



AGEING + COMMUNICATION + TECHNOLOGIES

A Year of Aging

Edited by
Myriam Durocher,
Nora T. Lamontagne
and Constance Lafontaine



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A Year of Aging

Introduction

**Kim Sawchuk, Myriam Durocher,
and Nora T. Lamontagne**

A Year of Aging creatively and critically examines media coverage of older adults and issues related to aging in Québec's mainstream media in 2017.

Over 2,360 articles were collected over this one-year period. **A Year of Aging** participants were invited to respond to an issue of their choosing from this corpus. Researchers, artists, researcher-creators, and activists of all ages who are members of the Ageing + Communication + Technologies (ACT) network,¹ were asked to use at least one article published in 2017 to produce a creative work or text from their own perspective, position, research interest, or activist goal. Drawing upon these news stories for inspiration, the contributors to **A Year of Aging** dissect, contort, and explore new avenues of critical thinking about representations of aging in the media.

The contributions to **A Year of Aging** playfully critique the current public discourse to promote alternative conceptions of our current and future experiences of aging and to raise and explore topics such as solitude, bodies, infrastructure, caregiving, elder abuse, housing, and leisure. The project, as a whole, fosters new methods for engaging with representations of aging in a collaborative, intergenerational manner.

Participants were not asked to conduct a media content analysis (e.g., Lagacé, Laplante, & Davignon, 2011) or to examine the ways in which older people and aging are presented in the news (Marshall, 2017). **A Year of Aging** is not a critique of journalistic methods either. Rather, this collection is a collaborative reflection on what was seen and what was rendered invisible within the articles published and collected during the year 2017² in Québec.

The voices join together with a common purpose: to claim a fair, just, and visible place for aging and older adults in our current mediascape. Of particular interest for our contributors is the framing, tone, and issues highlighted or downplayed in articles directly or indirectly concerned with aging in 2017. How do we rethink the current media imaginary? How might we address what is presented, how it is presented, and what is not presented? How might we develop a critical method that uses these articles, their formats, and their words to make space for new aging possibilities? These are some of the questions that prompted the overall approach to the project.

In its form as much as in its elaboration process, **A Year of Aging** challenges our understanding of aging from a cultural and media perspective. This work is consistent with other critical studies of age that examine how cultural constructs shape the ways in which aging and older adults are understood in society (see, for example, the work of Margaret Gullette (2004) or earlier work edited by Kathleen Woodward (1999)). The media industry is involved in the creation of these social constructs and representations of aging (Lagacé, 2015; Lagacé et al., 2011; Rozanova, 2010). Yet, research highlights how issues at the intersection of aging and the media are under-represented in the

media universe (Marier & Revelli, 2017), which contributes to fostering the limited and stereotyped representations of older adults and of what it means to be old.

Some contributors to **A Year of Aging** use articles from the corpus to highlight significant absences. Inspired by surrealist aesthetics, Karine Bellerive “gives voice” to a fictional character with a neurodegenerative disease. This literary exploration conveys what is often missing in the contemporary journalistic coverage of dementia: the subjectivity of the person whose life has become “managed.”

Wendy Allen’s contribution stands against the caricatured representations of older women’s bodies in the media. Drawing on the testimonies of friends, the resulting text is an intimate exploration of the aging body. Inspired by phenomenological approaches, Allen wonders how and if these representations correspond to the experience of women, subtly confronting the limited, normative representations of older women, aging bodies, and corporeal aesthetics through the words of her interlocutors.

In her contribution, Constance Lafontaine takes notice of a crisis largely ignored in the mainstream media: the bedbug infestations in Montréal social housing and the absence of sufficient action to address the issue. These invasive creatures cause problems that are far from invisible to those who experience their presence. Lafontaine invites us to spot the bedbugs in her illustration to bring to light a topic that does not fit comfortably in current discussions of aging and social housing. The invisibility of bedbugs is different from the way in which other animals are used in the aging context. As Lafontaine notes in her second

contribution, animals are discussed to the extent that they prolong human life expectancy, either as test subjects for scientific research on aging or as tools to improve the health of older adults. In short, the complex connections that bring together animals and human lives are absent, yet animals are rendered as “tools” with a *raison d'être* to prevent human aging.

Many of the articles published during 2017 emphasize the loneliness, health problems, and frailty associated with aging. While aging in our current society can make one vulnerable, within media discussions of frailty and vulnerability, these qualities come to define becoming old in a manner that inspires pity, rather than understanding. In a context in which aging is largely discussed in biomedical terms and, more specifically, profiled as the degeneration of motor and cognitive abilities (Powell, Biggs, & Wahidin, 2006), this is hardly surprising. The health of today's and tomorrow's seniors is presented as a source of concern and anxiety in these stories that cover a range of ailments, including neurodegenerative disorders, oral health, chronic diseases, epidemics, and falls. On the flip side of this discourse are the promises and promotion of miracle cures, medical treatments, and pharmaceutical innovations that claim to “delay” or “prevent” aging.

In this context, Kiren Budhia's work of art for **A Year of Aging** considers a different question: what happens if we welcome aging as a process that begins at birth? Budhia's art challenges us to redefine our conception of aging, which is often restricted to a specific period in later life. Inspired by Buddhist philosophy, Budhia's calligraphy brings together elements that recall ancestral practices and invites us to accept our aging with serenity.

In a similar meditative move, Marie-Ève Vautrin-Nadeau proposes a vision of solitude that counters the notion of social isolation, which is generally associated with old age. Combining painting and literary creation, Vautrin-Nadeau considers the joys of solitude, which she distinguishes from the loneliness or “isolation” that results from exclusion. In a context where aging, health, and economics are linked, solitude is framed as a threat to health as pernicious as tobacco.

A significant number of 2017 stories about aging depicted concerns about the costs associated with senior care and support, the infrastructure required to support an aging population, and the fluctuations and uncertainties related to pension plans. These are just a few examples of the topics from 2017 that articulate aging in relation to health and the economy. Aging is represented as an individual “problem” that threatens our national or collective welfare, one that would need to be addressed in the interest of population management (Powell, 2011). Therefore, the current neo-liberal mode of governance makes aging an individual responsibility: individuals must look after themselves and manage their aging “properly” and “responsibly.” Aging, often conflated with health, is viewed in economic and moral terms.

These issues are discussed and associated with extensive advice on how to ensure the quality of one’s own future. While numerous articles are concerned with retirement plans and express doubts about the future (calling upon individuals to take action and plan for their retirement), too few examine the funding required for the infrastructure that will ensure the future of an aging population. Tricia Toso’s contribution identifies this issue, as she examines decisions made by parapublic bodies, such as the

Québec pension fund, the *Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec* (CDPQ), the investments of such bodies, the wider benefits that they generate, and their social and environmental impacts. At a time in which the trend is towards the privatization of public infrastructure, Toso questions some of the investments made by the CDPQ, as well as the relative lack of coverage of this issue in the Québec media. How informed are we about the decisions made concerning these investments and their implications? What is our collective responsibility when present and future are intertwined in investments that have short-term benefits, but that will have environmental and social consequences in the near future? Toso sheds new light on the links between infrastructure and aging in our daily environment, highlighting how power is negotiated in the establishment of such infrastructure and environments.

Recurring themes in the media, such as universal access to care, well-being, housing, health, and “support for seniors,” may create the impression that the government is “investing in old age.” Yet, in 2017, cuts of a billion dollars to the health and social services networks were made by the Couillard government (Agence QMI, 2016).³ This creates dissonance between the rhetoric and the realities of eldercare within a regime oriented towards austerity. The deplorable lack of government attention to the impact of these cuts on older citizens was denounced by journalists in their reports of bedridden patients, postponed residence openings, denied baths, and forced relocations from homes. These articles are variations on a single topic—abuse.

Inspired by these stories, Maude Gauthier created a satirical promotional leaflet for an idyllic residence for seniors—a place where tenants are promised that they will be exempt from bore-

dom and free from abuse. She mocks the tone used by private operators of seniors' residences. In this fictional universe of privatized care, the imagined clientele is offered services that make a residence seem reminiscent of a summer camp. Gauthier's brochure presents an offering of services that not only critiques these austerity regimes, but also echoes some of the controversial stories of elder abuse in private residences that came to light in 2017.

The fight against abuse remains an important social issue that received media attention during 2017. The year began with consultations by Québec's National Assembly on legislation to combat elder abuse (Bill 115), which was adopted in May 2017. Discussions ensued, calling for the mandatory reporting of abuse, the addition of criminal provisions, and better regulations pertaining to the use of surveillance cameras in senior residences. The issues related to the development and implementation of this bill are addressed in the contribution of Respecting Elders: Communities Against Abuse (RECAA), an activist community group based in Montréal that works towards respect for older adults and their rights. While elder abuse has been widely discussed in the media and while governments have undertaken procedures to tackle the issue, resources remain inadequate. RECAA's call for mobilization brings to the table some of the issues that require public debate. Louise Poulin, a member of RECAA, also addresses multiple definitions and manifestations of abuse. Poulin brings to the fore that, as a result of being relegated to the *faits divers* section and being reduced to individual cases, elder abuse is framed as the consequence of isolated individual acts, rather than as a systemic phenomenon. Poulin's contribution broadens our understanding of abuse.

As many organizations mobilized in 2017 to denounce provincial budget cuts that affect seniors, health-care workers, social workers, and family caregivers, some journalists tried to add a human element to highlight the effects of these cuts. Although these examples may seem like mere anecdotes, they have a collective impact that influences how aging is depicted as a public issue in the news.

These anecdotes are generally transmitted through the words of journalists. The conventions of news reporting modulate the content and tone of the stories. Countering this trend, Marietta Lubelsky, a caregiver to her ailing partner, powerfully recounts the difficulties she encounters on a daily basis. She uses her personal narrative to analyze the austerity of a system that requires her to make daily sacrifices to provide adequate care for her partner, who has a neurodegenerative disease. Her contribution reveals the gendered impacts of these budget cuts that are so seldom covered by the media. Lubelsky's personal narrative fits well with a critique of the coverage of care in the media by researchers Patrik Marier and Isabelle Van Pevenage (2016). As their study underscores, eldercare is often provided by women, which is rarely discussed in media accounts. This has the overall effect of contributing to the devaluation of this largely gendered work.

