that has focused on the issue of euthanasia that constitutes the film's dramatic climax.

Thus, our reading of *Amour* departs from the central debate the film has provoked and focuses elsewhere. We believe that *Amour* is not primarily concerned with depicting the trials and tribulations of caregiving to the frail elderly, but rather with representing the end result of a delicate, lengthy, and subterranean process of the formation of a joint, cohesive, indivisible dual self, as may evolve after decades of marital intimacy. We propose reading *Amour* as a tale of love unconventionally defined; we argue that *Amour* is a pioneering, experimental cinematic examination of the rarely explored territory of long-lasting love, love that carries two people across several decades well into the couple's old age. There is as yet no exact word in the English language, nor to the best of our knowledge in other languages, for this type of love. It appears that the love of old age has yet to be encoded in cultural parlance. Thus, our reading of *Amour* takes advantage of the metaphorical language of film and poetry in order to provide a preliminary delineation of this concept of old love, shared and experienced in some, though certainly not all, long-lasting relationships, late into the couple's lives. While some may criticize the term *old love* as implying something negative, this is not our intention. The stigma is in the eyes of the beholder. Seeing old love as derogatory is akin to seeing old age as negative. Old love may be seen from the outside as connoting something worn out and without potential for change. Positively or negatively considered, a generalizing concept of old/late love (in the singular) is inevitably ageist. There are as many kinds of late love as there are "late styles" (Hutcheon & Hutcheon 2012).

While the close marital relationship of Anne and Georges, the octogenarian couple of *Amour*, played by the 85-year-old Emmanuelle Riva and the 82-year-old Jean-Louis Trintignant, is ubiquitously noted and

praised by virtually all writers and critics of the film, the nature of their love is either taken for granted or addressed in only a cursory manner. We argue that this film is only superficially about euthanasia; it is much more an exploration of a particular form of love that has hitherto been under-researched and little understood. It is because of the film's representation of this old-age love that it should occupy humanistic gerontology discourse.

April Love: A Many-Splendored, but Fleeting, Thing

Some time ago, one of us witnessed an incident where an elderly couple came into our neighborhood bookstore. While the man stood by the counter having a casual conversation with the owner, his wife was surveying a nearby shelf, with her back to him, but within hearing distance. When the proprietor made a comment regarding the couple's apparent good health, husband and wife spontaneously made a "knock on wood" gesture, which, by no prior design had the exact same rhythm and tempo, sounding like two well-practiced musicians playing a theme in perfect unison with no eye contact at all. The owner's response was "this is what happens when two people have been married for ages." The implications of the owner's response were that two individuals in long-lasting couples become more and more alike and, second, that this "alike-ness" is singularly a result of a full, long-lasting love relationship.

The bookstore owner's comment cannot be considered uncommon; that responses, behaviors, attitudes, and even outside appearances seem to grow more and more alike in direct correlation to shared time together is a phenomenon that has often been noted in popular circles. However, the implications of this phenomenon have rarely been explored from the perspective of love that covers an entire life span. Indeed, we are faced with a phenomenon, peculiar to long-lasting relationships, that represents a subtle but momentous process of identity de-differentiation. The reason this identity transformation has been accorded little attention in past decades is due to lack of interest in this matter relating to older people (Askham 1995); it is also related to Western culture's characteristic emphasis on the concept of individuation as a major regulating factor in lifelong ego or self-development.

“Love is a many-splendored thing,”¹ stated a popular song written for the 1955 movie of the same name (winning an Academy Award for Best Original Song), becoming very popular thereafter and being used in numerous films and a television series of that name. What this song most importantly captures comes not in the opening line quoted above, but with the line that follows: “It’s the April rose that only grows in the early spring.” The likening of love to a flower, a rose in particular, is of course a centuries-old trope, but this line speaks of an added dimension in explicitly specifying the likeness not to any rose but to a rose in early spring, which, translated to the seasons of human life, means young adulthood.

Indeed, traditional Western concepts of love are heavily colored by a perception of it as the sole province of youth; youth is an aspect assumed intrinsic to our collective definition of love. Thus, Georges’ comment to Anne after the concert about the way she looked – “You look lovely tonight” – is, by default, interpreted as a romantic, youthful expression. Yet, in a film that is filled with alternating shot and reverse-shot of facial close-ups, an atypical technique for Haneke, it is significant that Georges’ compliment is delivered in a long shot of him in the corridor of the couples’ apartment, facing the room where Anne stands, invisible to the camera. The *mise-en-scène* is never arbitrary with Haneke; neither is the fact that it is the apartment that is foregrounded in this shot, the very space that defines the relationship and is inseparable from it throughout. Significant also is Anne’s bemused response – “what’s gotten into you” – which can be understood as coy, slightly embarrassed, but alternatively can be taken at face value as her expression of surprise at his introducing a behavioral pattern from a former phase of the couple’s life, one that, while obviously flattering, is at the same time foreign, in the sense that it is no longer the *raison d’être* for their present relationship. Thus, we agree with Grundmann (2012) that *Amour* is a bold and rare cinematic exploration of the very concept of love – love that is not the proverbial early adulthood love, but rather a kind of love that, in our day and age, is becoming less rare.

¹ Lyrics by Sammy Fain and music by Paul Francis Webster.

We do not argue that old love is different in some fundamental and essential way from young love. It might be better to assert that it often expresses itself differently, sometimes in response to historical and cultural contexts, which we elaborate on later. A major attribute of aged love as exemplified in Haneke's *Amour* is its complex and unexpected attitude toward the past. When Anne, paralyzed but still alert, looks at the couple's photo album, rather than mourn or idealize the past, her response is: "It's beautiful, this long life." The film thus resists the idea that old love is disconnected from the youthful past; it suggests that the power of love depends on the ability to connect present, past, and future rather than relinquish these connections as merely nostalgic. Indeed, Georges' actions are loving, since they adhere to a past conception of love, of shared and sealed intimacy, that he is struggling to retain. His old love is a negotiation between decline and becoming.

April Love Approaching September: *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*

Robert Guediguian's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (2011) pivots on the vicissitudes of April love into late midlife. Its title is taken from a popular romantic French hit from the mid-1960s. The film story is the tale of a middle-aged, long-wedded couple, living in Marseille, for whom this song is associated with their own romantic youthful adventure.

The narrative premise of this film is a sentimental one: the couple, Michel and Marie-Claire, celebrating 30 years of marriage, is given a special gift from their adult children and friends – a trip to Mount Kilimanjaro. This is a trip they have been dreaming of since their courtship days, with the aforementioned popular song the inspiration for that dream. The plot of the film follows Michel, a trade unionist, who chooses not to take his name off the company's to-be-fired list, as he could, in order to spare his fellow workers from being let go during a company downsizing. In the same period, Michel's home is broken into and his and his wife's tickets and money for their anniversary trip to Mount Kilimanjaro stolen. Through random chance, Michel discovers the identity of one of the perpetrators, a young worker who was on the same downsizing list as himself, and he gets him arrested. However, both Michel and his wife find themselves troubled by this seeming "justice" once they understand the culprit's motives and the larger consequences of their revenge.

