



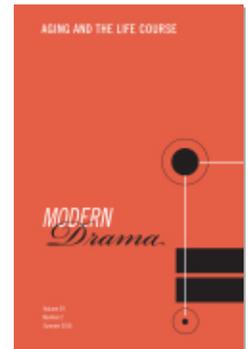
PROJECT MUSE®

Spots of Future Time: Tableaux, Masculinity, and the Enactment of Aging

Andrea Charise

Modern Drama, Volume 59, Number 2, Summer 2016, pp. 155-176 (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/626057>

Spots of Future Time: Tableaux, Masculinity, and the Enactment of Aging

ANDREA CHARISE



ABSTRACT: *This article proposes the utility of tableau as a terminological and conceptual contribution to age studies. I explore how the transgeneric appeal of this theatrical form enables stillness and fragmentation to be a part of the vocabulary of aging. Referring to the work of two twenty-first-century artists – French photcollagist Gilbert Garcin and American novelist David Markson – I demonstrate the applicability of the aesthetics of tableaux to non-theatrical enactments of aging. Despite their generic and formal differences, reading Garcin and Markson in tandem prepares readers to think of older age, and older masculinities especially, outside the framework of narrative and, instead, in terms of the visual aesthetics of stillness. Drawing new links among aging, play, and the tableau form, the article asserts the potential of the static as a way of imagining the aging subject in the context of age studies more generally. The tableau’s aesthetics of living stillness, I conclude, opens up drama and age studies alike to more playful possibilities for imagining aging and for enactments of self-creation in later life.*

KEYWORDS: *tableau, age studies, David Markson, Gilbert Garcin, masculinity*

Last scene of all,
That ends this strange, eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

What manner of theatre is it, in which we are at once playwright, actor, stage manager,
scene painter and audience?
W.G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*

In the last two decades, scholars, artists, and activists have begun to engage more actively with the topic of aging. Critics such as Elinor Fuchs, Anne Davis Basting, Valerie Lipscomb, Leni Marshall, Anthony Ellis, and others have shown that drama, especially, has much to contribute to our understanding of the aesthetic, political, and ethical considerations that belong to aging. Yet despite this new critical interest in dramatic engagements with age, the field of age studies is still dominated by narrative approaches while valuable insights from theatre studies remain underused.

For that reason, the present article explores an as yet undiscussed dramatic engagement with older age that involves the enactment of later life: the *tableau vivant*, an apparently non-narrative theatrical form that evokes the shared traditions of drama, painting, and photography and that, I suggest, makes a valuable terminological and conceptual contribution to age studies. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this type of entertainment emerged in Europe and North America as both a playhouse tradition and a parlour game. Many handbooks and novels of that period describe the staging of tableaux: a curtain would rise on costumed actors (or party guests) posed as figures in the settings of well-known historical, religious, or artistic scenes.¹ Such “living pictures” – Lee surrendering to Grant at the Battle of Appomattox or Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Venus rising from the waves in Botticelli’s painting *The Birth of Venus* or Parisians in Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People*, for example – were often staged within a large wooden frame or accompanied by music and poetry so as to imbue the embodied image with further dramatic effect.

Today, almost two centuries later, the tableau is unusual but not unheard of. Examples of its survival include the annual Pageant of the Masters, which has been held at California’s Laguna Beach for seventy years; films that use the tableau form for cinematic storytelling, such as *The Mill and the Cross* (dir. Lech Majewski, 2011) or *In the Crosswind* (dir. Martti Helde, 2014); and the living statues that are ubiquitous in tourist destinations throughout the English-speaking world. What unites these disparate entertainments are two key elements: the constraint of immobility and the theatrical accoutrements of costumes, scenery, and gesture. The tableau’s appeal arises from the contrast between its lively sense of play and the solemnity inherent in stillness – an enigmatic tension between surface and depth. As Brigitte Peucker explains, the tableau’s hallmark is its situation at the nexus of several modes of representation, which results in a “palimpsest or textual overlay” of elements at once visual, textual, and embodied (30).

In the contemporary arts, the aesthetics of tableau is now most often evident outside of theatrical settings. Art historian Jean-François Chevrier writes that, in the late twentieth century, tableau “became the model for a mode of

visual thought which repudiates representation-imitation in favour of a sculptural or constructive realism” (51). In his view, tableau is less a strictly theatrical form than “an armature, indeed a structure of visual and imaginative thought” realized in a range of art forms, painting and photography especially (51). But unlike realistic forms such as journalistic reportage or *cinéma-vérité* – which aim to present mimetic versions of truth – the tableau is less about capturing than about meticulously posing and enacting. As Michael Fried observes, it is not pose-holding nor even stillness that evokes the aesthetic of the tableau but the form’s “connotations of constructedness,” its being “the product of an intellectual act” (146).

Whatever the medium, tableau is characterized by its tacit acknowledgement of an audience. It is for the sake of these beholders that the tableau underscores pictorial and spatial relationships rather than temporal aspects of representation. In effect, its meticulously composed moment of silent embodiment playfully defies the viewer’s impulse to look for any form of narrative, whether pictorial or textual. The tableau’s dramatic effect is the result of precisely this refusal to resolve.

But whether a tableau is realized in its purely theatrical form – as a frozen moment within a conventional (and often sentimental) staged narrative – or in the more expansive metaphorical mode that I shall employ here, it inevitably implies some kind of contextualizing narrative framework. The figurative potential of tableau exemplifies the interdisciplinary range and applicability of the theatrical imaginary – its vocabularies, methods, and discourse – to a wide range of disciplines and artistic media beyond the theatre and dramatic literature. Because of this broad applicability, a product of its transgeneric legacy, the tableau offers a dramatically visual aesthetic framework that makes it eminently suitable for investigating depictions of aging. Since tableau contrasts sharply with more conventional stagings of aging (and, as we shall see, the ageist narrative models they generally imply), a critical investigation of tableau offers new direction for age studies.