Ageism was originally theorized by Robert Butler (1969) as stereotyping and stigmatization on the basis of age, yet recent work reveals that ageism can be both implicit and explicit. For example, Patrik Marier and Marina Revelli (2017) highlight how ageism in the media is not limited to marking intergenerational differences or to producing stereotypical representations of older adults as weak and vulnerable. Ageism can be promoted

through the “positive” depiction of older people. In opposition—or perhaps in response—to the fear of aging, representations of “super-seniors” who defy the norms associated with their age⁴ were apparent throughout 2017. These images of “positive” aging contribute to the establishment of new aging-related “standards” that define the “ideal” way to be old (Billette and Lavoie, 2010) and contribute to the “successful” aging agenda (Katz, 2013).⁵

As critical gerontology researchers point out, these “positive” representations of aging can be problematic because they restrict and define the experience of successful aging in a very narrow set of measurable terms. In other words, successful aging narratives offer a reductive and limited conception of what constitutes “aging well.” Furthermore, as critical studies of aging remind us, these narratives *de facto* exclude individuals who do not fit these standards. Strongly linked to the values of a consumer society, successful aging discourses often fail to consider the structural and systemic inequalities that affect our experiences of aging (Katz, 2013). These discourses also promote the myth that older people living in conditions of precarity are solely and exclusively responsible for their current condition. Central to these discourses are life’s pleasures, such as entertainment and socializing, which become obligations.

Inspired by these topics in the field of critical gerontology, Shannon Hebblethwaite comments on the instrumentalization of seniors’ activities and hobbies, which are presented in the media as a means to an end—to “age well.” Hebblethwaite promotes the simple pleasures to be found in participating in these activities. She denounces the fact that if an activity for older adults does not generate benefits related to physical or mental health, it

is not thought to be of value.

To tackle similar issues, Line Grenier offers a critical visualization in collaboration with ACT graphic designer Antonia Hernandez that is a cross between a poster and a collage. Grenier's contribution borrows from the words of the choreographer Thierry Niang who was quoted in an article in *Le Devoir*. She adapts his words to highlight the pleasure of rehearsing, playing, or performing music for its own sake. Through this process, Grenier considers the importance of sharing an activity and the pleasure experienced, without unduly reducing these cultural or artistic practices to some putative therapeutic or educational purpose. Why not play music simply for the pleasure of it? Must everything be good for you as you age?

Injunctions on how to “age well” emerge in the numerous articles from 2017 that extol the merits of special diets, travel, or physical exercise to stay healthy. Several also provide the secrets to having successful romantic relationships “despite” being old (Roanova, 2010). These discourses to promote a healthy lifestyle exemplify the characteristics associated with “successful aging.” While, in 2016, “potato flakes” were at the centre of the biggest food-related controversy in residential and long-term care centres, in 2017, this “honour” went to soft drinks,⁶ which residents living in residential and long-term care centres were not permitted for health reasons. Inspired by this idea and by the many food recommendations in news media in 2017, Myriam Durocher proposes a satirical “anti-aging” menu. Her nutritional advice, often contradictory and absurd, counters the notions that aging is a disease that can be prevented through the right diet and that we eat only for instrumental purposes.

Beyond words, journalistic discourses often “illustrate” the

subject of aging. Emmanuelle Parent's contribution to **A Year of Aging** focuses on the images that were used alongside stories about aging. Her visual analysis points to the predominance of photos of wrinkled hands as stand-ins for age. Despite the great variety of situations in which these hands are used—from assisted death to receiving help to bathe in a residential and long-term care centre—Parent notes that they often become meaningless and overused symbols of aging. Her text suggests that we prefer to look at hands over aging bodies due to all of their evocative imperfections. This substitution is yet another way in which older adults become invisible and reduced to a single, repeated image. The hand, in fact, suggests an individual's age while giving little consideration to the full extent of the embodied nature of aging.

While Emmanuelle Parent questions the visualization of aging provided by the media, Nora T. Lamontagne examines the words and journalistic tactics used to capture the public's attention in newspaper headlines. Analyzing the titles of newspaper articles, she highlights the use of age as a vector for sensationalism that establishes the "norm" for those who are aging. She observes and critiques how certain forms and practices associated with "good" aging are framed and valued, such as running a marathon or wearing a bikini.

Using titles of articles, in a manner that is both creative and bold, Magdalena Olszanowski poetically creates a dreamlike, disparate depiction of aging. Meant to be read aloud, this evocative piece and implied performance highlights the rhythmic ways in which we talk about older adults and aging in everyday life. In this way, Olszanowski's approach triggers kaleidoscopic impressions of aging, reminiscent of the way semiologist and writer

Roland Barthes uses fragments from literature and everyday life to reflect upon the social and cultural contours of love.

In both form and design, **A Year of Aging** is inspired by Barthes' *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* [A lover's discourse: fragments] (1977). Like Barthes, we make use of the power of repeated fragments of discourse; although, in our case, we do so to examine the complications of the cultural discourse on aging, not love. This approach allows for a collaborative creative reading of the media texts by our contributors. When assembled, the contributions in **A Year of Aging** challenge common, taken-for-granted, everyday truths about aging and open up a space for a dialogue and discussion of a range of issues on the topic of aging. This approach is creative and intellectual, and takes an activist perspective; it is also part of literary and creative traditions that uphold the importance of process and outcome in the act of social criticism. It is an approach that intentionally draws on the legacy of feminist traditions of media scholarship, among others, which consider how politics are shaped through language, genres, and literary styles. When creating **A Year of Aging**, we wanted to play with and work with these media discourses to carry out an idiosyncratic critique of the idioms that constitute our way of understanding aging and becoming old in Québec.

A Year of Aging brings to you, our readers, these fragments in no prescribed order. We invite you to find fertile juxtapositions between the texts that comprise this collection. Like a quilt or mosaic, this collection of works and reflections offers multiple points of view on the subject of aging that are at once optimistic, inspiring, and critical, and that express our worries about the presentation and representation of aging and older adults in Québec news. As you read, you will encounter prose, poems,

paintings, drawings, graphics, and visual creations that respond to these media representations. Through these works, we offer our insights, which critique, shock, move, raise awareness, and provide hope.

Notes

1 ACT is an international multidisciplinary research network that addresses the transformation of the experiences of aging with the proliferation of new forms of mediated communications in networked societies.

2 Participants had access to articles published in 2017, which had been archived through our ongoing media monitoring, and which dealt directly or indirectly with aging. The compiled articles either forthrightly or tacitly covered the topics of aging or seniors. This corpus was assembled manually throughout 2017, in order to follow the evolution of these topics and related issues in a dynamic and organic way. Thus, we have identified articles that address certain topics openly and others with only indirect references (for example, articles containing captions centred around seniors, while the issue discussed does not concern them exclusively). This was the case in the debate on assisted dying; while it did not explicitly or exclusively target seniors, it resulted in multiple publications that included pictures of older people.

3 Plus de 4 milliards \$ en mesures d'austérité [Over \$4 billion in austerity measures], *Journal de Montréal*, March 15, 2016.

4 Lagacé, Laplante, and Davignon (2011) conducted a content analysis of articles published in *The Globe and Mail* and *La Presse* between 2000 and 2009 to identify markers of explicit and implicit ageism. They demonstrate how an ageist media discourse is polarized, navigating between negative (old age as a social and economic burden, for example) and positive poles: "[...] elders who manage to meet youth standards are depicted in a 'positive' manner. In other words, those who 'do not age' are acclaimed in media discourse. It is conceivable that these negative and 'false positive' stereotypes (Billette and Lavoie, 2010) contribute to a polarization between generations of seniors, which could even result in a form of ageism that is no longer simply intergenerational, but also intragenerational" [our translation].

5 These examples become either models or exceptions. For Marshall (2017), the proliferation of images representing the aging individual as a happy, active, and healthy senior reflects the new forms of so-called successful aging. In the media, these concepts sometimes take the form of recommendations on how to "age well," or of depictions of seniors who have "aged well." Similarly, some articles extol the merits of particular diets, physical exercise, or travel to maintain fitness, or provide the secrets to a successful life for a couple "despite" old age, which are all manifestations of typical ideals related to "successful aging" (Rožanova, 2010).

6 La "petite liqueur" qui dérange [Troublesome soft drink], *Le Soleil*, March 11, 2017.

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Musicking

Line Grenier

Inspiration from Thierry Thieu Niang, choreographer

Design: **Antonia Hernández**

DANSE

JEUNE PLÉIADE

Le chorégraphe, des années au corps fatigué, à l'habileté limitée... des réflexions méditatives dans l'espace, le contact, l'équilibre et le mouvement. Les enfants regardent en silence, sans éblouir au spectacle de leur corps ou de leurs idées, mais ils sont très sensibles à la présence de leur maître. Ils sont très sensibles à la présence de leur maître, qui leur fait sentir que leur corps est un instrument de musique. Ils sont très sensibles à la présence de leur maître, qui leur fait sentir que leur corps est un instrument de musique.

« Je ne suis ni thérapeute ni éducateur spécialisé, mais simplement un homme qui aime danser et faire danser tous les autres »

Thierry Thieu Niang, chorégraphe

« I'm not a therapist, nor am I a specialized educator. I am simply someone who loves music and loves to play with others. »

Thierry Thieu Niang travaille auprès des aînés au corps fatigué une source d'inspiration

Fur-ever Young: Animals as Anti- Aging Technologies

Constance Lafontaine

Animals make frequent cameos in news media, especially in digital news media. Usually, they are not the subject of rigorous journalism; instead, they surface in so-called human-interest stories, where they are ascribed overtly anthropomorphic narratives. This typically makes it easy for news consumers to dismiss stories about animals as only being relevant to the world of “the cute,” “the banal,” or “the superficial.”

When the themes of aging and animals intersect in news media, the animals’ stories or life courses are rarely made to matter. I sought specifically to understand the ways in which non-human animals have been represented within the context of human aging. If our corpus is to be believed, the most meaningful intersection of aging and animality lies in the ability of non-human animals to allow humans to have longer and healthier lives. When aging is involved, saccharine stories about cute animals are replaced by the sober tones of science reporting.

Companion animals, such as cats and dogs, are brought into the aging conversation in a narrow way, namely by suggesting that owning them will allow seniors to age better, a common trope within active aging discourses. One article suggests that seniors should find the time to get some exercise and take “Pitou” for a walk. In another, we learn that dog ownership contributes to longer and healthier lives for seniors by improving their cardiovascular health. In other cases, companion animals are discussed purely in a context of zootherapy for seniors, whereby animals provide emotional support or have the power to counter cognitive decline.

Rather than being recognized as messy and complex relationships of responsiveness, reciprocity, and mutual responsibility, human-animal relationships are reduced to instrumental ones in humans’ later years. But how many of us would consider that our relationships with companion animals could be summed up by any curative function?

The supposed one-sidedness of the animal-senior relationship is further evinced in stories about the rise of robot “pets” and their older caretakers. Take Paro, for

instance, a much derided \$6,000 white fluffy, cuddly, animatronic seal purchased by a Montréal CHSLD some six years ago to interact with residents. We learned from the *Journal de Montréal* that the seals were still purring and batting their lashes at patients with dementia in 2017. We were told that they make the best pets for seniors because they “don’t cause allergies and require no upkeep.” When residents ask the attendants if the seals are truly alive, staff let the residents decide what to think. Life, it would seem, is not a requirement for pethood.

