

¹ My Pencil Is My Friend I Keep Him to the End—The First
² Grader and the Social Narrative of Literacy, Agency and Ageing
³ in Postcolonial Kenya

PRITHA BANERJEE¹

¹ Sundarban Mahavidyalaya

Received: 15 December 2016 Accepted: 1 January 2017 Published: 15 January 2017

8 Abstract

9 Ecological theories of ageing suggest that a unique combination of factors such as personal
10 competence and environmental characteristics, influence an older adult's sense of autonomy
11 and optimal level of functioning in society. One does not usually factor in possibilities of
12 acquiring literacy as a crucial aspect of the environmental resources necessary for supporting
13 an older adult's aspirations. Through a close reading of James Chadwick's film *The First*
14 *Grader* (2010), which narrates Kimani Ng'ang'a Maruge's struggle for acquiring literacy
15 through attending primary school, amidst much socio-political resistance, I shall be seeking an
16 appropriate heuristic for comprehending an older adult's desire for literacy and the
17 possibilities of an "environment" reengineered to provide the same, by the older adult himself.
18 My study shall also endeavour to identify the "little narratives" (Beth Daniells, 1999) in the
19 film that critique the grand narrative of literacy promoted by the postcolonial state of Kenya,
20 to highlight inherent ageist assumptions that often unthinkingly exclude the aged from state
21 narratives of progress for "all"

Index terms— ecology, ageing, autonomy, agency, literacy, narrative, environment, postcolonial.

1 Introduction

25 hat does it mean to 'age well' and what role does 'literacy' play in the lives of the aged and affect their sense of
26 wellbeing? Seemingly contradictory ideas are brought together in James Chadwick's 2010 film *The First Grader*.
27 One does not easily conflate the images that attend literacy narratives—that of schooling and teaching with an
28 old man's figure bent over a first grader's tiny desk, trying to emulate the etchings on the blackboard onto his
29 page. He struggles to hold the pencil between his fingers correctly and respond to the teacher's questions in the
30 classroom, nudged by classmates half his height, as his auditory functions are impaired by age. The name of
31 the film itself attempts to destabilize our expectations regarding the 'age' and 'body shape' we imagine we shall
32 see on screen as the first grader, thereby alerting us to the problematic and inherent ageist ideas informing our
33 perceptions regarding the aged and their requirements.

³⁴ W "My Pencil Is My Friend/I Keep Him to the End"—The First Grader and the Social Narrative of Literacy,
³⁵ Agency and Ageing in Postcolonial Kenya

Wahl, Iwarsson and Oswald (2012) define ageing well as "maintaining the highest autonomy, well being and preservation of one's self and identity as possible, even in the face of severe competence loss". The P-E fit (Wahl, et. al, 2012) or person-environment interaction that decides the level of autonomy experienced by the aged, largely focuses on physical competence and cognitive abilities of the older adult and the ability/inability of the immediate environment to support or sustain the same. As articulated by these theorists, "person-environment resources are central to agency and belonging," (Wahl, et. al, 2012) as environmental configurations often decide a person's experience of ageing, by either limiting his possibilities, or enhancing them. While Carstensen's research

43 ??2006) iterates that curiosity and explorative behavior decreases with advance in age and Wahl, Iwarsson and
 44 Oswald concede the possibility of the same, suggesting the increasing importance of 'belonging' increasing with
 45 advance of age in a person more than that of processes of agency, they keep room for the opposite to happen as
 46 well. Over the course of their study, ??ahl, Iwarrson and Oswald (2012) grant that often with a sudden cessation
 47 of activities performed at the workplace and/or home, the older adult might actually seek new experiences and
 48 opportunities for an enhanced sense of agency and thus belonging in society. James Chadwick's The First Grader
 49 enacts the second event conceptualized by Wahl, Iwarrson and Oswald, by narrating the story of Kimani Ng'ang'a
 50 Maruge, an 84 year old man's battle with socio-political systems to acquire literacy , by attending primary school
 51 with toddlers who reach till his knees. When the Kenya government announces free primary schooling for all,
 52 this octogenarian seeks to attend primary school, but is turned away by the school teachers who are surprised
 53 and bemused that an old man like him wants to attend school. He asserts that the government announcement
 54 mentioned "all" and hence included him as well. The school teachers, unable to come up with a suitable rejoinder,
 55 tell him that a school uniform was essential for attending school and hence he was not eligible. Even later, when
 56 Maruge dons half pants and walks to school in "uniform" and is sent back again, elders living in the neighbourhood
 57 are visibly disturbed by his actions and appearance and he is seen as an 'odd' old man among the aged and the
 58 young.