This synopsis captures the narrative axis of the film as a social drama of conscience. However, parallel to the themes of social responsibility, social justice, and human solidarity is a theme that lifts the narrative from the ideological arena and imbues it with an aspect of credibility that surely saves it from didactic moralization. This parallel narrative involves the portrayal of a long-lasting marriage, on the way to aged love. Corresponding to the social solidarity the film represents, there is another, more intimate solidarity portrayed in the film – one couple's solidarity. It is the amalgamation of the two parallel solidarities that endows this basically mainstream, feel-good cultural product with an added validity, relevance, and credibility.

For Michel, what is in fact early retirement rather than unemployment is less an economic issue – as he is basically secure financially – and more a manifestation of his imminent aging, carrying the hazards of an existential vacuum, as well as threatening his self-image as provider and head of a family. His wife, Marie-Claire, is supportive and cooperative, but unyielding when it comes to confronting Michel as he succumbs to the temptation of self-pity. Returning from her work as a caregiver for an elderly woman, Marie-Claire finds her husband in a semi-depressed mood, complaining about a general indifference and a lack of energy. The ensuing brief scene, early in the narrative, is telling, as it reveals the interplay between confrontation and insight in the evolution of late love:

Marie-Claire: You are like all men, weak.²

Michel (with angered astonishment): What are you saying?

Marie-Claire: Now that you're not working, and you've got time to think all day, you realize you are not Jaures, or Superman, [you're] just an old man who has gone into early retirement. You've lost the power that your status had given you, and you're back to being a regular man facing his limitations, and this you cannot bear.

Michel (anger increasing, approaches her almost ominously): What's with you?! (Changing tone to doubtful questioning) Do you really believe what you're saying?

Marie-Claire (softly smiling): Not all...not all...

While the couple prepares to work out their problems, their now-adult children, themselves young parents, are definitely ill at ease with the

² Authors' translation from the French.

new status of their father. The new situation elicits awkwardness and embarrassment: "He looks depressed... it's hard for me to see him like this..." When Marie-Claire suggests that Michel can profit from the situation and amuse himself, the daughter's response is "How can he be happy, Dad is old, and who cares for old people?" to which Marie-Claire retorts in anger, "Stop talking like that. Are you out of your mind?"

The ensuing developments in the narrative vindicate the older couple's capacity for the joint handling of difficult circumstances, even as it further reveals their offspring's weaknesses. Thus, shortly before Marie-Claire and Michel come to their decision to take the burglar's children into their custody, a scene between Marie-Claire and her daughter Flo unfolds. Flo is surprised to find her mother sitting alone in a café, drinking her favorite Metaxa, and is also concerned about her own relationship with her husband, Jeannot. The exchange unfolds as follows:

Flo: What are you doing here?
Marie-Claire: Drinking. What would you like to drink?
Flo: What's this, alcohol?
Marie-Claire: It's Metaxa. It does me good.
Flo: Are you all right?
Marie-Claire: You know, for fifty years I never went into a bar on my own, and I like it. I go in, get seated, having a small chat with the waiter...
Flo: I think Jeannot found someone in Bordeaux...
Marie-Claire: Maybe you'll have Marie Brizard instead of chocolate?
Flo: What are we going to do, Mama?
Marie-Claire: About what?
Flo: If he found someone...
Marie-Claire: It's not that serious.
Flo: How much have you drunk?
Marie-Claire: Two. I always have two. This is right for me. How do you know? He didn't tell you, did he?
Flo: I can see it.
Marie-Claire: This is different. [pause] It's your life. You have to face it. I think that if he works away from home for a long while you have to go with him.
Flo: I can't, I'm working.
Marie-Claire: This is *your* life. You have to decide.

For a close-knit family, as this family is represented from the film's onset, this scene is an anomaly. The conversation manifests a peculiar incongruity between the two generations of mother and daughter.

This incongruity is mutual: the daughter is blatantly critical of her mother's late freedom, her self-sufficient apparent well-being, which she ignorantly attributes to alcohol, critical also of her mother's light-hearted, matter-of-fact and emotionally cool approach to her son-in-law's alleged infidelity. Marie-Claire, on the other hand, seems to be taking her maternal role into unexpected territory. Instead of the containment and unconditional supportive role, as her daughter expects, she challenges the younger woman's priorities with her own perceptions of marital love and commitment. Seemingly inattentive to Flo, she deconstructs her maternal role, perhaps pleasantly surprised at her well-earned, experience-based wisdom. Her statement "It's your own life" seals the parental distancing from adult children. Marie-Claire is adamant about not buying into her daughter's emotional demands. She is prepared to give advice; she is not prepared to give unconditional sympathy. Interestingly, her advice preempts any moral consideration; that is, the son-in-law's alleged infidelity is of no relevance in her scheme of marital relationship. What does matter is an unconditional solidarity and togetherness, a solidarity and togetherness which she knows from her own life with her husband.

This café conversation prepares the ground for a later confrontation between parents and children. When the parents take the robber's two children into their care, their decision is met with indignation on the part of their adult offspring, fearing the attention they have gotten used to receiving will go to the newly adopted strangers. In this scene, the parents face up to the resentment of both their children, firmly holding their ground, immune to manipulation and in general appearing much more adjusted than their children in their capacity to negotiate complex and contradictory emotions, a capacity the film convincingly presents as a feat of hard-earned marital harmony.

September Love and the Achievement of Coupledome: *Another Year*

A number of recent films have taken up the challenge of representing the world of old people in general and the realities of marital relationships over time in particular. One such example is Mike Leigh's (2010) film

Another Year, which portrays Tom and Gerri, a North London couple who have been happily married for years. Leigh's Tom and Gerri, in their sixties, are younger than Haneke's Anne and Georges, but their several decades of marital bonding both define their close-knit relationship and at the same time set them apart from other people in their surroundings. They are sensitive, compassionate, and helpful to their kin and friends – a gallery of lonely people who have not been blessed with satisfying relationships – offering them shelter and caring attention. However, the core of their being is the togetherness they live when the visitors have left, and it is then that their conversation shows how keenly aware they are of their shared existence. The film's scenes of couple togetherness are interspersed through the narrative as scenes of repose and quiet, of wordless understanding, where they both seem to cherish their distinctiveness from others. What seems to contribute to their intimacy is the growing awareness of aging and death. During bedtime reading, Tom makes a passing reference to his younger self's dislike of the subject of history in school, to which Gerri responds by casually remarking, "We'll be history sometime."

Indeed, it is the sadness of leave-taking on the horizon that seems to endow their togetherness with a wistfully poignant significance. With this sadness in the air, it would be inappropriate to say that Tom and Gerri "celebrate" their togetherness, since their joy is subdued and is mildly incongruent with "classical" romance in being less oriented to the future and more toward the cycle of the seasons. The very title of the film, *Another Year*, signifies a particular sense of time, combining ages and seasons. Indeed, the film is structured around the four seasons, yet not in the usual sense of the cyclical repetition of nature and its symbolic signification for human life (an example of this represented in Kim Ki-duk's 2003 film *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter . . . and Spring*). The four seasons here function more as an afterthought regarding the repetitive, yet accumulative, nature of a marriage. (An early scene has Gerri worried about their son being unattached, while in later seasons he brings home a girlfriend, a gesture toward the continuation offered by the next generation.) *Another Year* has as its central trope the weariness of repetition and the quiet, singularly undramatic consolation of "ripe old marriage."

