

cer's book is a relaxed read despite its tomelike dimensions. The accompanying instructor's manual invites the educator to use the text as classroom material.

It is gratifying to read books which specifically address the needs of older women. The reader is made aware of the work that has been done on behalf of older women and by older women themselves. We should not be complacent however. Several of the authors make reference to increasing world-wide political, economic, and religious conservatism which will threaten women's social, political and economic gains. Women must become more aware of their social needs and needs of the Self, and must express these needs through further research as well as community and international networking.

¹B. B. Hess, "Old Women: Problems, political and policy implications," in E. W. Markson and G. R. Batra (eds.), *Public Policies for an Aging Population* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1980), pp. 30-59.

WOMEN AS ELDERS: The Feminist Politics of Aging

Marilyn J. Bell, editor. New York: Haworth Press, 1986.

WOMEN, AGING AND AGEISM

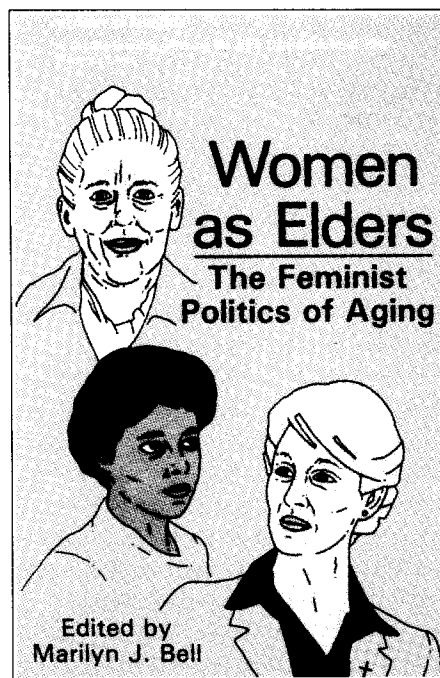
Evelyn Rosenthal, editor. New York: Harrington Park Press, 1990.

By *Judith L. Fraser*

Virginia Woolf wrote that women need a room of their own in which to have Self and to create. Woolf referred to both a physical and spiritual space. Both Bell and Rosenthal's books comment on the modern woman's search for that metaphysical/metaphorical expanse within herself which will make her whole.

Women as Elders aptly begins its commentary on that search with a preface by seventy year-old feminist poet Gert Beadle. "The Nature of Crones" explores the negative constructs of women in society and reclaims them as women's territory. Her vigorous verse exhorts other women to act as the Crone who

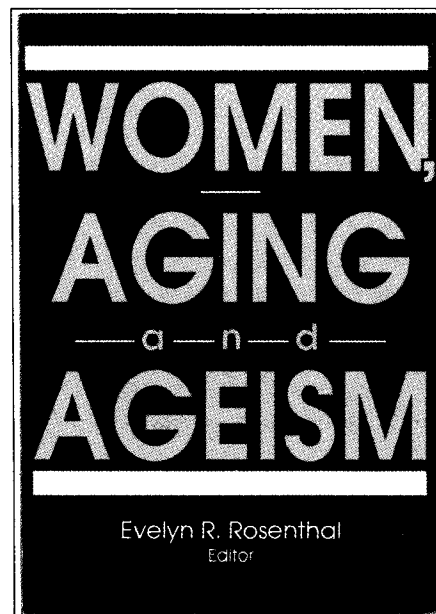
is distinguished by her ability to dream dreams... [and by refusing] to take se-



riously the small mind, loaded with self-righteous hyperbole...

A following chapter, "Crones Nest: The Vision" by Nancy Breeze, in conjunction with the Crones Nest Committee, outlines the dream of a group of women to create an older women's residential space. Their trials advise us that dreams are accompanied by hard work but remain attainable.

"Remembering Our Foremothers: Older Black Women, Politics of Age, Politics of Survival as Embodied in the Novels of Toni Morrison," examines the shared emotional space of a Black and of a White female's interpretation of this novelist's work. Morrison explores the transforma-



tion of women from their naive youth to wise age, drawing upon the tradition of African culture. The authors' discussion of Morrison's work comments not only on her skill but also on the American political culture which she implicitly critiques. In their own ways Holloway and Demetrakopoulos draw emotional sustenance from these stories.

Women, Aging and Ageism, like the writers in Bell's book, focuses on the concept of space. Both books contain personal and subjective explorations of being female. Rosenthal has chosen writers who record women's emotional experiences of aging. Interspersed amongst the chapters are poems by older women such as Ingrid Reti's "At Sixty One":

*Like a panther
age crept up on me*

*but I refuse
to conform to its stereotype*

*instead will plunge forward
in my endeavors*

*nourish and stretch my mind
with new concepts,
thoughts, ideas*

*share knowledge
with my students,
neighbors, friends.*

The panther gives me strength.

In Bell's book Margraff discussed the varying means by which religious sisters face their own retirement. In Rosenthal's book Reeves discusses the retirement preparations of women in dual career families. Despite their surface differences, these two groups of women face the same problems in retirement. Both have to deal with a less active lifestyle, both experience role changes, both identified their work as part of their self-definitions; both groups may face pressure to retire early, and both may face an uncertain financial future. In comparing these two groups, the reader will realize that though women may be separated by physical and intellectual spaces in youth, the spaces we inhabit in old age are very similar.