However, the animals that come up most abundantly in media discourses on aging only appear in passing. They are mentioned once and then quickly passed over, rendered invisible in service of a more important human subject. Here, we find coverage of the ways in which animals hold the key to anti-aging discoveries because of their genetic proximity to humans. But it is despite this proximity, or maybe because of it, that we must constantly renew our belief in their distance from humans, in their strangeness, and in their alterity, so as to extract this knowledge. They are the monkeys whose lives were extended because of a near-starvation diet. The mice whose

newly discovered capacity for episodic memory matters mainly because it might hold the secret to curing Alzheimer's disease. Or, even, the naked mole rat who never revealed discernable signs of aging in experiments—it might hold the secrets to eternal human life!

Meanwhile, our growing understanding of the biology of human aging, our own expanding life expectancies, and the promise of an aging-free human future continue to rely on the confinement, torture, and killing of animals. The instrumentalization of animals in media discourses on aging are certainly symptomatic of the human-animal hierarchies we uphold. But the instrumentalization of animals is also indicative of the roles we attribute to humans in their later lives. As media discourses on aging focus on medicalizing the aging body and pathologizing the aging process, the complexities of human-animal relationships get stifled, and non-humans become technologies of anti-aging.

Find all the Bedbugs!





Illustration by Constance Lafontaine

Experiential Journey Through Healthcare Institutions in Montréal

Marietta Lubelsky

I am Marietta Lubelsky, a primary care provider to my husband, Richard. He has Parkinson's disease with Lewy Body Dementia, which are abnormal structures that build up in the brain. I am 81 and my husband is 83 years old. Over the past year, my husband was hospitalized several times. During my extended visits, I became an eyewitness to many problems the patients and the healthcare professionals are facing within this institutionalized setting.

I witnessed the consequences of financial cutbacks and the pyramidal reorganization of the healthcare and social systems. The consequences of austerity and the top-down management are not discussed directly in the articles provided in the context of **A Year of Aging** project. However, reports are presented in most headlines about the extreme forms of mistreatment that occur in some facilities such as

long-term care institutions. Cutbacks and poor ratios of staff to patients result in overstressed and overworked healthcare professionals. The elderly are the ones who are subjected to the cruelty of the process, which we all witness at every level of the health care system. The decision-makers and managers do not understand, or maybe do not wish to comprehend, the problems. They are too far removed from day-to-day operations to witness the conditions in the wards of the hospital.

Every day, I need to be one step ahead of the game. It is exhausting and very frustrating. Talking about abuse: the system abuses not only the patients but also the caregivers, advocates and health care workers. As an advocate for my husband, my physical presence is needed most of the time. Sometimes I wait for hours to speak to a doctor, and the toll it takes on me is disregarded. My attendance is deemed essential, especially in a case where the patient has difficulty communicating or remembering what was said or which tests were performed.

The system is sick. The caregivers are wonderful, but they are overwhelmed and overworked. Consequently, and inevitably, they are prevented from allocating the time needed to patients, to family and/or to caregivers. The healthcare workers are inundated with time restraints due to the heavy loads and demands that are dictated by the system. It is almost impossible to meet the long-term needs of the elderly, who are vulnerable and in need of medical and social

systems. It is a societal duty to address the obstacles every one of us is or will be facing. We need to inquire and investigate the present conditions, and try to overcome the hurdles facing us. I believe that we need to work collectively to alter the system. Unless we approach the policy makers, we are going to be facing a situation where people will suffer and die. We must become vocal and be aware that silence kills some, while others endure incredible suffering due to a non-functional system, created by bureaucrats and opportunists.

Within the context of **A Year of Aging**, I have witnessed the challenges of the system, and I feel as I have aged ten years in one. I do not see any changes happening for the better, unless our combined voices are heard. I fought and advocated for the support we presently receive, loudly and clearly. My husband of 58 years became a shell of himself as a result of his illness. It is wonderful when the sun shines through the cracks of the shell. However, I know that eventually the cracks will disappear as the disease progresses. Now my role is to advocate for my husband, to give him a quality of life and so he can spend the remaining days of his life in dignity and respect.

I learned the importance of advocating for the ill, and becoming an active and educated interventionist to speak for those who are not able to express their needs due to increased frailty of old age or sickness. The situation is such that in a health care system where doctors, nurses and workers are restrained by allotted time and excessive workloads, they do not have sufficient opportunity to show empathy and to be mindful of the needs of patients. Consequently, it is essential to have a spokesperson to stand in for the sick and to support people in need. To me, it is a human right to receive support with empathy regardless of age, to foster dignity and ultimately, not to be neglected by the system.

The Faces of Older Adults Have Ten Fingers

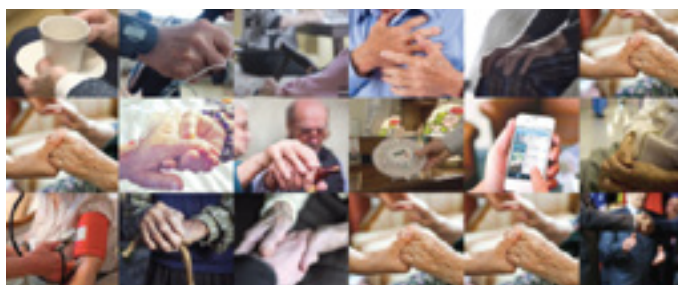
Emmanuelle Parent

I remember my fascination with my grandmother Beatrice's hands. I studied them carefully as they ran fervently across the piano. Still strong, her hands danced with energy and precision over the black and white keys. I recall their thin envelope of skin, through which blue veins mapped the paths of the blood from her palpitating heart. With each movement of her fingers, the delicate quality of the skin drew folds where new constellations of brown age spots were fashioned. Today, the memory of my Grandma's hands still evokes an interesting contrast between fragility and agility.



Clusters of images accompanying articles dealing directly or indirectly with aging in Québec print media in 2017.

My fascination with her silk paper hands seems to be shared by Québec's print media. In 2017, more than one out of twenty pictures accompanying articles dealing with aging present hands in close-up shots. The abundance of photographs of hands in the media prompted me to ask: Why are there so many older adults' hands in newspapers? In what context are they utilized?



These photographs paint a portrait of aging hands that is remarkably consistent. Introspective hands: small lonely hands obediently placed on the knees, simply resting one on top of one another, or with fingers crossed. Supported hands: two hands on a cane, or one hand on two canes, some of them clinging to the handle of a walker. Young hands also slip into this epidermal quilt; smooth hands fulfilling a contract, taking the pressure from a wrinkled arm, or of course, pushing a wheelchair. At long last, there are my favourites: hands that have fun! These hands throw a ball of pétanque, they assemble words on a

Scrabble board, or sew together squares of coloured fabrics. These body parts have no face. The photographs are close-up shots, and the people to whom the hands belong are faded, if not completely absent. However, the skin is exclusively white, stressing an undeniable lack of diversity.

If an image is worth 1,000 words, I argue that the 1,000 words emerging from the hand shots rarely have any relation to the content of the accompanying article. Who are the subjects associated with these body parts? The most common themes of the texts are medically assisted death, statistical facts on Québec and Canada's aging population, biological discoveries about old age, and laws and policies targeting seniors. Some articles marry the image to the subject more effectively than others. For example, when an article describing seniors' use of technologies is coupled with a photograph of hands on a computer keyboard. More often than not, anonymous hands are used to refer to any subject: an article about bathing in the Gaspé Peninsula or an article featuring financial assistance for seniors in Prince Edward Island. Hands illustrate living in dignity, or being found dead a month after arriving in a residence. A tax-related article even presents three photos of anonymous hands alongside its text. Needed? Probably not. It would appear that photos which exhibit seniors' extremities are simply used as stopgaps for newspapers that should use visual support for their texts.



For numerous reasons, the wrinkled hand is a convenient means of communication; it quickly establishes the age of the person to whom it belongs; it remains a neutral referent when one wants to talk about older people in a general manner; it is anonymous when one deals with legal affairs; and it hides the identity of a sick person. In my opinion, these privacy and photographic rights policies are no excuse for the overuse of these images. In 2017, the very same picture is used multiple times for various media articles. One particular photo, where young hands help old hands to get up, appears a dozen times for different topics. Commonly called stock photos, these images, used from one article to another, are found on image bank collection sites. Hands are notably common on the web. Is there a link between the visual aspect of journalism and its online format?

Artistically, the close-up photos of hands are moving. Among other things, they force us to take notice of details, of particularities sometimes imperceptible to the eye. These photos serve more to fill an editorial void than to provide visual and emotional input. The withered fingers and palms are, for the media and its consumers, an evocation of old age, which, in my opinion, depersonalizes the elder. The trouble is that when you stare at the hands, you avoid looking at the narrowed eyes, the proud torso, the tease in the tilted chin. By focusing on the hands, we avoid looking at the most important elements: context and emotions. To fully understand the importance of the debate on medically assisted death, or to grasp the reality of tax credits, the emotional baggage conveyed by a facial expression and by the environment of seniors is critical. Let's stop limiting ourselves to depictions of difficult situations through photos of old hands, it's too sad. Elders' hands do more than just shrivel. They read, applaud, garden, caress, play the piano, and sometimes hide a mouth to cover a burst of laughter. Going forward, I hope that we stop reading about the lives of older adults through the lines of their hands, and that we focus rather on the smile hidden behind them.

A System in Need of Care: Mistreatment 2017

Respecting Elders: Communities Against Abuse (RECAA)

News coverage of elder mistreatment in 2017 was, for the most part, anecdotal or relegated to the section of *faits divers*. However, taken as a whole, the coverage gives us a snapshot of a health and social system in need of innovation, human resources and money. This situation is serious. Budget constraints in the health and social services sectors have resulted in austerity in our public institutions. Long-term care facilities suffer from staff shortages and caregivers are hired with limited training. As a result, elders and caregivers in public care facilities can be vulnerable to neglect or abuse, sometimes resulting in tragedy.

One story in particular caught RECAA's attention: a woman left in her room unattended for hours fell to her death from a residence balcony on her first day living there.¹ Would we be reading this story if there had been sufficient staff attending to patients? This is one example among others that illustrate the importance of human resources, which are so inadequate in current residential institutions, in meeting the caregiving needs of our elders.

Many elders require and request home care. Public health and social services, however, cannot meet the increasing demand for home support. An entrepreneur has suggested an “ideal” solution to resolve the caregiving shortage. Why not recruit orphans from Nicaragua, an economically poor country in political turmoil, to work as home care workers?² “Workers Without Borders” would train the girls in their home country, teach them French, and *voilà*, problem solved.

