

authors feel that, frequently, immigrant women are particularly vulnerable to a lowered self-esteem when leaving their homelands. Immigrant women "find in a foreign country, similar home responsibilities, but less help and less female adult companionship than in their countries." Very often, their status is less egalitarian at home than in Canada. Their husbands, struggling for social and financial survival as well, consider the traditional roles of females a safeguard for their own security. Therefore, consciously or subconsciously, they discourage their wives and other female members of their family and friends to adopt the ways of the new country, and to strive for an independent position in society, which Canadian born women come to expect.

This is one of the first publications devoted to the more precarious new Canadians—women immigrants. One message comes through all these life stories: the acquisition of language is crucial for new Canadian women. Without language skills, immigrant women must struggle for survival in their homes, on the job and in the community, without much hope of developing their potential as individuals, to form meaningful networks of support for themselves and to exist outside their ethnic surroundings. Their mental well-being may be at risk when forced to function in a world they cannot comprehend because of the language limitations. It is a human right to be able to communicate with people around you, it is one fundamental birthright of every human being on this planet. For immigrant women, learning the language of their new country can be the most crucial helping hand extended to them. Unfortunately, too often, women are not eligible to attend language classes and not enough emphasis is placed on filling this need. Readers of this booklet will not forget, that language is the key to new life.

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Women as Elders: Images, Visions, and Issues Marilyn J Bell, ed *New York: Haworth Press, Inc, 1986 Pp 90*

Until recently there has been a paucity of literature in the academic realm reflecting meaningful explorations of the world of aging women. Most of the gerontological literature reports research done of a comparative nature, attempting to discern gender differences in later life by using androcentric norms and methodologies. Bell, in her introduction to *Women as Elders*, reminds us that in women's studies text books, elderly women are merely footnoted with a few references to some facts about meno-

pause, depression and the empty nest syndrome. Even younger feminists are accused by their elders of ignoring the issues and concerns and the very lives of older women. Thus, the subjective experiences of aging women have been dismissed for seeming lack of relevance with the result that their lives are often hidden and invisible. This symposium attempts to bring to light and celebrate the diversity of the lives of elder women and to translate their concerns into a feminine context. It includes five essays, an annotated bibliography and a section devoted to book reviews, each by a different author.

A brief and engaging preface is written by feminist poet, Gert Beadle, herself an elderly woman and a member of a Web of Crones. Drawing on her own experiences as an activist in feminist issues, she shares with us a vivid and personalized image of the intrinsic nature and character of the Crone. She informs us that the Crone's accumulated and hard earned wisdom affords her an overview of the big picture, an acute awareness of what is important and hence, a world view that is at one and the same time realistic and visionary. Her journey is a more inward one, no longer concerned with political reform, but by no means does she withdraw from life. In fact, she is more active than ever. Her energies are now given to nurturing life in herself and others, whereby she builds connectedness between women and their common needs. She does not control life but has stripped herself of its excess baggage, whereby she becomes more vulnerable to the wide range and depth of human feelings. As a result, empathy is one of her hallmarks and becomes the strongest bond between she and other Crones. Her ultimate letting go will be in her confrontation with death, the aura of which is tainted with a characteristic of a patriarchal society—that of fear.

While Beadle encourages women to nurture the strength they find in one another, Nancy Breeze in the "Crone's Nest: A Vision" describes the conceptualization of a visionary community living arrangement for women elders. The issues which this project highlights—health care, housing and economics—are particularly important to older women since they are more likely than men to be widowed and living in isolation, suffering from more chronic illnesses and living close to the poverty level. The concept of shared housing for the elderly is not new as a means of minimizing isolation and pooling limited resources. However, the Crone's Nest according to Breeze, "envisions the home as a healing community providing alternatives for physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health and growth." Even though this essay is unevenly written and the focus is not always clear, the proposed venture does stretch our

imaginations to envision seemingly far-flung possibilities and challenges us to exert the effort now to create the future.

“Remembering Our Foremothers: Older Black Women as Embodied in the Novels of Toni Morrison” is a fascinating collaboration between two scholars, Karla Holloway who is black and Stephanie Demetrakopoulos who is white. Together and separately they examine spiritual and political strategies of older Black women in four of Black author Toni Morrison’s novels. The results are twofold and intentional. They present the reader with rich images of Black feminism and spirituality by using several frameworks for study, including mythology, archetypes, and the Afro/American heritage. For both, Morrison’s older women personify growth into a “magical wisdom of age.” Secondly, each authors’ analysis exemplifies the distinctions between a Black and white female’s perspective of the spiritual and political significance of Morrison’s women. Despite their different interpretations, both authors help us to capture the memories we have of wide and resourceful older women. As women today search for a spirituality devoid of patriarchal symbols and images, these authors interpret for us a feminine spirituality as found in Morrison’s older and liberated women. In the conclusion to this joint essay, the authors note that their approach is not patriarchal or competitive; that is, their differences are not to be construed as either/or, but ones that respect both/and, which they term matriarchal wisdom.

In the next essay, “Aging: Religious Sisters Facing the Future,” Rita Margoff discusses the problems and issues confronting religious congregations of women. Probably in no other group are the effects of an aging society more visible. With fewer women entering religious orders, the orders are disproportionately aged. In the author’s own congregation, 44 percent of the women are 60 years and over which is at least four times that of the average for the general population. In addressing the problems resulting from this age structure, Margoff presents some interesting comparisons between the effects of these problems on current groups of aged sisters and those of the future. The issues raised in this article are ones that all religious orders are encountering. Nonetheless, a more personalized narrative of how sisters view their lives, of how these women have handled the tremendous changes that have swept through religious orders in the past twenty-five years, and some insight into the life experiences of members of religious congregations of women and the hope and fears that emerge from these experiences, would have made for much richer and more informative reading.

