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## Book Review

*Review of Amigoni, David and Gordon McMullan, eds. Creativity in Later Life: Beyond Late Style. Routledge. 2018. pp 278. Price: \$99.75 (Hardcover); \$21.98 (eBook).*

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This volume aims to tackle ‘creativity’—what it is, and how it presents itself in late life—on the crossroads of two lenses: cultural gerontology and the arts and humanities. The editors say this is a “provisional” collection, including authors of diverse backgrounds, speaking from a wide area of experiences, “who were likely to approach the subject of late-life creativity from very different, even frankly conflicting, viewpoints” (10). They claim that gerontological contributors tend to be interested in the “*effects of creativity on old age* [while] arts-and-humanities scholars tend to focus on the *effects of old age on creativity*” (9).

However, it may be oversimplifying, to infer that cultural gerontology interprets creativity as a healing practice, whereas the arts and humanities take a broader sociological view of aging. Anthropologists, who span both disciplines, have been major players in cultural gerontology bringing important theoretical insights (Climo 1992), while not avoiding the embodied practices of creativity. If anthropologists had been included in the collection, and if the editors had more broadly represented cultural gerontology, their readership might have been widened. For now readers might include older adult artists, policymakers, caregivers, and gerontologists concerned with healthy aging, and professionals from the arts and humanities.

The editors, both academics in the arts and humanities, have taken late turns towards the field of aging. David Amigoni did so when he became co-investigator for *Ages and stages: the place of theatre in representations and recollections of aging*, and primary investigator for the research network *Late-Life Creativity and the New Old Age*. Gordon McMullan, a literary critic and theatre director, has published on the concept of ‘late style’ and its shortcomings ( McMullan 2007; McMullan and Smiles 2016). As relative newcomers in the field, Amigoni and McMullan question if “late-life creativity” is best confined to a few professionals or is an integral facet of the everyday lives of older adults: “Can it encompass both Turner Prize or Pulitzer Prize winners and members of a late-life knitting circle?” (196). They don’t settle for any answer in particular, but rather demonstrate a broad spectrum of forms and meanings “late life creativity” can take.

The book is divided into five sections including late life creativity’s challenges, rethinking, variety, relationship to dementia, and application to cities. The chapters are a mix of theory, research, and personal perspective, all in the context of the United Kingdom. The section on “challenges” has articles authored by two older adults, a gerontologist and singer, as well as art therapists concerned with policy. The chapters in the “rethinking late life creativity” section question whether “late life” connotations are significant and if so, how, including here the music of David Bowie, art of William Turner, and poetry of Derek Walcott. The “varieties of late life creativity section,” includes articles on theatre, arts-generated social capital, fashion, everyday life, and creativity through civic engagement.

Initially, I wondered why the next section was created to focus on just one illness of old age: dementia. However some surprising approaches and results can be found in this section. For example in “The artistry of it all” (Chapter 13), Liz Postlewaite documents how a creative team gives workshops and

then actually moves into a dementia care home for two weeks. She reports how residents recalled and revisited work they cocreated. In the final section of the book authors depict the impacts of late life artists on their cities.

Overall, an interesting cross cutting theme in the book is what Darren Henley has called “everyday creativity” (Henley 2018). In Chapter 10, “Visual diaries, creativity, and everyday life,” “everyday creativity” is defined as the “cumulative effect of everyday reflection, decision- and meaning-making, that can contribute to innovative solutions to problems and challenges identified by communities” (Amabile, 2017 in Martin and Pilcher 2018, 223). In an ethnographic style, Wendy Martin and Katy Pilcher asked older adults to document their lives and their daily routines across an entire week with photographic diaries. Then, through in-depth interviews, the researchers collaborated with the participants to elicit the meaning of these everyday activities through the photos. More visual material, like the photographs in this chapter, would make this a more engaging and enjoyable book.

In Chapter 11, “Self, civic engagement and late-life creativity,” Angela Glendenning gives an autobiographical account of her everyday creativity, which she understands as an ability to “go the extra mile and support the underdog” (161). Glendenning creates the personal challenge *Just 70*—running, walking, swimming, canoeing, cycling, horse riding and climbing tors all within seven weeks—to raise money for a dialysis machine, and builds a second career as a volunteer in race relations. She says: “it seems that when we focus on the needs of others, we also reap benefits ourselves” (163).

This collection has a unique aim: to bring together cultural gerontology and the arts and humanities. Indeed, Twigg and Martin (2014) have stated that the “humanities have not been greatly engaged with the topic of age” (354). Yet, although the attempt may be laudable, this collection may be too heavily weighted to the arts and humanities. Of twelve authors, seven are professors and researchers in health and human sciences, only three specifically mention gerontology in the contributors’ section. It would be interesting to see research on late life creativity that has been *co-created* by gerontologists and the arts and humanities, conducted within community, and in intergenerational contexts. Intentional collaboration of the two disciplines could be combined with Community-based Action Research (CBAR), which would allow for a more realist representation. In Chapter 8, Jackie Reynolds, a gerontologist in the collection, calls for research on older adults that accounts for what constitutes successful or effective communities. Perhaps in the wake of this book more cultural gerontologists and people from the arts and humanities will enact transdisciplinary practices and shared analyses that result in a future collection. If that collection continues to challenge ageism and unsettle stereotypes, it will be much appreciated.

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