These orphaned caregivers would be categorized as “unskilled” workers and would have to enter Québec and Canada under a Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP). As Gabrielle Perras St-Jean points out in *Le Devoir*,³ including “unqualified” workers means that these potential caregivers would be unable to access permanent resident status. The vast majority of these workers would be here with a strictly temporary status, which limits their rights and opportunities in their host country.

Gabrielle Perras St-Jean’s article rightly reports that the “Québec Employers Council,” which is well-known for its disregard of social inequalities, is unsurprisingly in favour of this entrepreneurial project. This business venture would offer imported labour that would be less expensive than that provided by the current public system, and would seek to earn a profit. However, it would not ensure that the rights of either Montréal elders or their foreign temporary care workers be respected. Indeed, a private initiative

for elder care that amounts to caregiving for profit under the guise of benefiting a human rights agenda is disturbing and, in our view, a perfect formula for abuse.

Bill 115⁴ was passed amidst press and media fanfare in 2017. This act formally recognizes and defines the problem of elder mistreatment, including organizational mistreatment, in broad terms.

However, the bill focuses specifically on the protection of older adults living in public long-term care facilities, and those who are under protective regimes (e.g., the Human Rights Commission and the Public Curator) and thus who are considered vulnerable to abuse.

This bill fails to address the needs of elders who remain in various grey zones. For instance, those who have dementia or other conditions that impair their cognition or those who live in private residences or private long-term care facilities who might be living in poor conditions. Abuses in private institutions are unfortunately common headline news, yet it is not explicitly stated in the bill that these elders have the same protections as those who live in public facilities.

Of equal concern is the proposed response to situations of mistreatment in public institutions. The bill requires employees and professionals to report acts of mistreatment without fear of reprisal or the risk of losing their jobs. While abuse should be reported

and investigated, neither the bill nor the provincial government's budget proposal clearly outline how reporting of abuse and mandatory training will be implemented. Moreover, Bill 115 does nothing to improve the quality of services and general standard of living that requires a commitment to increasing budgets and resources in these residences.

Bill 115 is a step in the right direction. It has defined mistreatment in comprehensive and broad terms, but at the same time, it has not given enough guidance on how measures to address and rectify mistreatment will be implemented. It also does not state a commitment to increasing budgets and resources. Bi-weekly showers, meals made from instant mixes, limited recreational staff; all of these real-life examples illustrate that only a fraction of elderly residents are getting the care they need and participating in meaningful activities. Surely, we must do better than this!

In response to this critical situation, RECAA recommends the transformation of institutional care into person-centered care. Training, sensitivity, understanding and responsiveness to the needs of residents are the most effective means to prevent and reduce all forms of mistreatment.

**Complete reports on these issues can be found on
our website at www.recaa.ca.**

Notes

1 Chute mortelle « hautement évitable » dans un CHSLD, *Le Journal de Montréal*, 12 janvier, 2017.

2 Des orphelines nicaraguéennes pour prendre soin de nos aînés, *Le Devoir*, 5 janvier 2017.

3 Des soins producteurs d'inégalités, Gabrielle Perras St-Jean - Diplômée de l'INRS, *Le Devoir*, 16 janvier, 2017.

4 Bill 115 seeks to counter maltreatment of seniors and other persons of full age in vulnerable situations. It has been passed into an act on May 30th 2017 by the provincial government.

A Hands-on Path to Wellbeing in Aging

Kiren Budhia

Seals

In ancient India, texts started with a symbol indicating their beginning and finished with another symbol marking their end. These symbols evoked the impermanent nature of all things, including humanity. In order to overturn a general misunderstanding of aging, this work starts with the symbol of the end to represent birth (at the top). My goal is to provide another view of aging processes. The symbol of beginnings placed at the bottom of the artwork invites viewers to be conscious of their aging in the present moment.

The Japanese wabi-sabi aesthetics, standing for the beauty of things imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete, are used in the square seal placed on the upper left.

Within Buddhist philosophy, the mandala refers to the ancestral approach of observing the truth. In this work, the letter A is at the center of the mandala. It stands



for both the sound made by a newborn, as well as for the emergence of language. Communication and communion are suggested by the depictions of past and present Buddhas in each character. The wheel symbolizes Dharma, one's daily life anchored in the present.

The hand is obviously a hands-on gesture embedded in the present. Here, it comprises the symbols of the five aggregates that are earth, water, fire, air, and ether, which make up a human being according to Buddhist teachings. The heart sutra reveals that all aggregates that make up oneself are distinguishable by their emptiness. In emptiness, there is no form, no feelings, no perception, no impulses, and no consciousness. Therefore, seeing them empty of substance and essence saves one from suffering and distress.

Writings

In all cultures, practices and disciplines to eliminate suffering while aging have been transmitted by earlier generations. Here, I wrote “yoga” (योग) and the traditional medicine of “ayurveda” (आयुर्वेद) in Sanskrit, that can be combined in a complete approach for optimal health, vitality and increased awareness into old age. One can put these principles into practice through diet (आहार), herbs (सर्व षध), yoga postures (आसनं करोति), breathing exercises (प्राणायाम) and meditation (मि).

conduite/behaviour

Magdalena Olszanowski

Queen of new
Advocates for homeless and seniors
seniors
Party lines for seniors
who seniors
rescue snow
88-year-old socks
Deadly
Slips and falls taking toll
Case over
reunited
Ageism discrimination first
teach seniors
grit
art
has their backs
coming
fire leaves
need more men care
Scams common
with
media
care
cameras
seniors stretch health
starting in February
it's difficult to cross slowly

examine
collection of communities
quietly marks
reality to
lack of aging strategy
shows
needed urgently
Bodies
Dancing
healthy
steps in to moment between
faces care
people walk
build seniors
caregivers

faces
dignity, respect,
seniors
Encourage seniors
please don't retire just yet
Lack of concern
habits
dance floor
needs care
retirement 'inevitable,'
Seniors worry about
Our Health Care System
crash
Researchers need more info
promises for seniors
Sweet for seniors –
stay active

Researchers need more info
after scams
Love songs for seniors
Slips, falls
Sun, cigarettes,
help
shine spotlight on enduring love
Politics comes, and I,
change? Only embrace
with
for
'I do,' again:
Seniors
court
feels
home
Whoo!
embrace aging, fight
for
health
smoking and drinking
seniors

Leisure's Role in Resisting and Reinforcing Discourses of Active Aging

Shannon Hebblethwaite

Recreation activities are often uncritically promoted as one key means to resist age-related decline. For example, TVA Sports (February 22, 2017) described, with great enthusiasm, a recreational boxing program for people with Parkinson's disease in an article titled "Fighting Parkinson's, One Punch at a Time" [translation from French]. The instructor of the boxing class frames chronic diseases like Parkinson's as a battle to be fought, pointing to the importance of staying physically active and not "just sitting around the house".

This example highlights just how deeply encoded ageism has become in our language and how it continues to be pervasively transmitted by our youth-enamoured media and by recreation service providers. Aging is often constructed as something to fear on both an individual and collective level, with metaphors like the "silver tsunami" dominating the media discourse. This discourse effectively blames the failure of social systems (e.g., health care, pensions) on demographic phenomena (in this

case, an aging population). This “apocalyptic demography” has motivated the World Health Organization (WHO) to issue a global call for countries to promote a public policy of “active aging” (WHO, 2002). Terms such as “productive,” “successful,” “healthy,” and most recently, “active” aging have been represented through images of independence and social mobility.

This policy is problematic in the ways in which it gets enacted through media discourses that emphasize individual determinants of health (e.g., physical activity rather than social inclusion). These anti-welfare agendas attempt to restructure dependency through the uncritical promotion of productive and physical activity. We are constantly bombarded by images and stories in the media of “exceptional” older bodies engaging in extreme feats of physical activity. “Young centenarians” (Radio-Canada, February 21, 2017) are often profiled and paraded as examples of the “recipe for eternal youth” (*La Presse*, April 7, 2017). For example, Radio-Canada (February 23, 2017) reported on the 55+ Winter Games, explaining how participants aged 55-93 years exemplified the idealized active aging body by participating in Olympic-style sports including badminton, curling, ice hockey, and volleyball. What is problematic here is not only that 55-year-olds are labelled “old,” but also how the benefits from the activity are said to go beyond the personal well-being of the participants and are constructed as a societal and universal good. This is encapsulated in the article’s conclusion that “All the world wins” when older people are more physically active.

To be sure, physical activity has positive health benefits. What is of concern here, however, is the discourse of individual responsibility and the negative framing of physical changes to the body associated with aging. Fighting the “good fight” and being physically active is a moral imperative that not all older people are able to achieve. Participation in recreation programming requires financial resources to pay for these programs, knowledge of leisure resources in the community, and physical access to the sites, including transportation to and from these facilities. The absence of any reflection on the systemic social barriers that impact older people’s ability to participate in these “healthy” recreation activities is highly problematic. It also renders invisible any benefits accrued from social engagement by privileging physical activity.

Growing evidence of the discourse of individual responsibility and the problematization of older bodies and lives as vulnerable, dependency-prone, at-risk and in need of vigilance suggests that, as we age, we are expected to fashion rewarding identities through lifestyle choices and self-reflexive practices. This discourse vilifies and dehumanizes older people, placing blame on the individual for not exerting enough individual control over their bodies in order to stay “healthy” and, therefore, decrease the “burden” they place on health care and social services.

Particularly relevant to the discussion of leisure is the notion of activity as an antidote to decline and dependency. Activity is often promoted not only as a positive ideal, but as a universal “good”. This discourse positions activity as the “positive” against which the “negative” forces of dependency, illness and loneliness are arrayed (Katz, 2000). Researchers and practitioners, for instance, need to be mindful of their contribution to this discourse and think critically about their role in formulating recreation activities as a way to administer, calculate and codify leisure experiences as evidence of active aging. Media, because of their ability to shape public discourse on issues like aging, also have a responsibility. The benefits of leisure become more fully realized when we acknowledge the subjective nature of the leisure experience as something that is enjoyable, intrinsically motivated, and self-determined. Additionally, social, cultural, cognitive, and spiritual practices are just as essential to well-being as physical activity. It is, perhaps, long overdue that we heed Butler’s (2009) challenge to “alter our deep-seated cultural sensibility and work to overcome our fear, our shunned responsibility, and the harmful avoidance and denial of age. We must help people deal with their fears of aging, dependency, and death, and develop a sense of the life course as a whole” (p. 58).

References:

- Butler, R. N. (2009). *The longevity revolution: The benefits and challenges of living a long life*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Katz, S. (2000). Busy bodies: Activity, aging and the management of everyday life. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 14(2), p. 135-152.

