

# REVOLUTION AT POINT ZERO

HOUSEWORK, REPRODUCTION, AND FEMINIST STRUGGLE

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PM



# ON ELDER CARE WORK AND THE LIMITS OF MARXISM (2009)

## Introduction

"Care work," especially eldercare, has come in recent years to the center of public attention in the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in response to a number of trends that have put many traditional forms of assistance into crisis. First among these trends have been the growth, in relative and absolute terms, of the old age population, and the increase in life expectancy, that have not been matched, however, by a growth of the services catering to the old.<sup>1</sup> There has also been the expansion of women's waged employment that has reduced their contribution to the reproduction of their families.<sup>2</sup> To these factors we must add the continuing process of urbanization and the gentrification of working class neighborhoods, that have destroyed the support networks and the forms of mutual aid on which older people living alone could once rely, as neighbors would bring them food, make their beds, come for a chat. As a result of these trends, for a large number of elderly, the positive effects of a longer life span have been voided or are clouded by the prospect of loneliness, social exclusion and increased vulnerability to physical and psychological abuse. With this in mind, I present some reflections on the question of eldercare in contemporary social policy, especially in the United States, to then ask what action can be taken on this terrain, and why the question of elder care is absent in the literature of the radical Left.

My main objective here is to call for a redistribution of the social wealth in the direction of elder care, and the construction of collective forms of reproduction, enabling older people to be provided for, when no longer self-sufficient, and not at the cost of their providers' lives. For this to occur, however, the struggle over elder care must be politicized and placed on the agenda of social justice movements. A cultural revolution is also necessary in the concept of old age, against its degraded representation as a fiscal burden on the state, on one side and, on the other, an "optional" stage in life that we can overcome and even prevent, if we adopt the right medical technology and the "life enhancing" devices disgorged by the market.<sup>3</sup> At stake in the politicization of elder care are not only the destinies of older people and the unsustainability of radical movements failing to address such a crucial issue in our lives, but the possibility of generational and class solidarity, which for years have been the targets of a relentless campaign by political economists and governments, portraying the provisions which workers have won for their old age (such as pensions and other forms of social security) as an economic time-bomb and a heavy mortgage on the future of the young.

### The Crisis of Elder Care in the Global Era

In some respects the present crisis of elder care is nothing new. Eldercare in capitalist society has always been in a state of crisis, both because of the devaluation of reproductive work in capitalism and because the elderly are seen as no longer productive, instead of being treasured as they were in many precapitalist societies as depositories of the collective memory and experience. In other words, elder care suffers from a double cultural and social devaluation. Like all reproductive work, it is not recognized as work, but unlike the reproduction of labor-power, whose product has a recognized value, it is deemed to absorb value but not to produce it. Thus, funds designated for eldercare have traditionally been disbursed with a stinginess reminiscent of the nineteenth century Poor Laws, and the task of caring for the old who are no longer self-sufficient has been left to the families and kin with little external support, on the assumption that women should naturally take on this task as part of their domestic work.

It has taken a long struggle to force capital to reproduce not just labor-power "in use," but the working class throughout its entire life cycle, with the provision of assistance also to those who are no longer part of the labor market. However, even the Keynesian state fell short of this goal. Witness the Social Security legislation of the New Deal, enacted in 1940 in the United States, and considered "one of the achievement of our

century"; only partly did it respond to the problems faced by the old, as it tied social insurance to the years of waged employment and provided elder care only to those in a state of absolute poverty.<sup>4</sup>

The triumph of neoliberalism has worsened this situation. In some countries of the OECD, steps have been taken in the 1990s to increase the funding of home-based care, and provide counseling and services to caregivers.<sup>5</sup> In England the government has given caregivers the right to demand flexible work schedules from employers, so they can "reconcile" waged work and care work.<sup>6</sup> But the dismantling of the "welfare state" and the neoliberal insistence that reproduction is the workers' personal responsibility, have triggered a countertendency that is gaining momentum and the present economic crisis will undoubtedly accelerate.

