

The Becoming of Age: Cinematic visions of mind, body and identity in later life

Pamela H. Gravagne

In *The Becoming of Age*, Pamela H. Gravagne promotes a critical examination of the ways that aging and old age are understood, represented, and given meaning in popular film. Arguing that the narratives, discourses, and philosophical positions that underlie filmic depictions of growing older are historical and open to revision, Gravagne constructs a framework for evaluating how a film both portrays aging or older characters and tells the larger story of aging itself. Using this framework to explain how knowledge about aging and old age is rendered visible through film, she shows how movies are able not only to promote negative portrayals of old age but to challenge its cultural devaluation, and not only to consolidate age-based exclusionary definitions of self and personhood but to dispute the distinction between self and other on which these definitions are based. Gravagne ultimately contends that seeing popular film as a site of cultural struggle where the cinematic representation and the lived reality of aging and old age intertwine can enable the recognition and creation of alternate ways to age that will better reflect the continued becoming that is crucial to a full and meaningful life at any age.

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