



SELECTION OF QUOTES II

Selection of quotes and comments on ageing, gender and creativity



DONNA LEON:

- Most people — however much they might deny it — had an idea of what they were getting into when they got into it. (*About Face*)
- She believed that books served as a mirror of the person who accumulated them. (*Through a Glass, Darkly*)
- How beautiful, the grace of women; how soft their charity. (*Dressed for Death*)

ERICA JONG:

- My mother was dead and I become my mother! As I aged, I was even beginning to look like her. I would catch a sidelong glimpse of myself and think – there goes my mother. (*Sappho's Leap*, 256)
- I have reached the point, hitting by fiftieth birthday, where everything terrible has been said about me, right? I can't lose. I'm no longer afraid. (*Conversations with Erica Jong*, 189)
- Probably the best thing about getting older is that you're not as vulnerable to those feelings as you were when you were younger. (*Icons, Saints and Divas: Intimate Conversations With Women Who Changed The World*, 36)

PENELOPE LIVELY:

- An a view of old age itself, this place at which we arrive with a certain surprise – ambushed, or so it can seem. The view from eighty, for me. One of the few advantages of age is that you can report on it with a certain authority; you are a native now, and know what goes on here. (*Ammonites & Leaping Fish. A Life in Time*, 3)
- Today, people in their sixties seem – not young, just nicely mature. Old age is in the eye of the beholder. (*Ammonites & Leaping Fish. A Life in Time*, 6)
- One thing old age does is play trick with time. Time is no longer reliable, moving along at its inexorable pace, but has become febrile, erratic. Mostly, it accelerates. Charlotte read a book recently called *Why Life Speeds Up As you Get Older*, by a psychologist, which attempted to explain the phenomenon – for phenomenon it is, apparently, universally reported. One persuasive explanation is to do with the changed nature of experience itself; when we are young, novelty abounds. We do, see, feel, taste, smell newly, day after day; this puts a brake on time. It hovers, while we savour each fresh moment. In old age, we've seen it all, to put it bluntly. Been there, done that. So time whisks by. Ah, that's why – those interminable days of childhood. (*How It All Began*, 202)



DAPHNE DU MAURIER:

- I've been doing this all the past week. Glancing at Country Life, picking flowers, taking the dogs down to Prid and thinking, 'Really, what an aimless existence!' But I know it is only temporary, and I refuse to be Doomed! So easy to say, I'm sixty, I've had my life, I'm just an old has-been who is stuck down in Cornwall, and wait for my grandchildren to visit me. That is no way to look at life! Yes, the only thing to do is to carry on, and the storm will blow over.[...] Life goes on. Life is everywhere. One must *never* be defeated! (*Letters from Menabilly: portrait of a friendship*, 209-210)
- *Re Great Age*, you know one could do a very good story about a person who got into a muddle about his or her age, and said they were only ten, or something, when another person died, and then it was discovered to be wrong; and so the poor person in the muddle gets arrested for murder, because the police think the muddle was a deliberate lie, to act as an alibi! Then, as this age question gets discovered, more and more waine incriminating things come to light, which the poor arrested person (who was not guilty, of course) had simply glossed over in their past, and so in the end the Doom is appalling! You must admit, one could do quite a frightening story on these lines. Or, better still, do the age the other way round. Dora, let's say, is really only sixty, and not ninety-three, and is a criminal; and when it's dark, goes rushing around Tywardreath doing awful murders. Of course, no one would suspect a dear old lady of ninety-three! The whole aspect of age is full of possibilities! (*Letters from Menabilly: portrait of a friendship*, 239-240)
- We are none of us isolated in time, but are part of what we were once, and of what we are yet to become, so that these varied personalities merge and become one in creative thought, wearing, at times, an additional disguise, the face and voice of someone observed at a distance and believed forgotten, or bearing the casual gesture of a friend. Every character conceived, and fondly considered by its author to be original, was fist seeded in his or her being by means unknown, dating back perhaps through months or years, of doubtful parentage; and just as we ourselves carry the blue eyes of one forebear and the quick temper of another, so the genes of a fictitious man or woman develop as they must and without control. (*Myself when young: the shaping of a writer*, 64)