59 The ageism experienced by Maruge and seen by us in the film is a result of social expectations regarding
 60 how the aged must behave or contribute to society. Even older adults themselves seem to absorb these notions
 61 regarding ageing and participate in criticizing anyone stepping outside the boundaries acknowledged as proper
 62 behaviour for the aged in a particular time and space. The film, based on the actual incidents of Maruge's life
 63 attempts to visually 'break the mould' and question predetermined ideas regarding what the aged require or
 64 desire.

65 Just as ecological theories of ageing stressed by Lawton and Nahemow (1973) stress that an individual's
 66 optimal level of functioning is determined by a unique combination of "personal competence" and "environmental
 67 characteristics" , I wish to suggest that Maruge's desire for literacy in his old age and the resistance of society
 68 and government to the same might be understood as society's inability to provide/comprehend the 'environment'
 69 necessary for Maruge's 'optimal level of functioning', owing to preconceived notions regarding literacy and its
 70 'use' in the greater narrative of growth and development of the State.

71 The theory of the need of older adults to "age in place" (Wahl et. al, 2012) might also be examined for its
 72 limitations and limiting capacity on the way both older adults and the young form narratives regarding ageing
 73 and ageism.

74 I argue that ageing in "place", emphasizing the older adult's need for 'belonging' over that of 'agency', becomes
 75 a metaphor for binding a person to a "place" that is predetermined in terms of personal competence, skills and
 76 cognitive faculties.

77 2 II.

78 Refusing to 'Disengage'

79 The First Grader, in this respect is an appropriate film for the purpose of my study. Maruge challenges
 80 the way society views him-as an 'old man', who is expected to behave in a certain way, shaped by individual
 81 and collective ideas regarding ageing. When head teacher of the school Jane Obinchu asks him in surprise,
 82 "Mzee, why does someone as old as you want to go to school?" he replies, "I want to learn to read." Bemused
 83 and startled, Alfred, the other school teacher barks out, "Go home and rest in peace." At this Maruge reacts
 84 sharply, "Rest in peace? I'm not dead. My name is Kimani Ng'ang'a Maruge." Maruge has obviously faced
 85 such a perspective earlier as the elderly are often equated with the 3 'D's by the young, and even by the old
 86 themselves-disease, disability (functional impairment) and death (Butler, 1975). However, Maruge refuses to be
 87 typecast, not accepting this idea of disengagement which society forces upon him. Disengagement theory as set
 88 forth by Cummings and Henry (1961) details the steps whereby the old disengage from active social life and
 89 highlight the importance and benefits of this process to the social system as a whole. This theory has of course
 90 been challenged for its assumption that this is an innate, natural or inevitable process , rather than one created
 91 and enforced by society that does not see 'profit' in keeping the old engaged and participant in important social
 92 spheres. It also deprives the older person of agency, representing him/her as a pliant tool, succumbing to the
 93 social system. Maruge's figure provides a visual challenge to such a theoretical model, highlighting his anger
 94 against a system that attempts to create a power hierarchy between the young and the old, as represented by the
 95 school fence standing between the figures, physically differentiated by their 'age'. His act of asserting his name
 96 and identity as a person, rather than an 'old man' or 'mzee' begins his journey of claiming agency in a system
 97 that seeks to suppress this need. Arlie Hochschild (1975)Hochschild (, 1976) has pointed out that those who do
 98 not 'disengage' as society would expect them to, following the model proposed by Henry and Cummings, are seen
 99 as "troubled outliers". In this film too, we see how Maruge is seen as a troublemaker, who refuses to 'go home'
 100 and 'rest in peace' , who refuses to be confined to the 'home' or assume a static/peaceful existence, rather seeking
 101 to walk to school each day and participate in new activities as he wishes to learn to read and write. Robert
 102 Butler's extension of his earlier (1968) definition of ageism in 1975, recognizes it as "a process of systematic
 103 stereotyping or discrimination against people because they are old," these belief systems or stereotypes becoming
 104 so ingrained in people's psyche that they are implicitly embedded in the way society is structured. The fallout of

