

Age: Mirrored, Fashioned, Envisioned, Embodied

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As the editorial team worked toward the initial launch of *Age, Culture, Humanities*, colleagues in age and aging studies and related disciplines offered thoughtful and encouraging visions of the journal's potential influence on the scholarly community. They suggested, for example, that such a publication could help to “establish a world-wide community of sympathetic scholars, at present unknown to one another” and create “a ‘place’ to congregate as scholars to learn about emerging work in the field.”¹ We are grateful for and gratified by the ways these predictions are being actualized as authors, peer reviewers, and readers contribute to the work of building an intellectual home for humanities-based age studies. Since the launch of *Age, Culture, Humanities* in 2014, the journal's digital site has had more than 50,000 visits from over 25,000 unique visitors from across the globe. Alongside other developments, such as the founding of the North American Network in Aging Studies (NANAS) and the continued advancement of the European Network in Aging Studies (ENAS), *Age, Culture, Humanities* furthers the growth of age studies by publishing new scholarship in humanities approaches to age and aging, helping to define and expand the contours of the field. Such a forum can, in turn, help this interdisciplinary field of study secure broader recognition and a viable share of institutional resources.

Further evidence of the dynamism of the field can be seen in an array of stimulating and productive conferences devoted to age studies as well as an increasing number of sessions and papers drawing on age studies methodologies in disciplinary and interdisciplinary conferences. We are delighted to feature, in this issue of the journal, a themed collection guest edited by Hannah Zeilig, whose work effectively bridges humanities and social sciences approaches to the study of aging. Zeilig's featured theme builds on the conference “Mirror Mirror: Representations

and Reflections on Age and Aging,” which she organized at the London College of Fashion (University of the Arts, London) in October 2013. The stimulating collection of articles and visual images centers on the “relevance of understanding identities of age as embodied, enacted, and corporeal,” as Zeilig explains in her introduction to the featured theme.

The complex ways in which fashion, age, generation, materiality, and identity intersect offer rich opportunities for analysis. In “Third Age Men’s Experience of Fashion and Clothing,” Anna M. Sadkowska, David J. Wilde, and Tom Fisher investigate how approaches to fashion continue to shape the identities of British men who had been fashion innovators in youth subcultures of the 1950s and ‘60s. The researchers apply an interpretive phenomenological analysis to demonstrate ways in which these subjects are constructing new models of masculinity as they negotiate aging in the twenty-first century. Christina Buse and Julia Twigg consider clothing, style, selfhood, and the embodied identity of people with dementia, exploring how these might be mediated in the context of caretaking. In a contribution drawn from their recent book, *Ageing, Corporeality and Embodiment*, Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs trace the cultural implications of aging for a generation that, as part of its “cultural revolution,” spearheaded the construction of identity through consumerism. “Within the new aging,” Gilleard and Higgs argue, “the corporeality of old age, once a central pillar in the construction of a universalized model of aging, has been revealed as both less solid and more contingent. Its embodiment—the way people ‘act’ or ‘show’ their age—varies more widely than before.” The articles in the “Mirror Mirror” section are complemented by a selection of visual artworks curated by Zeilig—paintings, photographs, sketches, and a film—that further reflect on materiality, embodiment, and older age.

Other contributions to the second issue of *Age, Culture, Humanities*, in productive dialogue with the “Mirror Mirror” section, offer additional perspectives on embodiment and visual culture. For example, in the second installment of the recurring “Age Studies in the Disciplines” feature, Sabine Kampmann argues for expanded attention to the field she refers

to as Visual Aging Studies, which encompasses not only art history but also the study of contemporary popular culture, including commercial images. "Pictures of age and aging are not only symptoms of general ideas about age," Kampmann explains, "but also play an important part in producing ideational images and models of age. It is therefore necessary to examine visual material in terms of its different manifestations and its modes of production and reception, as well as to inquire into the functions images of aging assume in diverse social contexts." Applying these strategies to the motif of "mutton dressed as lamb," Kampmann demonstrates the need for further interdisciplinary exchange among diverse fields, including art history, archaeology, and other disciplines informed by gender, media, and cultural studies.

A position paper by Alessandra Lopez y Royo approaches the question of fashion and embodiment from the perspective of a woman in later life working as a model for fashion and fine art photography. While acknowledging the complexities surrounding the profession of modeling, this auto-ethnographic essay argues that modeling can be understood as "empowering and creative, rather than [viewed] as necessarily demeaning and objectifying." The author's personal experiences give her compelling opportunities to reflect on the larger theoretical, ethical, and aesthetic implications of modeling work.

A set of three linked articles in this issue focuses on cultural conceptions of age stages in the influential media of children's literature and fairy-tale adaptations. The articles on "Perpetual Adolescence and Liminal Adulthood" by Helma van Lierop-Debrauwer, Vanessa Joosen, and Anita Wohlmann argue that boundaries between age stages are increasingly difficult to draw as they explore evolving understandings of (delayed) adulthood manifested in children's literature and in cinema. In "How to Recognize an Adult when You Meet One," Lierop-Debrauwer brings an age studies perspective to the part-feline/part-human ambivalence of Minoes, the protagonist of a beloved Dutch children's novel published in 1970. Comparing this to the film adaptation, which was released in 2001, Lierop-Debrauwer traces changing contours of

adulthood in literature for children: “Instead of representing a fixed age identity, adulthood is portrayed as being as much a process of becoming as childhood is, as it is characterized by inner growth and making individual choices,” she explains.

