**Still Growing**

**The Creative Self in Older Adulthood**

**Donald Capps**

**The Lutterworth press 2015, PB 208pp, 9780718893910, £16.50.**

This is the most delightful of books in its thoroughness, scholarship and creativity. It has all the potential to transform the readers understanding of the nature of age. In our functional and reductionist world that over values youth, strength and output these seven chapters challenge much negativity around the shape of older age.

Carefully organised into three parts Capps explores some of the questions and opportunities for our transition into older adulthood in chapters 1 and 2. Taking the assumption that older adult hood begins at age 70 this Pastoral theologian uses a blend of his own experience, poetry and scholarship to invite the reader into a richer and more textured view of the complexity of age. It may bring limitation but it also brings wisdom, potentiality and generativity. We are invited to look beyond the immediate and the physical into different expressions of faithfulness and hopefulness. Capps demands positivity and a different frame of understanding for the self in older adulthood.

Part two offers three chapters on the nature of growth and development for older people. Chapter 3 articulates the stages of older adult hood which include the nurture of care, wisdom, gracefulness and endurance. We are reminded of the virtue of wisdom and the necessity for us to have a more meaningful relationship with control and release. Capps (p57 -59) writes and especially insightful reflection on the virtue of endurance .Chapter 4 skilfully articulates the ageing process as forward movement – a process that is described as a continuing development involving many changes. The narrative is grounded and seeks to move us out of a fearful framework of disability into a range of possibilities that enable us to see the gains in ageing. There is no escape from some of the discomforts of ageing but in our embrace of the challenges there is a freedom, a hope and even a serenity. Chapter 5 explores the creativity of older adults and this is described as having or showing imagination or inventiveness. He draws upon the work of Pruyser. Adaptability is explored as an essential quality of creativity.

Part three draws together reflection in a section entitled the artistry of ageing. Chapter 6 captures the essence of this artistry – as Capps explores relaxed bodies, emancipated minds and dominant calm. He invites the reader to consider the creativity of these elements of our embodied existence. In chapter 7 Capps acknowledges the significant mood changes in older adult forward and the opportunities that we all have in expressing our discontent but also bringing our tensions and dissonances into a more creative whole and harmony. Happiness, satisfaction and flourishing form part of this conversation.

The book concludes,

‘perhaps it would be more accurate to say that God created the world – and created us – out of a deep sense of loneliness. And perhaps this means that a similar sense of loneliness in this world that we inhabit is, for us, the underlying inspiration for our own creativity. And maybe it is the older adult who is especially aware that this is so’ (page 175).

The book contains a help for and clear index along with a comprehensive bibliography.

This is an extraordinary countercultural book informed by a passionate embrace of the complexity of human experience alongside a creative theology of vulnerability and human identity. Our faith communities would look and feel very different if we were to begin to practice some of the convictions captured in these seven chapters. It is Pastoral theology at its very best and I challenge anyone to read it and not be transformed by its generativity.

James Woodward

Sarum College and The University of Winchester.