105 this is that the "gaze of the youth" (Calasanti, Slevin & King, 2006) structures State policy and beliefs regarding
106 older persons. Butler concedes that "?Ageism allows the younger generation to see older people as different from
107 themselves; thus they subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings." In my view, this process of
108 'othering' is implicit in theorizing about old age as well, as seen in the limiting constrictions of ageing in 'place'.
109 Of course, Calasanti (2008) would argue that ageism includes such 'age-blindness' and a belief that age doesn't
110 really matter, such as I may be appearing to suggest. However, I am not suggesting that age does not matter or
111 'age' should be ignored. Rather, I am searching for an approach to age studies that does not constrict or delimit
112 the needs and desires of the aged.

113 It is also worth noting that he wants to be recognized as a part of the "everybody" that the Kenyan State
114 has envisioned as beneficiaries of free schooling. When the school , its board members and finally the State are
115 so startled and surprised by his demand for inclusion, it points again to the unthinking yet systemic process of
116 exclusion and marginalization of the elderly from the social perception of "all". It is apparent that the social
117 perception of "all". It is apparent that the 'young' and the 'old' adults of the film see Maruge as a bothersome
118 'extra' creating trouble and disturbing the smooth functioning of their idea of education and social progress. The
119 Ontario Human Rights Commission (2000) understands, hence, that the problem with ageism is a tendency to
120 structure society "based on the assumption that everyone is young, thereby failing to respond appropriately to
121 the real needs of older persons." Hence Maruge's figure disrupts this invisibility of the old, suddenly 'popping up'
122 and refusing to be 'less important', claiming centre stage, till the school finally accepts him as a student.

123 When Kimani Ng'ang'a Maruge steps into the school grounds, it's significant that the camera captures him
124 with the Kenyan flag flying in the background. Many aspects of the narrative coalesce here. Maruge had been a
125 Mau-Mau warrior in his youth, sacrificing his family and all he held precious for the ideal of freedom and liberty.
126 He refused to give up his oath of allegiance to the Mau Mau and their call for freedom from British rule and
127 for this his family was killed and he was tortured in the camps. The film wishes to sensitize its audience to the
128 fact that the Kenyan flag flying high in the school grounds owes much to him and thousands like him, now old,
129 marginalized and rendered 'invisible' as the postcolonial State of Kenya seeks to participate in the 'narrative'
130 of progress and development, to be secured by promotion of literacy among other initiatives, with the focus on
131 children as future of the newly emergent modern nation State .

132 While the film does not directly challenge the idea of literacy as a means of transformation and personal
133 betterment, participating in the 'grand narrative' of literacy (Daniells, 1999) promoted by the Kenyan State with
134 Maruge himself subscribing to the view, it complicates this narrative by questioning the State's demarcation of
135 eligible participants of this narrative. When Maruge travels to Nairobi to meet the board members deciding
136 State education policy after Jane Obinchu, the school teacher helping him, is transferred to a remote location,
137 he breaks into the meeting room, refusing to be sidelined again and views the photographs of Mau Mau freedom
138 fighters lining the walls of the boardroom. He silently takes off his coat and shirt before the board members
139 stunned into silence by his sudden entrance and actions. He turns around to reveal a back criss-crossed by lashes,
140 signs of the torture inflicted upon him at the camps, reminding the government representatives of the history
141 that enables them to sit in this boardroom and decide the policies of the State affecting the citizens of Kenya.
142 It is significant that the element of surprise is repeated in Maruge's action of taking centre-stage, refusing the
143 invisibility cast upon him by State policy, yet again. His active resistance to the transfer of his beloved teacher
144 is also unexpected by the board members as they expect an old man to 'go home' and accept what has been
145 handed out to him by a hostile society. Maruge's actions also critique the policies of a State that forgets its past
146 and simply continues implementing the legacy of colonial practices without reconstructing them to include the
147 needs and aspirations of every section of society under the banner of the Kenyan State.