Joosen’s article contrasts the implications of “childlike” parents in the *Polleke* book series by the Dutch author Guus Kuijer and the novel *The Illustrated Mum*, by British author Jacqueline Wilson, the title of which refers to an extensively tattooed mother. Citing Ann Alston’s observation that children’s books published since the 1970s often ask the child reader to understand and sympathize with the adults’ problems, Joosen explores the age ideology of these texts and considers the ways in which they might be illuminated by—and, in turn, help us better understand—sociological perspectives on the changing construction of age categories, such as the recent, more flexible and fragmented model of adulthood as extended adolescence.

In Wohlmann’s work, gendered age confronts the reflection in the mirror in two contemporary film versions of the Snow White tale, both released in 2012: *Mirror Mirror* and *Snow White and the Huntsman*. To a thoughtful analysis of the competition between the young Snow White and the queen who seeks to retain the appearance of youth, Wohlmann adds a compelling age-focused reading of a less-frequently considered element of these narratives: the “Seven Dwarfs.” Together, these linked articles on liminal age stages reveal that the components and boundaries of age categories in children’s literature and fairy tale revisions—influential instruments of age ideology and of visual culture—are fluid and evolving.

Whereas the essays on “Perpetual Adolescence” analyze literary representations of delayed adulthood, two articles in this issue approach questions of corporeal and cultural aging through close attention to depictions in cultural texts of spaces designed for the residential care of older adults. In an exciting collaboration between an architecture scholar and a film studies scholar, Annmarie Adams and Sally Chivers apply their respective disciplinary knowledge to examine the spatial and conceptual

structuring of the institutional “home” in Sarah Polley’s film, *Away from Her* (based on the Alice Munro story “The Bear Came over the Mountain”), in which a husband struggles both with the demeaning assumptions about people with dementia that are projected by an institution’s architecture and lighting and with his wife’s evident contentment with her new residence. Analyzing various home spaces in the film enables the authors to probe the meanings of “home” and to highlight the interplay of those meanings with various architectural design decisions.

“Putting Age into Place,” by Ulla Kriebner, similarly considers the significance of space for conceptions of aging—in this case, contrasting the representations of two fictional care homes: the oppressive long-term facility featured in John Mighton’s play *Half Life*, and the comfortable, hotel-like retirement home at the center of Joan Barfoot’s novel *Exit Lines*. What these two Canadian narratives share, Kriebner suggests, is a focus on “residents’ individual resistance, subversion, and agency.” Mapping this resistance in the space of the care home offers alternatives to the narratives of decline often associated with older age and with the need for care.

We are also delighted to share with readers the winning essay of our second annual Graduate Student Essay Contest, Lauren Palmor’s “Exploding the Hearth: Considering Victorian Aging.” This article participates in visual aging studies by reconsidering the familiar image of the Victorian hearth, with particular attention to the social and economic conditions of the older people associated with that part of the domestic interior in numerous paintings and in the public imagination. Palmor’s contribution, along with others in this issue, makes a strong case for the value of age studies approaches to understanding visual cultures.

Yet another angle on age and embodiment is evident in this issue’s forum, “Age and/as Disability,” which has been curated by Erin Gentry Lamb. This set of contributions probes correspondences and divergences between age studies and disability studies in a variety of intersectional contexts. Whereas, as Lamb points out in her introduction to the forum, scholarly work on age and on disability have largely

maintained a conceptual distance between the fields, this set of essays helps further an important dialogue between these fields—not only as areas of scholarly inquiry, but also as mutual interventions in a globalized, neoliberal economic system. Potential connections among age studies, disability studies, and queer theory (Jane Gallop); the implications of migrant workers providing care (Rüdiger Kunow); the intersectionality of age and disability with race in the context of inclusive design (Aimi Hamraie); and the relation between frailty in an individual and in an aging population (Woodward) offer a range of approaches through which to sharpen and expand conceptions of the interrelations of and distinctions among age, frailty, and disability.

Exclusive to the digital edition of this issue is an essay by Leni Marshall that integrates interviews with four scholars who have significantly contributed to, and who continue to build on, the foundations of age studies. In “The Past Is Not ‘Was’; It ‘Is,’” Tom Cole, Toni Calasanti, Marilyn Gugliucci, and Roberta Maierhofer, each approaching the study of age from different disciplinary perspectives, share the origins of their interest in age studies methodologies as well as their hopes for the future of the field. These interviews reveal, as Marshall puts it, how “the history of age studies serves as the foundation for its future.” After considering the intellectual trajectory of each of these four influential voices, Marshall concludes, “Age may indeed define and divide, but the chart of those paths, the testimony of these interviewees, the existence of this journal, and the work that its readers do, together provide incontrovertible evidence that age and age studies also can combine and connect.”

As the journal continues growing into its role as “a ‘place’ to congregate . . . to learn about emerging work in the field,” you’ll find additional updates, digital exclusives, and reviews of current scholarship posted to the journal’s website throughout the year. We are also posting a list of books available for review on the journal website, and we aim to build, in partnership with NANAS, a digital database of age studies scholarship. We welcome your participation in this intellectual community as the voices and visions of age studies scholarship continue to develop and to diversify.

NOTES

¹ These quotations are from responses to a survey circulated to scholars in related fields as the journal was taking shape.