



Aging and Identity: A Humanities Perspective

Sara M. Deats, Lagretta Lenker

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Viewing artistic works through the lens of both contemporary gerontological theory and postmodernist concepts, the contributing scholars examine literary treatments, cinematic depictions, and artistic portraits of aging from Shakespeare to Hemingway, from Horton Foote to Disney, from Rembrandt to Alice Neale, while also comparing the attitudes toward aging in Native American, African American, and Anglo American literature. The examples demonstrate that long before gerontologists endorsed a Janus-faced model of aging, artists were celebrating the diversity of the elderly, challenging the bio-medical equation of senescence with inevitable senility. Underlying all of this discussion is the firm conviction that cultural texts construct as well as encode the conventional perceptions of their society; that literature, the arts, and the media not only mirror society's mores but can also help to create and enforce them.

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