The demise of welfare provisions for the elderly has been especially severe in the United States, where it has reached such a point that workers are often impoverished in the effort to care for a disabled parent. One policy in particular has created great hardships. This has been the transfer of much hospital care to the home, a move motivated by purely financial concerns and carried out with little consideration given to the structures required to replace the services that hospitals used to provide. As described by Nona Glazer, this development has not only increased the amount of care-work that family members, mostly women, must do.<sup>7</sup> It has also shifted to the home "dangerous" and even "life threatening" operations that in the past only registered nurses and hospitals would have been expected to perform.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, subsidized home-care workers have seen their workload double, while the length of their visits has increasingly been cut,<sup>9</sup> forcing them to reduce their jobs "to household maintenance and bodily care."<sup>10</sup> Federally financed nursing homes have also been "Taylorized," "using time-and-motion studies to decide how many patients their workers can be expected to serve."<sup>11</sup>

The "globalization" of elder care in the 1980s and 1990s has not remedied this situation. The new international division of reproductive work, that globalization has promoted, has shifted a large amount of care-work on the shoulders of immigrant women. This development has been very advantageous for governments, enabling them to save billions of dollars they otherwise would have had to pay to provide services catering to the elderly. It has also enabled many elderly, who wished to maintain their independence, to remain in their homes without going bankrupt. But this cannot be considered a "solution" to elder care, short of a total social and economic transformation in the conditions of care workers and the factors motivating their "choice" of this work.

It is because of the destructive impact of “economic liberalization” and “structural adjustment” in their countries of origins that millions of women from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean Islands, and the former socialist world, migrate to the more affluent regions of Europe, the Middle East and the United States, to serve as nannies, domestics, and caregivers for the elder. To do this they must leave their own families including children and aging parents behind, and recruit relatives or hire other women with less power and resources than themselves to replace the work they can no longer provide.<sup>12</sup> Taking the case of Italy as an example, it is calculated that three out of four *badanti* (as care workers for the elderly are called) have children of their own, but only 15 percent have their families with them.<sup>13</sup> This means that the majority suffer a great deal of anxiety, confronting the fact that their own families must go without the same care they now give to people across the globe. Arlie Hochschild has spoken, in this context, of a “global transfer of care and emotions,” and the formation of a “global care-chain.”<sup>14</sup> But the chain often breaks down: immigrant women become estranged from their children, stipulated arrangements fall apart, relatives die during their absence.

Equally important, because of the devaluation of reproductive work and the fact that they are immigrants, often undocumented, and women of color, paid care workers are vulnerable to a great deal of blackmail and abuse: long hours of work, no paid vacations, or other benefits, exposure to racist behavior and sexual assault. So low is the pay of home care workers in the United States that nearly half must rely on food stamps and other forms of public assistance to make ends meet.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, as Domestic Workers United—the main domestic/care workers organization in New York State, promoter of a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, has put it, care workers live and work in “the shadow of slavery.”<sup>16</sup>

It is also important to stress that most elderly people and families cannot afford hiring care-workers or paying for services matching their real need. This is particularly true of elderly people with disabilities who require daylong care. According to statistics of the CNEL of 2003, in Italy only 2.8 percent of elderly receive nonfamily assistance at home; in France it is twice as many, in Germany three times.<sup>17</sup> But the number is still low. A large number of elderly live alone, facing hardships that are all the more devastating the more invisible they are. In the “hot summer” of 2003, thousands of elderly people died throughout Europe of dehydration, lack of food and medicines or just the unbearable heat. So many died in Paris that the authorities had to stack their bodies in refrigerated public spaces until their families reclaimed them.

When family members care for the old, the tasks fall mostly on the shoulders of women,<sup>18</sup> who for months or years at times live on the verge of nervous and physical exhaustion, consumed by the work and the responsibility of having to provide a care and often perform procedures for which they are usually unprepared. Many have jobs outside the home, though they have to abandon them when the care work intensifies. Particularly stressed are the “sandwich generation” who are simultaneously raising children and caring for their parents.<sup>19</sup> The crisis of care work has reached such a point that in low-income, single-parent families in the United States, teenagers and children, some no more than eleven years old, take care of their elders, also administering therapies and injections. As the *New York Times* has reported, a study conducted nationwide in 2005 revealed that “3 percent of households with children ages eight to eighteen included child caregivers.”<sup>20</sup>