Aged Love as an Equal Mixture: Ruebner's Old Love

The centrifugal movement toward the center of matrimonial existence is further explored in several poems written at the age of 88 by Tuvia Ruebner, a Slovak-born Israeli poet. At the center of Ruebner's most recent collection, *Achronim* ("last ones"), stands a series of poems focusing on his 60-year marriage. The first one's title is a quotation from John Donne and reads as follows:

Whatever Dies, Was Not Mixed Equally

What more
might I say to you
what
say
any more, even
in a whisper
all this noise
of words
while
we are
the two of us
me in you
you in me
Infolded.³

(Ruebner, *Achronim* 2013: 21)

In the Hebrew original, the final word of the poem – *megulgalim*, here rendered as "infolded" – connotes also the metaphysical concept of reincarnation. Since the couple in the poem is intertwined, even reincarnated as one, there is little use in words, and there is nothing "more" to add to the interlocking of identities, no rhyme or reason necessary to establish this interconnectedness, shaped, as it were, in the very visual aspect of the poem, a type of spiral, or the double helix of a joint psychic DNA.

The next poem in Ruebner's mini-cycle of aged love poems has the title *Ma'ariv* ("evening prayer" or just "evening"):

³ The first three Ruebner poems were translated by Rachel Tzvia Back.

Evening

All your beauty inward and shining
From your face, enwrapping your wrinkles, extolling in song.
In the forest of your hair a cave has been found –
Twilight glow and moving shadows.
The words have grown fewer and my hearing is weak.
From time to time, a small sigh.
Your height mine too have moved closer to the ground.
Not a dream of youth.
Love of old age.
(Ruebner, *Achronim* 2013: 22)

Rather than telling the reader what love of old age is, Ruebner is more explicit about what it is not: it is not the dream of youth. This poem adds to the wordlessness of the previous one a sense of the real, and its reality of old-age love is unromantic. The physical uprightness of the young body becomes a dream, an illusion. The physical form of this reality gets smaller, moves toward the ground, even as a spiritual essence grows – beauty radiating from within, words becoming sighs, and wrinkles emitting light. It is in the alternation between traditional lyrical vocabulary (“beauty,” “shining,” “extolling in song”) and their transformation through aging that the fugitive meaning of old-age love can be accessed and contemplated. Indeed, it is the contemplation of long-lived love that is Ruebner’s invaluable contribution to the discourse of love and partnership during the last phase of life.

The theme of love of old age juxtaposed with its earlier, youthful love and the gradual, time-consuming, age-related transformations from early to late love are further defined in the next poem.

An 88-Year-Old Man Says to an 80-Year-Old Woman upon Waking

Before I saw you I didn’t dream of you
When you came you didn’t capture my eye
But now with you lying beside me I am home
And without you I am not
Am not I.
(Reubner, *Achronim* 2013: 23)

This poem takes a further step toward severing old-age love from youthful romantic love. Indeed, this poem introduces a fear of old-age love

that is particularly pertinent to any moral discussion of euthanasia/killing in *Amour*: the ubiquitous sensation of impending abandonment through death. In the words of French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (quoted in Scalabrino 2013:10), "it is by the possibility of abandonment that one knows the possibility, inverted or lost, of love." A parallel idea is forcefully expressed in Derrida's (1995) *The Gift of Death*, where he says that our awareness of mortality is the only thing that gives meaning to our lives. The ultimate gift is the gift of death – death as a mark of our singularity, which cannot be substituted, and you cannot take another's dying from them even if you can die for them in some particular affair (Derrida 1995: 42). Death is important as a condition of our responsibility: "only death, or rather the apprehension of death can give this irreplaceability, and it is only on the basis of it that one can speak of a responsible subject, of the soul of a conscience of self, of myself, etc." (Derrida 1995: 51).

Ruebner's version, and vision, of old love is not linked to momentary, ecstatic consummation, the vegetable growth of Andrew Marvell in "To His Coy Mistress," or the blossom-becoming-wilted flowering, neither to its opposite, the promised land of eternity, but to love evolving according to its own logic. This growth model provides its own mythology. Contrary to the initial fixed quantity diminishing with chronological advance, Ruebner in this poem subverts and inverts the traditional terms of measuring love. Thus, long-lived love is not judged *vis-à-vis* its initial state, and, perhaps most importantly, is independent in its life span course from sexual attraction. Against "love at first sight," the poem offers the notion of "love at last sight." Its sensuality, though, is not lessened but rather transformed, as the next, and last, poem in the Ruebner series exemplifies.

To Come into Your Shadow

To come into your shadow, to be covered by it,
To come under your roof, to come
Under your arch, as if I had never come
Before.
What a wonderful moment of forgetfulness
A sublime fleeting moment of being-not-being,
So much happiness, so much happiness
For a fleeting moment, some dream that
Even a dream it wasn't.
(Ruebner, *Achronim* 24)

The picture of late-life love that emerges from these poems, written of course from first-hand experience, has no place for nostalgia, romantic or otherwise. On the contrary, it implicitly challenges, even overturns, youthful romantically charged models of love. Thus, the metaphor of the dream is offered and then rejected, in favor of a state of mind that is neither dream nor reality; this might be considered a liminally located love, offering a supreme, fleeting moment of "being-non-being," drawing from the now-palpable, actual proximity of the state of non-being through biological death.

Ruebner's line "without you I'm not I" is the old-age equivalent of April love's "Can't live without you." However, there is a difference between the latter's "I don't have a life without you" and the former's "I don't have an existence/identity outside of us." The first suggests dependency, while the latter, late-life version suggests a homogenized identity, "equally mixed." In another poem titled "Sitting Across From You," from a collection published shortly before *Last Ones*, Ruebner (*Contradictory Poems* 2011: 11) expresses a difficulty in sitting *across* from his wife, as *across* denotes separation, while all these old love poems clearly imply a being of one within the other, using images of cyclical inclusion, of being wrapped, rolled, enveloped, in one another, not an inter-subjectivity but an inner-subjectivity.

Back to Haneke's Old Love: *Amour*

The idea that killing someone can preserve the unity of a love relationship is clearly not only associated with old age, as all the variations on the theme of Romeo and Juliet illustrate. However, in *Amour* this theme is given another distinct old-age touch. Georges' refusal to recruit help puts him in a position of caregiver, changing his role from a loving partner to a person supplying services to another. However, Georges in the role of a caregiver is a *false I*; it is a false I because it contradicts the fused, couple identity Georges and Anne have created together. This is not to say that being a lover and being a caregiver have to be separate identities. Giving care, as noted in the concepts of care as reciprocity and person-centered care, can also be an integral part of love, especially of long-lasting love, which, by its very nature, has already had to adapt to decades of change.

However, for Georges, the growing emphasis on care becomes progressively more difficult to maintain, until he decides to put an end to the impersonation and to return, not to the role of lover (as Grundmann [2012] suggests) but to the shared being, whose only way to continue is to become a shared non-being.

The film supports the notion of identity fusion from the start: the couple is wrapped in their own space, separated from their environment, even as they sit among a crowd of listeners in the concert hall scene, or travel a crowded bus on the way home from the concert. This sealed intimacy is established from the very first image of the film wherein firemen break into the sealed-off apartment in order to enter it. The couple's literal and figurative shared space, sealed off from the world already at the narrative's beginning, becomes more so as Anne's condition worsens. What seems to some commentators as a growing, elective isolation can be also seen as a defense against invasions that puts their shared identity in danger. Communal and social involvement do not necessarily threaten the solidity and stability of de-differentiation in mature love – but they appear to be taken as such a threat in *Amour*. Thus, professional care, medical consultation, even overtures from family and neighbors are not perceived (by Georges as well as Anne) as helpful offers but rather as unwelcome, feared intrusions that are therefore rejected.