How might the temporal suspension and stasis that characterize the aesthetics of tableau provide alternative artistic representations of old age? Other examples of the imaginative power of temporal compression lend some clues. For instance, William Wordsworth, in his long autobiographical poem *The Prelude* (1850), famously described certain moments as brief, but intense, condensations of experience:

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence . . . our minds,
Are nourished and invisibly repaired. (bk. 12, ll. 209–11, 215–16)

In these rare and discontinuous episodes of profoundly meaningful experience, “spots of time” – not unlike tableaux – offer singular moments of heightened affect. In such lived (or remembered) instants of stillness and recollection, stasis is experienced not as a pathological or stultifying force but as a restorative one, with the power to renew creativity.²

Keeping in mind Wordsworth’s spots of time, the present article explores how the playful potential of tableau enables such moments of stillness and fragmentation to be a part of the conceptual vocabulary of aging, particularly in non-theatrical enactments. Of particular importance to my case are two twenty-first-century artists who evoke older age specifically in relation to the still and static: French photcollagist Gilbert Garcin and American novelist David Markson. I argue that reading Garcin’s photographic engagement with tableaux effectively prepares readers to draw out the implicit aesthetics of tableau in Markson’s unconventional prose, especially in Markson’s *The Last Novel*, a work anxiously preoccupied with the longevity of western art and the transience of its mortal makers. Despite their differences in genre and form, these works are an apt pairing for two reasons. On the one hand, Garcin’s photography introduces crucial features of tableau in relation to aging; on the other, Markson’s fiction illustrates how the dramatic conventions of tableau crucially offer a way of reading narrative against itself, thus calling attention to the limits of narrative inquiry as an approach to age studies. Moreover, both Garcin and Markson are themselves writing as aged men, and their respective enactments of tableaux reflexively invoke moments of stillness that explore what it means to experience old age as a man: an experience freighted with burdensome myths about both aging and masculinity. Reading these two artists together offers age studies the opportunity to think of aging, especially masculine older age, outside of a conventional narrative framework. Instead, the tableau provides a valuable interpretive scaffold configured by elements of visual culture, brevity, and the aesthetics of stillness. As both a form in itself and an armature for other artistic modes of representation, the tableau gives readers, artists, and critics an opportunity to make better use of evocative vocabulary and concepts drawn from the dramatic arts – and, perhaps in so doing, nudges us into a new stage of age studies itself.

To illustrate the difference between the aesthetics of tableau and more conventional dramatic engagements with aging, let me briefly outline the primary conceptual juncture of drama with aging: the “stages model” of the life course. As historian of aging Thomas Cole has shown, the dramaturgical language of stages has served to describe the journey of the western human body through time since at least the mid-sixteenth century. Its conceptual roots date back to the classical writings of early physicians (such as Galen)



FIGURE 1: Anonymous, *Le cours de la vie de l'homme dans ses différents âges*; early nineteenth century

and philosophers (such as Cicero or Aristotle) and had become more popular by Shakespeare's time, when "[i]maging one's own life (and that of others) as a spiritual drama, as a career, and as a sequence of stages became increasingly common" (Cole xxix). This conception – based on a person's supposed ability to plot a predictable course through life, to live a purposeful quest – allowed a man, as Cole puts it, "to step outside his own life experience and view it as a whole" (25). Widespread throughout Europe and North America until the early twentieth century, the stages model presented the individual with a conceptual playbill that placed him (and occasionally her) at centre stage. The story of one's life now had roles, characters, and indeed a plot for the future (see Figure 1).

In contrast to the medieval period (Sears), when only divine machinations could give purpose to what Thomas Hobbes called humanity's "nasty, brutish, and short" existence (110), later generations viewed the progress of a life as an upward ascent from childhood and youth to the peak of a man's "perfect age" – followed, inevitably, by the downward slope of later years. Visually rendered as a rising and falling staircase or as stages, the *Lebensstreppe* (German, "steps of life") provided a spatial as much as a temporal organization of bourgeois life. This pyramidal structure implied two conflicting

narratives. On the one hand, life's second act could be viewed in the flattering terms of accumulated wisdom and experience. This has been a popular view throughout western history, from Cicero's likening of aging to "ripening" in *De Senectute* (c. 44 BCE) to the gaining-perspective theory at the heart of John Rowe and Robert Kahn's twentieth-century gerontological model of "successful aging" (433).

But a less optimistic narrative thrives as well: that after ripening there only comes rot. This has long been the basis for many accounts of later life, perhaps most recognizably in Jaques's "All the world's a stage" speech in *As You Like It* (c. 1600). Four centuries after its composition, "[O]ne man in his time plays many parts, / His acts being seven ages" (2.7.142–43) remains legible as an extended metaphor of the life course, as does the bleak synopsis of old age that follows a few lines later: "sans everything" (2.7.165). In our own time, the attitude that age studies theorist Margaret Morganroth Gullette terms "the ideology of decline" focuses on the fixedly downward orientation of aging. Consider the disconsolate idioms we use: *sinking* into old age, *slipping* into dementia. Decline ideology is quite literally the fear of falling: the belief that one will fall – chronologically, physically, perhaps even morally – with all that implies of personal failure. Once fallen, we cannot, will not, ever get up. Today, in the iconography of old age, decline appears to be the inevitable or expected performance of late life.

With the above in mind, critical commentary on the tableau offers a valuable conceptual contribution to age studies. The aesthetics of tableau, of living stillness, also dramatizes alternatives to the typical narratives of decline – narratives that are often endemic to representations of aging in literature and drama. My aim here is not to deny the narrative aspects of aging or to diametrically oppose the concepts of flow and stasis. Rather, it is to draw attention to how the tableau dramatically enacts unconventional, resistively non-narrative, versions of old age. Both Garcin and Markson turn to tableau to engage with the artistic potential of aging – including, perhaps unexpectedly, its capacity to catalyse a moment of creation that is in some ways atemporal (or transtemporal). Articulating these alternatives presents an opportunity to examine the function of the static with respect to the aging subject. This opens the door to more playful possibilities for imagining aging through the evocative vocabulary and concepts presented by the dramatic arts.

