

AGAINST WISDOM

THE SOCIAL POLITICS OF ANGER AND AGING

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"It's time to get angry again." These are the mobilizing words with which Germaine Greer concludes the preface to *The Whole Woman* (1999), the sequel to *The Female Eunuch* (1970), and the very book she had vowed thirty years earlier never to write. In *The Female Eunuch* she had insisted that it was the responsibility of each generation of women to articulate its own experiences and its own priorities. A woman, including herself, could only speak with authority about women of her own class, background, education, and age. But some thirty years later, the dismaying lack of progress in women's issues across the life course and around the globe moved Greer to assume a position of authority to speak for women in general, and in *The Whole Woman* she writes about a multitude of feminist issues ranging from beauty, sexuality, and work to reproductive technology, hormone replacement therapy, and the global feminization of poverty.

I am not a fan of Germaine Greer's work. But I was heartened to read her new book. On the whole I had deplored her view of what aging can mean for women in her previous book *The Change: Women, Aging, and the Menopause* (1991). There, aging at its best is depicted as a rare opportunity for women made possible by virtue of "the change" itself; aging is a welcome retirement from the career of sexuality and, by extension, from the public world. Although *The Change* was motivated in great part by Greer's desire to expose the medicalization of menopause and by her contempt for the enormous and unnecessary market for manufactured hormones, ultimately her vision for older women is quietistic and separatist. In *The Change* she invokes the peculiar vision of old women as powerfully wise and

serene, as witches tenderly and deeply in love with the entire world.¹ The book left me with the dispiriting impression that Greer believed women beyond menopause should cultivate their own gardens in a spirit of tranquillity. So I found it bracing to discover her emerging from that self-imagined cloister and taking on a position of leadership at the age of sixty. I also find fascinating the fact that in *The Whole Woman* Greer has adopted an angry tone—or more accurately, a rhetoric of anger—as a strategy, calling up the cultural memory of militant women in the 1960s and evoking anger as a powerful binding force. "It's time to get angry again." Here Greer addresses women of all ages. Importantly, she is writing as an older woman and is also including older women in her view of a coalition of women.

I draw on the example of Greer as a way of introducing the subject of this essay: the damaging effects of the cultural prohibition of anger in older people in the United States and, concomitantly, the possible galvanizing effects of anger for stimulating personal and social change. The larger context of this essay is the social politics of the emotions as they relate to life stages—in particular to aging or old age in the United States where age is associated with wisdom, an ideal that, I will suggest, serves as a screen for ageism.²

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines wisdom as the "capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgment in the choice of means and ends." In the West the time-honored association of wisdom has been with aging, with wisdom defined in various ways but almost always understood as a capacity for balanced reflection and judgment that can only accrue with long experience. For Aristotle, wisdom is a virtue, associated with thought and with the mastering of feeling. And indeed wisdom has almost always been understood as predicated on a lack of certain kinds of feelings—the passions, for instance, including anger. From this perspective, anger would seem to be the virtual opposite of wisdom. And yet for Greer the authority of her anger is based on experience across the years of her life as a feminist. And it is experience that is commonly understood to be a necessary if not sufficient ground for wisdom. Thus we can understand Greer's anger as the base of the articulation of a political viewpoint that is itself a kind of wisdom, one that might seem a contradiction in terms—a wisdom that is feminist, or perhaps better put, a wise anger.

The questions that motivate this essay are: how does a social politics of aging, one that is inclusive (not limited, say, to gender or to class), rely on a rhetoric of emotion, and how has it changed over time in the twentieth century? These questions are related to another one: how is aging theorized in relation to other life stages and the emotions? I cannot be definitive or exhaustive in reflecting on these questions. But I hope that by focusing on two major books key to the social and cultural history of aging in the United States I can open them up to further inquiry. The first book is drawn from early in the century—the genetic psychologist G. Stanley Hall’s *Senescence: The Last Half of Life*, published in 1922; the second from the end of the century—feminist activist and writer Betty Friedan’s *The Fountain of Age*, which appeared in 1993. Why these two books by Hall and Friedan? Both were prominent figures, well known for their contributions to their chosen fields—in the case of Hall, adolescent psychology; in the case of Friedan, feminist activism. Both came to consider aging in America only when they were themselves older, and both wrote ambitious books that have been destined to be forgotten.³

Although their books were published some seventy years apart, both Hall and Friedan argue that we are witnessing the emergence of a “new” elderly, made possible by increases in life expectancy, and that these new elderly have a unique and even evolutionary role to play in our society. But Friedan does not build on the early cultural history of aging in the United States. We find no reference to Hall’s vision of aging in her work. I mention this not to indict *The Fountain of Age* on this score; rather, it would seem that in the United States, as with the history of feminism, social consciousness of aging has needed to be reinvented time and again throughout the twentieth century.⁴ But even this may be too positive a way of putting it. It is perhaps only now—at the beginning of the twenty-first century—that we are beginning as a nation to develop a broad social consciousness of the aging of our population.

A few statistics may be in order. According to the U.S. Administration on Aging’s “Profile of Older Americans: 2000,” since 1900 the percentage of Americans age sixty-five and older has more than tripled, and the absolute number of Americans sixty-five and older has increased elevenfold. Our population as a whole is aging, and with the increase in longevity over the twentieth century, our older

population is itself growing older. By 2030 it is estimated that there will be twice as many older persons living in the United States as in 1999; persons age sixty-five and older will account for a full twenty percent of our population. If the aging of our population is an important challenge facing our country, aging can also be said to be a women’s issue. In 1999, for example, for every 100 men there were 141 women; older women have a significantly higher poverty rate than men.

The implications of these statistics are reflected in our anxiety—both at the level of the individual and of the nation—over the financial future. As a nation we have an acute political consciousness of some of the fiscal consequences of aging, as witnessed in the acrimonious public debates over social security during the 1990s and in the presidential campaign of 2000. Should we “save” social security in some kind of a lockbox? Should we privatize social security?⁵ Our anxiety is seen as well in the multitude of news stories that warn us of the strict necessity of planning for retirement. Whether this effort can be sustained in the political arena in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001, is altogether another question. I am nonetheless hopeful that at this time we are developing a widespread social consciousness of the aging of our population. What can we gain from reading the works of Hall and Friedan? What can we learn from their reception?

In attempting to generate a social consciousness of aging, both Hall and Friedan draw on the notion of wisdom as well as deploy a rhetoric of anger, ranging from belligerence to rage. The extent to which they think of their projects as political is important here, since political energy and engagement are often understood in terms of fervor, and thus, as I mentioned above with regard to Greer, as antithetical to wisdom. In this essay, then, I sketch a micro-rhetorical history of anger in the twentieth century in terms of the cultural politics of aging.⁶ As we will see, the category of depression is central to this story.

Over the past fifteen years in the United States, the emotions have gained increasing prominence as a subject of research by historians who, along with scholars in other fields, have convincingly demonstrated that, like any other human experience, the emotions have a

history and thus change in fascinating ways over time. I am not a historian. But as a scholar trained in literary studies, I have found extremely suggestive the precept of the historicity of the emotions, along with histories of specific emotions such as grief and shame. Central to this work is the distinction between *emotional experience* (what an individual feels) and *emotional standards or ideals* (what a culture demands in terms of emotional behavior or etiquette). Also central to this work, given a theoretical emphasis on the social construction of the emotions, is sensitivity to differences in emotional experience and emotional standards in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and other social categories. But virtually no attention has been given to a history of the emotions in terms of age—in particular, old age.

