

## **Ageing Corporealities in Contemporary English Fiction: Redefining Stereotypes**

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Summary: This study takes its point of departure from the premise that, despite the progressive ageing of Western society, the process of ageing is surrounded by negative connotations and contradictions. Throughout history, Western art and literature have presented old age as a period of loss and dependency. In present times, consumer culture overwhelms us with messages of eternal youth, offering a wide range of products and techniques. Thus, the body that has kept its youth and vigour is considered virtuous whereas the body that looks 'old' becomes synonymous with sterility, illness and dependency. Taking symbolic interactionism as a methodological framework and twenty-six novels by fourteen English contemporary authors as a data-base, this study sets out to demonstrate that, while not denying the biological element, the negative connotations attached to the ageing body are mainly based on cultural beliefs.

ISBN: 9783843393782