The alternative, for those who cannot afford buying some form of “assisted care,” are publicly funded nursing homes, which, however, are more like prisons than hostels for the old. Typically, due to a lack of staff and funds, these institutions provide minimal care. At best, they let their residents lie in bed for hours without anyone at hand to change their positions, adjust their pillows, massage their legs, tend to their bed sores, or simply talk to them, basic elements in their maintaining a sense of their sense of identity and dignity and still feeling alive and valued. At worst, nursing homes are places where old people are drugged, tied to their beds, left to lie in their excrements and subjected to all kind of physical and psychological abuses. This much has emerged from a series of reports, including one recently published by the U.S. government in 2008, which speaks of a history of abuse, neglect, and violation of safety and health standards in 94 percent of nursing homes.<sup>21</sup> The situation is not more encouraging in other countries. In Italy, reports of abuses in nursing homes perpetrated against disabled or chronically ill elders are very frequent, as are the cases in which needed medical assistance is denied.<sup>22</sup>

### Eldercare, the Unions, and the Left

The problems I have described are so common and pressing that we would imagine that eldercare should top the agenda of the social justice movements and labor unions internationally. This, however, is not the case. When not working in institutions, as it is the case with nurses and aides, care workers have been ignored by labor unions, even the most combative like Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).<sup>23</sup>

Unions negotiate pensions, the conditions of retirement, and healthcare. But there is little discussion in their programs of the support

systems required by people aging and by care workers, whether or not they work for pay. In the United States, until recently, labor unions did not even try to organize care workers, much less unpaid house-workers. Thus, to this day, care workers working for individuals or families have been excluded from the Fair Labor Standards Act, a New Deal legislation that guarantees "access to minimum wages, overtime, bargaining rights and other workplace protections."<sup>24</sup> As already mentioned, among the fifty states, only New York State has so far recognized care workers as workers, with the passing of a Bill of Rights, in November 2010, that Domestic Workers United had long fought for. And the United States is not an isolated case. According to an ILO survey of 2004, "cross-national unionization rates in the domestic service sector are barely 1 percent."<sup>25</sup> Pensions too are not available to all workers, but only to those who have worked for wages, and certainly not to unpaid family caregivers. Because reproductive work is not recognized as work and pension systems compute benefits on the basis of the years spent in waged employment, women who have been fulltime housewives can obtain a pension only through a wage-earning husband, and have no social security in case they divorce.

Labor organizations have not challenged these inequities, nor have social movements and the Marxist Left, who, with few exceptions, seems to have written the elderly off the struggle, judging by the absence of any reference to elder care in contemporary Marxist analyses. The responsibility for this state of affairs can in part be traced back to Marx himself. Elder care is not a theme that we find in his works, although the question of old age had been on the revolutionary political agenda since the eighteenth century, and mutual aid societies and utopian visions of recreated communities (Fourierist, Owenite, Icarian) abounded in his time.<sup>26</sup>

Marx was concerned with understanding the mechanics of capitalist production and the manifold ways in which the class struggle challenges it and reshapes its form. Security in old age and elder care did not enter this discussion. Old age was a rarity among the factory workers and miners of his time, whose life expectancy on average, in industrial areas, like Manchester and Liverpool, did not surpass thirty years at best, if the reports of Marx's contemporaries are to be believed.<sup>27</sup>

Most importantly, Marx did not recognize the centrality of reproductive work, neither for capital accumulation nor for the construction of the new communist society. Although both him and Engels described the abysmal conditions in which the working class in England lived and worked, he almost naturalized the process of reproduction, never envisaging how reproductive work could be reorganized in a postcapitalist society or in the very course of the struggle. For instance, he discussed

"cooperation" only in the process of commodity production overlooking the qualitatively different forms of proletarian cooperation in the process of reproduction which Kropotkin later called "mutual aid."<sup>28</sup>

Cooperation among workers is for Marx a fundamental character of the capitalist organization of work, "entirely brought about by the capital[ists]," coming into place only when the workers "have ceased to belong to themselves," being purely functional to the increase in the efficiency and productivity of labor.<sup>29</sup> As such, it leaves no space for the manifold expressions of solidarity and the many "institutions for mutual support"—"associations, societies, brotherhoods, alliances"—that Kropotkin found present among the industrial population of his time.<sup>30</sup> As Kropotkin noted, these very forms of mutual aid put limits to the power of capital and the State over the workers' lives, enabling countless proletarians not to fall into utter ruin, and sowing the seeds of a self-managed insurance system, guaranteeing some protection against unemployment, illness, old age and death.<sup>31</sup>

Typical of the limits of Marx's perspective is his utopian vision in the "Fragment on the Machines" in the *Grundrisse* (1857–58), where he projects a world in which machines do all the work and human beings only tend to them, functioning as their supervisors. This picture, in fact, ignores that, even in advanced capitalist countries, much of the socially necessary labor consists of reproductive activities and that this work has proven irreducible to mechanization.