There are a few significant exceptions to this general rule. In *New and Improved: The Transformation of American Women's Emotional Culture* (1998), John Spurlock and Cynthia Magistro investigate the emotional lives of adolescents and women from the 1910s to the early 1930s in the United States, focusing in great part on the expression of personal feelings in their diaries and letters and thus on the tension between felt or lived experience and the culture's emotional standards. But they do not devote a section to older age. In contrast, historian of aging Andrew Achenbaum casts one of his essays, also published in 1998, as an exploration into what he refers to as the psychohistory of late-life emotionality. Notwithstanding their focus on different periods in the life course (adolescence and old age), in both these studies the authors are concerned primarily with felt or individual emotional experience, not with emotional standards. In the field of history this is indicative of much of the work in emotion studies. As Peter Stearns and Jan Lewis write in their introduction to *An Emotional History of the United States*, "The history of the emotions is . . . first of all, an attempt to recover that living presence, to recapture the way history felt. It is to ask what it felt like to be a Puritan immigrant to America, or an Irish one two hundred years later" (1). While both Hall and Friedan do write out of their own experience, some of it emotional, I am more concerned with the ways in which the rhetoric of anger and the conceptualization of wisdom appear in their work. But I am also interested in the tension between their own *experience* of anger and their notion of wisdom as a *standard* that they hope to foster.

Just as the capacity for wisdom has been linked with old age, specific emotions have been linked with certain stages of life in the twentieth century in disciplines ranging from psychoanalysis and psychology to cultural studies. If the emphasis in psychoanalysis and psychology is on the transhistorical nature of the emotions, in cultural studies it is on the social construction of the emotions. Melanie Klein, for example, theorizes an infant's psychic life as based not on primary drives, as does Freud, but rather on primary and intense affects—rage, among them. Anna Freud links the stormy oedipal emotions of hate and love with adolescence. And James Hillman theorizes certain emotions as being appropriate to certain stages of life (he remarks, for instance, that pity is an emotion we would not associate with childhood). In cultural studies, scholars of the emotions have studied the various incarnations a particular emotion might take at different points in our lives. This is, for example, an approach that William Ian Miller takes in *Anatomy of Disgust* (1997), where he sketches what I would call a psycho-ontogenesis of disgust, tracing the anatomy of disgust from its emergence between the ages of four and eight, through adolescence, and into late middle and old age. This later stage of life he associates with a loss of affect, with what he sees as a general self-disgust or listless resignation to a failing body and to a life now virtually over (Miller is clearly no champion of gifts that may come with old age).⁷ I have myself written in *Aging and Its Discontents: Freud and Other Fictions* (1991) about the emotion of anxiety that is fostered in our culture in relation to age. And Margaret Gullette, terming this "age anxiety," has called on scholars to study age-related emotions, offering a provocative account of how our culture has fostered the emotion of nostalgia as a way of socializing relatively young people into the ideology of middle age as decline (1998, 22). The emotions, then, are one of the important building blocks that our society draws upon to construct meaning and value, and to attempt to proscribe or valorize behavior in relation to one's age.

Senescence is a big book, a study of what Hall calls the second half of life. An indefatigable and renowned psychologist who was the first president of the American Psychological Association as well as the founding editor of four important psychological journals (the *American Journal of Psychology* among them), Hall undertook the writing of

Senescence after his retirement from Clark University in Massachusetts where he had served as president for thirty-some years. A sprawling compendium of research ranging from the thought of Aristotle to the responses by distinguished Americans to a questionnaire of Hall's own devising, from the biology of aging to the psychology of death, *Senescence* was first published in 1922, when Hall was seventy-eight.

Senescence is original in its cross-disciplinary focus on old age and impressive in its amplitude, and indeed Hall has been given the honor of being called our first psychogerontologist.⁸ Unfortunately, however, his method of surveying the research in various fields and of summarizing a multitude of various opinions and findings has an inevitable dulling effect. But there are two important exceptions to this general rule. The first is the opening of the book, where he speaks personally about his own retirement into old age. He finds it a shocking change from his previous life. The second is the next to last chapter, which he entitles "Some Conclusions." Here he rises to the challenge he has set himself in the course of the book—to imagine a new old age. It is as if in the process of writing *Senescence* Hall found himself inspired to adopt in the conclusion a messianic tone, one that is a radical departure from his firm resolve in the beginning to leave the world of public affairs.

In the introduction Hall formulaically asserts that "youth is an exhilarating, age a depressing theme" (viii). But on the whole, the tenor of the introduction is one of amazing resoluteness and industriousness.⁹ In the short time since his retirement Hall had undertaken many projects, including the writing of his autobiography (although, as Thomas Cole tells us, he had in fact begun work on it before), as well as the researching and writing of *Senescence* itself. Indeed, Hall's goal as he wrote his way through the book was to envision, as he put it, "the future of old age" (208). If in the introduction to *Senescence* he conceived of life expectancy in terms of the biblical number of seventy, by the conclusion we find him urging people to think in terms of living to one hundred years.¹⁰ What is his vision? That the demographic fact of so many old people is an index of the evolution of the human race, and that this evolutionary strength can only be fulfilled if older people who exemplify wisdom take on the important public role of counselor to those younger and to the nation as a whole.

Throughout *Senescence* Hall observes that enforced isolation in old age results in stagnation—in moroseness and depression. He comes close to a political analysis of the reasons for the emotional torpor of the old who find themselves, as he puts it, "a class more or less apart" (viii–ix), "a caste apart" (ix), literally cast aside by the institution of retirement. If older people are morose, it "is largely due to the inconsiderate treatment" that they receive (172). Yet if Hall sees that there is "a rapport between us oldsters" (ix), this seems to be an unspoken understanding, not one that would prefigure an embryonic political consciousness, in part because of what he understands as "the enhanced individuation characteristic of age" (ix).¹¹ Nor does he call for an end to the practice of retirement. Although he does contest Osler's infamous conviction that people do their best work before the age of forty, Hall finds himself in the contradictory position of both having determined to make a complete break with the work world of his past and ultimately concluding that the old—that is, those who have achieved a vigorous senectitude—should assume positions of leadership on the national and even international stage.

This contradiction is both mirrored in his conflicting views of the emotional lives of the old and explained by them. On the one hand, Hall accepts the time-honored notion that, as he puts it, there is a "lessening of emotional intensity" in old age, in addition to a progressive abating of sexual passion that begins with senescence (26). For Aristotle, whom Hall quotes early on, in old age the erotic passions of youth, associated with the heat of the body, are sublimated into the pursuit of truth just as the heat of the body dissipates into virtual nothingness. And in general, throughout *Senescence* Hall subscribes to the view that the intensity of feelings and emotions diminishes over the life course, and that this is one of the conditions of wisdom. Throughout the history of Western thought, wisdom has been associated with coolness of reason and evenness of judgment, with detachment and balance. To Hall this proves a congenial formulation. What can these people—intelligent, educated, healthy, and old—who would serve as senior statesmen or counselors, offer? They can offer "strength of reason, cool judgment, and breadth of view" (208). And in a familiar metaphor associated with wisdom, Hall writes that the potential of these elite older people is to reach a "summit" never before attained, the perspective that comes with age, from

which to “view the world in a clearer light” (382), with “poise and philosophic calm” (405).

