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GUEST EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

On ageing

Three years ago, I was visiting Natalie Rogers (known for her work in creative expressive therapy) and Claude Steiner (known for his association with Eric Berne and transactional analysis and his own contribution to the development of radical psychiatry), both then living in California, USA. Both were elderly and quite ill. Natalie was in a lot of pain; Claude was in some distress about his condition (prostate cancer and Parkinson's) and the effects of the combined medication to manage these. Inevitably, a lot of my conversations with each of them revolved around health and illness, death and dying – and ageing – and, indeed, Natalie reminded me of Bette Davis's famous line, 'Old age ain't no place for sissies'. One evening during my visit with Claude, and following one such conversation, I was talking with his wife, Jude Hall-Steiner (Claude had gone to bed), when there was a thud on the ceiling; Claude had fallen out of bed. Jude went up to see to him and, at that moment, I received a circular e-mail from the then editors of *Self & Society* asking for interest in editing a special issue of the journal – on the theme of ageing! It was a strange, uncanny and synchronous moment, to which I immediately responded 'Yes'. The next day I told Claude about this and later wrote to Natalie about it; both were very positive and agreed to contribute. Unfortunately, since then, each has died – Natalie in 2015, and Claude earlier this year – and, rather than editing their contributions, I have been writing appreciations about them (Tudor, 2016, 2017). Although I am sad not to have had Natalie's and Claude's own contributions, they have been very much in my mind during the planning and production of this special, themed issue. Nevertheless, for me, at least, their spirit is very much in these pages, and it is to them that I dedicate this issue. As I have been thinking about and planning this issue over the last couple of years, two other friends and colleagues of mine have died: Evan McAra Sherrard (see Sherrard, 2017) and John Pratt (see Pratt, 1994), and, as I come to the end of this process in writing this editorial, I am reminded of something Isabelle Sherrard, Evan's widow, a friend of mine and a contributor to this issue, said to me recently: 'Once you get interested in ageing, people start dying!' (personal communication, 3 March 2017).

It is probably true to say that, as we age (I myself am in my seventh decade), we become more focused on and interested in age and ageing – and on death and dying. However, ageing is not simply a personal issue. It is well documented that the world's population is ageing. A United Nations report, *World Population Ageing*, published in 2015, suggested that:

> Population ageing – the increasing share of older persons in the population – is poised to become one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century, with implications for nearly all sectors of society, including labour and financial markets, the demand for goods and services, such as housing, transportation and social protection, as well as family structures and intergenerational ties.

To this, I would add psychological implications, a number of which are explored in the contributions to this special, themed issue. The demographic data contained in the UN report are salutary. They include the following facts:

- Between 2015 and 2030, the number of people in the world aged 60 years or over is projected to grow by 56%, from 901 million to 1.4 billion, and by 2050, the global population of older persons is projected to more than double its size in 2015, reaching nearly 2.1 billion.
- The number of 'oldest old' persons (i.e. those aged 80 and over) is growing faster than the number of older people overall, and projections indicate that, in 2050, the 'oldest old' will number 434 million, and represent some 20% of the world's population.
- Older persons are increasingly concentrated in urban areas.

Thus, ageing is both personal and political, and concerns not only the elderly but also the young. This point is also somewhat topical as we see certain tensions between the old and the young as expressed in the demographics of voting patterns, both in last year's UK European referendum, in which the majority of older people voted to leave Europe (60% of those aged 65+) while the majority of younger people voted to remain in Europe (73% of those 18–24) (British Broadcasting Company, 2016), for reflections on which, see Hinshelwood (2017); and in the US presidential election in which 53% of voters aged 65+ voted Republican, while 55% of those aged 18–29 voted Democrat (The Washington Post, 2016). In this respect, I am particularly delighted that we have contributions to this special issue from all ages: from two in their early twenties to two in their early eighties.

I am also delighted that this issue has attracted more contributions from different countries, and, perhaps not surprisingly, given my location, more from Aotearoa New Zealand. *Self & Society* is an international journal and I am pleased that this issue is international. *Self & Society* is also noted for publishing different types of contributions: articles (including peer-reviewed articles), reviews (of books and films) and fiction (poems and prose), as well regular opinion pieces, and, as editor of this special issue, I have been particularly keen to represent this breadth.