GILBERT GARCIN

At the age of sixty-five, French manufacturer Gilbert Garcin (b. 1929) gave up his lamp factory to take on a new role: the artist, subject, and photographer "Monsieur G." Now in his mid-eighties, Garcin is known for his distinctive portraits of the artist as an old man.³ His meticulously composed

black-and-white photocollages frequently portray some universal theme, such as ambition, suffering, marriage, or the passing of time. Garcin photographs his own “double” – an older man, often dressed in a overcoat, who might well remind viewers of Jacques Tati’s one-dimensional counterpart, Monsieur Hulot – and occasionally that of his wife as well (Miss M.). Assembling these figures using the most basic materials – glue, string, ink, and sand – the dioramic scene is lit to maximize Garcin’s signature high-contrast monochromatic lines and is photographed once again.⁴

These allusive, quasi-allegorical snapshots play with photography’s supposed realism, asking their audience to behold subject and creator in a dual role. The composite or palimpsest Garcin as Mr. G. is poised somewhere between actor and scene painter, artist, and audience. His “subtle little scissors-and-glue stagings” (as Christine Ollier terms them) recall, in their highly constructed enactments, the stage and photographic tradition of tableau (12). Although his *oeuvre* is not as well known as that of other photographers associated with tableau (such as Jeff Wall), Garcin’s photocollages, in their approach to old age, present ample opportunities to think of aging outside of conventional narrative paradigms of the life course.

For example, *Work in Progress* is an allegorical tableau of selfhood that directly engages key concerns of age studies. An image of Mr. G., the artist’s persona, dominates the frame, partitioned into brick-like pieces and assembled into an impressive bust. Yet its imposing gaze – which directly addresses and even challenges the viewer – competes with the prominent black space of deficiency above the figure’s left eye. Anatomically, this striking absence corresponds to the brain’s fronto-temporal lobe, which controls the use of language as well as the cognitive functions necessary for creativity. Visually, the hole has the effect of collapsing the composition’s foreground and background, making it unclear whether the image is one of assembly or ruin. Does the scene embody growth, the building of a self over the course of a lifetime – or its opposite, the encroaching progress of physical decay and the neural void?

We can view *Work in Progress* as an exemplar of Garcin’s enactment of aging, but ambiguities abound. Below the immense bust sits a small figure of Mr. G. on a pile of debris, looking down; Miss M. stands to one side, facing away and looking upward; and over both figures, the large and charismatic face of Mr. G. holds our eye directly – but with its integrity fragmented by that black space. The tableau’s internal grammar leaves viewers in a state of suspended interpretation. Which way do we look? What endgame of aging do we choose? The effect is one of equipoise, of critical inertia. Where does aging take us?

Garcin's aesthetics is importantly distinct from other major critical considerations of the relationship of photography to old age. The most sustained treatment of this topic is Anca Cristofovici's *Touching Surfaces: Photographic Aesthetics, Temporality, Aging* (2009), which considers this medium's ability to reflect the processional nature of aging. Against the "custom" (Cristofovici's word) of viewing old age as walled off from the state of youth (18), Cristofovici argues that photography can reflect and represent the accumulation of "age-selves" over time:

Instead of thinking of old age as a discrete element in a linear narrative or in a hierarchy, I will focus . . . on continuity, on the possibility of bridging our different age-selves, of creating a space of communication between one's own ages and between generations . . . Aging equals change, everybody seems to agree; yet the ways of reading these changes and the direction of these changes are richly diverse. (18–19)

In Cristofovici's view, photography's metaphors and techniques are well suited to reflect the belief that stillness is a transient, and even a dangerous, fiction for the aging body (a point to which I will return). She discusses photographs that attempt to capture one of the most peculiar paradoxes of aging: it exists both as a state and as a continual process. Significantly, Cristofovici's discussion focuses on Jeff Wall, whose work is perhaps the best known of contemporary photographic engagements with tableau. Wall's *The Giant* (1992) features a huge female nude, standing on an open staircase landing. The building is obviously a library, and a handful of students are visible in the distance. Although Cristofovici does not explicitly mention the elements of tableau in the posed constructedness of its arresting focal figure, the image certainly borrows the aesthetics of tableau in its staging of older age.

Cristofovici describes the old woman's outsized, unclothed body as "an ironic transcendence of age" – one with the potential to disturb the hierarchy of "the centuries-old pyramidal model of the ages of man and woman" (24). She points out that much critical commentary on *The Giant* obsesses over the female figure's physical signs of age: the white hair, wrinkled flesh, and relaxed breasts. However, Cristofovici's optimistic reading weighs the image down with more didacticism than it can easily bear. Indeed it is difficult to view *The Giant* as truly transgressive, since the woman's body is, in fact, conventionally beautiful – idealized, trim, and (in more than one way) gravity defying. Far from disturbing the hierarchy of youth over age, Wall's image is really more of an idealized presentation of *youth in disguise* – a concept of successful aging that simply has older people looking and behaving like their younger counterparts. In my view, Cristofovici's Panglossian interpretation is symptomatic of a broader trend in age studies: the activist habit of attempting to de-alienate old age from youth-centric idealizations of bodily beauty and ability.

As a general rule, as Susan Sontag points out, older women's bodies suffer the fate of double marginality, sidelined both for being female and for being old. Even though it integrates elements of tableau, *The Giant* has no palliative effect on the power of the male gaze to enforce its own ideals of female beauty. In fact, it may even encourage such readings. Yet the image does highlight the tableau's possibilities for the artistic representation of age, particularly in the context of the stages model and its implied narratives of the life course. While Cristofovici's discussion of Wall's aging female body is certainly an important one, I wonder about the omnipresent privileging of temporal progression as the primary mode of representing older age in the arts. Today we seem inclined to overlook the deeply figurative basis of references to "stages" when describing phenomena understood to follow a roughly continuous temporal progression: grief, life, illness, and so on. The iconographic armature of the stages model appears implicitly, perhaps inevitably, to focus on decline as the exemplary drama of older age. Must the state of old age always coexist with the aging process?

