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Sally Chivers
Trent Centre for Aging and Society, Trent University, Ontario

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Health researchers and artists joined forces to develop the theatre production *Cracked,* which sheds both a refreshing and informative ‘light’ on living with dementia in the twenty-first century. The filmed version of this play offers a unique entry into thinking about and understanding the everyday lives of people who are experiencing dementia, the people who love them, and the people who work in fields that support both them and their families. *Cracked* stages pivotal issues that are recognizable to formal and informal caregivers, to a broader social network, and to researchers across disciplines. It playfully addresses topics as broad as denial of the diagnosis, fear that comes with perceived loss, the practical and symbolic effects of losing one’s driver’s license, difficulties of disclosure, and the unwelcome spectre of institutional care. At the same time, the production also challenges a set of common assumptions by raising less well-known facets of living with dementia: joy, love, music, meaning, hope, activism, and dance.

Indeed, the experienced researchers who developed this production left no stone unturned in developing a nuanced yet cohesive story about what it means to live with dementia in a Westernized context. The medium of theatre offers an apt vantage point from which to create empathy for people involved in the quotidian aspects of navigating health systems as well as the physical, emotional and mental transformations associated with dementia. It offers a rich platform from which to convey a multiplicity of research findings about creating meaning in life with dementia that are otherwise often reduced to ‘chapters’ or well-defined themes in research. Rare within scholarship, and even among artistic productions about dementia, this play offers *two* focused perspectives from characters with dementia, while featuring equally complex additional characters who gather with them in a support group as well as caregivers.

The first character introduced to the audience, Elaine, lives with her daughter and her daughter’s wife as she navigates the early stages of learning about and living with her diagnosis and with eventually moving into the Parkdale nursing home. Through folk songs and seemingly throw-away lines, the audience learns that Elaine holds lingering embodied memories of coastal work, such as fishing and lobster trapping. Elaine meets the challenges of her situation with a surprising humor: what many might expect to be a devastating experience – repeatedly finding out that her husband has died some time ago – she responds to with laughter. This strategy offers the audience a new way to think about the distinctiveness of dementia experiences and also offers a seamless way to offer moments of catharsis. Through Elaine, the audience meets her former neighbour, Vera, who seems to be a relative newcomer to Canada. Again entering the experience of the disease through the intimacy of everyday relational encounters, the audience witnesses how Elaine and Vera compare notes about their recent dementia diagnoses.

The portrayal of these two women who engage in a *growing* relationship, learning from each other, strikes a chord because people (and characters) living with dementia so often struggle for agency, even within fictional representations. Characters with dementia frequently come across as isolated, except maybe for the generous company of family and the odd friend. Elaine and Vera's friendship however, gives a genuine space to both of their perspectives, unmediated by the power relations between caregiver and cared for, youth and older adult, male and female, in a way that is often unseen, or unrecognized, but nevertheless hyper-real. Staging the friendship of Vera and Elaine immediately challenges the representativeness of the dyadic or triadic care relationship.

Cracked's inventive theatre devices allow a 'show don't tell' evocation of pivotal themes that run through dementia experiences, as can often be found in good ethnography. One such evocative moment occurs when the seven stage actors emulate clocks with their bodies, embodying time. At the beginning of the scene, their arms mark time in unison as they sing in unison, performing institutional time. They then shift to harmonizing musically and physically, playfully and creatively. With their hands marking different times, they remind the audience of the existential multiplicity of space-time experiences and of the way these radically alter how humans occupy infrastructures and situations, showing that perspective affects our experience of time and how humans occupy institutional spaces.

For the most part, this piece of drama evokes empathy for the multiple characters on stage, and their different faces and tones. It stops short, however, with the nursing home administrator. While that character does exhibit some development and change, the play could do more to convey how she—like the residents, family members, and other workers—is primarily caught in an inhumane system, a role that disavows her from the right to make a difference. The move into Parkdale, for both central characters, comes across as a tragedy in a way that leaves less to the imagination than other sections of the play. On the other hand, whereas indeed the flat character of the administrator adds to the fear people already have of these places, this fear is often also justified, and unites the multiple actors in a structurally confining situation.

While vastly entertaining and wildly evocative, the play also offers information about socio-economic resources available for people with dementia, as well as about the symptoms that come with the disease. It evokes research-based, but less well-known arguments about dementia care, such as that care programmes need to fit people's past and particularities. As such, it is not only about grim endings or the acceptance of decline, but also actively explores the idea of new beginnings, continuity with past lives and relational transformation. Many moments in this play could thus serve as useful conversation starters, among family members figuring out life with dementia, among service providers, and within classrooms.