

The Silvering Screen: Old Age and Disability in Cinema

Sally Chivers

Popular films have always included elderly characters, but until recently, old age only played a supporting role onscreen. Now, as the Baby Boomer population hits retirement, there has been an explosion of films, including *Away From Her*, *The Straight Story*, *The Barbarian Invasions*, and *About Schmidt*, where aging is a central theme.

The first-ever sustained discussion of old age in cinema, *The Silvering Screen* brings together theories from disability studies, critical gerontology, and cultural studies, to examine how the film industry has linked old age with physical and mental disability. Sally Chivers further examines Hollywood's mixed messages - the applauding of actors who portray the debilitating side of aging, while promoting a culture of youth - as well as the gendering of old age on film. *The Silvering Screen* makes a timely attempt to counter the fear of aging implicit in these readings by proposing alternate ways to value getting older.

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The Silvering Screen maps the intersections of disability, age, film, and cultural studies and, in the process, transforms each of these interdisciplinary fields. Through close readings of popular films, Sally Chivers convincingly showcases how

disability and old age are linked in our collective imagination and overviews the multiple, contested ways filmmakers have responded to that linkage. This is an important and exciting book.

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