The tableau offers an alternative framework – one where the body's aging appears not as a symptom of the gravitational pull of decline (as in the *Lebenstreppe*) but as an individuated, static state. Garcin's tableaux are significant for the way aging is framed and enacted on its own unrelational terms. One such moment of heightened drama is evident in *The Decisive Choice*, which features a tiny figure of Mr. G. in mid-stride along a strip of white paper, bisected by markings like those of a road surface. Against convention, Mr. G.'s direction of travel along the paper trail leads the reader's eye across the scene from right to left. There, the surface of the strip splits in two: one plane curves upward to the top left corner of the image, the other down to the bottom left. Cinematic tradition defines such orientation as indicating an antagonistic or countervailing force; so here the narrative logic of the photo-collage situates Mr. G. within the spatial and directional iconography of the *Lebenstreppe* while also subverting its conventions. As well, we see that the smooth, brightly lit upward incline contrasts with the shaded, precipitous downward slope. The latter's abrupt curve creates a conspicuous point of interchange that allows the image to toggle between depth and flatness.

This arresting moment of dimensionality in an otherwise flat photographic surface evokes the distinctive shape of the Möbius strip: a figure, like the tableau, characterized by its play with surface, space, and orientation. The decisive point of Garcin's image might, indeed, be read as a Möbius-like point of convergence, as some critical life moment – a diagnosis, a sudden illness, a fall – that signifies an instant of acute drama or transformation, especially in older age. Mr. G. seems to be looking toward the downward path, but his choice remains unseen; his resolution is implied yet unrealized within

the space of the tableau. The image's dramatic tension is located at precisely this Möbius nexus, the spot at which depth and surface converge and oscillate in a refusal to orient the aging self either one way or the other. The aged figure is poised to rest in the realm of potential.

The dominance of the stages model has meant that most critical engagements with aging are drawn toward artistic modes and genres more obviously concerned with narratives of progress and development: short stories, film, and the novel. Relatively neglected are those that do not fit this pattern, such as sculpture, photography, and non-conventional forms of theatre and prose – including David Markson's, as I will demonstrate shortly. One solution to this distortion lies in expanding the vocabulary and concepts that age studies draws from to enable more sensitive, subtle thinking about what it really means to grow old. Mieke Bal, for example, has demonstrated how narrativity and visual imagery – often thought of as hallmarks of the verbal and visual arts, respectively – should in fact be understood as “aspects rather than essences,” and the critical methods used to engage those aspects should be regarded as “modes rather than systems” (77–78). Of course, the aesthetics of tableau has long been used by other non-dramatic arts. But Garcin's photcollages show how the aesthetics of tableau can decentre prevailing narratives of progress to engender more inventive portraits of later life.

In the two works (*Work in Progress* and *The Decisive Choice*) described above, and throughout Garcin's *oeuvre*, the tableau provides a scene of play that allows Garcin to excavate a sense of selfhood from among the ruins of youth-centric conventions of masculinity: conventions like order, vanity, ambition, virility.⁵ Against those impossible ideals, embodied by the ubiquitous presence of the persona Mr. G., Garcin juxtaposes the fragility of his own, actual self. The power of play is found in the enactment of the aging male artist's confrontation with this supposed impotence: the artist, a puny miniature dithering in the foreground of his imposing double, the Ideal. To evoke the psychoanalytic language of Jacques Lacan, Garcin's tableaux function as a corporeal staging of the mirror stage itself: the turning of oneself into an object that can be apprehended from outside. The profound artistic accomplishment of these images – Garcin's wisdom, if I may use such a word – results from his stepping outside of this staging of the real and the ideal self to create a tableau of that very moment of conflict, preserving in each image an instant of serious yet playful self-enactment.

By privileging the aesthetics of tableau, Garcin's photographic *oeuvre* draws attention to his atypical enactments of self-creation in older age. Of course, his photcollages' moments of Möbius equipose necessarily interact with narratives of aging and even ageism – as evinced by Garcin's own reluctance to have his images republished in works that specifically address older

age (P. Garcin). In proposing the value of tableau to artistic and critical engagements with aging, I am not suggesting that this dramatic form offers immunity from strongly ideological ideas like decline. However, Garcin's aesthetics of tableau also serves as a conceptual key to reading older age in American novelist David Markson's famously enigmatic *The Last Novel* (2007), a work to which I now turn. Despite this novel's lack of any apparent aspirations to drama, I suggest that readers familiar with Garcin's enactments of aging might bring more sensitively rehearsed critical insights to Markson's idiosyncratic prose and its deliberately visual approach. Examined in tandem, these two artists illustrate the expanded relevance of drama – its forms, traditions, metaphors, and vocabularies – to the humanistic study of older age and to the task of imagining alternatives to traditional representations of aging, male aging especially.

DAVID MARKSON

The Last Novel (2007) was indeed the last of David Markson's fifty-year literary career: less than four years after its publication, he died at the age of eighty-two. The author's singular writing style – familiar to readers of *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (1988), *This Is Not a Novel* (2001), and *Vanishing Point* (2004) – is perhaps best described as “populated” by highly constructed, imagistically dense statements assembled by an otherwise nameless Novelist. The story (such as it is) is a compilation of Novelist's stand-alone anecdotes. Neither fragments nor aphorisms exactly, Novelist's meditations read more like data points than paragraphs. They vary widely in content, from meditations on art and artists through idiosyncratic biographical details of major figures of western intellectual history to occasional references to Novelist himself. Like Garcin's Mr. G., Novelist is a composite of Markson the author and the creative persona he constructed over his half-century of writing.

“Nonlinear. Discontinuous. Collage-like. An assemblage” (Markson, *Last Novel* 8). In terms of form and content, *The Last Novel* defies novelistic conventions by refusing plot, character, or narrative continuity. Moreover, in Markson's novels, as in his letters and interviews, aging was visibly an aggravation or provocation (e.g., “Age. / Dammit” [*Vanishing Point* 180]). More forceful than a leitmotif, old age serves as a motivating, even organizing, principle in his idiosyncratic anti-novels – his final anti-novel especially. *The Last Novel* alludes repeatedly to late life, referencing near mythic figures of aging (King Lear, Socrates, Diogenes), late style (Picasso, Michelangelo, Verdi), and Novelist's own desperate solitude. Thus, Novelist's lamentation, “Old. Tired. Sick. Alone. Broke,” is one of the few lines repeated throughout Markson's work. Taken together, these meditations amass into a stark, yet improbably lively, *memento senescere*:

Sigmund Freud ran his household in such a rigidly patriarchal manner that his wife was literally expected to have spread the toothpaste on his brush each morning.

