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## Book Review

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*At Home in a Nursing Home* is a remarkable ethnography that provides insight into the daily life of a group of cognitively impaired nursing home residents in Australia. It documents how they try to create a sense of home through movements within an institution of care where power relationships, self-determination, and administrative times can disrupt a delicate sense of belonging. Zhang's analysis is based on a careful articulation where she analyzes, with academic rigour and detailed descriptions, the cultural performativity of movement through assemblages of care. Working with the Deleuzian concept of assemblage, the author analyses "how older residents' movements meshed with multiples entities, including staff, medications, walking aids, assistive utensils, adjustable beds and chairs, as well as, care policies, assessments, care plans and fall prevention programs" (62). Thus, reading movements and care through one another in the nursing home as assemblage, Zhang here accounts for the mundane practices and embodiments of older adults with dementia as they negotiate a sense of belonging through their relationships with human and non-human others.

This ethnography is based on data the author gathered during one year of involvement in two residential care facilities in metropolitan Adelaide, Australia. From this ethnographic experience, Zhang brings to the text meticulous descriptions of care routines and of interactions among older people, mundane objects and the staff. In addition, Zhang also accounts for her own multisensory experiences of walking with the assistance of a physiotherapist and a walking frame, and of being cared for in a bedridden state. Such immersive methods are definitely challenging, but they are also necessary if we understand that, for a variety of reasons, her participants do not comply with classical research protocols and expectations of verbal, linear accounts of their lived experience and therefore invite researchers to radically rethink their methodologies. Zhang thus not only observes and registers movements but also to a certain extent embodies them by recreating them in her own corporality. Through this methodological attunement she empathizes with a non-normative language because she understands that this is how older people affected by dementia articulate their concerns in institutional care contexts.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part, "Walking," analyses the experience of walking, through an Ingoldian lens on movement, as a mechanism of life, routine creation, social ties and belonging. This section explains how interdependencies are created between those being cared-for, their care workers and objects through acts of moving. Zhang familiarizes the reader with the cultural complexity of walking for the older people she worked with, and points to the significance of walking for their well-being. She highlights the interdependencies that are forged and mediated through

walking in an institutional context that is not at all free from conflicting opinions and desires. In this regard, I wish to highlight the discussion on the ethics of care in residences with people with dementia (Rapport 2018). Through ethnographic description, Zhang shows us how care relations are imbued in processes of walking in institutional settings that are marked by a lack of budget, charges by ratio, and other administrative elements. For Zhang, although carers often contribute to constructing a sense of home among older people by motivating them to walk, a power imbalance is created by institutional control mechanisms that question older people's self-determination of where and how they may walk, thus diminishing their autonomy.

The second part, "Care," discusses the disjuncture between how care is given by care workers and experienced by nursing home residents through actions such as showering, giving a massage, or eating. Zhang writes about the multiple meanings of eating in the context of care for cognitively impaired people. On a very basic level, the progressive forgetfulness that comes with dementia can cause these older adults to stop eating at times. While continuing to eat is critical for the survival of people of dementia, the author argues that, in daily care, the focus should be on the practice of eating. Whether one eats independently or is being assisted, eating is a cultural practice. The ritual of eating is much more than food intake but is constituted by sensory ritualized practices, such as going to the dining room, getting ready to receive food, touching the food and experiencing its texture with your fingers.

As a ritual, eating can thus create a sense of belonging, including for older people with dementia. In this second section Zhang documents how these performative practices of eating and the intimate relationship between nursing home staff and residents in their encounters with food are tied up with the ethics of care. As the author points out, care workers must create a close relationship with cognitively impaired people to allow these residents "to prepare themselves for eating" (273). Preparing residents to eat means reconnecting with the cultural meaning of food by, for example, letting them smell the food or touch it. This is only possible through the corporeal interdependence that is gradually produced through daily encounters with others, such as care workers. Zhang stresses that this requires a high level of attunement and intimacy between care workers and residents. The author asserts that, although care models are rationalised through the medicalisation of care in these institutions (for example due to chemical restraint, a topic that the author also discusses), it is essential to underline that care relations are such that they are simultaneously places where the feeling of home is recreated. Zhang points out that this is possible as long as there is a "right assemble of care" (280), namely an adequate balance between less intrusive medical care models and more humane and empathic care models.

*At Home in a Nursing Home* is an exploration of movement in institutional care environments and of the role of movement in enabling a sense of belonging. The author aptly demonstrates the importance of incorporating embodiment and sensorial analysis in care studies. Zhang offers her sharp observations in clear, accurate, accessible prose, making this book appropriate for a diverse audience interested in the performativity of bodies with dementia, lived experiences of home making in residential care, and experiences of frailty.

## References

Rapport, Nigel. 2018. "The Action and Inaction of Care: Care and the Personal Preserve." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 29: 250–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/taja.12290>