Altogether, 18 different and diverse contributions explore the theme of ageing in what I have arranged into five groups: personal experiences of ageing (three articles); reports and reviews of research into the impact of ageing, and responses to the personal and social experience and position of the elderly (three articles and one regular column); fictional accounts of the experience of being old and alone (two poems and a short story, and a review of a documentary film); eldership (a regular column and two articles); and the practical implications of ageing (and death) both personally and professionally (two articles and a column), as well as a final film review.

The first three articles offer different personal perspectives on ageing. In the first, inspired by Carl Rogers' phrase and writing about 'older and growing', and drawing on a range of literature, **Margaret Merton** discusses her path to what she refers to as 'intentional elderhood'. Margaret's engagement with and enthusiasm for life is inspiring, and she is someone who embodies Srinivas Rao's perspective that, 'Rather than seeing ageing as a reason to contract, we should view it as an opportunity to expand. We should make each year of our lives more interesting than the one before'. In the second article, **Anton Ashcroft** shares something of his own story with regard to health and illness, and discusses the impact of early ageing on happiness, a perspective which, while some may view it as more poignant given his age (Anton is in his early fifties), nevertheless has important implications for how we might consider the happiness of the (more) elderly. In the third article of this introductory trio, **Patrick Body**, who, at the time of writing, had just turned 25, discusses ageing from a younger perspective and, drawing on his own experience and ideas, offers some perspectives about the concept of 'mental refinement', as well as mental development and mental decay. I am particularly appreciative of Patrick's engagement with this subject and material. In *Moving Pictures*, Terry Pratchett (1990) speculated that, 'inside every old person is a young person wondering what

happened' (p. 263); Patrick's article speaks to the counterpoint that inside every young person there is an old(er) person being wondered about.

The next set of articles, all of which are peer-reviewed, explore different aspects of ageing, and, variously, have strong cultural and political undertones. The first is a report by **El-Shadan Tautolo** and his colleagues from the Pacific Island Families study, which is a longitudinal research project of a cohort of millennials, now in its 17th year, based at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. This particular article discusses a participatory action research project within the study that explored ageing among Pacific people in New Zealand and, specifically, grandparents. This is a fascinating article that highlights a different cultural perspective to that of the (Western) mainstream on engagement with family, community and health services; intergenerational living patterns and relationships; as well as barriers to participation. In the next article, **Guy Robertson**, Director of Positive Ageing Associates in the UK, discusses ageing and ageism from a psychosocial and psycho-educational perspective. Drawing on extensive research, he discusses two theories in particular – stereotype embodiment theory and aged-based stereotype threat – each of which affects the individual older person. Guy goes on to suggest some practical interventions, including the use of positive imagery and consciousness-raising groups. Another 'intervention' with the elderly is 'life review work', which **Paul Solomon** discusses in his article, written in the context of his own development of this work with students in a psychotherapy education/training programme. Paul draws on the psychosocial perspective of the programme itself, as well as the sociopolitical context of the health and care of the elderly in the New Zealand health system, to frame his own reflections on developmental experiences, memory and reminiscence from his own life. Given the reference to the sociopolitical context of ageing in these articles, and, in Paul's article, to the neoliberal health care system, it is appropriate that the next contribution is **Stuart Morgan-Ayres**' political diary, which addresses wealth, changing demographics and the pension crisis.

The next group of contributions mark a change in style and, to some extent, content. A poem by **Julian Nangle** describes being old; another fragment of a longer poem by **Faysal Mikdadi** describes being alone; and a short story by **Helena Hargaden** describes a woman dealing with her partner's dementia. These are followed by a review of the documentary *Alive Inside*, directed by Michael Rosatto-Bennett, and reviewed by **Caitlin Ashcroft**, another younger contributor who has some experience of working with the elderly.

These mark a transition to the next group of three contributions on eldership. In the first, another regular *Self & Society* columnist, **Robert Sardello**, writes briefly about what he refers to as 'the sacred act of maturing'. In the second, **Giles Barrow** describes his own experience of David, a neighbour and elder, who, in effect, mentored Giles. Drawing on this experience as well as his own background as an educator, Giles discusses the implication of eldership both for the elder and for others in the community. In the third article in this group, **Heather Came**, **Maria Humphries** and **Miriam Sessa** explore cronehood, a specifically female form of eldership, and do so in the context of settler culture(s) in Aotearoa New Zealand. Drawing on postmodern feminist methodology and storytelling, theirs is an article that truly reflects the feminist slogan 'the personal is political', as well as Gloria Steinem's comment that 'Women may be the one group that grows more radical with age' (1983, p. 377).