75 Years Old and Still Alive: Old Age Sensationalization in Printed Press Titles

Nora T. Lamontagne

The aptitude to write a catchy title, one that will convince the reader to grant a few minutes of their precious attention to the proposed journalistic article, is an art. It was true at the time of the printed press, and it still is today, as titles must translate into clicks.

The title is therefore composed of a series of words carefully chosen for their ability to attract attention through a well-articulated formula. It can be a play on words, catch phrases, or an allusion to sex, blood or scandal. In the case of articles concerning seniors, it appears that the age of the subject is a particularly significant element, suggesting its importance and ability to hook the reader. Following this, I propose to examine the methods that come into play in the titles where age is mentioned, so as to unpack the interest awakened by old age for the readership.

Let's first list some examples from the 2017 media watch, in ascending order of age:

1. A 52-year-old bodybuilder has a young man's body
(*Le Journal de Montréal*, June 5, 2017)

2. Wearing a bikini at 63 for *Sports Illustrated*
(*Le Journal de Montréal*, February 8, 2017)

3. 70-year-old YouTube hit redefining beauty in
South Korea (*Montreal Gazette*, July 14, 2017)

4. He wins \$ 1 million at the age of 76 and continues to work
(*Le Journal de Montréal*, November 22, 2017)

5. Meet the 86-year-old race walker with no plans of
slowing down (cbc.ca, June 1, 2017)

6. 87 years old - still a trucker (*Le Journal de
Montréal*, July 17, 2017)

7. At age 91, she looks after her 95-year-old sister
with Alzheimer's (*Le Journal de Montréal*, October 21,
2017)

At first glance, we notice that it is the individual's advanced age - and that alone - that makes the title attractive. For example, take 40 years off of the 63-year-old woman posing in a bikini in *Sports Illustrated* ("Wearing a bikini at 23 for *Sports Illustrated*"), or of the 87-year-old trucker ("47 years old - still a trucker") and the title loses its captivating power.

But where exactly does this power come from? Why would advanced age be synonymous with interest to this readership? Because these seniors' behaviour does not match society's expectations of them. We are not dealing with just any elder, but with a "super-senior," to use the terminology used by some journalists. We are witnessing the sensationalization of old age.

The actions broadcast in the media are presented as unexpected or inspiring only because of the age of the person at the centre of the article. As in the case of centenarians revealing their "secrets" to longevity, the credibility and relevance of the subject in question are proportional to their age. In connection with the precepts of active aging, the coverage of these seniors is largely positive. Outstanding performances are brought to light, which should be adopted by the greatest number. In the articles cited above, these ideals are related to physical activity (# 5), dedication to others (# 7), beauty (# 1, # 2 and # 3) or participation in the labour force (# 4 and # 6).

Are these discourses not giving hope to younger readers? By painting a flattering picture of old age, worlds removed from a gradual decline (also widely covered by the media, but in a less individualized and sensationalistic way), the titles centred around a person's age evoke a reassuring future, whereas the standards presented are in fact unfeasible to the vast majority of seniors (currently, as well as in the future). As a specific number on a scale of human life, age gives an illusion of equality in spite of the vagaries of existence.

Adding a number in the title creates a sensationalist impact. We are not talking about a “very old woman,” but about a 91-year-old woman. This measurable detail indicates the individual’s age, while, in fact, age is not important for the rest of the article. There is no need to hide it out of respect for an old person’s modesty. The age is rather put on display, even emphasized, for it renders formidable the action performed.

Making a strategic use of age, the title relies on three elements: a fascinating dissonance between the event and the age of the individual, a counter-example of the decline related to aging – borrowing from the conventions related to active aging, and a figure which denies at the same time as it specifies the accumulation of years.

Will the numbers keep growing? Will we see a hyperbole of age in the titles published in the years to come? I would think so. It is highly likely that in the future, the age that impresses readers today will have to increase by 10 years to make the news. The more commonplace the facts reported, the more the age will have to be remarkable.

Cook it—Age it!

Myriam Durocher

Illustrations: **Emmanuelle Parent**

In the coming weeks, we will present completely revamped content!

You will also have the chance to receive a sample of our **new pill to slow down aging**: something to speed up meal preparation!



Dear Customer,

Cook it – Age it! is pleased to present the new addition to its special edition, “Anti-Alzheimer’s Recipes”! Based on the most recent nutritional studies, this menu has been designed to maximize your body’s potential to live forever. **Cook it – Age it!** is also proud to announce the addition of a DNA test kit to this week’s box! To significantly increase your chances of living forever, be sure to consume only the foods prescribed according to your test results.

You will find below specifications concerning the recommended consumption.

Best regards,

Cook it – Age it!

Mediterranean Platter of Youth

vegetables¹

- Kale → super magic food good for everything
- Carrots → excellent for the eyes
- Beets

beneficial for the brain

spices

- Salt
- Herbs

you really want to hasten
your decline?

~~sugar~~

- Potato → to breathe better
- ¼ watermelon
- Yogurt → for better skin appearance

for
microbiota

proteins

- Chicken²
- Fish³
- Legumes⁴
- Soybeans⁵
- Nuts⁶
- Insects



olive
oil



1 Preferably, select the option "organic vegetables" on your purchase order. For as little as twice the price, you will have access to food without pesticides! Something that is sure to put smiles on the faces of your gut's microorganisms (or microbes)!

2 There are many advisories about the dangers of consuming red meat, so we recommend chicken.

3 However, chickens are subjected to stress through terrible farming conditions, so we recommend fish.

4 Since fish consumption is no longer safe due to high levels of mercury, we think you should consume plants as an ideal protein source.

5 Unfortunately, soybeans are associated with cancer development, legumes are filled with pesticides and lentils are on the FODMAP list – therefore all are to be avoided, so we recommend that you hunt two or three spiders at home in order to add protein to your meal.

6 What about nuts? These might have been a good option, but the risks of allergies are too high.

7 For seasoning, we suggest using herbs instead of salt.

Recommended dosage

- ◆ Combine all the ingredients and consume, preferably, with red wine (this will ensure that the food you are consuming seems more digestible and/or less dissatisfactory. In addition, choose red wine, for its nutritional properties, of course).
- ◆ Ingest preferably while doing yoga, holding a weight in your hand, and in the company of people speaking another language – this combination will activate your motor and cognitive abilities simultaneously.



Your **Cook it – Age it!** box of the week!



Side effects

- ◆ Membership to **Cook it – Age it!** may reinforce the normative expectations related to the concept of “successful aging”, associated with health management.
- ◆ **Cook it – Age it!** cannot be held liable for natural deaths, even for those who do everything they can to prevent it.

The Costs of a Comfortable Retirement: Pension Plans and the Privatization of Infrastructure

Tricia Toso

Underlying much of the current discussion on retirement and aging is the question: how do we finance it? How can we afford to financially support an aging population given the changing nature of employment, with fewer positions with benefits, and volatile global markets? How do we as individuals and as a society plan for old age?

Financial columns in all of the newspapers offered advice on how to plan for retirement. These articles presume and promote financial independence through balanced investment portfolios and sound real estate decisions; they advocate for individuals who are autonomous, responsible and calculative, and who manage their money in enterprising and prudential ways. The rationality, or system of thinking, emphasizes individual responsibility, as opposed to more collective values. This narrative was furthered by a focus on the costs of an aging population. Whether spotlighting the future of state pension plans, or the poor conditions that older adults endure in state-run long-term

care facilities in Québec, the message seems to be that the social programs that older adults have depended on in the past are not going to be sufficient in the future.

The decisions we make about our healthcare, housing, and finances are, of course, enmeshed in global economies and markets, and as such the imaginaries and practices of retirement have both local and global reach and resonances. The only article in the database that touched on the issue of pension plan investment was in *Le Devoir* on May 6, 2017. It reported that the Québec pension fund, the *Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec* (CDPQ), was asked to answer questions about its investment decisions, in particular investment in farmland, tax havens and the fossil fuel industry. The CDPQ has been under fire for its investments in Brazilian farmland that has resulted in the displacement of farmers and Indigenous peoples, the degradation of sensitive ecosystems, as well as its investments in fossil fuel industries. The Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) Investment Board has also invested billions of dollars in extraction industries including coal mines, fracking operations, and pipelines, as well as pharmaceutical companies that engage in price gouging,¹ and arms manufacturing.² How pension plans invest the money of Canadian workers is often obscured by use of tax havens and offshore financial centres, shell companies and subsidiaries. An exception to this has been CDPQ's investment in public infrastructure.

The 2016 announcement by CDPQ Infra, the infrastructure subsidiary of Québec's *Caisse de dépôt*, was met with a great deal of fanfare, and has been consistently covered in Québec media. The *Réseau express métropolitain* (REM) will link Montréal's downtown with the South Shore, West Island, and North Shore

with a unified electrically-powered and fully automated 67 km light rail transit system. The project is being funded through a partnership of the provincial government and a Québec pension fund.³ The CDPQ manages several public and para-public pension plans and insurance companies in Québec, including public servants, management personnel, and employees of Québec's construction industry. As Canada's second largest pension fund after CPP, the CDPQ had assets of about \$285 billion in 2017, and invests in mega-projects such as public infrastructure.⁴

On the surface, the investment in projects like the REM seems like a great idea. A para-public pension fund investing in public infrastructure seems to echo the post-war period when pension funds were available to finance public investment through the purchase of secure, low-risk and long-term government bonds.⁵ However, unlike its historical precedents, and despite being positioned as a “public-public” partnership, critics point out that this project involves the privatization of public infrastructures.

Reports by the *Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement* (BAPE)⁶ and transit watcher Anton Dubrau,⁷ suggest that there are a number of issues with the REM project that have not been widely addressed. Questions around the monopoly over and privatization of key infrastructure, such as the Mount Royal tunnel, as well as an alleged conflict of interest by the CDPQ in its real estate holdings and proposed rail terminals, environmental damage and rezoning of land, lack of clarity regarding transit fares and its negative impact on existing public transit lines have been raised. Despite the BAPE report and the voiced concerns of various transit watchers and academics, the project has pushed through, and ground for the new rail system was broken in April of 2018, with plans for completion in 2020.

We don't yet know how the new light rail system will impact Montrealers; its plans for universal access in all of its terminals will certainly offer more mobility to those with limited mobility, but the project should give us pause. How do we feel about a para-public pension fund investing in, and operating essential infrastructural systems for profit?⁸ What are our collective responsibilities for ensuring public programs and systems for future generations? What costs are we willing to pay for that comfortable retirement?

Notes

1 For more information on CPP's investments with companies such as Valiant and Concordia Healthcare, see <http://www.businessinsider.com/valeant-not-profitable-as-normal-drug-co-2016-3>; <https://canadians.org/blog/canadian-pension-plans-are-investing-price-gouging-drug-companies>.