148 I am using Beth Daniells' (1999) concept of 'little narratives' to therefore read how the film text critiques
149 the perceptions and representation of older adults in a newly emergent State. The film does cater to audience
150 expectations of a 'literacy narrative' as a transformative text, subscribing to the usual master narrative of
151 movement from darkness to enlightenment (Inayatullah, 2013) exemplified by literacy narratives. However, by
152 visually embedding Maruge's past within the present social system, it disrupts this grand narrative as well. When
153 Maruge is rebuked by a teacher in school that he has not sharpened his pencil, he shuffles slowly to do so, but
154 is overcome by the memory of the same pencil used to torture the Mau-Mau warriors in the British camps. The
155 contrast between the present, where children learn to hold the pencil in their hand and chant after their teacher
156 , "My pencil is my friend/I keep him to the end," and the terror of colonized Kenya when children do not have
157 the possibility of receiving this education in a State of freedom, rather terrorized by the spectre of their mothers
158 and fathers being shot when demanding the British leave their land, further intensifies the problematic of a State
159 narrative that forgets the sacrifice of the elders in the society and does not seek to comprehend their desires and
160 necessities. Learning from the 'Old'

161 We see in one scene that Maruge is teaching the children the value of the education they are receiving, as it is
162 in his vision. He says to them, "A goat cannot read. A goat cannot write his name. An old man no better than
163 a goat." Of course these statements are awkward as they ascribe to literacy a paramount value without which a
164 human is compared to an animal. However, perhaps it is representative of a social system wherein the elderly
165 find it difficult to participate, without the skills available to the larger section of population. For maintaining a
166 sense of independence and selfdependence as also for retaining agency in a transforming world, the aged are often
167 forced to learn and acquire new skills, whether of literacy or digital literacy, as we often find older adults at home

168 seeking to participate in the new media of the internet and smart phones, sometimes struggling with the new
 169 jargon associated with new media. Returning to the theory of ecology of ageing discussed at the beginning of this
 170 paper, we remember that it is the unique interaction between a person, his competence and physical functioning
 171 and environmental press (Wahl et al., 2012) Maruge attempts to re-engineer his environment or the facilities
 172 provided by his social environment so as to improve his functioning in society and continued active participation
 173 in it. He wishes to read on his own a letter sent to him many years ago. His sense of independence does not allow
 174 him to simply ask another to read it out to him. Thus the film does sensitively portray the difficulties faced by
 175 an older adult seeking active participation in society.

176 Theorists such as Choi and Kim (2011) have discussed the benefits of the Activity Theory in gerontology, which
 177 see it as beneficial to both the older people and to society that they remain 'active', performing roles that they had
 178 always performed before being classified as 'aged'. The theorists understand that social perceptions regarding
 179 ageing affect individual perceptions regarding age among the aged themselves, further affecting psychological
 180 wellbeing. Both a sense of agency and a sense of belonging are perhaps necessary co-ordinates essential for
 181 an older adult's sense of wellbeing and self-valuation. In Maruge's case, this sense of agency and belonging
 182 are derived from the right to literacy and the right to pursue the same in a sensitive atmosphere conducive to
 183 learning, alongside recognition of the older adult's contribution to the present that Kenya enjoys.

184 The teacher of the school tells the parents of children who have gathered to resist Maruge's presence in the
 185 school alongside toddlers, "I think we have a lot to learn from Maruge? The children have a lot that they can
 186 learn from the old." We are now led to think about Maruge's interaction with the children in the school and
 187 analyse the children's response to this old man in class. When he first steps into the classroom, the teacher
 188 initially seeks to place him at the back of the class, but he says he won't be able to see the blackboard. So the
 189 teacher is forced to place him in the front of the class where he shuffles into a space besides a toddler, who looks
 190 at him, interested, curious but not with disdain, different from the way the other teacher in the school treats the
 191 'intrusion' of this old man in 'his' school. The children, not yet drawn into the social narratives of exclusion of
 192 the aged, accept his presence quite happily after the initial 'gazing', because of his different body shape and size
 193 in their class—that of the 'adult', usually associated with the 'teacher' rather than the 'student'. At lunch hour,
 194 some of them start interacting with him and he inspires them in re-iterating the battle cry of 'freedom!' which
 195 they take so easily for granted, not knowing the sweetness of this freedom won after a tough struggle and much
 196 loss. There is disjuncture, as the children uttering the word and Maruge uttering the same word, bears different
 197 meanings for both, but at the same time, it also creates the mildest sense of awareness of a past, teaching the
 198 children to respect it and learn from it.