Only minimally can the needs, desires, possibilities of older people, or people outside the waged workplace, be addressed by incorporating technologies into the work by which they are reproduced. The automation of eldercare is a path already well traveled. As Nancy Folbre (the leading feminist economist and theorist of eldercare in the United States) has shown, Japanese industries are quite advanced in the attempt to technologize it, as they are generally in the production of interactive robots. Nursebots giving people baths or "walking [them] for exercise," and "companion robots" (robotic dogs, teddy bears) are already available on the market, although at prohibitive costs.<sup>32</sup> We also know that televisions and personal computers have become surrogate *badanti* for many elders. Electronically commanded wheelchairs enhance the mobility of those who are sufficiently in charge of their movements to master their commands.

These scientific and technological developments can greatly benefit older people, if they are made affordable for them. The circulation of knowledge they provide certainly places a great wealth at their disposal. But this cannot replace the labor of care workers, especially in the case of elders living alone or suffering from illnesses and disabilities. As Folbre

points out, robotic partners can even increase people's loneliness and isolation.<sup>33</sup> Nor can automation address the predicaments—fears, anxieties, loss of identity and sense of one's dignity—that people experience as they age and become dependent on others for the satisfaction of even their most basic needs.

It is not technological innovation that is needed to address the question of elder care, but a change in social relations, whereby the valorization of capital no longer commands social activity and reproduction become a collective process. This, however, will not be possible within a Marxist framework, short of a major rethinking of the question of work, of the type feminists began in the 1970s as part of our political discussion of the function of housework and the origin of gender-based discrimination. Feminists have rejected the centrality that Marxism has historically assigned to waged industrial work and commodity production as the crucial sites for social transformation, and they have criticized its neglect of the reproduction of human beings and labor power. The feminist movement's lesson has been that not only is reproduction the pillar of the "social factory," but changing the conditions under which we reproduce ourselves is an essential part of our ability to create "self-reproducing movements."<sup>34</sup> For ignoring that the "personal" is "political" greatly undermines the strength of our struggle.

On this matter, contemporary Marxists are not ahead of Marx. Taking the Autonomist Marxist theory of "Affective" and "Immaterial Labor" as an example, we see that it still sidesteps the rich problematic that the feminist analysis of reproductive work in capitalism uncovered.<sup>35</sup> This theory argues that in the present phase of capitalist development, the distinction between production and reproduction has become totally blurred, as work becomes the production of states of being, "affects," and "immaterial" rather than physical objects.<sup>36</sup> In this sense "affective labor" is a component of every forms of work rather than a specific form of (re)production. The examples given of the ideal-type "affective laborers" are the fast-food female workers who must flip hamburgers at McDonald's with a smile or the stewardesses who must sell a sense of security to the people she attends to. But such examples are deceptive, for much reproductive work, as exemplified by care for the elderly, demands a complete engagement with the persons to be reproduced, a relation that can hardly be conceived as "immaterial."

It is important, however, to recognize that the concept of "care work" is also to some extent reductive. The term has entered the common usage in the 1980s and 1990s in conjunction with the emergence of a new division of labor within reproductive work, separating the physical from

the emotional aspects of this work. Paid care workers have held on to this distinction, wishing to specify the jobs that can be expected of them from their employers, and establish that the work they provide is skilled labor. But the distinction is untenable and care workers are the first to recognize it. For what differentiates the reproduction of human beings from the production of commodities is the holistic character of many of the tasks involved. Indeed, to the extent that a separation is introduced, to the extent that elderly people (or for that matter children) are fed, washed, combed, massaged, given medicines, without any consideration for their emotional, "affective" response and general state of being, we enter a world of radical alienation. The theory of "affective labor" ignores this problematic and the complexity involved in the reproduction of life. It also suggests that all forms of work in "postindustrial" capitalism are increasingly homogenized.<sup>37</sup> Yet, a brief look at the organization of elder care, as currently constituted, dispels this illusion.