2 CPP has invested over \$1.6 billion in military contractors in the U.S. <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/2canada-and-the-big-business-of-war-richard-sanders>

3 Desjardins, François. (May 6, 2017). La quête d'équilibre des régimes de retraite. *Le Devoir*.

4 In 2015, the Québec national Assembly passed Bill 38, an act that allows the CDPQ to carry out infrastructure projects through a newly created subsidiary, the CDPQ Infra.

5 Noakes, Taylor, C. (March 12, 2018). "How a new Transit System Could Hobble Montreal", Next City.

6 <http://www.bape.gouv.qc.ca/sections/rapports/publications/bape331.pdf>

7 http://www.bape.gouv.qc.ca/sections/mandats/Reseau_electrique_m%C3%A9ropolitain/documents/DM45.1.pdf

8 CDPQ expects about a 10% return on its investment.

The Aging Body

Wendy Allen

1 The aesthetic body

"She/he's got a good body"

2 The healthy body

"My body feels good"

3 The aging body

"My body is wearing out"

How we are portrayed

The images of the female body in our **A Year of Aging** range from a photo of the "perfect body" of 63-year-old Christie Brinkley in a bikini to an overweight body, also bikini clad, under the headline of "Scientists Test Blocking Menopause Hormone".

There are photos of so-called decrepit bodies including those of one woman who needs help getting her shoes on and another woman assisted by two people to help her get out of her wheelchair.

There is a strong, active 90-year-old, who is lifting weights in a gym and who doesn't look a day over 60, as well as women of all shapes and sizes exercising.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Francesca Worrall

There are trim women riding bicycles with their male partners. And a “desirable” body in a lace-trimmed camisole in the photo above an article entitled “Le désir sexuel a-t-il un âge?”

When I look at these images of older women’s bodies I see reflections of ideals and fears about aging. Ideals that are represented by slim bodies, male companions and exercise. Fears that are represented through health problems, isolation and lack of mobility.

Does this conform to our realities, and to the image we have of ourselves? I decided to ask around to see how my friends felt about their bodies. I discovered a variety of viewpoints and body shapes, as well as the humour and wisdom that were missing from the portrayal in the media.

How do we see ourselves?

A 73-year-old said, “my body’s like an old car, with parts that aren’t working, parts that are wearing out. But at least with a car you can go out and buy a new one.”

I asked “what do you think about it, aesthetically?”

She said, “Well I don’t have a full-length mirror, but if I did I’d throw it out.”

A 96-year-old friend stressed the importance of an attractive body. According to her, it’s the first impression anyone gets of you. She told me a story about her son’s recent visit. She said, “my son was impressed when he saw me because I was so thin. I’ve gained some since he was here and I want to lose it. I like to please my son.”

I asked the same question to another woman who is in her early sixties.



Plaster of Paris model for art students, China, 1981.
Photo credit: Wendy Allen

SC: I am more and more aware of what can happen to the body as it ages and that I can do things to prevent it. I eat carefully, exercise, respond to pain. My ear is blocked again. I must check on that.

WA: Do you include your "ear" in your body.

SC: Well, yes. Everything.

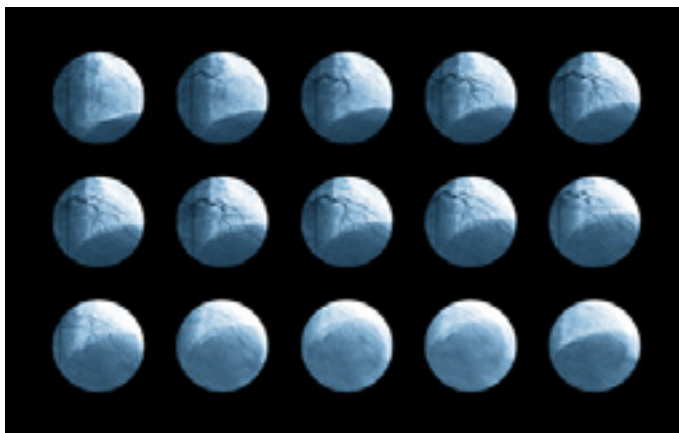
WA: So, for you the body is the "healthy body". What about the aesthetic body?

SC: Well, I've never had children so my breasts don't sag. My body is good. It hasn't changed that much except, of course, for the fact that my pants would fit better if I put them on backwards.

If I were to have a lover though, I'd want to make love in the dark, well at least dusk.

Another friend, who is 65, said that she loves her body, and that she listens to it to get feedback on how things are going. Does she need more sleep? Is she hungry? Is she feeling good? And then she can do something to make things better.

A 90-year-old, who just had minor heart surgery, agreed that the metaphor of an aging car seemed apt. But she found that watching her surgery on a television screen was fascinating. “You can either open your eyes or close them. But if you open them you get to see your body in a different way – and see the magic of modern medicine”.



Coronary Angioplasty. Photo credit: istock

A slightly younger friend, who is 60, said that since she's been doing yoga, she sees the connection between mind, spirit and body. She explains that it is not what the body looks like that is important, but how it feels and how well it moves. She says she doesn't mind wrinkles, gray hair or droopy skin.

This was closer to what my 82-year-old Chinese friend had once said which had, at the time, seemed so foreign to me. For her, the body is not separate from the head or the spirit, nor is it separate from energy and from health. A good body is a healthy body. It is infused with energy and spirit and that's what makes it attractive.

WA: But how do you feel about your body?

CZ: You have to be realistic. Our bodies change as we age.

Learning a New Language

Karine Bellerive

In a smoke-filled bar, a tear caresses the train of her thoughts.

She tells this woman's story in a minor key.

Madeleine takes the stage.

On the proscenium, her defining moments shine.

On the sunny side of the street, the violin and the double bass open new pathways. My ukulele overtakes their evolution, flutters with their growth. I am a knitter, a sower of marbles. Our ensemble encounters an uncultivated sonata. By heart, quilts of words warm us.

Madeleine crashes backwards on the seat of her thoughts.

Her wandering gaze stares at the empty square of another temporality.

When a false note strikes me down, the bandoneon player no longer smiles. I initiate a distorted tango.

Madeleine is pounding in the open window.

In the public square, lanterns illuminate her privacy.

The essence of the self is transformed. My body is a unique source of oxidative stress, chronic inflammation,

neurotoxins, tau protein, beta-amyloid. For the sake of public health, shock waves are swinging in the right direction, performing an increasingly erratic ballet. Changes in cortex structure, an abundance of RBFOX1, deterioration of gray matter, development of white matter, TMEM106B, rapid degradation of meninges, a variant of the ApoE4 gene: all these are the odour of the demon coming to life. His suffering is breath. My breath is suffering.

A spiritual algorithm plans the duration of the sojourn: my entire life. More than 400,000 warning signs, a lot of perfume, 17,000 brain lesions, 4,6 million lumbar punctures, 1,4 million mutations, 747,000 mild cognitive impairments, 564,000 biologically active molecules, 1,1 million interconnected cellular mechanisms, 106 million neurons, 141,000 pieces in my puzzle, 327 dead-cell markers. The virtual trajectory reaches its climax, then the rhythm changes.

On two walls, Madeleine simultaneously hammers fragments of silence.
She wavers, steadily, only for her monologue to regain momentum.

The captain of the team gives me a little impetus. To manage my organoleptic properties, he amplifies the magical powers of green tea, cocoa, fruits, nuts, vegetables and legumes, fish and turmeric, seeds and omega-3s. In his aging recipe, epigallocatechingallate stimulates the process of neurogenesis. But the damage is done. The situation will only get worse.

He forgets to track my 100 favourite songs.

Scattered on the busy road of her memories,
Madeleine opens a door.
She tiptoes into the secret of a foreign culture.

*On the chilly morning of an opera closed for good, I
undertake a journey in a lapse of memory. I forget the
colours of shame. And I find myself knowing how to write.
Everything is there: red wine, the various textures of my
guilty pleasures, my artificial intelligence and my first
conspirator, voice imaging, the finest of jazz.*

*Some paths loosen people's boundaries. There are still wide
gray areas to explore in order to slow the spinning wheel.
I can see us together, eyes bright, caressing those who dis-
appeared, emulsifying what is real and what is dreamlike.*

*The leaves wither beautifully. The love of music is older
than it looks.*

What do you Know About Abuse?

Louise Poulin

When you read print media, listen to the radio or watch television, how do you see maltreatment being presented? We generally see special cases, or horror stories. But do these articles really inform us about the issues relating to abuse?

In response to complaints and facts presented in the media and various seniors' protection associations, the Québec government initiated consultations in 2010 to implement the Act to Combat Maltreatment of Seniors and Other Persons of Full Age in Vulnerable Situations. This law includes rules to regulate the various problems that lead to abuse.

Here is the definition of maltreatment provided by this law:

“Maltreatment”: means a single or repeated act, or a lack of appropriate action, that occurs in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, and that intentionally or unintentionally causes harm or distress to a person. (Definition from the Act to combat maltreatment of seniors and other persons of full age in vulnerable situations)

This definition contrasts with the events we generally encounter, which are often reported by seniors' relatives. For instance, a woman died of exposure to cold due to lack of supervision in the long-term care home where she resided, whereas another died in a fire. In another case, a couple is separated after 40 years of marriage.

What is also discussed are diaper quotas, non-existent sprinklers, debates about cameras in rooms, as well as the food that is served to our seniors. The government reacts by investing a few million dollars, and we don't hear about these problems for some time. But what are the long-term solutions?

We must talk about prevention and not simply throw in a few million dollars when a controversy arises in the media. Those responsible for providing care to our older adults need to abide by standards, by following a guide on how things need to be done. We must reintroduce respect and compassion as the cores of care. But we must also adopt the means to achieve our ambitions, that is to say we must have personnel in sufficient numbers to realize the purpose of the law.

Scenarios reported by the media often concern a sensationalist cases of abuse, which are often settled with money. But abuse is so much more than that. It comprises psychological harassment, physical violence, poverty, isolation ... While abuse is often associated with physical ramifications, it can also be

psychological, emotional, financial, sexual, and so on. What can be done to minimize abuse in systemic instances?

Several groups are seeking solutions to various forms of abuse, including *l'Entreprise d'économie sociale en aide à domicile* (EÉ SAD), as well as integrated university health and social services centres (IUHSSC) and many non-profit organizations. Their work, while so important, is not appreciated for its true value. I'm still waiting for the government to seriously consider how the Québec population is aging, and for them to develop a plan that respects the needs of our seniors while taking all stakeholders into account.

In conclusion, it is good to talk about maltreatment, but I think it would be important to also talk about good treatment. Good treatment begins with the needs and desires of vulnerable people, with an obligation to adapt to their needs in order to help them. It is an approach based on empathy and well-being. This is an idea that could improve the fate of many seniors.