The use of framing techniques provides a central organizing motif and metaphor in Haneke's exploration of old love. The director's meticulous construction of the film's frames has been noticed by many critics (e.g. Grundmann 2012; Stewart 2013). This emphasis is more than a testimony to the director's outstanding talent; it also defines the space within which old love takes place. Haneke frames the narrative within the walls of the couple's apartment, locks the couple within the confines of this space, and locks the external world out of it. Framing is a physical, palpable existential necessity for Anne and Georges. Early in the narrative, when the couple comes back to the flat from the concert and discovers an attempted break-in, Anne tells her husband about a burglary in a neighboring flat, where the paintings were cut out of their frames. Her recounting of the burglary, told in a matter-of-fact, emotionally flat manner, barely conceals her anxiety at being de-framed, left without the frame that holds the picture together, literally as well as metaphorically.

Much later in the story, the paintings in Anne and Georges' apartment are taken out of frame, "burglarized" as it were, by the brutal intrusion of the first, then the second stroke. Just after Georges slaps Anne's face for refusing to be fed, and just before he suffocates her, Haneke inserts a sequence of shots of several paintings in various rooms of the apartment, now stripped of their frames, as if the threat of un-framing in the early scene has now been actualized. It is not clear, and left to the viewer's guesswork, who is behind the un-framing, but it is clear that tearing the picture out of its frame anticipates the actual termination of the now-one life and one identity of Anne and Georges. Their picture has been taken off the walls, and it can only be reframed, as it were, with an equally unsettling act – the act of framing Anne's body with flowers, as it is found by the firemen in the first scene.

Haneke offers a perspective so devoid of fantasy, so barrenly realistic, that the appearance of quasi-fantasy at the film's end has baffled critics and viewers alike. The mystical reappearance of the healthy figure of Anne before Georges' eyes has been attributed to Haneke's late style (Grundmann 2012), yet "lateness" (Cohen-Shalev 2002; Hutcheon & Hutcheon 2012; Said 2006) is rarely characterized by comforting resolution, proposing instead troubling, fragmented, and irresolvable denouements. Other commentators, from the social and medical professions, regard the phantasmic appearance following the act of killing as a part of Georges' pathology (Gullette 2014), or caregiver overstrain (O'Neill 2012).

However, reading the film (and the act of killing/euthanasia in particular) as an outcome and expression of old love, the apparition may be viewed as the mind's act of preservation of hermetic coupledom. The threat of cessation of lifetime coupledom that Anne's condition posed drove Georges to forego his responsibility as caregiver and to assume the responsibility for the intactness of the union, the guard of aged coupledom. The last scene vindicates that responsibility and symbolically preserves the unity split by fate. It is Haneke's way of expressing the idea that runs throughout the film, that what matters is the profound love, the old love of Anne and Georges.

The state of hermetic union, being a psychological attribute of aged love, also has far-reaching consequences for intergenerational relations. Cinema has its complicated, frequently culturally subconscious ways of exposing

socially sanctioned secrets. In his rejection of mainstream commercialism, Haneke pushes to the extreme what several recent films have only hinted at, which is the exclusion of adult children from the parental aged love unit. In *Amour*, Eva, the estranged daughter, comes home and is received almost as an intruder. It is true that her demeanor is officious, harsh, and selfish and that she proceeds with brute efficiency in all she does, yet she has the good intentions of trying to ameliorate the suffering she sees. However Georges will have none of this and resists allowing Eva to have any contact with Anne. Thus, the “blame” for the tension between and estrangement from each other – father from daughter, daughter from father – is shared. What *Amour* seems to be saying is that the adult children of long-lasting married couples, couples whose togetherness has evolved to the state of hermetic unity, stand to face an impassable barrier when attempting to “break through” and participate in situations that involve intimacy.

Concluding Comments

Gerontology has so far been slow in responding to the cultural need of understanding long-lasting love in old age. The ego development theory of Erik Erikson defines *love* as the positive basic ego strength resulting from a surplus of experience of intimacy over isolation in the sixth stage of development, corresponding ontogenetically with early adulthood (Erikson 1994). Although Erikson argues that each and every developmental dilemma in his epigenetic model undergoes transformations across the life cycle, the theory does not explicitly specify these transformations and modifications in late life. Categorizations of love beyond early adulthood have yet to be formulated, since there seems to be a variety of mature or late-life love, and they all may show different trajectories. Love in old age can be seen stereotypically, from without, as a thin reflection of “young love.” Popularly disseminated by various cultural texts (e.g. film, television, and literature), we encounter the possibility of falling in love in old age as a means of late or belated self-fulfillment, an overdue compensatory correction for missed opportunities or as a means of fighting late-life loneliness (e.g. *Last Chance Harvey* [Hopkins 2008]). However, a “second time around” love relationship is not the same as late romance in an old-age home, or the rekindling of a previous love relationship in old age

(e.g. *Quartet* [Hoffman & Harwood 2012], *Innocence* [Cox 2000]). Such forms of love, seen from within, unfold in tandem with age or life phases that affect the pace, emotional, and interpersonal nature of the partnership. In this study we focused on artistic representations of old love as opening a window into the subjective perception and experience of this phenomenon from within, in contrast to its social stereotyping from without.

When it does endure, the April love model reiterates the midlife anti-aging myth of being “forever young.” This is a postmodern variation of the mind–body duality: the body ages but the soul, in the form of disembodied love, remains intact. Aged love, on the other hand, as seen from the elderly’s point of view in *Amour, Another Year*, and, to some extent, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, is an evolving system, ongoing, renewing itself the older it becomes. It is not forever young but constantly aging, an acquired synchronicity that slowly and gradually matures.

Is it possible to transfer these proposals into agendas for a developmental science of age-related love? First of all, we need to be critically reflective of how ageist views of April love may spill into scientific studies. In the 1960s, a number of studies reported in this vein an “inevitable” linear decline in marital satisfaction (Blood & Wolfe 1960). Not just the decline model, but also the assumption of stability over time, is in question. The spectrum of old love should remind us that marital relationships can shift between vital and total, utilitarian and corrosive (Carstensen 1992; Levenson et al. 1993; Weishauss & Field 1988). Moreover, some of the aspects characterizing late love may suggest a hybrid construction that transcends earlier dichotomies. Late love might be regarded as one that is not just passionate or tiring, but is jointly stabilizing and satisfying. Late love can also provide us with a more nuanced and complex understanding of so-called convenient or utilitarian relationships. The sealed intimacy described in so many depictions of old love should be interpreted as a new context for constructing relationships in which partners, especially women, see themselves first and foremost as intimate subjects rather than sexual objects (Connidis 2006). Such sealed intimacy, however, may sometimes also be a response to ageist practices that often insist on separation as a solution to many of the difficulties associated with old age, rather than as an integral part of growing older.

On the other hand, *Amour* should also remind us that coupledness may have a steep price when the knot is untied. Gerontological studies have focused on “couplehood” among older adults as conferring everyday interaction and performance advantages, in the form of “compensation through collaboration in cognitive aging” (Dixon 2011). The representations from within of intensive late love should also alert us to the fact that too much identity de-differentiation may be disabling when the dyad becomes dysfunctional. Either way, representations from within of old love provide us with a still-much-needed reminder that we require a more dyadic perspective of how couples cope together, rather than individually (Berg & Upchurch 2007). When couples face a health crisis, the resources of both partners may be activated to maintain or restore a state of homeostasis, as long as this is achievable.

