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The bodily politics of ageing transitions: Negotiating in and through organizational life through the other-in-us

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The Body Politics of Ageing

*‘The body [is] no longer conceived as an object of the world,
but as our means of communication with it’*

Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002: 106)

Two ways of understanding embodied subjectivity in ageing transitions...

- Ageing transitions as experienced through interpellation and inculcated into our embodied disposition (the interpellation thesis)
- Ageing as a proprioceptive experience and only rendered visible through significant social cues (the phenomenological thesis)



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Ageing as other-to-myself

- Driven by paradoxical ontological impulses...

A desire to
become
'old'



A desire to
ontologically
distance
ourselves from
'old'

Witnessing

- Living through an experience where the working through of the event pulls into action in some way
 - I was there
 - Believe me
 - If you don't believe me, ask them
- The call to believe as inherently relational
- Doubling back and bearing witness as a coming to term of with the other-in-myself
- The 'I was there' as makes bearing witness 'fully' an impossibility

1. Witnessing as re-membering

It was early evening, and all of a sudden, Barry, who liked to think of himself as a bit of a key character and leader in the team, roles back his chair, and loudly stretches making a bit of a loud groan. However, this does not have the effect he was perhaps desiring.

'Feeling a bit done in Barry'

*Yeah, maybe getting a bit past his bedtime – anyone got a tartan rug and flask for Barry here
Everyone laughs. Someone says 'Nana Barry'*

Barry stops half stretches, his arms poised in the air like he's doing a Mexican wave, as if caught in headlights, a flash of panic goes through his eyes where his physical alpha male taking up of space becomes a visible manifestation of him not being able to hack it. . Then he seems to have a brainwave

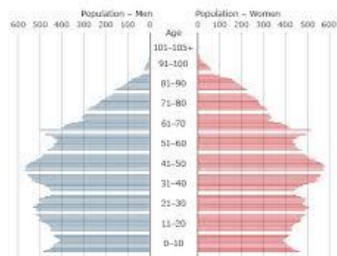
Nah mate, just feeling the pain of that earlier (gym) session. Hey, I've been done hours ago, got a really good result on the (name of a trade) – I fancy a drink, any of you fuckers up for it?

2. Technologies of Witnessing

- Quantification a distinctive technology of witnessing
- Viewing part of a 'sociology of distance'
 - Technology of simplification and abstraction
- Box creation: Based on chronology
- Box allocation: What gets put into the boxes
- Box neutralisation: Subsequently shapes future focus

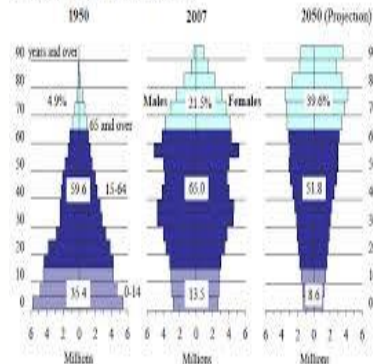
Population projections
How immigration may affect UK population's age structure

Estimated UK age structure mid-2008

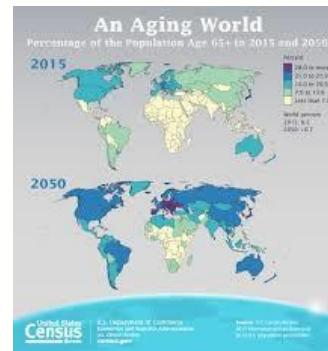


Source: ONS

Figure 2.3
Changes in the Population Pyramid



Source: Statistics Bureau, MHC, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare



2. Witnessing ageing through Visualisation



Witness and Testimony in researching Transitions

SILVIA T: Yes, I was, but he always make sure that he always tried to – this is the first husband, he always tried to make sure that he would actually go up in the ladder quicker than me so that he could always earn a bit more. So he would actually do overtime.

Interviewer: What do you think that was about?

SILVIA T: Oh, just power trips, he was so insecure within himself that he always had to – he was abusive mentally so he'd always say "oh, you don't look good enough", and "nobody likes you" and things like that.

*‘If **terstis** designate the witness insofar as he intervenes as a third in a suit between two subjects, and if **superstes** indicated the one who has fully lived through an experience and can therefore relate it to others, **auctor** signified the witness insofar as his testimony always presupposes something – a fact, a thing, or a work – that pre-exists him and whose reality and force must be validated’.*

Agamben,(1999) *Remnants of Auschwitz*, p.17



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Questions and Comments Welcome

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