In *Senescence* the only entry in the index on the emotions is to “emotions damped in the old.” Seeming to promise more of the same (the lessening of the passions, and so on), it refers us to a passage in “Some Conclusions.” Throughout *Senescence*, Hall writes of the old in the third person. But here he shifts to the first person. The result is electrifying. Instead of a philosophic calm, we encounter the fervor of debate. It is as though Hall were arguing a case in front of a judge and jury. He asserts that the old—*we*—have intense emotional lives. But we have been forced to inhibit the expression of our feelings. As a psychologist he speaks in terms of repression. But if he had been a sociologist he would have cast this phenomenon in terms of oppression, what he in fact does call “outer circumstance” (383). Furthermore, Hall employs the language of social justice, referring to the “rights” of the old and to the old as a distinct “minority.” Here is an excerpt from this fascinating passage:

They say our emotional life is damped. True, we are more immune from certain great passions and our affectivity is very differently distributed. But what lessons of repression we have to learn! If the fires of youth are banked and smoldering they are in no wise extinguished and perhaps burn only the more fiercely because they cannot vent themselves. . . . We get scant credit for the self-control that restrains us from so much we feel impelled to say and do and if we break out, it is ascribed not to its true cause in outer circumstance but to the irritability thought characteristic of our years. Age has the same right to emotional perturbations as youth and is no whit less exposed and disposed to them. Here, as everywhere, we are misunderstood and are in such a feeble minority that we have to incessantly renounce our impulses. (383)

Hall insists that people who are old have the same right to anger as the young. He astutely understands that the anger of the old is willingly (if unconsciously or uncritically) misinterpreted by those younger as an unbecoming “irritability” common to old age, and thus as something that can be disregarded. Given this double frustration on the part of the old, it is not surprising that Hall goes on to conclude that in fact emotional life probably increases as one grows older.¹²

Hall wants to retain the capacity of wisdom conventionally reserved for the old, but given his declaration of the right to emotional

intensity, he must also revise his view of wisdom—or at least add something to the emotional mix. I imagine Hall winding himself up in the writing of this chapter, bringing himself to the point where he can proclaim that what is required today is not an old age that is “merely contemplative” (407). Old age, he declares, is decidedly “not passive and peace-loving but brings a new belligerency” (410). Belligerency: Hall was angry and was ready for combat, impatient to fight from a position of moral authority. In his adoption of a rhetoric of defiance, how far he has come from the torpor and moroseness of old age he saw as being largely enforced by cultural constraints.

In addition to his own personal experience of being cast aside by society, where did Hall find the energy—the theoretical energy—to imagine the future of old age? What model helped him conceptualize a powerful old age? I suggest it is the analogy of adolescence to old age that enabled Hall to think about old age differently. The association of senility with infancy, of a second childhood with childhood proper, is altogether familiar—and demeaning to the old. But the association of old age with adolescence is original. Adolescence was Hall’s area of expertise as a professional psychologist. He was the author of an even larger book entitled *Adolescence*, which was published in 1904 in two fat volumes and was well received, and in which he conceived adolescence as a time of new development and new beginnings—biologically, psychologically, and socially. By linking old age with adolescence, he borrows the energy of adolescence and transfers it to old age. “Adolescence is a new birth, for the higher and more completely human traits are now born” (xiii), he had written in 1904. In *Senescence*, “the call to us is to construct a new self just as we had to do at adolescence” (403). “Age has the same right to emotional perturbations as youth,” he wrote (383). In *Senescence* he conceptualizes the future of old age as the evolution of the human species into a new stage. Adolescence and old age: Hall believes that each stage has feelings distinct to it. Yet paradoxically, in this they are also similar—and indeed some of those feelings are the same. He also envisages a kind of alliance between adolescents and the old, understanding that, as he puts it, “[t]he greatest influence of the old upon the young has, from time immemorial, been near the dawn of puberty” (430).

The metaphor of youth was also important to Hall as a way of understanding the role of the United States in international affairs, in

particular in relation to Europe. The relative youth of the United States in relation to Europe translated into the potential for energetic leadership, with our older leaders by analogy endowed with youthful energy. Thus Hall had a vision of older Americans that contrasted sharply with the culturally dominant view. As the cultural historian Gerald Gruman has argued, it was during the last great wave of mass immigration in the 1920s that the view of the modernist life cycle, characterized by adolescence as a time of alienation and old age as rejection, was consolidated. Hall's clarion call counters this view of what Edward Burgess was later to aptly term the "role-less role" of the elderly.

"Senescence, like adolescence, has its own feelings, thought, and wills, as well as its own physiology, and their regimen is important, as well as that of the body," Hall wrote in his book on old age (100). Recent research has shown that many cognitive functions do not inevitably decline with age as has previously been thought and that mental exercise is key to maintaining and strengthening those abilities. The same is true of the emotions: the emotions, or passions, need not inevitably diminish with age, and exercise—emotional exercise—is as fundamental to their vitality as is their cultural authorization. In *Senescence*, as Hall presciently wrote, "Memory fails in age only if not exercised, and this is true of all abilities" (68). And the capacity to feel—including reacting to injustice with anger—is one of those abilities.¹³

Hall's belligerent attitude on behalf of what we would call the marginalization of the elderly—or more strongly, ageism—was ignored in contemporary reviews. I suspect that Hall's anger—even if expressed in only a few places—was either considered a scandal or a temporary aberration or both. Perhaps it was dismissed as the unpleasant irritability so stereotypically associated with the elderly, a social prejudice that Hall himself had diagnosed. Perhaps it was below the radar screen of his readers because an anger that is righteous is not associated with the old, only peevishness and cantankerousness.

Yet it is not surprising to me that Hall's anger was ignored. Even in recent scholarly assessments of *Senescence*, Hall's anger, although certainly recognized, is not given appropriate due. Instead, *Senescence* is characterized as a rambling jeremiad, with the implication that Hall's statements are ill-considered, oddly inappropriate outbursts, the result of a temperament given to depression and to lament.¹⁴ My

reading of Hall's anger is altogether different. In short, I respect it. I understand his anger as the call to give voice to injustice on the basis of what today we call ageism. I also think that even a temporary alliance of wisdom with anger is remarkable. Hall wanted to harness the energy of anger, and he called on those older people who possessed wisdom to take on an active role, to remind others of "the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment" (411). He could not, however, sustain the uneasy conjunction of righteous anger, wisdom, and leadership, and so the instances of rhetorical anger are few. But even though his language is different, Hall nonetheless reminds me of Germaine Greer. If in the beginning of *Senescence* he saw aging as a time when one retired from work, in the end he protests the cultural injunction of the withdrawal of the elderly from the active world. Greer writes, "It's time to get angry again." For Hall, however, it was the first time. In *Senescence* we find an incipient protest literature on behalf of the elderly who are sentenced to the margins and condemned to retirement when their greatest need, Hall believed, was to be of service to society.

Betty Friedan's *The Fountain of Age* appeared in 1993 when she was seventy-one, exactly seventy-one years after the publication of *Senescence*. Like Hall's book, *The Fountain of Age* is long and ambitious, covering a multitude of topics. Disregarded by academic feminists (in part because Friedan is a liberal feminist and in part because of the ageism implicit within feminism itself), it is an important book, and a complex one, the result of years of research and of hard thinking about aging. It yields meaningful insights and lessons, too many to be noted here.¹⁵ Unlike Hall, Friedan is not interested in surveying past attitudes toward aging and the elderly. Much of her book is issue-oriented, focusing on work, housing, menopause, long-term care, and the right to die. But like Hall, Friedan argues for understanding the purpose of the additional years that the longevity revolution has given to people in Western and other developed countries.¹⁶ If Hall drew theoretical energy for his analysis of old age from his view of adolescence, Friedan reflects on issues of aging largely through the lens of gender, and in particular from the vantage point of the second wave of the women's movement, one that she helped decisively to shape through the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963.¹⁷

"An angry, thoroughly documented book that in one way or another is going to provoke the daylight out of almost everyone who reads it": this is one of the blurbs, excerpted from *Life*, on the back of my copy of *The Feminine Mystique*. But when I reread it as part of my research for this essay, it didn't strike me as an angry book, either in tone or in terms of a rhetoric of anger. Some thirty-five years after its publication *The Feminine Mystique* reads to me as an authoritative and forceful analysis of the relegation of white suburban women (mothers of young children, and wives, women who didn't work outside the home) to the debilitating role of keepers and consumers for the nuclear household.¹⁸ What I found particularly striking about *The Feminine Mystique* is this passage, key to *The Fountain of Age*: "A woman today who has no goal, no purpose, no ambition patterning her days into the future, making her stretch and grow beyond that small score of years in which her body can fill its biological function, is committing a kind of suicide. For that future half-century after the child-bearing years are over is a fact that an American woman cannot deny" (293). Echoing a theme we find in *Senescence*, a theme that will also be central to *The Fountain of Age*, she insists that these women must "help shape the future" (293). And in *The Fountain of Age* she provocatively insists that the underlying cause of the women's movement was in fact the increase in life expectancy for women: "what had really caused the women's movement," she writes, "was the *additional years of human life*. At the turn of the century, women's life expectancy was forty-six; now it was nearly eighty" (16).