Corresponding Author

Esther-Lee Marcus, Geriatric Division, Herzog Hospital, POB 3900, Jerusalem 91035, Israel. Email: estherlee@herzoghospital.org

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Kathrin Komp & Stina Johansson (eds.) (2015). *Population Ageing from a Lifecourse Perspective. Critical and International Approaches*. Bristol: Policy Press, 258 pp. ISBN 978 1 44731 071 6 (hardcover)

REVIEWED by MARY McCALL*

In an increasingly shrinking global world, students and researchers alike need to expand their thinking on how concepts from different fields can complexify our understanding of social issues, finding similarities, while honoring differences. *Population ageing from a lifecourse perspective: Critical and international perspectives*, edited by Kathrin Komp and Stina Johansson, offers a wide range of international examples to illustrate that demographers need to understand lifecourse perspectives, while lifecourse scholars also need to understand demographic changes so that both groups can plan and implement social policies effectively. Overall, the book makes this argument clear, with examples in different arenas of life that can benefit from this dual and integrated perspective. Fortunately, most of the authors also take a critical perspective by focusing on ideas such as cumulative advantage and disadvantage, and the notion of “de-standardizing” lifecourse models. They also integrate the complexities of gender, class and ethno-racial identity, as well as major demographic changes due to birth rates, death rates and immigration. Some overarching themes throughout

* Mary McCall, Faculty Development, School of Nursing, Samuel Merritt University, Oakland, CA, USA

the 14 chapters include micro-, meso- and macro-level analyses of demographic and lifecourse changes and how they impact each other; the challenges to welfare nations to deal with an increasingly diverse population; the difficulty in creating age-based versus lifecourse social policies; and how a sense of personal agency can influence one's aging experience. I would find this book helpful in an upper division undergraduate or first-year graduate course in a variety of fields to introduce concepts that both demographers and lifecourse scholars use and apply in research.

Chapter 2 on demography identifies the key components to population changes. It is the only chapter in the book that focuses specifically on macro-level demography, while the rest of the book utilizes demographic perspectives on micro-level experiences of individuals and groups. Chapter 3 specifically tackles the connection between demography and lifecourse in an insightful manner by discussing how changing social conditions influence lifecourses and, in turn, how changes in lifecourses have an impact on demographic patterns of society (p. 31).

The next chapters address country-specific topics that constitute a variety of common points, while demonstrating differing cultural contexts for aging societies. In Chapter 4, the authors challenge the notions of "active aging" and "third age," since even "similar" generations – for example, Baby Boomers – will be different in different countries. The authors utilize Allardt's sense of well-being with its four domains: *having* (material things), *loving* (relationships), *being* (self-actualization) and *doing* (productive activity). These are reminiscent of Freud's notions of issues of love and work as fundamental tasks, as well as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. I must point out, though, that the notion of self-actualization, along with autonomy and independence, which is repeatedly pointed to as a lifecourse goal, is a perspective of developed countries. As long as older people in some countries still struggle to cover basic needs, it is questionable whether self-actualization is a universal goal we should all be aiming for.

Chapter 5 gives us insight into gender, work lives and aging in Portugal. The authors have an incisive analysis, claiming that democratization, decolonization and the development of the welfare state post WWII gave those who were in middle age at that time completely different perspectives on work, and planning for old age, than those who were much younger when those major changes occurred. Chapter 6 discusses

cumulative advantages and disadvantages in socioeconomic status in Poland. The authors critique the notion of common “lifecourse regimes” and its potential (non)relevance to non-Western nations given major global changes affecting societies and individuals such as mass migration or natural disasters. Chapter 9 also echoes these critiques in the analysis of the retirement planning of self-employed persons in Germany.

Chapter 7 discusses ethnicity and aging in the United States, identifying Bonilla-Silva’s overarching categories of “white,” “honorary whites” and the “collective black” describing underlying attitudes to others. The history of racism in the United States is addressed, and the difference between individual-level *prejudice* and the meso- and macro-level *racism* and *discrimination* is delineated, all of which impact the lifecourse chances of people of color. Given that the current US minorities will become the majority in 2044, I believe the United States needs to consider the impact of this on many key aspects of social life and social policy. For instance, for many years to come, the majority of older persons will still be white, which will have an effect on care and who gets care from whom. Given the lower ages of most immigrants, they will likely be the care providers.

In Chapter 8, the examination of rural and urban lifecourses in Australia provides insight into the role of geography and its impact on life chances, linking environmental gerontology and lifecourse theory. The notions of “place attachment” and “place identity” are important, especially with regard to the impact that migration and mobility have on older people and their sense of attachment and self. Intergenerational relationships and obligations are also taken up in the book, particularly in Chapter 10, comparing the Netherlands with China. This chapter provides an interesting analysis of the concepts of family solidarity and demographic shifts in both countries, speculating on the kinds of lifecourse changes that might be coming down the road, specifically in terms of grandparenting.

Social care in Sweden is examined in Chapter 11 through interviews with women who have come to Sweden at different ages and from different circumstances in their home country. The interviews reveal perceived difficulties as an immigrant in personal adaptations, in care and support, and in personal and social needs, in contrast to social policies. In Chapter 12, the Swedish labor market is explored, posing the important question of how to adjust working life and conditions to the needs of an aging workforce.

A discussion of how to move from “old-age social policies” to “lifecourse social policies” is presented in Chapter 13. The authors distinguish between policies according to who the target group is, what the mode of intervention is, the time horizon adopted and the consideration of social inequality. Initiatives such as Age-Friendly Cities and Active Ageing initiatives by the World Health Organization illustrate some ways to move to lifecourse policies. However, they also note that these changes are challenged by the nature of politics – where the time horizon is the next election, not someone’s lifespan.

In terms of applications to social policy, Johansson quotes Antonnen in asking “whether universalism might mean uniformity instead of diversity, conformity instead of pluralism and absolutism instead of relativism” (p. 185). Examples from Sweden and Finland (as well as Japan, although not included here) illustrate this set of dilemmas. In all aging countries, we can see a trend toward a shift in focus from either government-based or family-based care, to increasingly diversified care systems, with all nations beginning to expect and provide more private, market-based options. These raise the following questions: 1) how do we maintain services and supports for those who need them, even as these needs become more diversified? and 2) what, if any, is an ideal balance between the roles of the individual, the family and civil society, and the national government in providing services for its older citizens?

Most countries are also moving toward a model of more individual (and thus family) responsibility for old-age care. This most likely will continue to exacerbate lifelong inequities based on class, race/ethnicity, gender and citizenship status. We can see clearly where that can lead if we look at the United States and how its largely market-based care system perpetuates longstanding inequalities in education, health status, health care and longevity.

In their concluding chapter, Johansson and Komp note that, across the chapters, it seems education has been a key factor in providing opportunities for individuals, especially women, to adapt their lifecourse to, or to break free from, traditional lifestyles. They also note that cumulative disadvantage might be the most powerful theoretical explanation for ethnic variation in economic resources, health and well-being in old age.

