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Book Review

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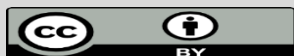
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Reviewing Janette Davies' monograph has been a compelling and challenging task. In our most recent work and Haim's diverse books over the years, we have pondered upon the concept of 'home' and its transformative nature in old age - a social conundrum that is also the focal point of Davies' detailed account of the intimate interconnection between elderly people with dementia and professional caregivers in a residential 'home'. In her careful and crafted depiction, Davies resonates the voice of people who are often muted in anthropological discourse (Hazan 2015). In the first three chapters she introduces her field: a professional care ecology for elderly people with dementia in a residential 'home'. The fourth and fifth chapters contains the stories of several residents that illustrate the interdependency between the elderly with dementia and the care assistants.

Therefore, people with dementia are not the only 'silenced witnesses' that claim a voice here. This book also sheds light on the care assistants' experiences and plights – working class women who are mostly underpaid for their tedious labor and whose position is rarely questioned. Most importantly, Davies highlights the vitality of the interactions and interdependency of care assistants and older people with dementia in everyday care practices and temporalities as they are continuously negotiated against the backdrop of management's constraints which are deeply impacted by profit-making goals. One telling example of the convergence of needs of both caregivers and the elderly is the account of Valerie's dilemma during her weekend shift. "She described finding a trail of feces from the lounge to the toilet... rightly guessing that it was Arthur, who was frequently unable to understand where to defecate... the lounge was full of residents and their visitors, many of whom were concerned that the care assistants had to clean it up, acknowledging how busy they had been that day due to a shortage of staff" (62). This account reminds the readers that care is situated, relational, and reciprocal, not necessarily instrumental.

Davies' complex and realist descriptions of the everyday reciprocity of caregiving, can be understood as a result of her Janus-faced presence in the field as both an anthropologist and a trained nurse, which allowed her a unique position in the field: she was able to access, observe, and actively share the staging of human dramas at the residential home, day by day as they emerged, for over a year, that other participant observers would never have gained admission to in a similar level of controlled intimacy. From this position in the field stems her monograph's greatest strength and main contribution: her anthropological gaze at the minutiae of life in a UK residential home. For instance, she delicately explores the loss of privacy, dignity, and self-esteem, mainly during bathing times, through very personal stories of residents, and through her active involvement. Such a 'careful' research position allows her to describe some of the residents' mundane comments that "they enjoyed coffee that morning...[since] it was not 'slopped'", while deducing that "well-made and well-served hot drink could provide real pleasure" (91).

However, it is precisely in this double entanglement that one of the monograph's drawbacks is found as well. Though the author acknowledges her position in the field, she does not comprehensively reflect upon the power inequality between her as a researcher and a trained nurse with abundant experience and prolific academic background versus the underpaid and worn out care assistants. This accounts for an essential aspect of positionality in the field (Rosaldo 2000, 532), which is not adequately addressed in the monograph; hence, producing an account that is deceptively 'real'.

Another remarkable aspect is that Davies is not reflexive to the significance of the time gap between the publication of the monograph in 2017 and the data collection which transpired during the last decade of the 20th century (2). She respectfully chose to publish her findings only after the last resident who participated in the research has passed away. Nonetheless, this time gap of around roughly twenty years has implications that should have been considered and contemplated upon. Firstly, although there is a vast literature of ethnographic research *in* institutional settings, ethnographic research *with* people with dementia at a large residential home has become an almost impossible mission for anthropologists to carry out in the last decade: vulnerability often equals inaccessibility. Hence, the raw data collected in this research is of great value due to its uniqueness, and from the positionality of an anthropologist. Davies should have pondered upon this temporal challenge critically. Secondly, as Davies' monograph is undoubtedly an important addition to several other prominent works that address the caring for older people with dementia in institutional settings, such as Gubrium's (1975) groundbreaking ethnography on "bed and body work" and Kitwood's (1997) writing on "person-centered care", these classical and influential works are blatantly absent from Davies' literature review. Thirdly, Davies considers the 'home' trope in old age in general and in institutional care settings in particular. However, she does not sufficiently incorporate recent notable theoretical and empirical writing on this topic (e.g. McLean 2007), mostly limiting her theoretical background to the last decade of the twentieth century. Moreover, while Davies refers to the topsy-turvy category of 'home', she morally absolves the care assistants of dehumanizing and malignant care at times, not to mention the absence of presence of the encounter with death as a formative constituent in the construction of the Home as a home in the sense of a safe haven from the impending end.

Despite these analytical and methodological shortcomings, Davies provides ample valuable suggestions for improving residential home care. For instance, she proposes mealtime adjustments, such as offering a variety of food choices and rearranging seating positions. She also encourages professional caregivers to enhance activities in the afternoon to relieve the residents' boredom, such as engaging them in craft-making, cooking or cleaning, and spending some time outside. Overall, her insights into the everyday routinized life of older residents in an institutional setting are likely to interest health practitioners, social workers, professional caregivers and hopefully policy makers and executives. Furthermore, her empirical data will be captivating for anthropologists and align well with other ethnographies of nursing homes. To conclude, we recommend undergraduate through graduate students and professionals to consider adding Davies' monograph to their reading list.

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