199 Lauren Marshall Bowen (2014) in his analysis of this film asks pertinent questions regarding how the elderly
 200 are supposed to visualize their social roles in a modern society. Does Maruge therefore represent the past? Do
 201 the old represent the past, alone? Barbara Myerhoff (1992) discussed the importance of the stories older people
 202 tell, as they 'make' themselves through this process of narration. While Maruge is largely silent regarding his
 203 past and does not wish to "speak" about the horrors experienced by him, his past is always present for him, as
 204 seen through the flashbacks in the film that impinge upon his present narrative. In The First Grader, the present
 205 is sought to be changed by Maruge as he warns the government and the school board that "we reap what we
 206 sow". His past experiences, and therefore his "age" endows him with an understanding regarding the fallout of
 207 decisions taken over time. He encourages the policy framers to recognize the efforts of a good teacher like Jane
 208 Obinchu, instead of punishing her with a transfer as that will foster and encourage the kind of sensitivity towards
 209 Kenya's history as also the ability to re-interpret predetermined cultural meanings of ageing displayed by Jane.

210 The film depicts a student named Kamau, who is weak in mathematics and falling behind the rest of his class.
 211 His father, deeply resistant to Maruge's figure in the school, feels that the teachers are giving more attention
 212 to the old man rather than the young children, who 'should' get greater care, being Kenya's 'future', leads
 213 the demonstration against Maruge. However, later, it is Maruge who helps Kamau learn to write '5' correctly,
 214 repeating the teacher's rhyme regarding '5', drawing the number with a stick on the ground. Kamau, inspired and
 215 encouraged in a friendly atmosphere learns joyously. Later, when Maruge is transferred to an adult school and
 216 Jane Obinchu to another school, it is this child who leads the other children in throwing stones and barricading
 217 the school, refusing entry to the new headmistress appointed by the school board. The children's ability to accept
 218 'differences' created and perpetuated by adult society stands out as a sharp critique of the way ageist attitudes
 219 are often unconsciously built into the way society functions. Novak's (2012) concept of the Conflict Theory of
 220 Ageing is significant here as it highlights the impact of ageism on society's valuation of the elderly. Often seen as
 221 unproductive and as 'burdens' on the economy, only valuable in terms of feeding the burgeoning market of health
 222 care, specific needs of older adults are brushed under the carpet of a universal policy regarding older persons and
 223 ageing, seeing them as a homogenous bracket of people.

224 IV. Critiquing the Homogenization of the Needs of the 'Old'

225 However, as depicted in The First Grader, one size does not fit all. The "gaze of the youth" (Calasanti et.
 226 al., 2006) is not sufficient in comprehending the subjectivities of ageing. 'Age' often acts as an additional layer
 227 of discrimination along with the prejudices associated with race, gender, caste, creed and financial status. As
 228 Phelan (2008) notes, "Ageist assumptions become so integrated into common discourse in diverse social contexts
 229 that they become tacitly acceptable and legitimize a particular version of social reality which objectifies older
 230 people as a homogenous group in subject positions which emphasize these stereotypical negative attributes." At

231 the same time, age based discrimination is overlooked or granted less importance than other forms of "othering",
232 on the basis that "we all grow old" (Law Commission of Ontario, 2017). However, this film attempts to critique
233 this homogenization of the 'old' by depicting difference in the way older adults respond to, or experience the same
234 situation. While Maruge is interested in learning and attending primary school, other old men in his locality
235 laugh and jeer at him for not following the norm. "A school is no place for an old man," they say, "You don't
236 belong there!" However Maruge is undeterred. He creates his own space. It is also worth observing that he is
237 extremely depressed when sent to an adult school as 'befits' him, as he finds his classmates absolutely uninterested
238 in learning and the teacher uninvolved with the learners, in contrast with the primary school he used to attend,
239 where the teacher teaches him to hold the pencil and begin writing and personally attends to the needs of the
240 students. Therefore, what might suffice for a lot of older adults does not satisfy him and his yearning to learn in
241 an environment conducive to learning, with other learners equally excited to write 'a?b?c'.