#### **Women, Aging, and Elder Care in the Perspective of Feminist Economists**

As feminist economists have argued, the crisis of elder care, whether considered from the viewpoint of the elders or their care providers, is essentially a gender question. Although increasingly commodified, most care work is still done by women and in the form of unpaid labor that does not entitle them to any pension. Thus, paradoxically, the more women care for others the less care they can receive in return, because they devote less time to waged labor than men and many social insurance plans are calculated on the years of waged work done. Paid caregivers too, as we have seen, are affected by the devaluation of reproductive work, forming an "underclass" that still must fight to be socially recognized as workers. In sum, because of the devaluation of reproductive work, almost everywhere women face old age with fewer resources than men, measured in terms of family support, monetary incomes, and available assets. In the United States, where pensions and Social Security are calculated on years of employment, women are the largest group of elderly who are poor and the largest number of residents of low-income nursing homes, the concentration camps of our time, precisely because they spend so much of their lives outside of the waged workforce, in activities not recognized as work.

Science and technology cannot resolve this problem. What is required is a transformation in the social/sexual division of labor and, above all, the recognition of reproductive work as work, entitling those performing it to remuneration, so that family members providing care are not penalized for their work.<sup>38</sup> The recognition and valorization of reproductive work is also crucial for overcoming the divisions that exist among care

workers, which pit, on one side, the family members trying to minimize their expenses, and, on the other, the hired care-givers facing the demoralizing consequences of working at the edge of poverty and devaluation.

Feminist economists working on this issue have articulated possible alternatives to the present systems. In *Warm Hands in Cold Age*, Nancy Folbre, Lois B. Shaw, and Agneta Stark discuss the reforms needed to give security to the aging population, especially elderly women, by taking an international perspective, and evaluating which countries are in the lead in this respect.<sup>39</sup> At the top, they place the Scandinavian countries that provide almost universal systems of insurance. At the bottom there are the United States and England, where elderly assistance is tied to the history of employment. But in both cases, there is a problem in the way policies are configured, as they reflect an unequal sexual division of labor and the traditional expectations concerning women's role in the family and society. This is one crucial area where change must occur.

Folbre also calls for a redistribution of resources to rechannel public money from the military-industrial complex and other destructive enterprises to the care of people in old age. She acknowledges that this may seem "unrealistic," equivalent to calling for a revolution. But she insists that it should be placed on "our agenda," for the future of every worker is at stake, and a society blind to the tremendous suffering that awaits so many people once they age, as it is the case with the United States today, is a society bound for self-destruction.

There is no sign, however, that this blindness may soon be overcome. In the name of the economic crisis, policy makers are turning their eyes away from it, everywhere striving to cut social spending and bring state pensions and social security systems, including subsidies to care work, under the ax. The dominant refrain is the obsessive complaint that a more vital and energetic elderly population, stubbornly insisting on living on, is making even the provision of state-funded pensions unsustainable. It was possibly with in mind the millions of Americans determined on living past eighty, that Alan Greenspan in his memoirs confessed that he was frightened when realizing that the Clinton Administration had actually accumulated a financial surplus!<sup>40</sup> Even before the crisis, however, for years policy makers had been orchestrating a generational war, incessantly warning that that the growth of the sixty-five-plus population would bankrupt the Social Security system, leaving a heavy mortgage on the shoulders of the younger generations. Now, as the crisis deepens, the assault on assistance to old age and elder care is bound to escalate, whether in the form of a hyperinflation decimating fixed incomes, or the partial privatization of social security systems, or the rising retirement age. What

is certain is that no one is arguing for an increase in government funding for elder care.<sup>41</sup>

It is urgent, then, that social justice movements, including radical scholars and activists, intervene on this terrain to prevent a triage solution to the crisis at the expense of the old, and to formulate initiatives capable of bringing together the different social subjects who are implicated in the question of elder care—care workers, the families of the elders, and first of all the elders themselves—who are now often placed in an antagonistic relation with each other. We are already seeing examples of such an alliance in some of the struggle over elder care, as nurses and patients, paid care workers and families of their clients are increasingly coming together to jointly confront the state, aware that when the relations of reproduction become antagonistic, both producers and reproduced pay the price.