Hale's "Being Old: Seven Women, Seven Views" and Siegal's "We Are Not Your Mothers: Report on Two Groups for Women Over Sixty," in *Women, Aging*

and Ageism, are sharp observations on the way women respond to their own aging. Hale's chapter stresses the need to listen to older women's feelings about age and their own aging, not society's view. Women, like the aged, are not a homogeneous group and yet are subjected to stereotyping. Siegal's chapter speaks to the stereotypes held by men and women as they were articulated by two separate groups of older women. The authors force the reader to confront her own stereotypes that she holds about her Self, and about other women's Selves.

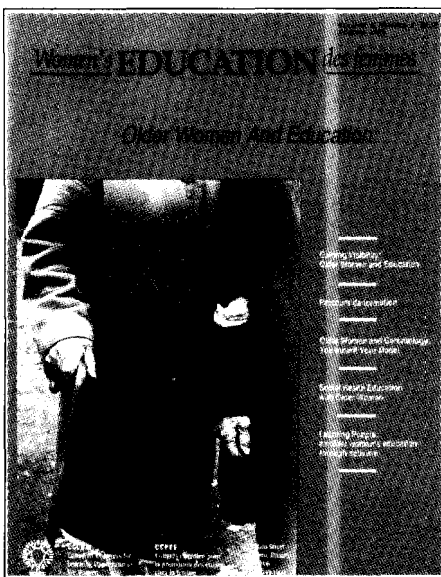
This is true of both texts as they engage both our intellectual and emotional cognizance of aging. Appreciation of age does not necessarily come with strengthening our individual metaphysical/metaphorical spaces, but with our awareness, as these authors make clear, that our womanspaces overlap throughout our entire lives.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION DES FEMMES: Older Women and Education

(Vol. 8 No. 2) Toronto: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women.

By Stacey Sulewski

Contrary to popular belief, as people get older their intellectual capacity and learning abilities do *not* decline. Older people can and do learn through formal and informal educational experiences. The *Women's Education* issue on older women



and education clearly communicates the message that education is a lifelong process. Given this, education theory, practice and policies must change to reflect the needs of older learners.

This issue of *Women's Education* focuses specifically on older women. It offers critical views on the usual educational opportunities that are available to older women, and outlines several directions for education alternatives.

The articles in this issue of *Women's Education* have a common theme—that learning opportunities for older women must recognize, and work to eradicate, the social realities of sexism and ageism that older women face. It emphasizes that education with older women must do more than simply help women to adjust to old age. Rather, there is a need for education that will assist women in radically changing the way they experience old age. Education must be “instrumental in significantly altering the well-being of aging women or changing either personal or societal concepts about old age and old women” (Harold, p. 8).

This issue of *Women's Education* goes beyond critique. The articles demonstrate that opportunities for lifelong learning do exist and that more are beginning to address the needs of older women. Grace Hodgins' article on the education program called SHOP (Social Health Outreach Program) presents a useful model upon which to adapt other educational programs that aim to counteract ageism and sexism. Vi Thompson's article talks about the new phase of education that she began as an older woman involved in political action. Her article emphasizes the value of education for, and through, action. I truly enjoyed the four personal stories of women from across Canada. For me, they underscore the value of knowledge gained through everyday experience, and they point out important cultural and regional differences in the ways that women experience aging and education. These and other articles in *Women's Education* left me with a wonderful sense of optimism. They present worthwhile material with which to build more educational opportunities for older women.

As Sharon Harold explains, growing old “isolates [people] from the social and economic relations of the ‘public’ world.” This is especially true for older adults in institutions. Most of the educational op-

portunities that exist for older people in institutions further reinforce their isolation. This issue of *Women's Education* overlooks the particular challenge involved in reaching older women in institutions and developing education initiatives that serve their unique needs.

Overall, however, the issue is a marvelous step toward addressing the inequalities in appropriate educational opportunities for older women. It is an extremely valuable resource for educators, researchers, students and organizers alike.

RESOURCE LIST

Ageing International: news about the elderly you need to know. Published by The International Federation on Ageing: 1909 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20049 U.S.A.

Aging: Issues Affecting Older Women in Ontario. A discussion paper (Spring 1991), published by the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues, 880 Bay Street, 5th Floor, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N3.

Anderson, Sharon. *Mitral Valve Prolapse: Benign Syndrome?* Wellington House Press, 1990.

Brady, Judy (ed.), *1 in 3: Women with Cancer Confront an Epidemic.* San Francisco, CA: Cleiss Press, 1991.

Chaney, Elsa M. (ed), *Empowering Older Women: Cross Cultural Views. A Guide for Discussion and Training.* Published by the American Association of Retired Persons (1990): 1909 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20049 U.S.A.

Cruikshank, Julia, in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Elders.* Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1990.

A Friend Indeed/Une véritable amie: Box 515, Place du Parc Station, Montréal, Québec H2W 2P1.

Journal of Women & Aging (quarterly edited by J. Dianne Garner). The Haworth Press, 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904 U.S.A.

Kehoe, Monika, *Lesbians Over 60 Speak*