Old. Tired. Sick. Alone. Broke. All of which obviously means that this is the last book Novelist is going to write.

Anton Chekhov died in Germany. His coffin arrived in Moscow in a freight car – distinctly labeled *Oysters*. (*Last Novel* 3)

In this splintered excerpt, which is typical of every single page of the novel, Markson's contemplations about aging and death ask readers to reflect on what it means to grow old. Yet, in the absence of any conventional narrative framework, how can readers make sense of these disparate meditations? What if, instead of reading *The Last Novel* as a novel or even (as Catherine Texier has suggested) as a long poem, readers take to heart the peculiar dramas both of aging and of Markson's writing? The idiosyncratic form of *The Last Novel* places aging deliberately and productively in relation to an anti-narrative mode of stillness. Consequently, Markson's unsentimental suspensions of temporality should be read in light of the dramatic convention of the *tableau vivant* – that is, as an unrelenting series of textual tableaux. The textual tableau, writes David J. Denby, functions primarily “in a spatial rather than a temporal dimension” and invites “a mode of perception radically opposed to that of narrative” (75). In their moments of arrested action, Markson's prose tableaux pluck iconographic and philosophical references from the past to compose a static pageant of the western creative tradition.

The purposive spatialization of Markson's prose upsets the conventional temporal experience of novel reading, forcing the reader to experience the composition of aging selfhood in the absence of traditional narrative cues. If his micro-paragraphs are profoundly tabular, then the sporadic refrain – “Old. Tired. Sick. Alone. Broke.” – functions as a collection of bleak sub-tableaux of aging: each word a Möbius spot that orients (and perhaps re-collects) *The Last Novel's* encyclopaedic meditations around Novelist's elusive story of selfhood. In fact, it is the blank space between Markson's tableaux (what readers of comics would refer to as “the gutter”) that constitutes the book's true visual armature. Just as Garcin's tableaux resist the ageist implications of the stages model and its narrative of decline, so do Markson's purposefully interrupt the tendency to associate temporal thickness and continuity with robust stories of selfhood in older age. Reading Markson's last novel in terms of tableau offers readers a new perspective on the representation of aging as a resolvedly unsentimental suspension of temporality.

In a 2009 letter to biographer Charles J. Shields, Markson laments the physical, mental, and creative declensions associated with older age and

illness. “Four bloody hours,” he writes of a visit to his oncologist. “[S]it and wait, sit and wait . . . Damn, I hate being old” (*Reading*). While it’s unwise to conflate personal biography with authorial expression, it does seem that Novelist shares Markson’s distaste – as is evident throughout *The Last Novel*:

Moments in which Novelist does something like leaving his desk to retrieve a book from across the room – and finding himself staring vacantly into the refrigerator. (45)

Old enough so that gradual loss of bone has left him at least two and a half inches shorter than he was when younger. (125)

Sophocles, *re* a tremor in his hand, as recorded by Aristotle: He said he could not help it; he would happily rather not be ninety years old. (187)

Sitting and waiting. Sitting and waiting. In these condensed instances of reflection, is it too playful to read such tableaux as re-casted “senior moments” – not as daunting moments of forgetting, vacuity, or loss, but rather as acute instances of the constitutive stillness of later life? At this point, some readers might recall Mikhail Bakhtin’s definition of the *chronotope* as the spatial and temporal matrix that forms the basis of language and narrative, moments in literature in which “[t]ime becomes, in effect, palpable and visible” (250). Bakhtin’s model presents the traditional novel as a kind of corporeal analogue; to appropriate such a framework in terms of the concerns of age studies, one might see both a novel and the aging body as concretizations of time’s passing. By contrast, Markson’s textual tableaux merely point to a discrete act or thought, without plotting its outcome. This is a meaningful difference from other treatments of male aging that more often identify the senior moment with a loss of sexual, intellectual, or creative potency. In fact, it is the gutter among Novelist’s tableaux that indicates how progress and plot are, if not inconsequential, then at least secondary to the novel’s highly concentrated enactments of meaning in older age.

This does not make the tableau an inherently anti-ageist form or one that necessarily celebrates the representation of aging. But its aesthetics does provide a spatial framework capable of capturing moments of later life that conventional narrative approaches rarely do. In literary age studies, framing aging in terms of holistic temporal narratives has been key to the ethical resituation of late life from a de-othered, intergenerational, life-course perspective rather than as the undesirable antithesis to youth and adult maturity. The metaphor of life as a story in which late life is an integrated rather than an estranged part serves to shore up aging – older age especially – against the pervasive insinuations of age segregation and ageism.⁶ But is the figuratively dramatic approach I propose really necessary to help readers make better

sense of Markson's portrayal of an aging novelist? Let me play sceptic for a moment and consider three other theoretical possibilities.

Possibility one: in their playing at wisdom, many of *The Last Novel's* enigmatic statements recall the Stoic brevity of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* or even, almost two millennia later, Oscar Wilde's preface to another story of aging masculinity, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Wilde was fascinated by surface, flatness, and persona, all the aesthetics of tableau: "All art is at once surface and symbol" (168). Except Markson's writing never dispenses the advice or ethical directives associated with that literary form. The resemblance of these texts one to another does not reflect a shared purpose.⁷

Possibility two: interpret *The Last Novel* through a Freudian psychoanalytic framework. In the psychic process of condensation, several themes or associations combine into one symbol, which may appear to the conscious mind as the distortion and allusion that belong to dreams (hence Freud's own interest in jokes, and the way they could shuffle and conflate ideas and associations). One of the reasons I resist this reading, despite the essentially psychoanalytic paradigm of first-wave age studies, is because the Freudian association of aging with stasis and inertia views immobility as both a literal and a figurative threat to the aging self. In her article "Social Physics: Inertia, Energy, and Aging," Teresa Brennan describes Freud's view of aging as the onset of physical and psychical rigidity:

[T]he more we see things from our own fixed point, the stronger the ego. But the more we do this, the more sedimented our pathways become. The more sedimented they become, the less freely mobile energy we have . . . and the closer we come to death. Hence the 'inorganic crust' that Freud felt growing about him as he aged. (137)

This view is exemplified in Brennan's work on aging and echoes throughout the anthology where her article appears, *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* (1999).⁸ In a similar vein, Kathleen Woodward's early writings effectively redraw the dramatic life-as-stages *Lebenstreppe* motif within a psychoanalytic framework. Woodward's "mirror stage" of old age, an inversion of the stage of infancy, associates a person's shocked recognition of growing old with a Lacanian species of violent denial: "[T]his aging body is not my self" (67).