Unfortunately, I find that this stops short of analyzing the underlying structures of white privilege and capitalism as the fundamental systems that keep poor and minority groups in a situation where the odds of them moving up are very low. We need to not only understand these systems but also work to dismantle them if we are ever to reach a point where *all* people in *all* countries have a chance to have a decent lifestyle with reasonable social and health support. Critical gerontology analyses, such as those by Carol Estes, Meredith Minkler and Harry “Rick” Moody are essential to expose the underlying assumptions about older people and the systems that maintain inequities across the lifespan. For example, how we fundamentally view older people – as needy or autonomous – lays the foundation for policies and expectations. To assume any stereotype of all older persons is dangerous. It obscures true variations and true needs that a society could meet. There are many references to human agency in this book, which I think overstates the ability of individuals to rise above the demographic, social and historical circumstances they grow up and grow old in. As the editors of this anthology also propose, there is a need for an overall flexibilization, pluralization and individualization of welfare services in most aging nations to guarantee a late life experience of respect and dignity for all.

Anne Leonora Blaakilde and Gabriella Nilsson (eds.) (2013). *Nordic Seniors on the Move. Mobility and Migration in Later Life*. Lund: Lund Studies in Arts and Cultural Sciences 4, 225 pp. ISBN 978 91 981458 0 9 (paperback), ISSN 2001 7510 (online)

*REVIEWED by SOFI FRISTEDT**

This is an anthology well-worth reading as it tackles a quite novel phenomenon: seniors on the move. Although some years have passed since its publication, it is still relevant and up to date. All chapters are well written and the quality is augmented by the fact that all texts have passed double-blind peer reviewing. The book encompasses research from various disciplines that focus on mobility and migration, all using the same method, namely ethnography. Although the authors do not state it explicitly, I consider the book as research in line with the “new mobilities paradigm” that originates from sociology and was developed primarily by British scholars John Urry and Tim Cresswell. This paradigm has been developed in the past 15 years as a response to previous perspectives that failed to acknowledge and recognise intersections between geography (place) and social categories such as class, ethnicity and gender. The paradigm has however been criticised for paying too little attention or even forgetting to add *age* as a social category of relevance in this situation. Based on this

* *Sofi Fristedt*, Department of Rehabilitation, School of Health and Welfare, Jönköping University, Sweden

critique, an anthology like this one focusing on age is all the more relevant, important and even necessary. What makes this book especially interesting is its focus on the rather novel phenomenon of Nordic seniors moving to leisure areas in their home countries or abroad. A growing number of international publications has also discussed this topic, but scientific texts describing this phenomenon from a Nordic perspective are few. So this anthology clearly adds knowledge to address this gap.

A well-written introduction helps to familiarise the reader to the context and situations that are further developed in the book. We have been informed that the number of seniors making this lifestyle migration have increased considerably over the past 20 years. The authors argue that this rise is potentially due to an increase in mass tourism and also due to better finances among seniors in general. In addition, more people live longer and with better health, which in turn facilitates different and varied ways of growing old as discussed by the authors. As in younger years, travelling and also mobility and migration could provide quality of life in later life as well.

The different chapters of the book highlight various aspects of senior mobility and migration, among other things rural retirement migration in Sweden as well as lifestyle motives for moving to senior housing in a Swedish setting. Furthermore, eating habits as well as religious life of Finnish retirement migrants in Spain are described in two separate chapters. In the two following chapters, perspectives on the Church of Sweden abroad as “like coming home” and transnational voluntarism for Swedish senior migrants are in focus. Finally, the challenge of (Danish or other EU) welfare states’ policies when it comes to retirement migration and national health promotion are introduced as also the mobilities of third agers.

To summarise, it becomes clear from the book that mobility and migration may affect many other aspects of human life such as images of ageing, identities, traditions, feelings of belonging (“doing and feeling at home”), friendships and relations with family and other relatives as well as religious attachments. The provided examples based on empiricism give concrete and interesting descriptions from different contexts related to different populations.

But mobility and migration is also wisely problematised in this book as a complex phenomenon. Being on the move is, for example, not only seen as an aspect of being healthy but also as an aspect of staying healthy by

some seniors mentioned in the book. They have made their migration for the benefit of their own health, seeking for instance a warmer climate in Southern Europe. This may, however, have implications on social welfare policies and thus personal economy, such as reduced pensions from the Nordic home country. It may in fact be that the migrant has to return home and consequently compromise on personal health when doing so. This is an important finding, which deserves to be taken up and debated by policy makers to inform policy and societal planning. It is also surprising and a bit contradictory that activities remain almost the same for many of the individuals described in the book. Although seniors on the move change their surroundings, they re-create routines and thus continue to do more or less the same activities as before.

The book is also well-worth reading to get deeper and wider perspectives on later life and ageing. Migration and mobility are in some situations described as signs of “non-ageing” by the seniors in the presented studies. These perspectives stand somewhat in contrast to traditional views that assume later life to be opposed to mobility. However, given the lifestyle changes and developments in health, it is obviously time to revise and question traditional views of seniors. Sweet old ladies and nice old gentlemen may still exist, but nowadays they sometimes ride a Harley Davidson and experience “a second age of mobility that recall their teenage years,” as suggested in the Introduction of this book. For similar reasons, authors throughout the book use the term “seniors”, signifying strength and energy, rather than disease and frailty. The two latter concepts are more or less associated with the concept of “old age” in discourse. Striking examples in the anthology point to new ageing processes and provide examples of later life of today that are relevant to spread and discuss, since these are also true pictures of ageing. On the contrary, I would have liked to see a bit more reflection on how this discourse could be problematic for persons who cannot remain healthy, be mobile or migrate.

To summarise, I would really like to recommend reading this book since it rakes up many thoughts, reflections, and provides new insights into important aspects of later life.

Vern L. Bengtson, with Norella M. Putney and Susan Harris (2015). *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 267 pp. ISBN 978 0199 9486 59 (hardcover)

REVIEWED by GERDT SUNDSTRÖM¹ & MARIA ÁNGELES TORTOSA²

Families stand strong, and so does religion and family transmission of values that include religious convictions and practices. At least in the United States. This is the well-underpinned message in the book *Families and Faith* – one of many publications over the years from the Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG) headed by Vern Bengtson. Since the project started in 1970, the authors have collected information on Southern Californian families about their family relations and the transfer of values over generations. This book is a well-written report on the lives of contemporary families in various constellations of religious belief, scepticism or denial.

The authors are aware that it is common to see contemporary life as secular, individualistic and primarily materialistic. Change happens fast, the youth are rebellious and family breakdown is ever present.

¹ Gerdt Sundström, Institute of Gerontology, School of Health and Welfare, Jönköping University, Jönköping, Sweden

² Maria Ángeles Tortosa, Department of Applied Economics, University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain

All these things challenge traditional religions and institutionalised ways of socialising children, such as Sunday school.

As we read it, the book is primarily about contemporary families, not just about religion. One may see it as a response to Tamara Hareven's call (1991) for studies on families from a wider context, including studies on family values. Bengtson and colleagues use both statistical evidence and in-depth interviews with a carefully selected subsample of their interviewees to analyse how families manage to instil their values in their children. The family, in all its complexity, is considered as a central socialising agent in the book. The authors convincingly show that religiosity (and lack of it) is transferred surprisingly well by today's families. This is especially the case in "warm" families where children have the freedom to choose and parents don't "shove religion down the throat," in one participant's words.

