

REVIEW

Silver Universe: Views on Active Living

Laura Dryjanska and Roberto Giua (eds), Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2018, 320 pp., hbk £75.00, ISBN 13: 978 1 4985 5232 5

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Finding reductiveness in representations of 'ageing', which present growing older as a series of isolated issues, Dryjanska and Giua, through their edited collection, instead wish to broaden the discussion to incorporate the pursuit of fulfilment and quality of life (p. xi) – matters which they suggest are neglected as one's universe 'becomes silver' (p. xi). Although recognising an increased societal emphasis on the need to age healthily, Dryjanska and Giua are keen to tackle any lingering Cartesian mind–body dualism, drawing inspiration from Italian culture which places an emphasis on bettering one's wellbeing through beauty, art and other pleasures.

In order to break down siloed issues and consider an entire 'constellation' of different experiences of growing older (p. xii), Dryjanska and Giua have compiled an eclectic and wide-ranging mix of essays from experts from diverse fields. Ranging from neurology and psychology (*e.g.* Chapter 5) to law (Chapters 4 and 13), tourism (Chapter 1) and nutrition (Chapter 9), this interdisciplinary approach, they hope, will inspire the more meaningful and holistic pursuit of 'active living', incorporating wellbeing, diet and disease prevention regimes alongside physical exercise. That the editors have made a strong effort not only to be inter-disciplinary in their approach, but also to have a strong representation of female voices throughout, should also be celebrated.

Directed broadly at 'the worldwide English-speaking audience', the editors imply that this volume should be used to inspire an extremely wide range of people to invest more positively in their lifestyle for the sake of disease prevention. Not to do so, they claim, should even be considered 'a slap in the face of intergenerational solidarity' (p. xii). Indeed, by ignoring the received wisdom that 'prevention is better than cure' and failing to take responsibility for one's health, one risks placing great economic and emotional strain on one's family and society as we age.

Nevertheless, despite the impressively broad scope, at times the potency of the collection was undermined by a lack of clarity regarding any didactic intention. Indeed, while the editors were clear in their wish to provide a range of views and insights, it was hard to perceive a strong narrative or normative thread between the articles, which seemed to be somewhat mismatched in their intended purpose. While some, such as Trudy Corrigan's 'Lessons Learned from the Dublin City

University Ireland Intergenerational Learning Program' (Chapter 6), could easily be appreciated by a wide audience, others, such as Carbone's 'Mono-strategic (Direct and Indirect) and Multi-strategic (Indirect) Rehabilitative Interventions for Alzheimer's Disease' (Chapter 3) – a description of the pathology of Alzheimer's disease and strategies to restore lost cognitive function – were obfuscatory and largely irrelevant to those without an appropriate background. It may well be the case that such articles do indeed serve as a useful reference for certain professional groups, however, such technicality detracts from any underlying message about active living which could be absorbed by a lay audience, such that Dryjanska and Giua want to attract.

Moreover, the changing focus between ageing and the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's was unexplained and somewhat unclear. For example, the collection both begins and ends with a discussion about dementia, with Dryjanska and Giua posing the question of whether one is 'already dead when you lose your identity to a neurodegenerative disease?' To posit such striking questions in such close proximity to discussions of ageing in general seems to imply falsely that such diseases are indeed an inevitable or normal part of the ageing process and could be described as stigmatising. Similarly, in Chapter 2, Bruni, Lagana, Addesi, Notaro *et al.* write that dementia 'steals one's mind, while transforming and damaging one's relationships, thus creating unbridgeable cognitive and affective losses' (p. 13). They continue that after diagnosis, families 'start the exhausting routine of a full-time care job that is not chosen but withstood' (p. 14). As well as diverging significantly from contemporary social inclusion frameworks for considering issues surrounding dementia, the potential immediate emotional impact of such discourse on any readers living with dementia or their carers should be cautioned.

It is easy to understand the motivation of Dryjanska and Giua of putting together an expansive and inter-disciplinary collection of works, breaking down what they see as the bounded issues of ageing and taking a more holistic approach, in turn mirroring the more communal culture of Italy from which they take inspiration. Despite such positive intentions, however, the flaws of the edition may lessen the chance that the collected knowledge will impact as wide an audience as they hope.

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