Meanwhile, the "commoning" of reproductive/care work is also under way. Communal forms of living based upon "solidarity contracts" are currently being created in some Italian cities by elders who, in order to avoid being institutionalized, pool together their efforts and resources when they cannot count on their families or hire a care worker. In the United States, "communities of care" are being formed by the younger generations of political activists, who aim at socializing, collectivizing the experience of illness, pain, grieving and the "care work" involved, in this process beginning to reclaim and redefine what it means to be ill, to age, to die.<sup>42</sup> These efforts need to be expanded. They are essential to a reorganization of our everyday life and the creation of nonexploitative social relations. For the seeds of the new world will not be planted "online," but in the cooperation we can develop among ourselves, starting from those of us who must face the most vulnerable time in our lives without the resources and help they need, a hidden but no doubt widespread form of torture in our society.

- 11 Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Meillassoux has argued that women's subsistence farming has been a bonus for governments, companies, and development agencies in that it has enabled them to more effectively exploit African labor, through a constant transfer of wealth and labor from the rural to the urban areas (110-11).
- 12 Marx, *Capital*, 277.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, quoted by David McLellan in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 363-64.
- 15 Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros, eds., *Reclaiming the Land: The Resurgence of Rural Movement in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 1.
- 16 Silvia Federici, "Witch-Hunting, Globalization, and Feminist Solidarity in Africa Today," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, special issue, *Women's Gender Activism in Africa* 10, no. 1 (October 2008): 21-35.
- 17 Yann Moulier Boutang, *De l'esclavage au salariat. Économie historique du salariat bridé* (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 1998); Dimitris Papadopoulos, Niamh Stephenson, and Vassilis Tsianos, *Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the 21st Century* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).
- 18 See Nancy Folbre, "Nursebots to the Rescue? Immigration, Automation and Care," *Globalizations* 3, no. 3 (2006): 349-60.
- 19 See Silvia Federici, "Reproduction and Feminist Struggle in the New International Division of Labor" in this volume.
- 20 Nona Glazer, *Women's Paid and Unpaid Labor: Work Transfer in Health Care and Retail* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).
- 21 David E. Staples, *No Place Like Home: Organizing Home-Based Labor in the Era of Structural Adjustment* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-5.
- 22 Hugo F. Hinfelaar. "Witch-Hunting in Zambia and International Illegal trade," in *Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa*, ed. Gerrie Ter Haar (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007).
- 23 Federici, "Witch-Hunting, Globalization, and Feminist Solidarity in Africa Today."

### On Elder Care Work and the Limits of Marxism

- 1 Laurence J. Kotlikoff and Scott Burns, *The Coming Generational Storm: What You Need to Know About America's Economic Future* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).
- 2 Nancy Folbre, "Nursebots to the Rescue? Immigration, Automation and Care," *Globalizations* 3, no. 3 (2006): 350.
- 3 As Joyce and Mamo point out in "Graying the Cyborgs" (2007), driven by the quest for profit and an ideology privileging youth, a broad campaign has been underway targeting the elderly as consumers, promising to "regenerate" their bodies and delay aging if they use the appropriate pharmaceutical products and technologies. In this context old age becomes almost a sin, a predicament we bring on ourselves, by failing to take advantage of the latest rejuvenating products.
- 4 Dora L. Costa, *The Evolution of Retirement: An American Economic History, 1880-1990* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1.
- 5 OECD Health Project, *Long-Term Care for Older People* (Paris: OECD Publications, 2005); Lourdes Benería, "The Crisis of Care, International