242 With a burgeoning aged population, the Kenyan government introduced a National Policy on Older Persons
243 and Ageing in 2009, attempting to at least include the older adult's needs in their national vision of collective
244 progress. Julliet Kola, the head of the Kenyan government's social welfare programme in 2009, accepted that
245 the government had previously focused on the youth and ignored the older people (Brown, 2009). This policy
246 attempted to provide continued employment to older adults and include them in the workforce, seeing that
247 they can contribute to society even in old age. This approach, in keeping with the Activity theory of ageing
248 (Choi & Kim, 2011) discussed earlier, focuses on the "willingness and productivity" of individuals as the only
249 determining factor regarding their suitability for continued participation in social activities, instead of an age
250 barrier. However, while this shifts the way the elderly are seen in society, from the position of 'advisors' to that
251 of active participants, it might do well to continually remember the differing needs of older adults and their
252 differing skills and desired methods of participation and retaining 'agency'. With Kimani Maruge's efforts at
253 acquiring primary school education in 2003, and his being recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records as
254 the oldest man to start primary school, the Kenyan government included the promotion of education for seniors
255 in their 2009 policy as well. Maruge's efforts did lead to an inclusion of the necessity for thinking about the need
256 for literacy as a 'need' amongst the elderly, hitherto never considered by the stereotypical assumptions of the
257 State and society at large. Towards the end of The First Grader, we learn that the letter Maruge had preserved
258 so carefully and been unable to read, was the government recognizing his efforts and contribution as a freedom
259 fighter and promising him a pension. It brings tears to his eyes, listening to the letter and also points to the
260 lacunae in the State's vision that promises a pension to individuals through the medium of a letter, not reflecting
261 on the fact that most of the Mau-Mau fighters were probably unlettered. While it does redeem the image of the
262 State partially in that it recognizes the need for financially supporting these older adults in society, yet it points
263 out the unconscious acts of neglect and marginalization, deeply embedded in way the State functions.

264 V.

265 "The Power is in the Pen" Representation and visibility therefore play a great role in transforming this systemic
266 stereotypical imagery perpetuated over time. The radio plays an important role in Maruge's journey in the film.
267 It is through the national announcement over radio that he learns of the State policy announcing education for
268 'all'. Again, it is the radio that starts spreading the news of Maruge attending primary school, in 'uniform'.
269 The radio jockey's shifting interpretation of Maruge's actions, portray the shifting interpretations by society and
270 thereby changes the manner of representation as well.

271 From deep surprise at his actions, to celebrating his success at this journey, to exclaiming in joy at Maruge
272 representing Kenya at a global forum like the United Nations, the radio jockey's narrative demarcates the
273 possibilities of change engendered by mass media. At the same time, the film also projects a strange contrast
274 between the billboards of Kenya showcasing Maruge and his words "The power is in the pen" and his lonely figure
275 walking through the streets, fighting for a revisioning of the purpose of literacy and education. While the media
276 cashes in on his figure of resistance, at the same time, it seems uncaring towards the actuality of that struggle.
277 Similarly, while the National Policy of Kenya on Older Persons and Ageing (Ministry of Labour, Social Security
278 and Services, Republic of Kenya ,2009) strives to include the interests of the elderly, it does not create space for
279 the specific and the individual axes of

280 3 References Références Referencias

281 struggle faced by each older adult, Maruge, simply being a representation of one. I think the film succeeds in
282 drawing our attention to the instability of images perpetuated through media and the power of the same. At
283 the same time, Maruge's figure inspired an entire generation of older adults to begin attending primary school.
284 While, as Lauren Marshall Bowen's (2014) detailed analysis of this film suggests, the film does not question or
285 interrogate the nature of literacy being offered to the children of this postcolonial State , I think the film is
286 important in creating the sub-narratives or 'little narratives' that question the lack of representation of older
287 adults in the grand narrative of literacy closely aligned to the grand narrative of progress and development of the
288 State that so easily bypasses the need to include the requirements of older adults, who form such a large chunk of
289 society. Thus, by representing a "need" not usually associated with older adults and their perceived requirements,
290 the film assists in breaking stereotypical representations of the aged, and making us aware of the lacunae in our
291 understanding of age. It also revisions the notion of curiosity and enthusiasm for new experiences declining with
292 age (Carstensen, 2006) and suggests, rather the need for 'agency' as essential for a sense of belonging in society;

293 this 'agency' derived from acquiring skills that enhance the ability to participate in social activities, without the
294 need for depending on another.