It is fascinating to me that in the years between the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* and *The Fountain of Age*—years that saw protest movements of so many different kinds, as well as a growing cultural acceptance of the appropriateness of expressing feelings—the expression of anger, or the rhetoric of anger, has itself undergone inflation. For Friedan, the feminine mystique, or what we would call an ideology of gender, imprisoned women in their homes and shopping malls. Analogously, she argues in *The Fountain of Age* that the age mystique—old age as a period of dreaded decline and deterioration—must be exposed as counter to the essential truth: that the third age of life can and should be a period of new possibilities and growth, both for the individual and for society as a whole.¹⁹ But the key emotional term from the rhetorical arsenal of anger that Friedan

deploys in *The Fountain of Age* is rage. Although she often uses rage and anger interchangeably, "rage" is her preferred term. It appears over and over in *The Fountain of Age*. The rhetoric has escalated. And yet the message of *The Fountain of Age* is superficially optimistic.²⁰

What does rage signify? Is it intense protest, as in the black rage movement of the 1960s? Or does it carry the debilitating connotation of emotional pathology, as rage in women often does? Or is it something else? Even more than the association of anger and the elderly, the conjoining of rage and the elderly would seem to be a virtual cultural impossibility, an oxymoron.

For Friedan, rage is an energy that is created by the thwarting of possibilities. When rage is turned in on oneself rather than outward, it is transformed into depression, into an equal and opposite force that paralyzes innate energy or healthy aggression. As she writes, "in age as in youth," depression "is the outcome of rage turned inward" (61). She understands rage as a response to powerlessness, whether it was the powerlessness of young middle-aged women in the 1960s trapped in obsolete gender roles or the powerlessness of those who are regarded as old and thus cast to the edges of society. Women under the influence of the feminine mystique internalized their rage, which worked its will on the body, manifesting itself in headaches, depression, and the like. Similarly, Friedan concludes—and it is a provocative deduction—that the high rate of depression among the elderly is due precisely to the cultural vicissitudes of aging:

Given the reality of aging in America today—the loss of power in forced retirement, the subtle and not-so-subtle put-downs and denigrations of the youth culture, the growing sense of invisibility, the isolation and loneliness as spouse or friends die, the fear in the city streets, the real economic worries and physical symptoms—the wonder is all those studies in which older people report they are not lonely, unhappy or angry most of the time. Knowing all the reasons we have to be angry, lonesome, or afraid, one can only suspect that an awful lot of older people are suppressing an awful lot of rage. And if, indeed, depression in old and young alike is defined as unbearable rage turned against oneself, small wonder that depression is endemic in older people. (450)

Thus anger—or indeed an unbearable rage—is not available as energy. Rather, it is invisible and immobilized, masked and manifested

only in depression, which is, she implies, wrongly treated as a physiological disease in the elderly and not correctly understood as a symptom of social suffering.²¹ Rage is unconscious. It is silent.

Can we imagine Betty Friedan, like the sixty-year-old Germaine Greer, getting angry, that is, using the rhetoric of anger to politicize prejudicial cultural practices against the old? The answer is no—and some of the reasons are similar to those we find in *Senescence*. Like Hall, Friedan believes that as people grow older they become more themselves, more individual. Imagine the difficulties of forming a political interest group on the basis of age alone, a huge and heterogeneous group of people not only characterized by many social differences (class, religion, ethnicity, and so on) but also by hyper-individuality. But just as the empowerment of women was a rallying cry in the 1960s, so Friedan insists we must insist on the empowerment of age. The second wave of feminism drew both spontaneously and strategically on anger. Yet Friedan does not think that the empowerment of age can be based on the model of the women's movement. Why not? In great part because her conceptualization of the special strengths or capacities that can come with age are in conflict with such a rhetoric of the emotions.

Friedan wants to put the accent on the positive, to substitute a model of growth for the disabling model of decline. A model of growth implies the development of something new. And in fact the word "new" rings like a bell throughout the book. For her, age means the potential of inventing new ways of living in the crucial domains of work and love. Just as the doors to the work world needed to be opened for women, so they need to be reopened to the old. Friedan believes—correctly in my judgment—that the institution of retirement on the basis of chronological age is the critical factor in the ideology of age as decline (obviously many people want or need to retire because their jobs are unsatisfying or debilitating—she is not referring to such situations).²² There are contradictions here of which she is fully aware. Older people have been forced unfairly to retire, and, as she points out, that very barrier has stimulated inventiveness among those with the energy to find new ways to continue to be of service to society. But Friedan argues that, in addition, with older age arrives impatience with the power games that come with the territory of earlier years and earlier struggles. She admits this of herself. She

for one is glad to have all that behind her. She is in a new country, she tells us, and she does not want to go back to the old battlegrounds.²³

To see the third age as development, we need, Friedan says, "a revolutionary paradigm shift" (87). At times this shift seems simply the invention of a new lifestyle modeled on continual change but based somehow on differences from what went before—new living arrangements, new risks, new adventures. What is the essence of the fountain of age? It is "the very ability to keep changing" (31). Her metaphors of improvisation and of reinvention signal that. She also draws on psychosocial models of development, one of which is Erik Erikson's theorization of the stages of life as characterized by certain virtues or strengths.²⁴ And development is different from change. It implies a teleology. Friedan extends Erikson's notion of generativity, which he associated with the middle years of life and with parenting in the widest sense (today we might call it mentoring), to the third age.²⁵ As she writes, "to contribute somehow to the ongoing human enterprise, to pass on some legacy to the next generation, is, it seems, a burning need of vital age, different from the parenting of one's children yet just as essential to survival of the human species" (612). Like Hall, she also argues that the human race has been given these extra years by evolution (she cites the sociobiologist E. O. Wilson), and concludes that these very years must have some special evolutionary significance. It is our responsibility, she insists, to fulfill that task.

What special capacities will be developed with age in order to allow one to do this well? One of the answers is—we may not be surprised to learn—wisdom. Wisdom is, she writes, "the ability to see the picture whole, and its meaning deep, and to tell it true" (216). If Hall found a way to put wisdom to work, Friedan finds a way to put it in the workplace. "Could the growing need for such wisdom transcending narrow expertise in every field provide the pragmatic, social basis for the fountain of age?" she asks rhetorically (244). The Supreme Court provides her with an important example. Thus Friedan's notion of wisdom is in part wisdom of a practical nature, echoing a meaning attributed to wisdom in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "sound sense, esp. in practical affairs." She also suggests that along with wisdom in age, which implies wholeness, may come a host of qualities—"freedom from youthful competitive compulsion,

cooperation, empathy" (326). Wisdom, lack of competition, cooperation, empathy: qualities all virtually antithetical to anger.

