***Extravagant Bodies: Extravagant Age. Reader: Inspiring Old Age—Body and Mind on the Fringes of Social Norms*. Tereza Teklic, Sunica Ostoic, and Ivana Bago. London: Kontejner, 2013. Pp. 552. £22.00 (paperback).**
Extravagant Bodies: Extravagant Age. Catalogue: Inspiring Old Age—Body and Mind on the Fringes of Social Norms. Tereza Teklic. London: Kontejner, 2013. Pp. 128. £9.00 (paperback).
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This bilingual collection (English and Croatian), containing essays and artistic works created from the 1990's to 2013 by an international range of scholars, artists, and activists with viewpoints on aging as diverse as the places they call home, is aptly titled extravagant. Yet its main thrust is captured by the introduction to the reader which ends with remarks from a dialogue with Boris Majkic, a colleague of the editors. Majkic observes that since "the very meaning of the word 'old' is controlled by the Other," what interests him "in old age is to isolate the part that is not connected to the wish of the Other" (*Reader* 13, 15). His desire to explore the part of old not controlled by "the discourse of bureaucracy, of knowledge" or "the covert master" (15) is well reflected in both the variety of theoretical, historical, practical, and speculative essays in the reader and in the selection of art presented in the accompanying catalog. Chosen from works shown at the Third International Extravagant Bodies Art Festival in Zagreb, Croatia (2013), the catalog's pictures and performances complement the reader's essays by making visible the ageist "premises on which contemporary society is founded, at the same time opening up the possibility of their critique" (*Catalogue* 7). Together, these volumes offer "different and dissenting conceptualizations and performances of ageing" (*Reader* 7) that highlight the parts of old that can never be contained by any one theory and that attempt to make audible the actual voices, and visible the actual bodies, of the old.

One of the most informative pieces is Silvia Federici's "The Great Witch-Hunt in Europe," a chapter from her 2004 book *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation*. In this essay, she argues

that the witch hunt was "a war against women" (*Reader* 159) designed to demonize and destroy forms of female practice and power that could not be tolerated in newly forming capitalist social relations. Rather than serving as a way to punish specific transgressions, the charge of witchcraft, Federici asserts, functioned as a campaign of terror against (predominantly) older women similar to the way "the charge of 'terrorism' [functions] in our times" (133, 135)—as a vague and unprovable charge that "could be used to punish any form of protest and to generate suspicion even towards the most ordinary aspects of daily life" (135). Therefore, according to Federici, the witch hunt was about both the construction of a patriarchal order in which women's bodies, labor, and sexuality would become economic resources controlled by the state, and a class struggle in which older women who remembered more communal forms of life were criminalized and impoverished, then accused of the very "crimes" that their newly degraded social situation provoked.

In contrast to Carolyn Merchant who, in *The Death of Nature* (1980), finds a clear connection between the rise of the scientific method and the persecution of witches, Federici insists that the rise of the modern scientific method cannot be considered the proximate cause of witch hunts. Where Merchant argues that the transformation in economic, cultural, and scientific practices that occurred when a mechanistic world view replaced a pre-scientific organic view left both women and nature as objects or resources to be controlled and exploited (Merchant xvi), Federici contends that the change in status of women and nature evolved from the efforts of the ruling class to "eradicate an entire mode of existence" that threatened their ability to establish "the conditions for capital accumulation" (*Reader* 189). Yet, as Federici herself points out, since early scientific theories often combined a mechanistic view of nature with an organic one (*Reader* 187), it seems reasonable to assume that rationalism, mechanism, and the need to consolidate capitalist relations free from older female resistance all contributed to the emergence of the witch hunt. In the absence of the perspective and voices

of women accused of witchcraft, a close reading of both Merchant's and Federici's attempts to speak for them and give historical context to their lives can lead to a richer understanding of some of the roots of the seemingly intractable present-day misogyny and ageism that characterize our culture, and of the continuing need of social and economic elites from the late Middle Ages on (*Reader* 189) to consolidate political and economic power through the politics of gender, age, and terror.