- Migration, and Public Policy," *Feminist Economics* 14, no. 3 (July 2008): 2–3, 5.
- 6 In England and Wales, where it is reckoned that 5.2 million people provide informal care, starting in April 2007, caregivers for adults were given the right to demand flexible work schedules (ibid.). In Scotland, the Community Care and Health Act of 2002 "introduced free personal care for the elderly" and also redefined caregivers as "co-workers receiving resources rather than consumers . . . obliged to pay for services" (Fiona Carmichael et al., *Feminist Economics* 14, no. 2 [April 2008]: 7).
  - 7 Glazer, *Women's Paid and Unpaid Labor: Work Transfer in Health Care and Retail* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993). According to various surveys, as a consequence of these cuts . . . 20 to 50 million family members in the United States provide care that has traditionally been performed by nurses and social workers. Family care givers supply about 80 percent of the care for ill or disabled relatives and the need for their services will only rise as the population ages and modern medicine improves its ability to prolongs lives. . . . With more terminally ill people choosing to remain at home until their final days, family members or friends now serve as informal caregivers for nearly three fourths of sick or disabled older adults living in the community during their years of life, according to a report in the Archives of Internal Medicine of January 2007 (Jane E. Brody, "When Families Take Care of Their Own," *New York Times*, November 11, 2008).
  - 8 As a consequence of this "transfer," the home (Glazer writes) has been turned into a medical factory, where dialyses are performed and housewives and aides must learn to insert catheters, medicate wounds, while a whole new sort of medical equipment has been manufactured for home use (Glazer, *Women's Paid and Unpaid Labor*, 154).
  - 9 Glazer, *Women's Paid and Unpaid Labor*, 166–67, 173–74.
  - 10 Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, "We Were the Invisible Workforce: Unionizing Home Care," in *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor*, ed. Dorothy Sue Cobble (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007) 180.
  - 11 Glazer, *Women's Paid and Unpaid Labor*, 174.
  - 12 Jean L. Pyle, "Transnational Migration and Gendered Care Work: Introduction," *Globalizations* 3, no. 3 (2006): 289; Arlie Hochschild and Barbara Ehrenreich, *Global Women: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (New York: Holt, 2002).
  - 13 Dario Di Vico, "Le badanti, il nuovo welfare privato. Aiutano gli anziani e lo Stato risparmia," *Corriere della Sera*, June 13, 2004, 15.
  - 14 Arlie Hochschild, "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value," in *Global Capitalism*, eds. Will Hutton and Anthony Giddens (New York: The New Press, 2000); Arlie Hochschild and Barbara Ehrenreich, *Global Women: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (New York: Holt, 2002), 26–27.
  - 15 *New York Times*, January 28, 2009.
  - 16 The Bill of Rights Domestic Workers United campaigned for and won in 2010 in New York State was the first in the country that recognized that care workers are workers, entitled to the same rights that other categories of workers have.
  - 17 Dario Di Vico, "Le badanti."
  - 18 However, according to the *New York Times*, the number of men caring for elder parents has been steadily increasing in the United States.
  - 19 Martin Beckford, "'Sandwich Generation' Families Torn between Demands of Children and Parents," *Telegraph*, April 1, 2009.
  - 20 Pam Belluck, "In Turnabout, Children Take Caregiver Role," *New York Times*, February 22, 2009. Other countries where children have become care workers include Britain and Australia, which often recognize them the right to participate in "patient-care discussions" and ask for compensations for their work.
  - 21 *New York Times*, August 30, 2008.
  - 22 See on the topic: Francesco Santanera, "Violenze e abusi dovuti anche alla mancata applicazione delle leggi" in *Prospettive Assistenziali*, 169 (gennaio/marzo 2010). *Prospettive Assistenziali* is dedicated to struggle against social exclusion, especially of disabled and elder people. Santanera's article can also be read online: <http://www.superando.it/content/voew/5754/121>. According to government controls realized in 2010, one third of institutes for the elderly violate the legal norms ([http://www.ansa.it/notizie/rubriche/cronaca/2010/02/26/visualizza\\_new](http://www.ansa.it/notizie/rubriche/cronaca/2010/02/26/visualizza_new)).
  - 23 Shireen Ally, "Caring about Care Workers: Organizing in the Female Shadow of Globalization," Center for Global Justice, San Miguel De Allende (Mexico): International Conference on Women and Globalization, July 27–August 3, 2005, 3.
  - 24 Boris and Klein, "We Were the Invisible Workforce," 182.
  - 25 Ally, "Caring about Care Workers," 1.
  - 26 Robin Blackburn, *Banking on Death or Investing in Life: The History and Future of the Pensions* (London: Verso, 2002), 39–41; Nordhoff 1966. As Robin Blackburn points out, the first proposals for paying pensions to people in old age appeared at the time of the French Revolution. Tom Paine discussed the issue in the second part of *Rights of Man* (1792), so did his friend Condorcet who offered a plan that was to cover all citizens. On the footsteps of these proposals, "The National Convention declared that 10 Fructidor was to be the date of the Fête de la Veillesse and that there should be old people homes established in every department. . . . The Convention adopted the principle of a civic pension for the aged in June 1794, just a few months after the abolition of slavery" (Blackburn, *Banking on Death*, 40–41). In Marx's time, forms of assistance against sickness, old age, and death, as well as unemployment, were provided by the "friendly societies," workers' clubs organized on the basis of trade, described by John Foster as "the one social institution that touched the adult lives of a near majority of the working population" (Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, 216). Moreover, while the zenith of utopian socialism was in the early part of the nineteenth century, as late as the 1860s communitarian experiments, committed to protect their participants from poverty, helplessness, and old age, continued, especially in the United States. A contemporary journalist, Charles Nordhoff, counted at least seventy-two organized according to cooperative/communistic principles.
  - 27 Wally Secombe, *Weathering the Storm: Working-Class Families from the Industrial Revolution to the Fertility Decline* (London: Verso, 1993 & 1995), 75–77.
  - 28 For Peter Kropotkin's concept of Mutual Aid see in particular the last two chapters of the homonymous work, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902).
  - 29 Marx, *Capital*, 451; "As cooperators," Marx writes, "as members of a working organism, [workers] merely form a particular mode of existence of capital." The productive power they develop "is the productive power of capital" (ibid.).