Where, then, does the rage go? Certainly it is not transformed into outrage, into anger at injustice. Like Hall, Friedan opens the preface to *The Fountain of Age* on a note of depression. She confides that she was depressed for weeks after her friends threw her a surprise party on her sixtieth birthday, forcing her to acknowledge publicly that she had indeed arrived at that culturally constricting number. As with Hall, in the course of researching and writing her book, which she undertook not long after that defining birthday, and of living her life, her depression lifts. In *The Fountain of Age* Friedan presents herself as not only reflecting in creative ways on the possibilities of age but also as embodying them—taking risks, imagining new ways of loving, and inventing a new style of being an activist.²⁶

What accounts for this transformation from depression to vital aging? For her, one of the important strategies of the women's movement was emotion talk (this is my phrase). As she writes in *The Fountain of Age*, talking about one's feelings and claiming them was crucial: "the rages and angers and humiliations, the passivities and dependencies, that had been encouraged in us so long and still held us back" (156). In *The Fountain of Age* she claims her own feelings—of depression and, later, of exhilaration. But she does not extend the model of consciousness-raising in the women's movement to age, although of course she does talk with a large number of people. She doesn't imagine the sharing of feelings of anger, never mind unbearable rage. Was rage buried behind her own depression? Or was she merely depressed and not suffering from depression? She never tells us. In any case it seems that her depression vanished in the witnessing of possibilities, in the writing about them, and in the living of them.

In *The Fountain of Age* the rhetoric of rage, which is so prevalent and so surprising, ultimately serves merely as a sign of social suffering. In a sense it isn't given a body. Friedan doesn't seem to write out of rage; she does not even seem to write out of anger, as does Hall in important passages. Nor does she quote people who voice their rage. For how could she? For Friedan, rage in the old is repressed, a symptom of cultural pathology. Wisdom is a sign of the achievement of one's possibilities in age, with rage expelled. Wisdom and rage: like

magnets pointed toward each other, they repel one another. In the 1960s black rage as a rallying cry performed important cultural work. Rage meant outrage at racial injustice. But a wise rage? For Friedan, it is a cultural contradiction in terms when it comes to aging.

But there is one curious passage in *The Fountain of Age* where a kind of manic rage surfaces. In the two paragraphs that open her chapter "Intimacy: Beyond the Dreams of Youth," Friedan tells us a dream she had, a dream that took her back to her "old shrink":

I had a dream: In my house, propped up against a wall, pushed out of the way, was something quite large, all wrapped up in a rug. Like a mummy. And I said, "What is wrapped up in that rug?" No one was paying any attention to it, it didn't really get in the way. But I didn't want something wrapped up, hidden like that in my house. I insisted on slitting it open.

There was a woman wrapped up in the rug, and she was still alive! She was not young but she had longish light hair and a glint in her eye, and she was brandishing a knife in her hand. I woke up in horror and sat up in my bed. There was a live woman I had wrapped up in that rug, and she was going to kill me if I didn't let her out. So I went to see my old shrink, and I said, Given the realities, the numbers, my age, how could I live with the woman I had wrapped up in that rug? She was alive, but how could I let her out without her exploding with rage—that knife in her hand? And I felt the pain of my own yearning. (254)

Friedan does not comment on this dream. Instead she lets it stand as testimony to the undeniable and banal insight that we all need love, and that older women are much more likely to suffer from the lack of sexual intimacy than are men. The lack of congruity between the wild and frightening energy represented in the dream and the calm therapeutic tone of her authoritative exposition—"Without love, the human self never develops at all," she intones (254)—belies the still-buried rage, rage that she could not conjoin with wisdom. As she remarks elsewhere in *The Fountain of Age*, in a passage that goes against the grain of the argument in her book, "Research has shown an actual strong relationship between 'irascibility' and longevity. Could that very rage, long buried in women, which we have now managed to express, breaking down the barriers and the false images that once made us turn it against ourselves, be part of the fountain of age?" (156).

I have focused on Hall's *Senescence* and Friedan's *The Fountain of Age* to explore the difficulties of envisioning the future of aging through the cultural building blocks of anger and wisdom. G. Stanley Hall understood himself to be part of an emerging "vanguard" of older people, as Andrew Achenbaum rightly stresses (421). Hall briefly allowed his anger at being marginalized with retirement and old age to surface, and, fortified with this energy and the paradigm of adolescence, imagined himself at the forefront of a new generation of older people at a critical juncture in history. Wise men would be stern counselors to future generations. In a very real sense the aged would embody the future. With the exception of the scholarly history of gerontology, history has forgotten Hall's vision of aging.

With long experience as a feminist activist and writer, Betty Friedan, like the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir before her, turned to old age as the next frontier. Although *The Fountain of Age* is a protest against the ideology of old age in the United States, and although, in comparison with Hall, Friedan seems to up the ante with a rhetoric of rage, that rhetoric of rage turns out to be curiously empty—devoid of energy, concealed as depression. Ultimately Friedan, too, turns to wisdom as a way of conceiving the special strengths of the old. On the one hand, her notion of wisdom is more pragmatic than Hall's. On the other hand, it is also a more romantic version of wisdom, relying on the twentieth-century psychological tradition of the reconciliation of gender opposites explored by Jung and others and culminating in a banal vision of psychic wholeness. But notwithstanding their somewhat different understandings of wisdom, both Hall and Friedan assign the social role of wisdom to the elderly. This is a clear example of what Paul Griffiths, a philosopher of the emotions, has called the social construction of emotions, where certain emotions—here the psychological stance of wisdom—are invoked to reinforce certain social roles.²⁷

We do not know how history will treat Friedan's *Fountain of Age*. When it appeared it received a large number of reviews, although that was to be expected given her stature. For six weeks it was on the *New York Times* best-seller list, and it was translated into numerous languages. But I predict that Friedan's message of wisdom will not prove any more culturally compelling or palatable than Hall's. Plato argued in book 10 of the *Republic* that in order to lay claim to

an audience, tragedy could not rely on the representation of a calm and composed wisdom; the passions were required. Moreover, as an ideal attribute or emotional standard long associated with the old, wisdom in effect has suppressed the emotional experience of anger.

Both Hall and Friedan advocate what over twenty years ago Gruman called *re-engagement*. In a brilliant analysis of the forces that have worked to construct the modernist life course, one in which the elderly are relegated to the margins, Gruman argues that it is precisely the old who have a future: "in the furthering of a genuinely modern culture, it is the aging who actually have pride of place; they are where the action is, for they are something historically *new* as a large population sector. . . . Moreover, the elderly, as individuals, face challenges *new* to themselves which call for successive, creative renewals of identity. . . . Thus, the aging population does have a future, as it becomes re-engaged at the frontier of modern cultural adaptation and realization through historical time" (380). Unlike Hall and Friedan, Gruman does not find it necessary to invoke wisdom as a way of bestowing a social role on the elderly, a role that over the course of the twentieth century has been extolled as crucial to society as a whole but in reality has been ignored or dismissed as useless. Nor does Gruman feel obliged to rationalize the years given to us by the longevity revolution by arguing that they serve an evolutionary purpose.

It is time to declare a moratorium on wisdom. I do not mean that we would not be right to describe certain people as wise or certain actions as wise. What I mean is that we should not draw on the notion of wisdom in theorizing or imagining a social role for older people in general. Wisdom should not be advocated as an emotional (or unemotional) standard or ideal. In this I am going counter to what not a few people in critical gerontology are advocating.²⁸ As I have tried to show, the cultural reflex of associating wisdom and age has seriously limited us from imagining the years that have been granted by the longevity revolution. Wisdom in the old is a stereotype that does not carry real meaning in contemporary Western societies. There is absolutely no need to have to justify the extraordinary extension of life expectancy that has been gained over this century. Moreover, the notion of wisdom as a developmental capacity that ideally characterizes old age interferes with the crucial work that needs to be done to reclaim these years as meaningful in the broadest sense.

Wisdom carries the connotation of detachment, hence, as we see in Hall and Friedan, the extreme difficulty of putting it together with engagement, or re-engagement. With its emphasis on detachment, wisdom justifies the disengagement theory of aging, the theory that older people “naturally” withdraw from their social roles so as to make their ultimate disappearance—death—less difficult for the smooth functioning of society. Wisdom carries the connotation of dignified behavior, hence the further difficulty of its association with a rhetoric of protest. It implies a kind of transcendence of the social world, a certain timelessness, a knowledge that is—there is of course a contradiction here—not characterized by one’s placement in the world, or what Donna Haraway has called situated knowledge.²⁹ As a form of knowledge, wisdom is conceptualized as objective, not subjective.