To illustrate Federici's argument, in the catalog Sanja Ivekovic juxtaposes pictures of witches drawn by medieval artists, "terrifying and grotesque old women [who] belonged to the poorest strata of society" (*Catalogue* 36), with contemporary photos of older women who have been reduced to penury by the current political and economic system. In the tradition of earlier Yugoslav artists who questioned the role of art in society, at each of her exhibitions, Ivekovic strives both "to democratize artistic space by abandoning galleries and taking to the streets," (*Catalogue* 36) and to provide alternative models to the contemporary economic system by constructing free advice centers with information on economic models that emphasize "exchange, giving and recycling knowledge, ideas, skills, goods" (36). Both the photos and the advice centers provide resistance to the formation of new and exploitative capitalist relations that mirrors the resistance to early capitalist relations mounted by the old women who were labelled witches.

A second interesting essay is "Tribute to the Older Woman: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Ageism," by Kathleen Woodward, republished from *Images of Aging: Cultural Representation of Later Life* (Featherstone and Wernick). Inspired by a day of "convivial ease" (*Reader* 223) she spent on vacation with her grandmother when she was 10, in this essay Woodward seeks to reinsert the excluded perspective and the unheard voice of the older woman into the discourses of psychoanalysis and the feminist critique of it. In place of a psychoanalytic theory "obsessed with the making of triangles out of the elements of two generations" in which the "father (or the Name of the Father) is cast as the third

term that intervenes in the mother-child dyad," (*Reader* 207), Woodward proposes a vertical, yet non-hierarchical, theory of generational continuity or identity across three generations of women. In this context identity is not opposed to difference, but "entails a difference based on *similarity* that finds its temporal expression in *continuity*" (213, emphasis in original). With continuity, argues Woodward, the core of a little girl's identity is no longer "based on sexual difference but on generational linkage" (211) and expresses a sense of not only who she is, but of where she is—not separated from the mother but added to the line of mothers. The older woman thus becomes "a figure of knowledge who represents the difference that . . . time makes, a difference that she in fact literally embodies" (213). As an older woman continues to reinvent herself "consciously and critically" (221), a young girl can live into the future with "identifications that permit different ways of thinking—and . . . of living" (221) in which "the stormy emotions of two-generational same-sex Oedipal violence are nowhere in evidence" (223).

Woodward's theory of a line expressing relationships among generations of women rather than a triangle provides a welcome counterpoint to the prominence of Freud's ideas in feminist theory. Yet the theory might be more effective if it were expanded to include those of differing sexual orientations and women without children. It would also ring truer if it considered more deeply the sexist and ageist obstacles that many older women encounter when attempting to reinvent themselves, an occurrence discussed thoroughly by Martha Holstein in *Women in Late Life* (2015). Even so, the catalog serves up two pictures that beautifully illustrate the theory of generational continuity and the self-reinvention of older women. The first is of Meri Galevska, who lives in a retirement home in Belgrade. At eighty-five, in honor of her deceased husband, who was a composer, she founded an all-female musical sextet, the Fabulous Fairies, with whom she is going on tour. The pictures shown are from a documentary that Marko Jeftic made about the lives and challenges that these women face in their musical performances, the

humor that keeps them going, and the "iron will of one woman, determined to succeed in spite of everything" (*Catalogue* 40). A second illustration can be seen in Hroslava Brkusic's pictures of and conversations with the Italian actress Anna Magnani, a woman who rejoices in the wrinkles she has earned and refuses to hide. As she poses, she says, "The time is propitious for us to become what we are not . . . and become what we want to be. . . . Different generations, different ideas, different ways of accepting . . . the passage of time that is inscribed into the body" (26). Both her body and her words aptly personify Woodward's ideas.