Archipelago Formation

Marie-Ève Vautrin-Nadeau

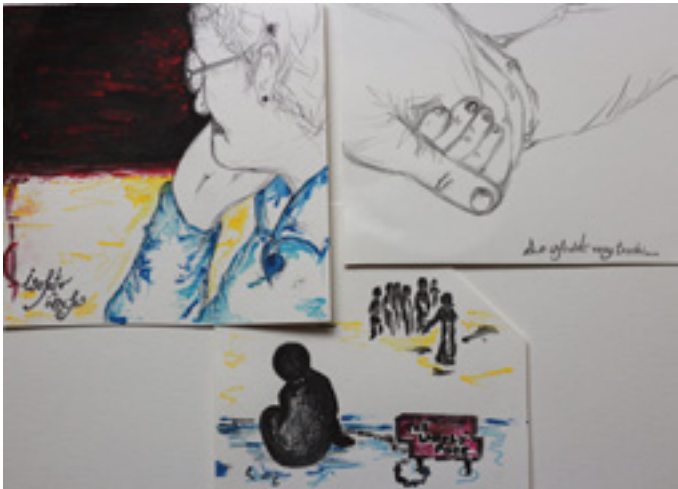
What is implied by the notion of social isolation? This term is so widely used in print media when senior citizens are involved. More often than not, seniors are portrayed as dependent and limited beings, frail creatures without a past, living apart from the “active population,” as if contributing to society is no longer a possibility for them.

While reading the articles published in francophone news media in 2017, I detect a difficulty in addressing social isolation in terms that go beyond mourning, through the evocation of a “saviour-saved” logic. When journalists report on older adults’ sayings, it is mainly to corroborate them with the observations of project directors’ and experts’ reports (doctors, service worker, etc.), with the aim of striking sensitive chords with the readership. In a special edition on seniors’ solitude, published by *Le Journal de Montréal* on July 15, 2017, heart-wrenching phrases such as “I sit here from morning until night just staring at the walls” (Vincenza Delisi, 97), and “I would just like for someone to take me to their home or to the restaurant” (Suzanne Otis, 67) are used to express the extent to which idleness can result due to a significant absence of human contact. Invariably, “old age”

is associated with a weariness, a sort of waiting room before death, as if, after having worked and possibly raised children, an older adult can only consider the end, and prepare for a stage exit. What kind of “status” is given to older people? What kinds of options are available to them in a titanic system that runs on vigour and freshness?

Are we not deepening this isolation when we think of vibrancy solely in relation to youth, and abnegate death and the darker parts of life, while considering family ties, friendships, and neighbourly relationships as something obvious? Attributed with a pathological character, solitude is purged of its many possibilities. The space it used to open up before, through the vicissitudes of a busy daily life, gets flattened out, distorted, dissipated. It is therefore simplistic to posit solitude as a manifestation of seniors’ social isolation. Linked together, these two terms certainly seem to capture the discomfort seniors experience when they find themselves on their own, by themselves. But are these experiences not dynamic, and existing in variable forms? Would solitude not be more appreciated, or soothed, if growing old also meant reimagining the passing time, and redesigning graceful moments?

To be alone,
Wanting to be alone,
Feeling lonely,
Isolating yourself, to be isolated.
Isolato, insula,
Let the islands meet, the trajectories intersect,
Where so many solitudes seek to become archipelago.



Drawing 1: A woman looks out the window. Before her, no horizon.
Drawing 2: A silhouette in a lonely pose. In the distance, other silhouettes ... at a distance.
Drawing 3: A gathering of hands. The hand of an older woman holding that of a child, to put the emphasis on intersecting trajectories.

The Ideal Residence

Maude Gauthier

Illustrations: **Kim Sawchuk**

*A perfect place? It's possible!
Managed BY seniors FOR seniors
for over 10 years.
A responsible place needs good
GOVERNANCE.*



- ◆ Managed by residents of 3rd and 4th age
- ◆ Right to privacy
- ◆ Hygiene support provided by our numerous qualified staff, always in a good mood
- ◆ No cameras, mould or diaper quotas
- ◆ Clowns, concerts, day camps to initiate younger retirees, and more!

*A place where living is GOOD ...
and warm, appetizing, and
nutritious food is abundant*

*Recipient of the Public's Choice
Award at Montréal's 50+ trade
show!*

What our residents have to say:

*"I could not have made a better decision for
my retirement!" - Lise*

*"We meet people, we make friends, and the
service is excellent!" - Réjean*

Sample Schedule

6 am-9 am	Breakfast
9 am-10:30 am	Physical activity
10:30 am-11:30 am	Art Workshops or Crossword Puzzles
11:30 am-1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm-3 pm	Pet therapy or visits from friends and family
3 pm-4:30 pm	Bingo
5 pm-7 pm	Dinner

Sample menu

Breakfast	Fresh fruit, cereal, baked beans
Lunch	Corn chowder or vegetable soup Salmon filet or hamburger steak with fried onions Banana cake
Dinner	Cream of cauliflower soup or minestrone soup Chicken with mango and avocado or rotini with tomato sauce Strawberry and chia pudding



Contributors

Wendy Allen. When I was 60, I remember a 90-year-old friend saying, “I know what it’s like to be your age, but you have no idea what it’s like to be 90.” That’s how I felt about most of the media coverage of seniors in our **A Year of Aging** project. How old are the people who are writing these articles? And who is the intended audience?

The few articles that I wanted to read usually had an enticing photo and some insight into the interests of seniors – novel living arrangements, people following their interests or discovering new ones. For example, a story about a choreographer who likes to work with people of all ages spoke to me.

I was particularly struck by many of the photos of older women in the database. Most of the photos of seniors used by the media are limited and disconnect from my experiences and those of my friends. My general impression was that the images of women in **A Year of Aging**, particularly of their bodies, were unidimensional and insensitive in their lack of representation. With this in mind, I integrated photos that convey a broader understanding of what bodies, aging bodies, might look or feel like. I started reflecting on this after a Chinese friend of mine opened my eyes to a concept of body that encompasses more than what we, in a western context, think the word “body” refers to. It seems that something vital is missing – input from seniors.

Karine Bellerive is a lecturer in the Department of Literature and Communication at the University of Sherbrooke and a PhD student in the Department of Communication at the University of Montréal under the supervision of Line Grenier. She is particularly interested in forms of writing about the self, their specificities and contributions as modes of knowledge production, as well as issues relating to aging and neurodegenerative diseases associated with aging.

As part of the project, I focused on articles found in the French news media (print and digital) addressing the question of neurodegenerative diseases that are medically correlated with aging, namely, Alzheimer's and other forms of "dementia." A summary analysis of mainstream media content reveals that risk factors, preventive measures, symptoms, treatments, difficulties experienced by caregivers, access to physician assisted dying, and the increasing prevalence of these types of "pathologies" within our population are the most discussed subjects - while texts that tell the singular story of caregivers are rare. What I see are disembodied representations - heterogeneous realities levelled and apprehended through a hyper-medicalized lens. Using terms, expressions and phrases found in the articles, I created a three-phase short story inspired by the surrealist style (Sabot 2001), featuring a woman of singular casting that defies the norm. Playing with the meaning of words while erasing their origins, I attempted to experience the philosophical interest of literary writing as a "thought experiment" and not only as "the object of philosophy" (Sabot 2002).

Kiren Budhia was born in Zambia, Africa. He is a second-generation immigrant of Hindu ancestors. He was educated in Canada and holds a degree in metallurgy from McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario) and a fine arts degree from Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). He started his artistic career as a stone sculptor, researching contemporary art forms in Indian temple art forms concepts. His interest in calligraphy came from the pillars of king Ashoka, a series of carved columns engraved with writings about dharma and righteousness dispersed throughout his kingdom, India. He started learning Japanese calligraphy under a Japanese sensai for the past five years.

As I was reading articles in the newspapers and listening to programs on CBC Radio on the topic of aging, I found that the focus was placed on a timespan, the one coming after retirement. But in Buddhist philosophy, aging begins after birth. This work looks at aging as a common concern for humanity. I was inspired by seeing hand prints from all ages in cave paintings, a spontaneous instance of performance art that stands outside of time. My use of the aesthetics of cave paintings is in line with their origins rooted in embodied human expression.

Myriam Durocher is a doctoral student in communication at the Université de Montréal. Her current research interests deal with the production and circulation of knowledge about food, “healthy” eating habits and bodies, in a context marked by an ever-increasing media penetration. Her doctoral project seeks to survey the development of a so-called biomedicalized food culture that produces normative understandings and standards that dictate how to exercise and apprehend bodies.

Conducted in the context of **A Year of Aging**, this project offers a glimpse into my research work on the injunctions to “age well” that contribute to defining the relationship between aging bodies and food. The illustration showing a lunch box and a fictional recipe aims to criticize the way through which the discourses interconnecting diet to aging bodies are producing understandings that tend to frame aging bodies as “machines” that can be “tailored” through the ingestion of specific nutrients. This critique is also meant to respond to exclusion and stigmatization schemes that operate in a context where “aging well” is intertwined with an individual’s responsibility for his or her health, thus neglecting considerations for the social and structural inequalities that necessarily shed light on the possibility of aging in a “healthy” manner, or not.

Maude Gauthier is a researcher and lecturer in communication. She has been collaborating with ACT for several years. Her projects include the mediation of intimacy, digital media, their practices and representations.

The original idea behind the creation of the brochure for *The Ideal Residence* was to overstate the quest for perfection, to invent a self-contained environment that meets the highest requirements concerning elements that seem important in the eyes of the public (according to the terms included in public discourses surrounding public and private housing in Québec). However, the production of the brochure led to a new awareness: by comparing it with actual

promotional material for residences and real services, the difference between the brochure and the real material was not obvious! Although it is justifiable to wish to grow old in a safe and enjoyable environment, the purpose of this leaflet is to criticize the sales philosophy that offers seniors, as consumers, a perfect product – particularly in the way it differs from public services, with all the flaws showcased in news media.

Line Grenier is a professor in the Department of Communication at Université de Montréal.

As a researcher studying the intersections between music and aging and, more broadly, aging cultures, I was struck to see how little space culture and art occupied in the publications listed. However, it did not surprise me, since health, medical and socio-economic issues are generally where we see a preoccupation on aging - which is often still perceived, primarily, as an individual problem to be solved. I have also found that in these publications, art and culture are reduced to their usefulness and effectiveness in terms of therapeutic or educational function. Once again, I was not surprised, as these are used as intervention tools to be prioritized to help older people with disorders and disabilities resulting from the degenerating abilities and functions, or those wishing to prevent these incidents or at least reduce their effects.

This is another year in which yet again singing, dancing, photography, weaving, graffiti, painting,

drama or music – the undisputed star of the “cultural apparatus” list - have been relegated to the background, or instrumentalized as means serving other purposes.

