

Call for essays for a thematic issue of *Cinéma & Cie*

Edited by Gloria Dagnino (Università degli Studi di Udine) and Adrien Valgalier (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle)

Ageing on Contemporary European Screens: Dialogues Between Film Studies and Cultural Gerontology

Over the last two decades, scholars from different disciplinary and theoretical backgrounds have devoted increasing attention to representations of advanced age and the ageing process in film and other audiovisual media: e.g. Robinson *et al.* 2007; Chivers 2011; Wearing 2013; Cohen-Shalev 2012; Jermyn & Holmes, 2015; Swinnen 2015; Bolton & Lobalzo Wright 2016; Shary & McVittie, 2016; Courcoux, Le Gras & Moine, 2017; Dolan 2017; Ureczky, 2018; De Rosa, Mandelli & Re 2021; Tracy & Schrage-Früh 2022. The growing interest in later life and its onscreen configurations speak, on the one hand, to “the cultural turn [that] came relatively late to gerontology” (Twigg and Martin 2015: 1) and contributed to the expansion of its theoretical-epistemological frameworks as well as the socio-historical questions that this discipline addressed. On the other hand, it reflects the renewed centrality that later life has acquired in public and political debate, following the ongoing trend of demographic ageing, which is projected to affect countries worldwide soon, regardless of income level (World Health Organization 2025). Europe has been the first region in the world to experience a shift in the composition of the population towards older age groups: between 1950 and 2025 the median age of the population in Europe has increased by 65% (United Nation 2024), and today, with more than one fifth of its population aged 65 or over (up 16% since 2014), most of whom women, Europe is the “oldest” continent in the world (Eurostat 2025). Although an extended lifespan is viewed positively at the individual level, the “graying of Europe” (McKinsey Global Institute 2005) has largely evoked concern, if not catastrophist reactions – epitomized by the “silver tsunami” metaphor (Tragaki 2024) – due to its anticipated disruption of national economies and welfare systems. However, the issue of ageing cannot be approached solely from an economic or demographic perspective. Cultural gerontology provides a reconceptualization of later life, powerfully encapsulated in Margaret Morganroth Gullette’s notion of being “aged by culture” (2004). This means that, before being a statistical fact or a biological and chronological process, ageing is also embedded in a field of power relations, strategic games, struggles, and social negotiations (Gilleard and Higgs 2015). Ageing is far from self-evident, and its understanding cannot overlook the relationships that societies and cultures establish with it, notably through public policies, industries, and representations in the arts and the media. These elements contribute to shaping individual identities around ageing while also generating tensions in their formation.

This thematic issue of *Cinéma & Cie* aims to offer a platform for disciplinary and theoretical cross-fertilization between the fields of film studies and cultural gerontology, with a specific focus on contemporary European productions. One of the tenets of cultural gerontology is the conceiving of age and ageing as cultural constructs. In this sense, film studies can provide a fruitful framework for understanding the “cultures of ageing” (Gilleard and Higgs 2000), and their influence on other forms of cultural production, as well as on societies more broadly. Similarly, film and media scholars examining visual narratives around ageing cannot but benefit from the rich scholarship produced by cultural gerontologists and the ways it fosters radical yet rigorous interdisciplinarity. Europe provides a useful testing ground for examining established

and evolving socio-cultural perceptions of ageing for reasons that extend beyond the mentioned demographic factors. One of the objectives of this thematic issue is to explore whether and how the “Europeanness of European cinema” (Liz, Timoshkina and Harrod 2014) informs representations of ageing in contemporary productions. What transnational narrative patterns, thematic or iconographic motifs can be identified in European films that portray ageing and age-related subjects? How do cinematic representations of ageing reflect or challenge geographical, cultural, and historical differences along Europe’s traditional dividing lines of North vs. South and East vs. West? What role, if any, is played in this by the ‘silvering of stardom’ and ‘the silvering of audiences’ (Dolan 2017) across the European region? How can these representations be viewed in light of the specific industrial and institutional dynamics that characterise film production in Europe, including supranational funding schemes and co-production agreements? These are just some of the questions that we aim to investigate by putting in dialogue the theoretical perspectives and methodological tools of film studies and cultural gerontology.

We will prioritize contributions that focus on films released after 2010 and incorporate transnational or comparative approaches between European countries.

