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## Book Review

*Review of King, Andrew, Kathryn Almack and Rebecca L. Jones, eds. Intersections of Ageing, Gender and Sexualities: Multidisciplinary International Perspectives. 2019. Bristol, UK: Policy Press. pp. 246. Price: \$97,75 (Hardcover); \$35 (Paperback and eBook).*

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## Book Review

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Coming out of gerontology's heteronormative trappings of 'successful aging' and the much-aspired 'good life' in later life discourses, King, Almack and Jones' edited volume on the complex intersections of gender, age and sexuality makes for a novel intellectual disruption. This volume reimagines and "queers" (Sandberg and Marshall 2017) gerontology's futures as well as capably harnesses the "cultural turn" (Gilleard and Higgs 2013) by weaving queer temporalities with interlocking themes of subjectivities, identities, bodies and embodiment. This focus on the performative multiplicity of aging subjectivities allows for radically questioning the cultural friction between people whose lives are considered "desirable to live and thrive into old age" and those "whose aging is understood as liveable aging" (Sandberg and Marshall 2017: 7). Thus this volume addresses both the epistemological, political, social and vital limitations of a "hetero-happy" context (Van Dyk 2014), where able-bodiedness and heterosexuality are normativity's second name. Hence, by representing aging futures that are marked by alleged 'failures' of menopause, sexual dysfunction and chronic ailments, the volume achieves two significant goals: (1) it offers a potent critique of mainstream gerontology that has for long organized itself along the binaries of successes and failures, and (2) it opens up a range of alternative voices, realities and practices that have been neglected in gerontological studies due to similarly binary epistemologies.

This volume is organized around four substantive thematic sections: "Theoretical interpolations," "Representations," "Dis/empowerments" and "Health and well-being." The first section focuses on gerontology's ongoing attempts to bridge theory and lived reality. Building on theories of intersectionality, Toni Calasanti (Chapter 1) offers a heuristic model, where sexual orientation and gender intersect to influence the division of care labour among older couples. Drawing from queer theory, Yvette Taylor's semi-biographical contribution (Chapter 2) offers an innovative critique of a 'chrononormative', neoliberal capitalist academic space. Vanessa Fabbre and Anna Siverskog (Chapter 3) use queer and life-course perspectives to understand the role of social capital among trans older persons in the United States and Sweden. Interestingly, in both the second and third chapter, queering 'time' serves to both illuminate and critique how (hetero)normative expectations are reproduced, disciplined and yet disrupted.

"Representations" focuses on portrayals of aging, gender and sexualities, drawing from textual analyses of web columns and magazine articles. This deconstruction reveals the aging body as a site of new forms of governmentality. Elizabeth Barry (Chapter 5) uses Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* to think imaginatively about menopause and later life sexuality. Comparing Germaine Greer's and Simone de Beauvoir's depiction of menopause, Barry argues that, while both these leading feminists sympathize with the gendered experience of aging, they ultimately employ the same spurious scientific concepts that pathologize menopause by naturalizing the idea of decay and incapacity associated with aging female bodies. Marciel Oro Piqueras (Chapter 6) takes three contemporary British fictional texts to complicate the contemporary social space for later life sexuality, most commonly caught between the "asexual" and the "sexy oldie" (Sandberg 2015). Piqueras aptly reminds that, although the female protagonists in the texts do

not conform to the normative models of (female) aging, this does not prevent their affective and sexual assertions to occur outside the tropes of the heterosexual family. The contribution on midlife motherhood in Denmark and Israel by Kinneret Lahad and Karen Hvidtfeldt (Chapter 7) neatly follows this caution. Based on data from online web columns and magazines, the authors distill the theoretical concept of “aging capital” (indicating experience, patience, wisdom and hence agency) to demonstrate how ‘late’ mothers negotiate aging in the face of pro-natal regimes and public moralities on appropriate motherhood.