The authors' use of lengthy but interesting family vignettes heightens the understanding of the different roads that value transmission may take, regardless if children become zealots, rebels or prodigals. Even when children leave a religious fold, they may nevertheless "inherit" humanistic values. National surveys support the authors' results, but their longitudinal approach shows shifts between generations not available to cross-sectional data. One may compare with studies on social mobility, which typically show both change and continuity of positions.

Concepts in social psychology such as role models and socialisation are efficiently used throughout the book as theoretical building blocks. Yet, we miss Durkheim's approach and his insight that too much or too little social control may destroy human interaction and even life itself (in *Suicide*). Durkheim also points out parallels between social life and religion. A very demanding religion is rarely found in a permissive society, but may for precisely this reason be attractive to some. For example, in Lutheran and permissive Sweden, conversion to Catholicism is growing.

Bengtson and colleagues describe spirituality as a new and expanding kind of semi-religiosity, visible among Baby boomers and later cohorts who are spiritual but increasingly unaffiliated with established religions. We think the authors are onto something here, but we miss a specification

of what they mean by spirituality. Statements made by some strongly religious interviewees in the book suggest that they also have trouble understanding the concept.

Further, what is missing from the book is the influence of history on religiosity. History may influence religiosity just as much as the family. We intend to illustrate this with two examples from our own studies. In Sweden, the state and church were traditionally partners, not only in controlling morals but in monitoring, recording, taxing and conscripting people. In fact, the first Swedes that left for America in 1846 did so for religious reasons. In recent history, many other civic organizations tie people together in Sweden, thereby creating another role for religion. In the 1930s, a Swedish author (Ludvig Nordström) even stated that belief in the welfare state had taken the place of religion. But after major traumatic events, people still gather in churches rather than municipal auditoriums. Another example of the relationship between history and religiosity can be found in Spain. Spain's image (at least abroad) is one of deep-rooted religiosity, and there is a complex relationship between church and state. Yet surveys show remarkably little traditional religiosity and widespread disbelief in church teachings and dogmas (CIS 2008). As in Sweden, religious beliefs and practices in Spain have declined dramatically (Malmberg et al. 2008). These examples show that historical contexts may have consequences for individual families, regardless of how energetically parents socialise their children. As Hareven (1991) put it, families are actors, but they also act in a context.

To conclude, *Families and Faith* is remarkably easy to read and accessible to laymen. Scientific considerations are mostly stowed away in fine print, into footnotes and in the appendix. Surprisingly, the closing chapter provides advice for parents and religious leaders on how to facilitate transmission of religious values. This is unexpected in a book from an academic publisher. Nevertheless, we enjoy this ethnographic trip into the exotics of American religiosity. We can learn from this book that families do continue to transmit their values, and they probably do so also in European and other contexts as well. Stimulating analyses show that overt religiosity is stronger in the United States, but the basic message of this book is that families are here to stay and, it seems, so is religion.

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Ulla Kriebner, Roberta Maierhofer,
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*Alive and Kicking at All Ages: Cultural
Constructions of Health and Life Course
Identity*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag,
324 pp. ISBN 978 3 8376 2582 0 (paperback)

REVIEWED by DORA TADIC*

Alive and Kicking at All Ages is a book for all who are interested in ageing studies, from experts in gerontology and sociology, to people who just want to know more. It is easy to follow, written in accessible language that allows everyone to understand it and yet it does not lack in academic content. The editors excellently link 17 contributions together to form a cohesive piece of writing, which is the product of the biennial conference of the European Association of American Studies (EAAS) in Izmir, Turkey, in 2012.

The book focuses on contemporary topics, such as health, policy, culture, personal narratives and discrimination, that surround old age and physical or mental disability. The organisation of the book allows insight into real-life narratives of ageing, personal experiences and policy changes, as well as how these are reflected in society through literature, theatre and TV programmes. The book comprises two parts, divided by theme, “Material Realities” and “Cultural Representations,” each containing contributions on age and disability.

* Dora Tadic, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

“Material Realities” includes seven chapters that focus on age and disability in contemporary society. For instance, in her contribution, Marshall analyses “ageility studies” (p. 21), an area of studies on age and disability. She argues that both disability and old age are viewed as medical conditions and, as such, need treatment through either rehabilitation or the use of rejuvenating products available on the market. The goal of ageility studies, however, is to accept one’s disability and old age and to strive for conscious ageility. Another contribution that examines old age as a problem that needs fixing is by Bendien. She explores a variety of standardised methods of treatment applied to the entire older population, creating what she terms “kwik-fit” (p. 81). The main issue here is that every person has a different perception of time, that is, of how slowly or quickly life goes by. In the fast-paced world of the young, the old often return to their memories in order to make sense of the accelerating changes happening all around them. Bendien argues that instead of applying a “one size fits all” (p. 83) model, we should take a person-centred approach and focus more on individual needs and interests of older people and allow them to grow old at their own pace. Adding to that, Boulot provides another example of generalisation about older people. She analyses ageism, that is, discrimination based on one’s age, in the workplace. Ageism is a type of discrimination to which no one is immune and as such needs to be addressed more thoroughly. In her contribution, Boulot explores the passing of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). ADEA protects older workers from losing their job on the basis of their age. However, it has not yet eradicated ageism from the workplace, and older employees are often considered “less productive, enthusiastic or creative” (p. 136), making it clear that there is still room for improvement.

“Cultural Representations” offers ten contributions, which show how old age is portrayed in theatre, movies and literature and how these portrayals shape our images of older adults. Wilson’s contribution, for instance, focuses on madness and memory. Based on the BBC TV drama *She’s Been Away*, Wilson provides an account of a mind of an older woman, appearing to be mad, and her young cousin who is unconsciously allowing patriarchy to dictate her life. The story follows the two women on their journey to self-empowerment and, through her analysis, Wilson questions well-established gender norms and the erroneous connection between ageing and madness.

Moving from TV to literature, Dackweiler investigates the topics rarely discussed when talking about old age – love and sexuality. She uses examples from two works of literature, both following women who suffered the death or institutionalisation of their husbands. In a situation when people are left without a partner after a long life together, they need to reconfigure their lives and create a new routine. The stories Dackweiler uses offer two different narratives of ageing alone, that of decline and progress, and leave us thinking about how we will construct our own later years.

Even though a number of relevant topics on old age and disability are addressed, one area is nevertheless absent from this otherwise excellent collection: non-heterosexual ageing. As a research area that has started rapidly developing in the past couple of years, there is more and more research focusing on how older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) experience ageing and deal with legal and personal problems they encounter during that process. Understandably, the issue of LGBT ageing is extremely broad, and as such would probably require the inclusion of 17 additional papers. And yet its absence is a missed opportunity for introducing readers to the gendered complexity of ageing studies.

Alive and Kicking at All Ages is not just an overview of narratives that surround ageing and old age. It is, in the editors' own words, a "product and mission at the same time" (p. 17). Its mission is to change the way we look at older people in our society and imagine their lives and to challenge the stereotypes that surround later life. The book shows us that old people are a crucial part of society just like any other age group, supporting that claim with various examples of legal, medical and cultural narratives. It also teaches us not to think about ageing as a progress marked by the absence of good health. Rather, it offers a new outlook on old age and calls for more awareness on the variety of people's experiences in later life. Instead of accepting that ageing is an inevitable process of decline, we need to support the concept of individual experience and do our best to move forward towards a society that provides means for "optimal ageing" (Minkler & Fadem 2002).