Within this widely accepted public discourse, the clashing viewpoint of a choreographer (Lalonde, 2017) sparked my interest and delighted me. I borrow his viewpoint so that I can make way for something else differently, ultimately saying no to the “restorative action,” focusing on the heterogeneity of growing old, and in turn, musicking with others, for fun.

Shannon Hebblethwaite is an Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Human Sciences, at Concordia University.

From my early career as a recreation practitioner working with older adults, I have borne witness to the incredible strength, creativity, and agency exhibited by older people, in stark contrast to the dominant narrative of age-related decline that persists in the public discourse of aging even today. As a leisure scholar and practitioner, I have watched, with intrigue, how the discourses of “healthy,” “successful,” and “active” aging have been enacted over time. I am concerned that we speak ‘about’ older people instead of ‘with’ them and that we engage in program implementation and policy-making with little input from the older adults who, themselves, are impacted by these practices. Through my work as a research-

er studying the ways in which leisure is implicated (both positively and negatively) in our experiences of aging, I encourage researchers, practitioners, and the media to be more critical of their own ideas and expectations of older people. Being involved in **A Year of Aging** afforded me the opportunity to engage critically with the abundant media narratives of aging, with the objective of encouraging a more reflective approach to understanding the variegated experiences of what it means to age “well”.

Antonia Hernández is a Chilean artist and researcher based in Montréal. She is finishing a PhD in Communication at the Concordia University.

As a designer of this book, my goal was to give space to enjoy the different contributions slowly. Some of them were meant to read as poetry, others not. But I think poetry is about time and space. Why not have both for all the pieces?

Constance Lafontaine is the Associate Director of Aging + Communication + Technologies. She is completing a PhD in Communication Studies at Concordia University.

I am interested in the ways in which humans and animals grow older in connected ways. My two contributions to **A Year of Aging** explore manifestations of such entanglements. First, I was struck by the narrow and repetitive ways in which the lives of animals are evoked in stories about human aging. I wrote “Fur-ever Young” to contest what I saw as

the instrumentalization of animals in discourses on human aging.

My second contribution is a drawing entitled “Find the Bedbugs.” I created this piece in response to the lack of media coverage on the rampant bedbug infestations in urban centres, especially in rented dwellings. The invisibility of the issue exacerbates the shame and stigma that comes with an infestation and prevents us from thinking of bedbug infestations as a societal issue that requires concerted action. These small pests can be especially difficult to eradicate for older adults who live in situations of precarity, and they can exacerbate isolation and generate deep psychological and physical pain. Reimagining an old newspaper game, I invite viewers to find all the bedbugs—but I’ll never tell them exactly how many there are.

Nora T. Lamontagne has an MA in Media Studies. At the time of working on this book, Nora was the coordinator of engAge, the Center for Research on Aging at Concordia University. She participated in collecting the articles constituting the corpus of this media watch. Her research interests include the adoption of technologies in older adults, and the networking and socio-material relationships they can create.

In a world where we are surrounded by numbers, some say that “age is just a symbol.” I can only agree with the argument that this number is an awkward, imprecise and artificial way of assessing a person’s “age,” a number that disguises the individual circum-

stances shaping everyone's life. However, it is hard not to concede that the number plays a special role in our perception of aging. The titles selected in my piece highlight this. Although most of these articles were published by *Le Journal de Montréal*, where sections such as "Le sac de chips" present the coverage of the news that tend to be more sensationalist, the same mechanisms are implemented, in more subtle ways, in the texts of many other daily newspapers that highlight "super-seniors." These preliminary reflections allow us to bring to the table questions of when and in what contexts journalists find it necessary to specify the age of their subjects.

Marietta Lubelsky. I am a human rights activist devoted to maintaining the dignity of those who are subjected to societal and governmental discrimination due to race ethnicity, age and physical or mental disabilities. As a child, I experienced anti-Semitism and as a teenager I experienced intolerance as a refugee. I realized that my experiences were not unique, and I decided to work with those whose humanity was compromised as a result of origin, cultural tradition physical and/or mental challenges. In middle age, I faced experiences with my mother and mother-in-law, for whom I needed to advocate for better health and social services in a compassionate and respectful environment until their end of life.

Many of the articles I read were factual and anecdotal reporting on incidence of elder abuse. I became aware that senior mistreatment does not happen in a vacuum; it can be the result of the lack of accessibility and quality of health care experienced by those already victims of discrimination and exclusion.

Magdalena Olszanowski (SSHRC/FQRSC Fellow) is an artist and faculty member in Media Arts at John Abbott College. She is currently finishing her PhD in Communication Studies at Concordia University. In 2013, she participated in the Hemispheric Institute's Art & Resistance course in Chiapas, Mexico. Her work on gender, sound and image technologies, with a particular focus on censorship, can be found in journals such as *Feminist Media Studies*, *dancecult: journal of electronic dance music culture* and *Visual Communication Quarterly*. Her dissertation is focused on the feminist internet histories of the 1990s. She is also currently working on a documentary featuring women experimental electronic music composers.

While collecting data for the project, the rhythm of the headlines made itself known to me fairly early on. I knew that I would want the words to perform a kind of rhetoric of their pose on the page as soon as I was asked to participate in **A Year of Aging** via our own attunements. The poem is inspired by newspaper black out poetry, poetry that is formed when the writer takes a black marker to an already printed text and strikes out words until a new text (a poem) emerges. For **conduite/behavior**, I used headlines from January and February 2017. The word order of the titles remains the same, but I removed parts of the headlines to form a new discursive orientation of news on aging.

In her twenties, **Emmanuelle Parent** identifies both as a doctoral researcher in communication studies and as a marketing professional; but also as a pianist in her free time, as her maternal grandmother was before her. As for many, her

first contact with aging was through her relationships with her grandparents. These relationships, full of learning, art and love, still influence her vision of older adults today.

It is from this admiring and curious perspective that I approached the corpus of **A Year of Aging**. As photos of hands marched before my eyes, article after article, the subject became obvious to me. Halfway between prose and journalistic analysis, my work reflects on the media coverage of old age, as well as the aesthetics and the importance of photography in print media discourse.

Louise Poulin was born in 1936. After studying theatre and phonetics in Québec City and in Paris, she taught French as a second language, from kindergarten to university. She also worked on radio and television as a columnist.

When I retired, I wanted to give back to society some of what I received. I did volunteer work for 15 years with seniors experiencing loss of autonomy. I think that we need to remain vigilant, and that if we are victims of abuse, or if we witness such acts, we must report them, without hesitation, to relevant authorities. Getting involved with Respecting Elders: Communities Against Abuse (RECAA) is a manifestation of my desire to help vulnerable seniors. I have a lot of compassion for seniors, it seems quite natural to me. That's why I was immediately interested in participating in a media coverage analysis concerning abuse. It's a subject that is important to me for many years, and I am very familiar with this issue.

In 2017, media coverage concerning these vulnerable people reveals the lack of attention devoted to this subject. The end of their life is presented as a problem, a burden for society. This is why it was important for me to put their needs into perspective and to better define what abuse is, despite the limited definition put forward in the media.

Respecting Elders: Communities

Against Abuse (RECAA) is an organization founded by elderly people from ethnic communities in Montréal. Its mandate is to work towards a culture of respect for all elderly people, especially those of ethnic origin, who are often marginalized due to their language and culture.

Contributors in alphabetical order:

Anne Caines: Founding member of RECAA, RECAA coordinator

Francine Cytrynbaum, MSW: Founding member of RECAA, currently teaching at UQAM and Vanier College, working with the Alzheimer Society

Sadeqa Siddiqi: Member of RECAA, board member of International Migrants Alliance

Kim Sawchuk is the director of Ageing + Communications + Technologies and a Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Concordia University.

Tricia Toso is a PhD candidate in Concordia's Communication Studies program. She researches the politics of infrastructure development and the ways in which infrastructural systems engineer and entrench social and environmental injustices.

Tricia is currently studying the ways in which infrastructure has been used as an instrument of colonization in Canada, and how different Indigenous communities in Québec have developed their own independent and innovative telecommunications and transportation systems. She has worked with a number of community groups, research hubs, and advocacy collectives to bring awareness to the issues that arise with infrastructure planning and implementation.

What struck me the most while going through the database was the sheer volume of articles dedicated to financial advice for retirement. I had been following the development of the REM since it was first announced in 2016, but it wasn't until I was faced with the question of where our money goes when we invest that I realized how much our retirement imaginaries and practices are bound up with infrastructure development. *The Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec's* (CDPQ) investment in the light rail system offers us a unique opportunity to examine the complex intersection between public financing, policy, and infrastructure implementation. It also brings into focus questions around the privatization of infrastructure and who benefits from such a shift to the private.

Marie-Ève Vautrin-Nadeau is a PhD candidate in Communication Studies at Université de Montréal, under Line Grenier's supervision. Her current research interests lie at the intersection of impairment and "mad" studies, of care (as a biopolitical and psychosocial issue), of aging studies, and of feminist perspectives of embodiment. Influenced by a background in

visual arts, naturopathy and creative writing, Marie-Ève endows a poetic quality to everything she undertakes.

In the context of the project **A Year of Aging**, my primary concern was to immerse myself in articles dealing with social isolation and/or loneliness among seniors. Beyond the special edition presented in *Le Journal de Montréal* in July 2017 concerning loneliness among older adults, the December articles that depicted a dark portrait of life in residence and in CHSLD have been most haunting for me. I noticed that the expression “break the isolation” was extensively used, legitimizing the actions of many of the service workers, from the therapeutic clowns to the volunteers within the organization *Les Petits Frères*. It seemed to me as though in these articles, the elders were portrayed only as service recipients, rather than the main characters of a history, or as bearers of knowledge. The text “Archipelago Formation” that I wrote juggles with the theme of social isolation among seniors by attempting to rattle the individualizing logic involved in the field of health and social services. Without challenging what some people may feel, I sought to highlight how the “one life, one island” concept is implanted in Québec’s collective psyche.

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AGEING + COMMUNICATION + TECHNOLOGIES



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A Year of Aging creatively and critically examines the media coverage of older adults and issues related to aging in Québec's mainstream media during the year 2017.

Over 2,360 media articles were collected over this one-year period. Drawing from this corpus of materials, the contributors to **A Year of Aging** were invited to respond to an issue of their choosing. Researchers, artists, research-creation artisans and activists of all ages, who are members of the **Ageing + Communication + Technologies (ACT)** network, were given the challenge to use at least one article published in 2017 and produce a creative work or text from their own perspective, position, research interest or activist goal. Drawing upon these news stories for inspiration, the contributors to **A Year of Aging** dissect, contort, and explore new avenues for critical thinking on representations of aging in the media. When assembled, the contributions to **A Year of Aging** challenge common, taken-for-granted, everyday truths about aging and open up a space for dialogue and discussion.