While the psychoanalytic foundations of age studies have proved the value of autobiographical and fictional narratives to dismantling negative stereotypes, such an approach also has its pitfalls. Literary critic Sally Chivers notes that a psychoanalytic framework "risk[s] treating characters as people and thereby merely diagnosing literary figures" (103). Also, as I have written elsewhere, if the life course is understood as a succession of inverted psychic stages, then readers are left without the critical means to interpret phenomena (such as rejuvenation, reverse aging, the aged child, and so on) that subvert or

confound traditional narratives of aging as chronological progression – whether real, imagined, or represented in the arts (Charise 928). The problems of associating aging with immobility are clear. Nor is this merely an arcane debate: as gerontologist Stephen Katz has argued, the current aging ideology of “busy bodies” has led to physical activity becoming “a panacea for the political woes of the declining welfare state and its management of so-called risky populations” (147). From the perspectives of both criticism and policy, then, Freudian hermeneutics are mismatched to the task of understanding stillness as a productive rather than reductive aspect of older age.

Possibility three: setting aside Markson’s idiosyncratic form, we might approach *The Last Novel* from the perspective of other late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century American and British narratives of male aging. From Philip Roth to John Updike, from Martin Amis to Ian McEwan, contemporary literary representations insistently equate later life with the onset of sexual, artistic, and intellectual impotence. Male aging is habitually presented as a catastrophe, an invitation to suicide, a “massacre” (to quote Roth’s *Everyman* 156), and more specifically, as a fatal dropping off. This latter pattern is at least as old as Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, where the aged Gloucester attempts to hurl himself over the cliffs of Dover. Contemporary examples include Roth’s aptly titled novel *The Humbling* (2009), where an aging Shakespearean actor takes “a tumble” off the stage at the Kennedy Center during a disastrous performance (27). Recent films featuring older men who explicitly or implicitly commit suicide by jumping suggest the modern consolidation of this trope: Harvey Keitel’s character in *Youth* (2015, dir. Paolo Sorrentino) or Michael Keaton’s award-winning performance in *Birdman* (2014, dir. Alejandro G. Iñárritu). In both cases, it is surely no coincidence that the aging male character has professional ties to the stage, which suggests the convergence of performance, failed or dimming careers, and representations of male aging in contemporary western art and culture. *The Last Novel* implies a re-enactment of this pattern. Markson’s first line reads, “There are six floors in Novelist’s apartment building . . . / And then the roof” (1). The last page quotes a sign: “Access to Roof for Emergency Only. / Alarm Will Sound if Door Opened” (190). Markson’s readers are left to assume that Novelist plans to jump to his death from the roof, though no straightforward narrative leads to this conclusion. The ambiguities of *The Last Novel* distinguish Markson’s text from what Catherine Mayer has termed the “amortal” refusal of aging common to the other narratives I mention above.

I suggest these possibilities merely as false starts, to point out that the obvious critical approaches to Markson’s writing do not work. What does, then? Obviously, the tableau, which offers an alternative armature to the ingrained impotence plot endemic to representations of male aging. In *The*

Last Novel, the author repeatedly mentions canonical male artists to whom age brought isolation, despite their fame and talent:

Cezanne, who lived in greater and greater isolation, late in life.

Degas, who lived in greater and greater isolation, late in life. (186–87)

In addition to his name and date on the frame of a portrait by Jan van Eyck:

Als ick kan – The best I can do. (187)

Novelist references the Dutch painter Jan Van Eyck, whose “Portrait of a Man in a Turban” (c. 1433), a work famous for possibly depicting its artist-maker, also functions as an overt instance of the overlaying of textual and visual tableaux in Markson’s meditation on older age (the inscription ALC IXH XAN appears on the frame surrounding the painting). Particularly in the latter third of *The Last Novel*, Van Eyck’s “*Als ich kan*” joins Novelist’s “Old. Tired. Sick. Alone. Broke” as a textual/tableau-like refrain. All I can. The best I can do: this is less the typical slogan of decline or disgust with one’s various incapacities than a radical way of distancing oneself from the relentless demands of youth, masculinity, artistic proficiency, and indeed the life course itself. For Novelist, and perhaps for Markson as well, *als ich kan* serves as an assertion of late selfhood. It may not render the artist immune to the indignities of impotence or decline, but it does counter-balance those prevailing ideologies of aging.

In Markson’s novel, the link between aging, play, and the tableau takes on a somewhat different structure than in Garcin’s images. The tableau again provides a scene of sombre play, but while Garcin focuses on the individual self, the textual tableaux of *The Last Novel* portray the ruin of the entire western iconographic, philosophical, and literary tradition: the disintegrating legacies of Chekhov, Freud, and others – indeed, the novel itself – all in pieces. For Markson, like Garcin, the power of play is found in the tableau’s staging of a moment of mirroring. But the shattered mirror of Markson’s novel precludes any possibility of reflecting a sense of wholeness back to the reader – even the basic knowledge of how to read such a text. Markson plays a serious joke on any reader who picks up this novel, his *last* novel, expecting to encounter a somewhat familiar form. Even as his “novel” refuses to provide the conventional temporal continuities that this dominant genre of modern western literature has come to convey, Markson’s series of tableaux still enact literature’s own primal *tableau vivant*: the reader in the act of reading.