- 30 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 208, 221.
- 31 Ibid., 230.
- 32 Nancy Folbre. "Nursebots to the Rescue? Immigration, Automation and Care." *Globalizations* 3, no. 3 (2006): 356.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 The concept of "self-reproducing movements" has become a rallying cry for a number of U.S. based collective, who refuse the separation—typical of leftist politics—between political work and the daily reproduction of our lives. For an elaboration of this concept see the collection of articles published by the collective Team Colors: "In the Middle of a Whirlwind," and the article recently published by Craig Hughes and Kevin Van Meter in *Rolling Thunder*, "The Importance of Support. Building Foundations, Creating Community Sustaining Movements."
- 35 I refer in particular to the theory of "Immaterial Labor" formulated by Hardt and Negri in the trilogy from *Empire* (2000) to *Commonwealth* (2009). See also *Multitudes: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004), 108–11.
- 36 For a discussion of Hardt and Negri's theory of "Immaterial Labor" see Silvia Federici, "On Affective Labor," in *Cognitive Capitalism, Education and Digital Labor*, eds. Michael A. Peters and Eergin Blut, 57–74 (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).
- 37 Negri and Hardt, *Multitudes*, 114.
- 38 On this question see Mariarosa Dalla Costa, "Women's Autonomy and Remuneration for Carework in the New Emergencies," *The Commoner* 15 (Winter 2012), <http://www.thecommoner.org>.
- 39 Nancy Folbre, Lois B. Shaw, and Agnetta Stark, eds., *Warm Hands in Cold Age: Gender and Aging* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 164.
- 40 Alan Greenspan, *The Age of Turbulence: Adventures in a New World* (New York: Penguin Press, 2007), 217.
- 41 Elizabeth A. Watson and Jane Mears, *Women, Work and Care of the Elderly* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 1999), 193.
- 42 The organization of "communities of care" is the project of a number of DIY, anarchist collectives on both coasts of the United States, who believe it is the precondition for the construction of "self-reproducing" movements. The model here is the solidarity work organized by Act Up in response to the spread of AIDS in the gay community in the 1980s, which, against all odds, marked a major turning point in the growth of that movement. Information on the "communities of care" project can be found in some websites (as the Dicentra Collective's of Portland, Oregon), as well as a variety of zines produced on this subject. On this topic see also "The Importance of Support: Building Foundations, Sustaining Community," *Rolling Thunder: An Anarchist Journal of Dangerous Living* 6 (Fall 2008): 29–39.

### Women, Land Struggles, and Globalization: An International Perspective

- 1 Quoted in *Don't Be Afraid, Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart: The Story of Elvira Alvarado*, ed. Medea Benjamin (New York: Harper Perennial, 1987), 104.
- 2 United Nations, *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics* (New York: United Nations, 1995), 114. In 1988, the ILO defined subsistence workers in agriculture and fishing as those who "provide food, shelter and a minimum of cash income for themselves and their households"—a fuzzy definition depending on which notion of "minimum cash income" and "provision" one uses.