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Jason Danely (2014). *Aging and Loss: Mourning and Maturity in Contemporary Japan*.
New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press,
246 pp. ISBN 978 0 8135 6516 3 (paperback)

REVIEWED by ELS-MARIE ANBÄCKEN*

I have read a lot of literature on Japanese society and aging since the early 1990s. A recurring theme is the issue of care and filial duty in a changing society: Who cares, who should care, and where? Danely has composed a unique tapestry which tells the (hi)story of aging, care and intergenerational relations by using aesthetics and spirituality as tools for analysis. In doing so, new aspects of the experience of aging as experiences of loss are dealt with, in the intersections of aging studies, religion and, perhaps, gerontological social work. The ethnography unfolds, starting out from the choice of site and informants to careful interpretations of conversations and participant observations. The in-depth stories and analyses of this interweave with theoretical reflections resulted in a rich “story,” which is both an academic study and a piece of fine art.

Throughout the ethnography, Danely uses the cultural reference of *Ubasuteyama*, the mountain where old grannies were taken by their eldest son to die. Danely draws on this tale in a deeply creative way across time to show that it continues to influence the ways old age care is dispensed till this day. Even though eldercare is available, the view of filial duty as an ideal for care appears to linger on, but interwoven with individual

* *Els-Marie Anbäcken*, School of Health Care and Social Welfare, Mälardalen University, Eskilstuna, Sweden

considerations and rooted in feelings of unfulfilled expectations. This theme is interesting to revisit, 15 years after the introduction of the Japanese care insurance to support the independence of elders and their families.

The book is divided into four parts that elucidate the core theme, interpreting the aging experiences of *Loss, Mourning, Abandonment and Care*, and finally *Hope*.

The Introduction underlines the importance of seeing population aging as a transformative power in society, as cultural meanings and social institutions change. While I see this throughout the book, I sometimes wished to see more transparency in how the interpretations are constructed, especially on spiritual matters such as the role of cemeteries and family altars. Nevertheless, ethnographies may uncover aspects which are hidden in the taken-for-granted contexts of one's own. In this case, ancestor worship can be linked to different levels, such as population aging, changing family structures, and social policy. The depth of meaning in the rituals surrounding death and the care of the ancestors, as well as the worries that the next generation will not continue this care (in the physical sense but also ancestral "aftercare"), is clear from Danley's informants. I was struck by the similarity we found in a recent study (Anbäcken et al. 2015).

In the first part, *Loss*, Danely brilliantly interweaves loss, abandonment and aesthetics, and with pregnant words paints a picture of "The Weight of Loss: Experiencing Aging and Grief." The reader feels this weight. I am reminded of Moustakas' *Loneliness* (1961) on the inevitable existential loneliness of human existence. Both beauty and sadness of loss are linked to narratives. Memorialization is described as both "revealing the structure of loss and its creativity" (p. 26) and also adding to *ikigai*, a sense of purpose of life. Core concepts developed throughout the book are introduced in Part 1, such as "transience" (p. 21) and "empty space (*ma*)" (p. 23). I find the section "Mourning and Materialization: Debt, Change and Return" (p. 28) especially worth commenting on, since these three words capture the core theme of life and relationships in Japan: keeping the balance of giving and receiving throughout life, in work-, community- and family relations.

In Part 2, *Mourning*, Danely uses his analysis of the movie *Ubasuteyama*. Granny Orin demands to be left on the mountain to die, so that by yielding

to the younger generation, the intergenerational balance and cycle of life could go on. The mountain appears to be a place of redemption and reunion with the spirits of the ancestors. The metaphor continues as “landscapes – inner and outer,” which interestingly enough are “psychological and political, natural and built” (p. 69). Danely manages to draw on the image of Kyoto landscapes, with its mountains, rivers, shrines and cemeteries. I was especially moved by a woman’s description of the grave as a place to go when “you don’t need anything more” (p. 74). Danely draws on the contrast of light and dark of mourning and also on the memorialization through grave artifacts and the family altar, with photos of the deceased.

In Part 3, *Abandonment and Care*, the *Ubasuteyama* storyline continues, now in reference to the manga “Abandon the Old in Tokyo.” Danely shows that the myth of abandonment was alive well into the 1970s and beyond. He states that there is “a context of uncertainty about the family-provisioned care, social welfare, and care institutions” (p. 142). Danely also adds something original, by transforming the traditional image of filial duty into another level, where dependency and care are made invisible in the “fog” of successful aging. Danely also problematizes dying alone, *kodokushi*, which often is seen in Japan as a sign of failure – a shameful death for elders, in contrast to the “good death” in the presence of family. This discourse opens up for end-of-life-choices which are very ambiguous in Japan where life-extending technologies are widely used at hospitals. Even here, Danely finds the link to the *Ubasuteyama* myth, describing this situation as “another path up” the mountain and saying that “hopes must be revised or lost” (p. 158).

Thus, we come to the fourth and final part, *Hope*, where Danely labels the Japanese-style welfare as “an ideology of care as abandonment” and says that this paradox is an impossible equation. By not taking care of the older generation at home until the end, professional care becomes psychologically equal to abandonment. Danely includes the political space in his line of thought, although his argument is weakened by the omission of an analysis of harsh economic conditions and the structure of gainful employment and gender (cf. Anbäcken & Sand 2014). That said, he is far from falling into the trap of unquestioned sociocultural analysis and brings fresh insights through his aesthetics of care, where loss is the focal point.

Ancestors are a major theme in Danely's ethnography, especially in the way he follows one of his informants, who has struggled throughout the book sorting material things as a kind of life review. The narrative concludes with the story of a dagger which belonged to an ancestor and the ceremony to sanctify it in the temple to be on good terms with the ancestor. Again, as a piece of ethnography, it was deeply interesting and it makes this informant's story end in hope. Yet, as a reflection of Japanese aging and loss, it is perhaps somewhat peripheral. To me, the story of the lengthy farewell through meticulous sorting was even more informative for an analysis of bereavement.

The way Danely paints his ethnographical portrait is excellent, with many depths and details that could be discussed further. However, the fact that the ethnography takes place in Kyoto, "the crib of cultural Japan," calls for additional reflection. Kyoto is an area rooted in thick cultural and religious traditions. With a long personal history in Japan and research on aging and care there, I found myself sometimes questioning whether the leitmotif of relations to ancestors colored the analysis too much. For example, aging communities in large housing complexes in suburban areas, or differences between rural and urban areas, may have provided other perspectives of aging and loss than household altars and graveyards. In light of the changing society of Japan, this would have had added value.

This book has kept me company a couple of months. Its beautiful language requires thoughtful reading to digest the soulful words that continuously flow as a Japanese mountain river. Upon reaching the end of the book, two words from the subtitle echo: "mourning and maturity." I warmly recommend readers of aging and later life to enjoy this aesthetic voyage, which offers new perspectives not only regarding the case of Japan but also of any aging society.

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The International Journal of Ageing and Later Life (IJAL) serves an audience interested in social and cultural aspects of ageing and later life development. As such, the journal welcomes contributions that aim at advancing the theoretical and conceptual debate on research on ageing and later life. Contributions based on empirical work are also welcome as are methodologically interested discussions of relevance to the study of ageing and later life.

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