Until recently, the belief that not many women are in the work force and the assumption that those who are, do not take their jobs too seriously, has minimized interest in their adjustment to retirement. Jean Coyle’s essay, “Retirement Planning and the Woman Business Owner” is a welcome addition to a growing body of research on women and retirement. Coyle finds that for women business owners, like most white collar professional women, work provides meaning, economic security and self-esteem and identity. Her concern with women entrepreneurs is that they may evade retirement issues since they can choose not to retire, thus minimizing planning and making the adjustment more difficult. With the growing number of women who own and run their own businesses, almost half of whom are 50 years of age and over, Coyle sees the need to specifically investigate their retirement process. Although her attention is on a specific group, the issues she raises and her suggestions for further research are relevant to all women who will someday be facing retirement.

The last essay in this symposium can give Canadian women further reason to be thankful for a socialized system of medicine. Doris Hammond in, “Health Care For Older Women: Curing the Disease,” focuses on the relationship between the health problems of older women which are mostly chronic and Medicare (medical insurance in the United States for persons 65 years of age and over) reimbursement policies favouring treatment for acute illnesses which are more prevalent in older men.

However, readers on both sides of the boarder can resonate with Hammond’s underlying thesis and it is that the real disease is age and sex discrimination. She points out that not only are older women’s health problems trivialized within the health care system, but the least amount of research dollars are spent on the prevention of those chronic illnesses which effect them the most such as breast cancer and osteoporosis. Even past longitudinal studies on health and aging have excluded women subjects and medical textbooks are still “unisex,” assuming that the aging process is the same for women and for men. Not surprisingly, Hammond advocates for political activism as a solution. She presents as an example the history of women’s health activism which was subsumed into a male model with the advent of modern medicine. Women again through collective action can help change stereotypes and abuses to insure that their health needs are taken seriously. She reminds us “that it is only through women, themselves, that the best solution will be found.”

The collection concludes with an annotated bibliography on older women, policy and politics, and three book reviews. Although somewhat informative, the majority of these entries consists of brief reviews of papers and reports that would be almost impossible to access for further reference and study.

Putting together a small collection on a topic as broad and diverse as older women is a difficult task. *Women As Elders* because of its diversity lacks cohesiveness. Its brevity does not allow for an in-depth analysis into any one of the topics. Despite the limitations, a commonality emerges around the issues raised and the questions asked which are germane to all women. The authors present a myriad of concerns and images we all confront as we age and they break through some commonly held stereotypes about older women. We are challenged to "look toward new forms, to develop alternatives to assert ourselves and to take the risks to realize our vision." Although I would not recommend this collection to be used as a primary text, these essays could be used by students of women's studies and by all persons as a preparation and a looking forward to the time when we will all be elders.

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Canada's Aging Population. Susan A. McDaniel, *Toronto and Vancouver: Butterworths, 1986. Pp.136.*

Canada's Aging Population, by Susan McDaniel is an excellent sourcebook for anyone interested in the area of population aging. *Canada's Aging Population* is the first book in the Butterworths Perspectives on Individual and Population Aging series, designed to provide review and analysis of Canadian based scientific and professional knowledge in a variety of gerontological topics. The choice of demographic aging is particularly appropriate to begin with as it provides a framework for discussion of other social gerontological topics. This book is written in such a manner that it can be easily understood by the reader without any expertise in this area.

McDaniel begins by exploring the causes, myths and measures of population aging. This first chapter provides a clear discussion of the terminology of population aging—what it is and is not—as well as an interesting exploration of the myths of population aging. This chapter also explores the measures used in the study of population aging. Charts and diagrams are well used by McDaniel to assist the reader in comprehension of this material.

Chapter two provides an excellent discussion of the conceptual and research perspectives in the study of population aging. The information is up to date and the strengths and weaknesses of the discussion of the various philosophical arguments within each perspective, but rather a concise and succinct overview of the research paradigms.

A third chapter is devoted to exploring the Canadian experience of demographic aging in a global context. This chapter outlines how Canada compares with other countries in the world, both developed and developing, in terms of how "old" it is. McDaniel strongly makes the point that if we understand that population aging is a *gradual* process then continued aging can be viewed as requiring accommodation and a shifting of priorities. The final part of the chapter consists of an interesting discussion of Canada's aging past and present. Within this the trends relating to sex ratio, place of residence, and language and ethnicity are highlighted.

Chapter four reviews some of the major contemporary issues and concerns surrounding population aging. The first issue discussed is the advent of zero population growth. McDaniel provides clear explanations of the relationship between zero population growth and mortality; between population growth and economic growth; between aging, zero population growth and level of economic development; and the changing attitudes toward population in the advent of zero growth. Within the section on aging, zero population growth and level of economic development, McDaniel provides a particularly interesting discussion of three situations of population change and the resulting relationships between population growth rates, economic burden, fertility, mortality and aging.

A further section of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of economic concerns in an aging population. Issues such as dependency burdens, productivity/creativity concerns and wealth distribution are briefly explored. Economic issues of a policy nature are more completely discussed in chapter five.

The remainder of chapter four introduces mobility and opportunity structures in an aging population and a brief discussion of the particular problems of women in an aging society. Particularly interesting is McDaniel's discussion of the confusion between women's dependency and population again. McDaniel states that because the greatest number of old people are women and that many of these women are in financial trouble due to their life