In the spirit of this special issue’s invitation to play, I present Garcin and Markson as an amusing challenge to age studies. The tableau’s artful encounter with aging provides a critical armature at odds with the traditional

dramatic and narrative structures that are often overlaid onto later life. Earlier, I mentioned Wordsworth's "spots of time" to describe his epiphanic moments of recollection – individual tableaux of childhood memory that were able to temporarily still the demands of the poet's adult life and interfold past and present. Something comparable inspires the tableaux of aging I've described here, except that Garcin's and Markson's respective tableau-like enactments of aging involve not a Wordsworthian calling forth of childhood but something like its counter-action. In their singular moment of stillness, these tableaux occasion spots of *future* time that invite a beholding audience to project themselves consciously into the state of older age. The tableau's forgetive senior moment is enacted at its Möbius nexus, at the convergence of surface and depth, present and future, in its refusal to resolve into a temporal narrative of aging. Remember, you will age: every *memento senescere* functions as a spot of future time by casting the recollection of one's aging into the future. Both Garcin and Markson generate spots of future time to remind us not of death, exactly, but of the state that will most likely precede it. Through the enactments of their not quite self-same personae, the artists I describe generate spots of future time that elude the strictures of narrative and the traditionally ageist models of representation they often entail.

In his novel *The Rings of Saturn*, W.G. Sebald asks, "What manner of theatre is it, in which we are at once playwright, actor, stage manager, scene painter and audience?" (80). Spots of future time, presented as tableaux, appear to answer Sebald's lyrical query. The equipoise of the tableau's double moment balances the unreal (that is, non-narratable) relationship to older age with the real and the various aesthetic paths that can lead us to such occasions. In fact, the aesthetics of tableau provides a conceptual armature for better understanding the diverse portraits of aging offered by the arts, by presenting additional insights into the separation of "deep" and "surface" personhood. While I do not dispute the need for models of deep selfhood that emphasize the rich and ongoing interior life of older persons (especially those with cognitive impairments), the tableau provides an armature for alternative forms of personhood that may be complementary to these care approaches and activist aims. As the work of theorist Gilles Deleuze has shown, spatialization and the surface may also offer provocative opportunities for imagining the diverse expression of selfhood in older age.⁹ Such regard for surfaces in older adulthood is apparent in the improvisational theatre methods Anne Davis Basting has introduced for people with dementia in the *TimeSlips* creative storytelling project, which focus on the lasting capacity for imagination rather than on the impermanence of memory (94). Just as surface, flatness, and persona were the fascinations of Wilde's late-nineteenth-century

allegorical tale of aging, the cognate aesthetics of tableau should be reason enough to reconsider their value for humanistic age studies in our own time.

The spatialization of time-bound media, language especially, dramatizes new possibilities for articulating the lived and imagined experiences of older age. Representations of aging are now far more diverse than the traditional stages metaphor is able to accommodate, and our critical vocabulary of older age needs to diversify beyond that model's aesthetics of process, progress, and narrative linearity. Engaging with the new dramatic conventions I propose makes space for much-needed alternative vocabularies in age studies, a field that is capable of conveying a far more complex sense of the experience of embodiment in older age. In these *memento senescere* tableaux, the dramatically imagistic armature may or may not portray a complete narrative of aging. Yet the tableau, unfamiliar as it is, provides its audience with the means to enact a study of our own late lives – as best we can. *Als ich kan*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank the editors of this special issue (Marlene Goldman and Larry Switzky) and an anonymous reviewer for their various enhancements of this article.

NOTES

- 1 See, for example, handbooks like Head's *Home Pastimes; or Tableaux Vivants* (1860). In keeping with its multigenre appeal, the tableau as a nineteenth-century parlour game was regularly represented in the novels of this period, including William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Wilkie Collins's *No Name*, and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, to name just a few.
- 2 Wordsworth's earlier poem "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" (1798) describes a similarly alimentative moment of stillness:

The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. (ll. 61-65)

Wordsworth's mention of "future years," as we shall see, has relevance to my argument regarding the tableau's pertinence to aging.

- 3 In addition to his official website, *Gilbert Garcin: Photographies*, Garcin's work has been collected in several dedicated art books, including *Mister G* (2009) and *Tout Peut Arriver* (2007).
- 4 Gilbert Garcin's images do not appear in the present article because, as his son informed me via email (October 2015), Garcin is open to his images

being republished but not in relation to certain topics, including aging. Without commenting further on the significance of Garcin's reluctance, I will simply say that this episode speaks to the difficult task of envisioning older age as a form of play for artists and readers more generally. Nevertheless, the images that I discuss can be viewed at Stephen Bulger Gallery's permanent online archive of Garcin's work, included in the Works Cited below.

- 5 To name only a few illustrative examples from Garcin's *oeuvre*, see *The Flight of Icarus (after Leonardo da Vinci)*, *The Artist And His Double*, and *The Peacock*.
- 6 For example, a 2012 report from the European Network of Age Studies entitled "Aging, Narrative, and Performance: Essays from the Humanities" identifies narrative (along with culture, materiality, and performativity) as one of four conceptualizations of aging motivating current social-science-based and humanities-based research in this field. "A narrative approach to age starts from the metaphor of life as story and refers to the way age identities are constituted in and through narratives. *Narrative*, as a travelling concept, helps to define aging as a development through time, negotiating between personal circumstances and aspirations, and the expectations of the master narratives in which we are inscribed" (Swinnen and Port 12; emphasis in original). Even this description of narrative as a "travelling concept" (the phrase is Mieke Bal's) refers to concepts with multiple disciplinary and epistemological usages and hints at this linkage of aging with dynamic, forward-looking, purposive movement through time.
- 7 See, for example, Morson's *The Long and Short of It* (2012) and numerous essays on the literary study of aphorism's long-standing proximity to playful prescription, including Umberto Eco's "Wilde: Paradox and Aphorism" (2004), James Stephens's "Science and the Aphorism" (1970), and Simon Reader's "Social Notes" (2013).
- 8 For examples of age studies' early emphasis on the psychoanalytic dimensions of aging, see, in addition, Kathleen Woodward's *Aging and Its Discontents* (1991).
- 9 See Deleuze's writings on the surface in *The Logic of Sense* (1969) or his discussion of the diagram's relationship to surface representations in *Foucault* (1988) and elsewhere. Thanks to Stephen Katz for suggesting to me the utility of the diagram in relation to the aesthetics of tableau.

WORKS CITED

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- Bal, Mieke. *Looking In: The Art of Viewing*. London: Gordon, 2001.