A last example that argues for the inclusion of the perspective and voice of the old is Alison Marie Kenner's "Securing the Elderly Body: Dementia, Surveillance, and the Politics of 'Aging in Place.'" In this essay Kenner presents a thought-provoking take on the technologies used for monitoring elderly people with dementia who want to grow old in their homes rather than in institutional facilities. Comparing monitoring systems for dementia care with similar products used for prisoners under house arrest—a concept that is reminiscent of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon and Michel Foucault's use of the term as a metaphor for a society's desire to observe and normalize in *Discipline and Punish* (1975)—she argues that such technologies paradoxically give the elderly less control over their lives rather than more. When an elder's behavior is constantly judged by clinical behavioral norms constructed by the need to find a cost-efficient yet effective way to care for her, Kenner argues, then these surveillance technologies "are both reproducing and creating new forms of social control" (*Reader* 405) that can "infringe on the elder's rights" (401). In this situation, bodies become "nodes" on large information networks in which the mass of data renders contextual, individualized information invisible. When "wellbeing has come to mean physical safety where the greatest threat is posed by the aging body itself" (409), Kenner argues, increased surveillance and monitoring can result not only in "access or mobility restriction, or further medical interventions" (409),

but in care decisions that exclude the voice of the elderly person herself. She concludes that those who design and use these technologies should pay more attention to the way they "reinforce the norms, hierarchies, and oppression of ageism" and insist on the construction of systems that "explicitly challenge the ideologies and structural inequalities that disadvantage the elderly in the first place" (411).

The model of care that Kenner writes about expands to a more technological realm of ideas expressed by Annette Leibing in "Divided Gazes" about the "wars" between person-centered care, in which the emotions and personhood of a sufferer are validated, and biomedical care, in which the person is often seen as the disease and can experience biosocial death in life (Leibing 255). The trepidation with which Kenner approaches technological models of care also reflects the conclusion of "Graying the Cyborg," an article reprinted in the reader from *Age Matters* (Calasanti and Slevin), that warns of the dangers inherent in the ways that biomedicine and technoscience often blindly reproduce ageist social hierarchies (*Reader* 335). One family's alternative to a biomedical/technological model of care appears in the catalog in photos taken by Miajana Miljkovic and Neven Sviben of their mother, who has had Alzheimer's for eight years and for whom they care at home. Called "The Human Face of Dementia," these pictures convey the beauty and "expressiveness of her face and the curiosity of her eyes, that she expresses emotion and that her life is valuable" (*Catalogue* 58). Wishing to show that every individual has value not only in the sense of usefulness but also in the sense of simple human dignity, these photos directly challenge the very ageist ideologies that Kenner critiques.

In a reader with twenty-four essays covering topics as diverse as old age understood through queer theory or facts on population aging and domestic violence against the elderly to aging deciphered through the relationship between mortality and architecture or the tie between time travel and photographic negatives, and a catalog that features selections from a video celebrating the joys of sport in old age to the performance

of sixty-three-year-old "trailer-trash blonde" Tammy WhyNot on getting old and having sex, it is difficult to give a satisfying view of these volumes. Although some of the entries in the reader, such as "The Challenges of Caring for a Family Member Afflicted with Alzheimer's Disease," which both reiterates the fear-inspiring statistics used to raise awareness of (and money for) Alzheimer's research and focuses too readily on the consequences of care to the caregiver, and "Changes in Cognitive Capacities in Old Age," which characterizes aging "as a process that lasts a number of years" (*Reader* 429) rather than a process that begins at birth, miss the mark of exploring the part of old not defined by the Other and of including the voice of the old person herself, the majority of the essays and photo selections succeed in giving a more nuanced and personal vision of growing old and of old age. With such a wealth of perspectives, this collection has something to offer everyone—from theoreticians and geriatricians to photographers and filmmakers—who desires to think critically about what it means to be old.

Perhaps the last poem in the reader, "Extended Haiku with a Little Milk," best represents the overall aim of these volumes—to give the aging and the old a fully human voice and a fully expressive face not constructed by the Other:

> "With trembling hand the old man passes the old girl a glass of milk.
> So much love in a single movement I have never seen" (Reader 549).

To read this poem aloud while gazing at the series of photos of artist Ana Alvarez-Errecalde's parents embracing "like the intertwined branches of a majestic tree, making it difficult to see where one starts and the other begins" (*Catalogue* 18), is to understand what it might mean to finally appreciate the extravagance of an inspiring old age.

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