The third section on “Dis/empowerments,” explores how (social) positioning emerges in the continuous affective interplay between individual and institutional hierarchies. Authors Jill Wilkens (Chapter 8) and Elham Amini (Chapter 9) creatively import Bourdieu’s *habitus* to critique the intersection of social mobility and the practice of social scientific research. Wilkens indexes habitus dislocation to understand her participants’ – British lesbian and bi/queer older women born between 1940 and 1958 – differential access to education and employment. Amini writes from her positionality as a female, highly educated young health professional among a group of menopausal Iranian women practicing Shia Islamic faith. The negotiation of her insider/outsider status during research, inspires her reflections on social location and shifting power dynamics. Feliciano Vellar’s examination of sexual expressions and practices of elderly in Spanish long-term care facilities, is an atypically a-theoretical contribution to this volume. Yet, it adds significantly to the understanding of the way sexual lives of institutionalized older adults remain embedded in highly regulatory regimes that perceive sexual behaviors “as potentially problematic or even pathological” (165). Vellar concludes with practical guidelines, emphasizing the need for a rights-based, person-centred model of care to ensure sexual citizenship of elderly with dementia, as well as LGBTQ older adults. In chapter 11, Finn Reygan and Jamil Khan take the reader to South Africa to offer insights on the lives of LGBTQ older adults that are informed by “contextual realities and African ontologies” of care (171). The authors contend that constitutionally guaranteed freedoms do not necessarily translate into substantive equality for older people in a context that has long, complex histories of racial and class-based inequality. Taken together, the four chapters demonstrate that dis/empowerment grows from differential social mobility, sexual citizenship and the practice of social scientific research, and is thus continuously re-created at the intersections of hegemonic epistemologies with socio-political realities.

The last section, “Health and wellbeing,” challenges the normative constructions of age, illness and masculinity. Mark Hughes’ (Chapter 12) contention of the potential dangers of quantitative research aggregating people into one LGBTQ category, is a rare one. Drawing from existing large-scale studies on Australia, UK and the United States, Hughes shows how “population level analysis can powerfully illustrate the systemic subordination of some people on the basis of multiple and intersecting social categories” (193). In a similar vein he critiques the tendency of quantitative studies to valorize experiences of marginalization as ‘additional’, rather than vital. In the last two chapters, Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto (Chapter 13) focuses on mature masculinity in the Viagra era and Julie Fish (Chapter 14) offers an analysis of older gay and bisexual men’s experiences of prostate cancer. Both authors reaffirm the persistent cultural tension between successful aging, respectable sexuality and aging masculinities and demonstrate how older men’s lives are disciplined by dominant tropes of heteronormativity and bodily functionality.

Overall, the volume’s multidisciplinary interrogations are well served owing to the editors’ diverse intellectual engagements with LGBTQ older adults, end of life care, housing and social care. The editors have involved a range of actors, hence staying true to gerontology’s fundamental question of ‘so what’ or: how can theories and empirical insights effectively improve the lives of older persons? This is however also where the volume somewhat disappoints its publics: despite the editors’ involvement with LGBTQ activism, this current volume does little to add voice to the growing movement of sexual citizenship and the affirmative political discourse of later life sexuality. One is left wondering: how do historical, social and cultural forces shape resistance, advocacy and pride in LGBTQ lives? How will future gerontologists

engage with the shifting regimes of LGBTQ politics and policy? That said, this volume's engagement to privilege the "international" perspective, or at least "not to prioritise voices or perspectives from the global north, at the expense of others" (3), undoubtedly comes as a relief. The volume invites the reader to deliberate on pertinent questions that challenge the Euro-American hegemony of gerontological knowledge systems and to reconsider the convergence of who and how is known: "where does this knowledge come from, in whose name is it written, whose voices are heard and whose are not?" (3).

To summarize, this volume surely delivers its original promise: understanding the complex intersections between different forms of social division, identity, (in)equality, power and privilege. Although its rich analysis will be primarily appealing to academics, it can also be a useful teaching resource for upper undergraduate and graduate students interested in intersectional frameworks, both theoretically and methodologically. While all contributing scholars are primarily, and actively seeking to hybridize the heteronormative boundaries and underpinnings of gerontology (and aging), the volume certainly has the breadth to be appreciated by literary experts, cultural theorists, medical practitioners or anyone interested in rethinking cultural imaginaries of failing bodies, fragmented identities and sexual pluralities.

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