295 **4 VI. Conclusion: Re-Modelling Place'**

296 In my view, the Ecological Framework of Place (Moore, 2014) provides a better heuristic for the environmental
297 gerontology concept of "place", including in its ambit the five axes of 'people', 'physical setting', 'program of the
298 place' (referring to the socially shared understanding of the place, enabling effective 'coaction'), 'human activity'
299 that acts as a catalyst for the earlier three axes and 'time' as major agent of change. While drawing upon earlier
300 research on personenvironment interaction (Lawton, 1983;Lawton & Nahemow, 1973; ??ubenstein, 1989;Scheidt
301 & Norris-Baker, 2004;Oswald, Wahl, Rowles & Chaudhury, 2005), it provides a more sensitive model of ecology
302 of ageing by providing for simultaneous intersections of 'social embeddedness', 'temporality' and 'human agency'
303 as factors contributing to differential experiences of 'ageing' and 'place', by older adults. Maruge's recreation
304 of the image of an old man in popular imagination impels a transformation in the way a generation of older
305 Kenyans viewed themselves and also acts as the catalyst transforming the social understanding of a primary
306 school as 'place', with a specific 'program'. The First Grader also makes us aware of the importance of providing
307 an environment sensitive to the problems faced by these older persons seeking to re-engage, as the support of the
308 environment equipped to respond to the requirements of the elderly decides the level of autonomy experienced by
309 them in the face of declining physical and cognitive abilities as per the ecology theories of ageing analyzed at the
310 beginning of this paper. However, this notion of 'decline' is also problematized as Maruge's figure purposefully
311 striding through the arid landscape of Kenya, refusing to be 'held down' to any definition of 'decline', challenges
312 this concept regarding the elderly as well and focuses attention on the need for seeing older adults as 'agents' in
313 the process of remodeling of "place" (Moore, 2014), as a socio-physical milieu inhabited and catalyzed by them.

314 [Social Security and Services, Republic of Kenya ()] , *Social Security and Services, Republic of Kenya* 2009.
315 2014. Ministry of Labour (National Policy on Older Persons and Aging)

316 [Calasanti ()] 'A Feminist Confronts Ageism'. T Calasanti . *Journal of Aging Studies* 2008. 22 (2) p. .

317 [aframework-for-the-law-as-it-affects-olderadults/older-adults-funded-papers/ageism-and-thelaw-emerging-concepts-and-practices-i
318 aframework-for-the-law-as-it-affects-olderadults/older-adults-funded-papers/ageism-and-thelaw-emerging-
319 concepts-and-practices-in-housingand, -health/ii-ageism-concepts-and-theories/ 2017. Law
320 Commission of Ontario (Ageism: Concepts and Theories)

321 [Butler ()] 'Age-ism: Another Form of Bigotry'. R N Butler . 10.1093/geront/9.4_part_1.243. *The Gerontologist*
322 1969. 9 (4) p. .

323 [Calasanti et al. ()] 'Ageism and Feminism: From 'Et Cetera' to Centre'. T M Calasanti , K Slevin , N King .
324 *National Women's Studies Association Journal* 2006. 18 p. .

325 [Wahl, R. Scheidt, P. G. Windley ()] 'Aging in Context: Sociophysical Environments'. *Annual Review of Geront-
326 ogy and Geriatrics* Wahl, R. Scheidt, & P. G. Windley (ed.) 2003. Springer. p. .

327 [Wahl et al. ()] 'Aging Well and the Environment: Toward an Integrative Model and Research Agenda for
328 the Future'. H W Wahl , S Iwarsson , F Oswald . 10.1093/geront/gnr154. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnr154> *The Gerontologist* 2012. 52 (3) p. .

329 [Moore ()] 'An Ecological Framework of Place: Situating Environmental Gerontology within a Life Course
330 Perspective'. K D Moore . 10.2190/AG.79.3.a. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 2014.
331 79 (3) p. .

332 [Inyatullah ()] 'Beyond the Dark Closet: Reconsidering Literacy Narratives as Per formative Artifacts'. S
333 Inyatullah . <http://www.jstor.org/stable/437441> *Journal of Basic Writing* 2013. 32 (2) p. .