In terms of a cultural politics of the emotions, angry women have long been labeled irrational or hysterical. The strategy was—and still is—to demean those women. In a way the reverse is true with the old: being wise, which entails being without anger, is held up as an ideal. Anger in the old is outlawed. Anger is what the philosopher Alison Jaggar has called an “outlaw emotion,” one that is “conventionally unacceptable” (160). On the social stage in the United States there has been one notable exception to the rule of outlawing angry old women, and that is Maggie Kuhn of the Gray Panthers. Why was her behavior acceptable? I would venture that it was tolerated in part because of her petite stature (as a diminutive woman she was not seen as a threat) and in part because the project of the Gray Panthers was always intergenerational and not limited to aging. Ultimately, Kuhn was not taken seriously but rather patronized as cute, while the Gray Panthers were seen as a nonthreatening knockoff of the Black Panthers.

Challenges to ageism that draw on a rhetoric of protesting anger should not be dismissed. Anger can be a sign of moral outrage at social injustice, at being denied the right to participate fully in society. Anger in this sense is a judgment, or more strongly, an indictment. As the philosopher Robert Solomon argues in *The Passions*, “An emotion is a *judgment* (or a set of judgments), something we do. An emotion is a (set of) judgments(s) which constitute our world, our surreality, and its ‘intentional object’” (185). I find compelling Germaine Greer’s

declaration that it is time to get angry again. I am reminded of Gloria Steinem’s very first words in her essay “Doing Sixty,” published in 1994, in which she expresses the contradiction between the cultural ideal of detachment expected of her and her own intense reactions to injustice. “Age is supposed to create more serenity, calm, and detachment from the world, right? Well,” she writes, “I’m finding just the reverse” (249).³⁰

We need to change what has been called an affect script for older people in our culture.³¹ How do we do this? In great part by telling stories. Stories relay forms of feeling, and one of the stories of aging and anger that has remained in my mind for many years now is one told by feminist activist Barbara Macdonald. Fittingly enough, the incident she recounts occurred while she was on a protest march in Boston in the late seventies—a march to Take Back the Night. Macdonald, a lesbian, then sixty-five, had a kind of premonition that the march wouldn’t work, but she didn’t suspect just who her antagonist would be. She wasn’t sure she wanted to go, she told her partner, Cynthia. She “had a vague feeling of dragging” her feet. Wasn’t this kind of march pointless because men had the power and would not take it seriously? Her partner, twenty years younger, persuaded her to go. If it doesn’t convince the men, Cynthia assured her, never mind, it will be good for us. Cynthia was wrong.

It is a dark and rainy night, and monitors, helping to assemble the women, give them instructions. Six abreast. Walk closely together. Do not let men break your ranks. Barbara’s uneasiness gone, she is eager to move forward. She feels strong. “I felt,” she writes, “the exhilaration, the oneness with the women around me, the sense of at last doing something instead of passively grinding my teeth with anger, as I do every morning when I pick up the *Globe* to see what woman was murdered the night before.” Then, waiting to begin, she notices Cynthia talking quietly with the monitor. Barbara joins them, and the monitor says to her, “If you think you can’t keep up, you should go to the head of the march.” What did that mean? Understanding hits Barbara like a series of hammer blows. It is because she is perceived by a younger woman as old and therefore as necessarily weak—and, more ominously, as lacking in judgment. That the younger woman, who explains that she didn’t know what to do, is well-meaning and contrite does not change the fundamental situation.

Barbara now feels exiled by these younger women and by the women's movement itself. Barbara snaps back at her. She begins and finishes the march in a rage. As she writes, "All my life in a man's world, I was a problem because I was a woman; now I'm a problem in a woman's world because I'm a sixty-five-year-old woman" (Macdonald with Rich 1983, 28–30).

Where does her rage go? Unlike Friedan's rage it does not remain buried in her dream life. Macdonald draws on the urgency of the threat to her to understand her situation.³² Reflecting hard on this incident later, given a kind of strength from her rage, Macdonald resolves to neither direct it toward the younger monitor—that does not seem quite fair—nor to turn it against herself and her own aging body, a body that, by her account, reads as sixty-five. The intensity of her rage is wisely proportionate to the offense. It is symmetrical to the structure of power in which she finds herself unfairly meshed.³³ Her rage is dispelled when she decides to fight back in the future with what force she has, no matter how diminished it may become as she grows older. Her rage is dispersed as she analyzes the incident, placing it in historical context, comparing the first wave of feminism with the second, puzzling over the fact that in the first wave older women were leaders, whereas in the second wave younger women—women in their twenties and thirties—were and still are predominant. Why is that? She concludes that this can't be explained by a simple emphasis on youth culture in the United States. Today, she writes, "youth is bonded with patriarchy in the enslavement of the older woman. There would, in fact, be no youth culture without the powerless older woman" (39).

From her experience of rage within the women's movement, Macdonald draws powerful lessons. But if she puts aside her rage, she safeguards her anger. Her anger is the precious residue of her rage.³⁴ "Although much of what happened to me in the march is resolved for me," she writes, "I am still angry at the ageism in the women's movement" (35–36). I take it that her anger in part motivated this important small book she wrote with Cynthia Rich, a book that gives us this notable story, which is an instance of what Margaret Gullette has called, in *Declining to Decline* (1997), "age autobiography." Echoing the critical race theorist Patricia Williams, I would say that Macdonald's story is "a gift of intelligent rage" (216). Would I

call Macdonald a wise old woman? No, because this would call up another image altogether, an image of a woman who is calmly dispassionate, who has a benign and detached sense of perspective, who can dispense a measured and balanced knowledge of the world. Macdonald's story, however, is one of an anger that, upon reflection, turns out to have been wise. It was time for her to get angry again. Both Hall and Friedan envisage aging as a time when there is important work to be done in service to society and to the self. We might understand, then, Macdonald's anger as the impetus for a certain kind of work—as protest against injustice and as the intellectual work of the historical understanding of the roots of ageism against women. From this perspective anger provides not only the energy for work. It *is* work. When one is angry, one must continually confront others and one must be on one's guard. One must relinquish the seductions of detachment that is promised by wisdom.

I close with a question. "Emotions become feminist when they incorporate feminist perceptions and values," Jaggar writes (1989, 160). Vaclav Havel speaks of what he has called "something like a social emotion," a judgment akin to a feeling of aversion to unfair social inequities, a feeling he experienced early in his life as "an antagonism toward undeserved privileges, toward unjust social barriers, toward any kind of so-called higher standing predetermined by birth or by anything else, toward any humiliation of human dignity" (1990, 7). At the very least, humiliation of human dignity would require indignation. That social emotion might be described as a noble anger. What word would we use to describe the anger associated with the experience of ageism? That we do not in fact have a word analogous to "feminist" suggests how very far we are from recognizing and honoring the emotional experience—the anger—associated with ageism.

Notes

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and Sharon Kaufman. I thank Robert Butler, Thomas Cole, and Larry Polivka for their good suggestions. I have benefited enormously from conversations with Jennifer Driscoll on the relationships between anger, rage, and outrage.

1. Greer theorizes two broad periods in an adult woman's life—the reproductive period and the reflective period that succeeds menopause—as well as seven stages, of which menopause is the fifth (56).

2. There is of course also a history in the West of the periodization of the life course as well as a history of the metaphors in which the life course has been cast. See Thomas Cole's *The Journey of Life*.