The last group of articles discuss some of the practicalities of ageing. In the first, drawing on her own experiences of living with her husband as he became more ill and died (in 2015), **Isabelle Sherrard** discusses, with poignancy and practicality, some of the decisions that are involved in dealing with ageing, dying and death. Twenty-five years ago, **Barbara Traynor** wrote an article with Petrūska Clarkson, 'What Happens if a Psychotherapist Dies?' (1992)

I had just completed my training at the time (at Metanoia, which had been founded by Petrūska and others). I remember the article being published, reading it, and realizing that it was one of the first articles to discuss these issues as well as making the practical suggestion of having a professional executor. As I was putting this issue together, I remembered this and made contact with Barbara, to see if she would be interested to revisit the subject from the point of view of the ageing psychotherapist. She was, and the result is the present article in which she also reflects on her own experience as an ageing practitioner. The final piece in this group is a report by two psychotherapy students, **Karen Bateson** and **Clare Whitworth**, on a brief survey of their training cohort on the MA in Psychotherapy and Counselling at the University of Leeds, UK, on age. I am grateful to Karen and Clare for responding to the theme of this special issue as the subject of their article and this new column for *Self & Society*.

One of my favourite books as a young teenager was *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas (1844/1910), together with its sequel *Twenty Years After* (1845/1911). For some reason, I liked the somewhat archaic language (reflected in the English translation) and was fascinated with how the relationships between the musketeers (Aramis, Athos, Porthos and D'Artagnan) changed over the years. I was reminded of this when I saw an interview with the cast members and the director, Danny Boyle, of *Trainspotting 2*, much of which focused on their changing relationships over time – of both the characters and the actors. This inspired me to put a call out for a review of this film in the context of it being made 20 years after *Trainspotting* – and, according to Danny Boyle, deliberately so. I was delighted that **Maggie White** answered the call, and has written an excellent review which includes her reflections on ageing and identity.

Reflecting on the issue as a whole, I have been struck by three processes.

When I first envisaged the issue, I thought I might have half a dozen articles: one each from Natalie Rogers and Claude Steiner, two others that had been promised, and perhaps two more. In the event, the first two contributors died, the second two withdrew for different reasons, and no articles came in as independent submissions. In this sense, it seemed like ageing was not terribly popular, either as an experience or as a subject for special consideration and/or (re)view.

However, when I approached people to consider submitting articles, most if not all were extremely enthusiastic, a response that seemed to be infectious as other colleagues and friends offered various suggestions – and contributions. As he himself acknowledges in the introduction to his article, Patrick Body's contribution was a prime example of this infectiousness. In this sense, it appears that, once you raise and tap into this issue, there is a lot of interest and a lot of good practice and interesting research. This enthusiasm has resulted in such a full issue that four contributions have been held over and will appear next year in a special issue on 'The Politics of Ageing' in another journal, *Psychotherapy and Politics International*.

In the larger timespan of this issue (i.e. the past three years), as I have noted, some colleagues and friends have died, and I have become more aware of issues regarding ageing and, especially, health. Partly as a result of this awareness and of more conversations with friends and colleagues, some of these people have contributed to this journal. My exploration of this area has also led to reviving connections with old – and now older – friends, specifically Barbara Traynor and Guy Robertson, and so this issue has also become personal, which, in turn, has meant that I have thoroughly enjoyed editing it. I only hope that the issue and the subject will inspire continued interest and further contributions on the subject to *Self & Society*. As Ashton Applewhite put it in the wonderfully named *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto against Ageism*, 'the sooner growing older is stripped of reflexive dread, the

better equipped we are to benefit from the countless ways in which it can enrich us' (2016, p. 82).

Finally, I would like to thank David Kalisch, Gillian Proctor and, previously, Richard House for entrusting me with this special issue; all the contributors and the reviewers for their work, including the regular contributors to *Self & Society*, most of whom took up my invitation to address the theme of the special issue; the production team at Routledge for their skill in producing a lovely looking issue (apart from the front cover, the images of which reflect a social default setting and assumptions of youth, as well as whiteness, ability, urbanity, and employment); and, as ever, my colleagues, friends and family for their support and engagement with this particular project.

Notes on contributor

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