334 [Oswald et al. ()] *Dimensions of the Meaning of Home in Later Life, Home and Identity in Later Life: International Perspectives*, F Oswald , H W Wahl , G D Rowles , H Chaudhury . 2005. New York: Springer.
335 p. .

336 [Discrimination and Age -Human Rights Issues Facing Older Persons Ontario: Discussion Paper ()]
337 'Discrimination and Age -Human Rights Issues Facing Older Persons'. Retrieved from www.ohrc.on.ca/english/consultations/age-discussion-paper.pdf Ontario: Discussion Paper, 2000. p.
338 39.

339 [Hochschild ()] 'Disengagement Theory: A Critique and Proposal'. A R Hochschild . *American Sociological
340 Review* 1975. 40 (5) p. .

341 [Hochschild ()] *Disengagement Theory: A Logical, Empirical, and Phenomenological Critique*, A R Hochschild .
342 1976.

343 [Lawton and Nahemow ()] 'Ecology and the Aging Process'. M P Lawton , L Nahemow . *The Psychology of
344 Adult Development and Aging*, C Eisdor, M P Lawton (ed.) (Washington, DC) 1973. American Psychological
345 Association. p. .

346 [Phelan ()] 'Elder Abuse, Ageism, Human Rights and Citizenship: Implications for Nursing Discourse'. A Phelan
347 . *Nursing Inquiry* 2008. 15 (4) p. .

348 [Lawton ()] 'Environment and Other Determinants of Well-Being in Older People'. M P Lawton . doi:10.1093/
349 geront/ 23.4.349. *The Gerontologist* 1983. 23 p. .

350 [Cumming ()] 'Further Thoughts on the Theory of Disengagement'. E Cumming . *International Social Science
351 Journal* 1963. 15 (3) p. .

352 [Cumming and Henry ()] *Growing Old: The Process of Disengagement*, E Cumming , W Henry . 1961. New
353 York: Basic Books.

354 [Brown ()] *Kenya Tackles a New Problem: Age*. The National, M Brown . <https://www.thenational.ae/world/africa/kenya-tackles-a-new-problem-age-1.573413> 2009. (Sept 23))

355 [Daniell ()] *Narratives of Literacy: Connecting Composition to Culture*. College Composition and Communica-
356 tion, B Daniell . 1999. 50 p. .

357 [Novak ()] M Novak . *Upper Saddle River*, (NJ) 2012. Pearson. (Issues in Aging)

358 [Myerh Off ()] *Remembered Lives, The Work of Ritual, Storytelling and Growing Older*, B Myerh Off . 1992.
359 Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. p. 231.

360 [Zelig ()] 'The Critical Use of Narrative and Literature in Gerontology'. H Zelig . *International Journal of
361 Ageing and Later Life* 2011. 6 (2) p. 737.

362 [Choi and Kim ()] *The Effect of Time Volunteering and Charitable Donations in Later Life on Psychological
363 Wellbeing*, N G Choi , J Kim . 2011. Ageing & Society. 31 p. .

364 [Scheidt and Norris-Baker (ed.) ()] *The General Ecological Model Revisited: Evolution, Current Status, and
365 Continuing Challenges*, R J Scheidt , C Norris-Baker . H.W. (ed.) 2004.

4 VI. CONCLUSION: RE-MODELLING PLACE'

370 [Rubinstein ()] 'The Home Environments of Older People: A Description of the Psychosocial Processes Linking
371 Person to Place'. R L Rubinstein . 10.1093/geronj/44.2.S45. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* 1989. 44
372 p. .

373 [Carstensen ()] 'The Influence of a Sense of Time on Human Development'. L L Carstensen . 10.1126/sci-
374 ence.1127488. *Science* 2006. 1913-1915. 312.

375 [Bowen ()] 'The Literacy Narrative of Chadwick's The First Grader'. L M Bowen . <http://ageculturehumanities.org/WP/the-literacy-narrative-of-chadwicks-the-first-grader/>
376 *Age Culture Humanities: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2014. 1.

377 [Gubrium (ed.)] *Time, Roles, and Self in Old Age*, J F Gubrium (ed.) (New York) Human Sciences Press. p. .

378 [Butler ()] *Why Survive? Being Old in America*, R N Butler . 1975. New York: Harper and Row.