3. With the exception of Theodore Roszak's *America the Wise*, published in 1998, and *Longevity Revolution*, published in 2001, I know of no other similar books written in the twentieth century in the United States by individuals who had not dedicated themselves to a career in gerontology or, more broadly, aging. I have chosen to focus on Friedan's work rather than Roszak's because I wanted to stress gender in this essay.

4. We see this also in Erik Erikson's book-length essay *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review* (1982). Erikson, who has a fine sense of historicity, writes that old age—in the sense of the massification of old age (this is my term)—was only discovered in recent years, by which he means the 1960s and 1970s.

5. An index of our heightened consciousness of aging is that social security has come to be associated almost exclusively with transfer payments to the elderly, when it also provides a safety net for people with disabilities and to children whose parents have died.

6. The literature on anger is extensive and I will give only a few references. See *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America's History*, by Carol Stearns and Peter Stearns, for a historical reading of American anger. In terms of the psychology of anger, see the work of the American psychologist Silvan Tomkins, who identifies anger-rage as one of nine innate affects, or what I would call affect clusters. In literary studies, see Gwynne Kennedy's *Just Anger*. I have also written on anger as a political emotion. See Woodward, "From Anger . . . to Anger: Freud and Feminism" (1996) and "Traumatic Shame: Toni Morrison, Televisual Culture, and the Cultural Politics of the Emotions" (2000).

7. "The scalings-back" of disgust, Miller writes, "that attend middle and old age are more a function of a general loss of affect; they represent a giving up in the losing battle against physical deterioration, a general sense that less is at stake, that the game, even if not nearly over, has a determined outcome. Our biological mission has run its course—we either have had kids or will never have them—careers have peaked, and the stakes of failing in the moral and social competences that disgust holds in place are no longer so high" (15).

8. See Munnich's "A Short History of Psychogerontology" (1966).

9. Henry Fuller opens his review of *Senescence* this way: "In the poignantly personal Introduction to his latest work Mr. Hall wonders if he will not be found 'depressing'" (1922, 150). Although the reviewer goes on to observe that Hall in

fact has a "gallant spirit," one that is inspiring, that Fuller opens the review on the note of depression is telling. It is as if depression—or more generally, gloom—is a subject that both cannot be avoided and is condemned.

10. This is in fact one of the strategies of Alan Pifer in *Our Aging Society: Promise and Paradox* (1986). He refers to what he calls the third quarter of life, which implies that we should think in terms of a life expectancy of one hundred years. A cultural consensus is emerging that one hundred years of life is our due. Among the many examples of this is Gloria Steinem's statement that she plans "to reach a hundred" (1994, 283).

11. It will hardly come as a surprise that Hall writes of old age predominantly from a male point of view. He associates women with domesticity and motherhood, and he sees women, whose function in life depends upon their sexual attractiveness, as aging earlier than men; if senescence—the second half of life—begins for men in their early forties, it commonly comes earlier for women in Hall's account.

12. Later in *Senescence* Hall writes that the old do not form a class but rather are "hyperindividualized" (172).

13. In this light it is fascinating to me that a contemporary reviewer of *Senescence* singled out for disapproval both Hall's attitude of discontent and his remedy for it. In a full-page review that appeared in the *New York Times Book Review and Magazine* in 1922, Maurice-Francis Egan describes the book as "melancholy" and concludes that Hall's problem is one of his own making. Hall made the mistake of devoting his entire life to work, to conducting his life at an energetic rhythm that Egan finds unnatural to old age. "An old man who can be gently idle has every chance of being a happy man," Egan writes, chastising Hall; "when one is old one needs so little" (7). One of Hall's grievous errors, Egan insists, is that Hall does not give much credence to a spiritual dimension of life, benightedly insisting instead on important involvement in a public world. The point seems to be that if Hall has fallen victim to his own depression, well, he made his bed and now must lie despondently in it. In Egan's view, wisdom would consist in a belief in spiritual matters and in accepting the gift of leisure that came with Hall's old age, enjoying each day as it comes with "a love for the simple things of life" (7). But Hall rejects the serenity Egan wishes for him: "The fact is, we must find and make new pleasures as well as new modes of escaping and mitigating the pains of body and mind and must learn anew how to love, hate, fear, be angry, pity, and sympathize aright. The serenity ascribed to us would pall and bring stagnation. It is a profound psychological truth that 'out of the heart are the issues of life' and our heart is not dead; on the contrary emotivity probably increases with years and most expressions of it, unless they become more sublimated" (384).

14. I am referring here to Thomas Cole and Andrew Achenbaum, both of whom describe *Senescence* as a jeremiad. Both also stress the mood of depression that seems to them to pervade the book's opening pages, in which is incorporated part of an anonymous article entitled "Old Age" Hall had written for the *Atlantic Monthly* the year before. In that essay Hall had gloomily asserted, "Now I am

divorced from my world, and there is nothing more to be said of me save the exact date of my death" (1921, 24), a melancholy sentence certainly, one that both Cole and Achenbaum deploy as a way of opening their discussions of Hall's *Senescence*. Both Cole and Achenbaum understand acutely the contradictions embedded in *Senescence* as well as the complexities of the cultural history of aging in the United States. But their emphasis on depression in their discussions of Hall (albeit in very different ways), along with their characterization of *Senescence* as a jeremiad, results in what I take to be a concomitant devaluation of anger in his work. For certainly the point would be that Hall revised that infamous *Atlantic Monthly* sentence for *Senescence*; he writes instead: "it might seem at first as if there was little more to be said of me save to record the date of my death—and we all know that men who retire often die soon afterward" (xii).

Cole and Achenbaum come to completely different conclusions about the cultural value of Hall's view of the potential wisdom of the new class of elders he envisions. While Cole rejects Hall's view of aging because it ultimately worked to reinforce the emerging scientific management of the life course and to de-emphasize the spiritual dimension of late life, Achenbaum casts Hall's view of wisdom positively as prophetic of what he sees today in our postmodern period—as an emerging interest in wisdom as a form of knowledge.

It may be useful to recall literary critic Sacvan Bercovitch's influential definition of the American jeremiad here: it is "a mode of public exhortation ... designed to join social criticism to spiritual renewal, public to private identity, the shifting 'signs of the times' to certain traditional metaphors, themes, and symbols" (xi).

15. One of the most important contributions of *The Fountain of Age* is Friedan's insistence that many older people, under the influence of the model of old age as a long and disastrous physiological decline, mistakenly regard themselves as objects of continuing or imminent care and thus in effect give up their future; she cites research showing that seriously debilitating health problems for the most part only occur in the short period right before death.

16. The "longevity revolution" was coined by Robert N. Butler, to whom Friedan gives much credit for inspiring *The Fountain of Age*.

17. Friedan is a feminist and so we should not be surprised that gender is the most important analytical category in *The Fountain of Age*. In terms of sociological variables, illness would be the second category; race, class, and ethnicity do not enter her discussion in any major way.

18. It is true that Friedan at one point likens suburban tracts to "comfortable concentration camps," but this is the rhetorical exception, not the rule (293).

19. To my knowledge, Gerald Gruman was the first to use the phrase "aging mystique" in analogy to Friedan's "feminine mystique."

20. Judith Hennessee, in her biography of Betty Friedan, informs us of Friedan's legendary narcissistic temper. But for Hennessee, "The fine-tuned fury that gave *The Feminine Mystique* its compelling power was gone, replaced by optimism and uplift" (1999, 273).

21. I take the term "social suffering" from Arthur Kleinman (Kleinman et al. 1997). In *The Change* Greer analyzes menopause in similar terms. "The irrational certainty that the womb was the real cause of the ageing woman's anger or melancholy," she writes in *The Change*, "effectively obscured the inconvenient possibility that she may have had genuine grounds for protest; women on the other hand obligingly internalized their own rage and produced a bewildering array of symptoms" (1992, 2). But Greer also focuses on the expression of rage. "We are only dimly coming to a recognition that the anti-social behaviour of demented old women might be an expression of justifiable rage too long stifled and unheard," she writes (137). "Despite the best efforts of feminists to awaken women's anger and to turn their hostility outward so that it becomes a force for social change rather than the procreator of symptoms, we have failed" (138).