We invite contributions from scholars in film and media studies, cultural gerontology and age studies working on a variety of subjects, including, but not limited to:

- Representations of ageing, later life, and/or intergenerational relationships in contemporary European cinema (post-2010)
- Representation of older age at the intersection with other identity traits, such as gender, sexuality, race, class, disability in contemporary European cinema
- The “silvering” of European stardom: lasting stardom, cinephilia, cultural memory
- Representations of older age across specific genres of contemporary European cinema
- Visual aesthetics of ageing bodies across cinematography, performance, make up, VFX
- Ageing and authorship: late style, career trajectories of European filmmakers, and creative productivity in later life
- Narratives of ageing in European cinema beyond the decline vs. success paradigms
- Industry and/or policy approaches to the study of age-related European film productions
- The “silvering” of European audiences and its impact on film circulation, film promotion and box office performances

Submission Details

Please send an abstract between 300 and 400 words with bibliographic references and a short biographical note to gloria.dagnino@uniud.it and adrien.valgalier@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr by **18th May 2026**.

Authors will be notified of the outcome of the selection by mid-June. If accepted, the author(s) will be asked to submit a **full article** by **13th November 2026**.

Articles must not exceed **6000 words (including bibliography)** and must be accompanied by 5 keywords, author name(s) and a 100-word max bio, institutional affiliation(s) and contact details.

Articles will be submitted to double blind peer review. Submission of a paper will be taken to imply that it is unpublished and is not being considered for publication elsewhere. Authors who

are not native English or French speakers are asked to have their manuscripts proofread by a native speaker before submission.

The publication of this thematic issue is scheduled by June 2027.

For any queries do not hesitate to contact the editors at the email addresses listed above.

References:

- Bolton, L., & Lobalzo Wright, K. (2016). *Lasting Screen Stars: Images that Fade and Personas that Endure*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chivers, S. (2011). *The Silvering Screen: Old Age and Disability in Cinema*. University of Toronto Press.
- Cohen-Shalev, A. M. (2012). *Visions of Aging: Images of the Elderly in Film*. Sussex Academic Press.
- Courcoux, L., Le Gras, G., & Moine, R. (eds.) (2017). *L'Âge des stars : Des images à l'épreuve du vieillissement*. Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle.
- Dolan, J. (2017). *Contemporary Cinema and "Old Age": Gender and the Silvering of Stardom*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- EUROSTAT (2025), Demography of Europe – 2025 edition, Interactive publication: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/demography-2025#about-publication>
- Gilleard, C., & Higgs, P. (2000). *Cultures of Ageing. Self, Citizen and the Body*. Routledge.
- Gilleard, C., & Higgs, P. (2015). "The cultural turn in gerontology". In Twigg, J., & Martin, W. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (29–36). Routledge.
- Gullette, M. M. (2004). *Aged by Culture*. University of Chicago Press.
- Jermyn, D. and Holmes, S. (2015). *Women, Celebrity and Cultures of Ageing. Freeze Frame*, Springer.
- Liz, M., Timoshkina, A., & Harrod, M. (eds.) (2014). *The Europeanness of European Cinema: Identity, Meaning, Globalization*. I.B. Taurus.
- McKinsey Global Institute (2005). *The Graying of Europe: How Aging European Populations will Threaten Living Standards and Prosperity*. https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/europe/the%20graying%20of%20europe/mgi_how_aging_european_populations_will_threaten_living_standards_perspective.pdf.
- Robinson, T., Callister, M., Magoffin, D., & Moore, J. (2007). "The portrayal of older characters in Disney animated films". *Journal of Aging Studies*, 21(3), 203–213. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2006.10.001>.
- Shary, T., & McVittie, N. (2016). *Fade to Gray: Aging in American Cinema*. University of Texas Press.
- Swinnen, A. (2015). "Aging in film". In Twigg, J., & Martin, W. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (83–90). Routledge.
- Tracy, T., & Schrage-Früh, M. (eds.) (2022). *Ageing Masculinities in Contemporary European and Anglophone Cinema*. Routledge.
- Tragaki, A. (2024). "From 'demographic bomb' to 'silver tsunami': Navigating global population shifts". *European View*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/17816858241240606>

United Nation, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). *World Population Prospects: The 2024 Revision. "Median Age of Population."* Data Portal. <https://population.un.org/dataportal/data/indicators/67/locations/908,8,20,40,112,56,70,100,191,203,208,233,234,246,250,276,292,300,831,348,352,372,833,380,832,412,428,438,440,442,470,492,499,528,807,578,616,620,498,642,643,674,688,703,705,724,752,756,804,826/start/1950/end/2025/line/linetimeplot?df=e2b83962-b4bf-4841-bbfe-b634b43400b9>.

Ureczky, E. (2018). "Crises of care: Precarious bodies in Western and Eastern European clinical film dystopias." *Contact Zones: Studies in Central and Eastern European Film and Literature*, 2018(1). https://contactzones.elte.hu/wp-content/uploads/CZ_2018_1_fin-18-37.pdf.

Wearing, S. (2013). "Dementia and the biopolitics of the biopic: From *Iris* to *The Iron Lady*." *Dementia*, 12(3), 315–325. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301211421085>.

World Health Organization (2025). "Ageing and Health". <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>.