- Basting, Anne Davis. *Forget Memory: Creating Better Lives for People with Dementia*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009.
- Brennan, Teresa. "Social Physics: Inertia, Energy, and Aging." *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*. Ed. Kathleen Woodward. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999. 149–68.
- Charise, Andrea. "'The Tyranny of Age': Godwin's *St. Leon* and the Nineteenth-Century Longevity Narrative." *English Literary History* 79.4 (2012): 905–33. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/elh.2012.0036>.
- Chevrier, Jean-François. "The Tableau and the Document of Experience." *Click Doubleclick: The Documentary Factor*. Ed. Thomas Weski. Cologne: Walter König, 2006. 51–61.
- Chivers, Sally. *From Old Woman to Older Women: Contemporary Culture and Women's Narratives*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2003.
- Cole, Thomas R. *The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Cristofovici, Anca. *Touching Surfaces: Photographic Aesthetics, Temporality, Aging*. New York: Rodopi, 2009.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault*. Ed. and trans. Sean Hand. London: Continuum, 1999.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *The Logic of Sense*. Ed. Constantin V. Boundas. Trans. Mark Lester. London: Athlone, 1990.
- Denby, David J. *Sentimental Narrative and the Social Order in France, 1760–1820*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Eco, Umberto. "Wilde: Paradox and Aphorism." *On Literature*. Trans. Martin McLaughlin. Boston: Houghton, 2004. 62–83.
- Fried, Michael. *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*. London: Yale UP, 2008.
- Garcin, Gilbert. *The Decisive Choice*. 2006. Gelatin Silver Print. Bulger Gallery. 11 Feb. 2016. http://www.bulgergallery.com/dynamic/fr_artwork_display.asp?ArtworkID=1917.
- Garcin, Gilbert. *Gilbert Garcin: Photographies*. N.d. 11 Feb. 2016. <http://www.gilbert-garcin.com>.
- Garcin, Gilbert. *Tout Peut Arriver*. Trézélan: Filigranes, 2007.
- Garcin, Gilbert. *Work in Progress*. 2004. Gelatin Silver Print. Bulger Gallery. 2 Feb. 2016. http://www.bulgergallery.com/dynamic/fr_artwork_display.asp?ArtworkID=1916.
- Garcin, Phillippe. Message to the author. 14 Oct. 2015. E-mail.
- Gullette, Margaret Morganroth. *Declining to Decline: Cultural Combat and the Politics of the Midlife*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1997.
- Head, James H. *Home Pastimes; or Tableaux Vivants*. Boston, 1860. 11 Feb. 2016. http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/19724?msg=welcome_stranger.

- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Renaissance Editions, University of Oregon, 1999. 1 Mar. 2016. <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/748/leviathan.pdf>.
- Katz, Stephen. "Busy Bodies: Activity, Aging, and the Management of Everyday Life." *Journal of Aging Studies* 14.2 (2000): 135–52. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0890-4065\(00\)80008-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0890-4065(00)80008-0).
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. Trans. Bruce Fink, in collaboration with Heloise Fink and Russell Grigg. New York: Norton, 2006. 75–81.
- Markson, David. *The Last Novel*. Berkeley: Shoemaker, 2007.
- Markson, David. Personal correspondence with Charles J. Shields (04/11/2009). *Reading Markson Reading*. Ed. Tyler Malone. Blog. 11 Feb. 2016. <http://readingmarksonreading.tumblr.com/post/5154028250/a-postcard-sent-to-charles-j-shields-from>.
- Markson, David. *Vanishing Point*. Berkeley: Shoemaker, 2004.
- Mayer, Catherine. *Amortality: The Pleasures and Perils of Living Agelessly*. Chatham: Random, 2011.
- Morson, Gary Saul. *The Long and Short of It: From Aphorism to Novel*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2012.
- Ollier, Christine. Introduction. *Mister G*. By Gilbert Garcin. Trézélan: Filigranes, 2009.
- Peucker, Brigitte. *The Material Image: Art and the Real in Film*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2007.
- Reader, Simon. "Social Notes: Oscar Wilde, Francis Bacon, and the Medium of Aphorism." *Journal of Victorian Culture* 18 (2013): 453–571.
- Roth, Philip. *Everyman*. New York: Vintage, 2006.
- Roth, Philip. *The Humbling*. New York: Random, 2009.
- Rowe, John W., and Robert L. Kahn. "Successful Aging." *Gerontologist* 37.4 (1997): 433–40. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/geront/37.4.433>.
- Sears, Elizabeth. *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986.
- Sebald, W.G. *The Rings of Saturn*. Trans. Michael Hulse. New York: New Directions, 1998.
- Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It. The Norton Shakespeare*. 2nd ed. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus. New York: Norton, 2008.
- Sontag, Susan. "The Double Standard of Aging." *Saturday Review* 24 Sept. 1972: 29–38.
- Stephens, James. "Science and the Aphorism: Bacon's Theory of the Philosophical Style." *Speech Monographs* 37 (1970): 157–71.

- Swinnen, Aagje, and Cynthia Port. "Aging, Narrative, and Performance: Essays from the Humanities." *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life* 7.2 (2013): 9–15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3384/ijal.1652-8670.1272a1>.
- Texier, Catherine. "'Old. Tired. Sick. Alone. Broke.'" *New York Times* 8 July 2007. 11 Feb. 2016. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C01E6D9163EF93BA35754CoA9619C8B63>.
- Wilde, Oscar. Preface. *The Picture of Dorian Gray: The 1890 and 1891 Texts*. Ed. Joseph Bristow. Vol. 3 of *The Complete Works Of Oscar Wilde*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.
- Woodward, Kathleen. *Ageing and Its Discontents: Freud and Other Fictions*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991.
- Wordsworth, William. "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey." *William Wordsworth*. Ed. Jonathan Wordsworth. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.
- Wordsworth, William. *The Prelude*. Ed. J.C. Maxwell. Aylesbury: Penguin, 1976.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ANDREA CHARISE is Assistant Professor of Health Studies at the University of Toronto at Scarborough, where her research and teaching focus on health humanities, arts-based health research, and literary representations of older age. She received the 2014 John Charles Polanyi Prize for Literature and has published in venues including *Health Expectations*, *Victorian Studies*, *Essays in Romanticism*, and *English Literary History (ELH)*.