22. Friedan in *The Fountain of Age*: "To look at people over sixty-five in terms of work, health, and productivity would be to treat them like full people again, not just objects of compassionate or contemptuous care. It was in terms of work that the issue of the personhood of women was finally and fully joined—and the women's movement was born" (199).

23. The metaphor of old age as a foreign territory or new country is widely used, often by people who are writing on aging for the first time. A recent example is Mary Pifer's *Another Country: Navigating the Emotional Terrain of Our Elders*. But if the trope of old age as a new country is conventional, Pifer startles me by comparing the vicissitudes of old age to post-traumatic stress syndrome.

24. The other model is psychological anthropologist David Gutmann's theory that in the postparental years women develop the masculine "side" of themselves; men, the feminine "side."

25. In *The Life Cycle Completed*, Erikson reconsiders his theory of human development and associates the final and eighth stage with grand-generativity, drawing on the analogy with grandparenting. In *Insight and Responsibility*, Erikson defined the task of the eighth and final stage as the achievement of wisdom, which was the outcome of the successful struggle between integrity and despair: "Wisdom, then is detached concern with life itself, in the face of death itself. . . . If vigor of mind combines with the gift of responsible renunciation, some old people can envisage human problems in their entirety (which is what 'integrity' means) and can represent to the coming generation a living example of the 'closure' of a style of life" (1982, 133–34).

26. Reviews of Friedan's book, for example, single out her recounting of going on an Outward Bound expedition as exemplary of her idea of adventure in old age; while reviewer Nancy Mairs finds this exhilarating, Mary-Lou Weisman, in a caustic piece, considers Friedan's optimistic attitude ridiculous.

27. In "The Development of Wisdom across the Life Span," V. P. Clayton and James Birren, defining wisdom as "the integration of general cognitive, affective, and reflective qualities," find that while the older people in their study did not link their older age with wisdom, younger people did associate growing older with the development of wisdom. I would argue that notwithstanding this

association of wisdom with old age on the part of younger individuals, which may in fact simply be a stereotype of old people, wisdom is not translated into a meaningful value on the level of society.

28. In his essay on late-life emotionality, Achenbaum applauds what he sees as a growing interest in wisdom, a capacity that he suggests may be a sign "that the current pursuit of knowledge has entered the postmodern era" (1998, 426). See also Harry R. Moody's *The Five Stages of the Soul* (1997), in which he outlines stages of spiritual development in adulthood, sparked by a sense of mortality at midlife; and Ronald Manheimer's "Wisdom and Method: Philosophical Contributions to Gerontology," where he astutely reviews recent work on wisdom, pointing to the virtually inherent contradiction between understandings of wisdom over the course of the Western tradition and methodologies that adhere to Western scientific standards of objectivity, quantifiability, and verifiability. In "Aging, Morale, and Meaning," Bertram Cohler adopts the following skeptical definition of wisdom: "the so-called wisdom achieved in later life consists of the ability to maintain a coherent narrative of the course of life in which the presently remembered past, experienced present, and anticipated future are understood as problems to be studied rather than as outcomes to be assumed" (1993, 119–20). I should add that in *At Last the Real Distinguished Thing: The Late Poems of Eliot, Pound, Stevens, and Williams* (1980), I considered how wisdom is represented in the form and substance of the late poems of these great American modern poets. My point there was not so much that these men themselves were wise, or that they advocated wisdom in general as the salient criterion of a social role for older people, but that they were able to create compelling fictions of wise old men in their poetry.

29. For Haraway, "feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledges*" (1991, 188).

30. In her wonderful essay on midlife memoirs on both sides of the Atlantic, Isabelle de Courtivron (2000) contrasts the responses of Anglo-American and French authors to that great divide in terms of affect—activist anger versus elegant resignation: "While exasperation and anger at having been objectified for decades, then suddenly discarded, propels a number of American and English feminists toward the next activist phase in their lives, French texts tend to negotiate this transition in a very different manner. In their case, the emphasis on elusive and delicate issues connected to the waning of desire, pleasure, and seduction leads to combat against the self rather than against the world, and tends to result in the passive acceptance of feminine 'destiny.'"

31. The term "affect script" comes from psychologist Silvan Tomkins, who further specified different kinds of affect scripts. See, for example, his chapter on "Anger-Management and Anger-Control Scripts" in *The Negative Affects: Anger and Fear* (1991). Tomkins understood an affect script as a succession of affects over time, a pattern that is repeated over the lifetime of an individual. I am using the term not in the sense of an individual life but in the sense of a larger cultural pattern, a cultural affect script.

32. As Tomkins has provocatively written, "Cognitions coassembled with affect become hot and urgent"; he also posits the reverse, "Affects coassembled with cognitions become better informed and smarter" (1992, 7).

33. I take the notion of an emotional response being symmetrical (or not) to its context from Patricia Williams. But being proportionate is more often than not the same as being symmetrical. One may have a symmetrical response that is wildly out of proportion.

In *Alchemy of Race and Rights* (1991) Williams recounts an incident in which she became enraged (she was not buzzed in to a store in Soho, New York, during the Christmas shopping season by a young white male salesclerk because she was black). "I was enraged," she writes. "At that moment I literally wanted to break all the windows of the store and *take* lots of sweaters for my mother. . . . I am still struck by the structure of power that drove me into such a blizzard of rage. There was almost nothing I could do, short of physically intruding upon him, that would humiliate him the way he humiliated me" (45). Her rage, she writes, "was admittedly diffuse, even self-destructive, but it was symmetrical" (46).

34. I am suggesting a distinction between rage, as a visceral response to an event, and an intelligent rage or anger that is informed by analysis and reflection on the context and thus calls for that response, a distinction that is echoed in Margaret Gullette's *Declining to Decline* (1997) where she draws a line between anger and a "higher" anger. "The higher anger that accompanies liberation has an honorable impersonal element; it is felt on behalf of all kindred sufferers. Some people leap to it directly from disappointment. These are already collective emotions. The higher anger estimates the broadest possible human collective, takes the measure of the ideology and its components, envisions slightly more than reasonable goals, operationalizes procedures" (232).

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WHAT CAN A FACE DO?

ON DELEUZE AND FACES

Richard Rushton

[He] saw a certain ambitious triumph in her face which no assumed coldness could conceal. (Dickens, 205)

This brief passage, from Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, contains a number of assumptions on the nature of faces.

Her face (the face of one of the heroines of the novel, Bella Wilfer) signifies "ambitious triumph." First of all, the face is part of a signifying system: what is expressed on a face (the *signifiers*) are the concepts or feelings (the *signifieds*) "behind" that face. In Peirce's terms, there is an indexical relation between what is on a face and the feelings or ideas it expresses—that is, what is behind the face is what causes the marks or expressions to appear on the face.

That which is signified is "in" her face. What the face thus brings forth is a model of *representation*: the face represents or expresses the inner feelings of a person; it expresses something that is hidden behind the face, yet there is something in the appearance of a face (*on* the face) that allows access to what is hidden beneath.

Nothing Bella did—no amount of being cold-faced or stone-faced—could conceal what was in her face. This implies that nothing can stop the face from revealing what is beneath it; what is beneath the face will flow onto the contours of the face unhindered. However, one must assume that on certain occasions that which is hidden in a face *could* be concealed, that there would be times when Bella could be sufficiently stone-faced so as to conceal the realm beyond. So what, then, is Dickens saying?

He is saying, on the one hand, that there are certain times when what is in a face cannot be hidden, that there are times when the facial signifier is automatic. A face, therefore, does not need to be