Bilder des Alters und des Alterns in Film und Fernsehen.
Eine Arbeitsbibliographie
Zusammengestellt von Hans J. Wulf

1. Altersbilder im Film. Bücher und Artikel
2. Biblio- und Filmographien

Die folgende kleine Bibliographie versammelt Arbeiten, die sich mit den Dramaturgien und Konzeptionen der Altersdarstellung in Film und Fernsehen befassen. Es finden sich keine Untersuchungen zum rezeptiven oder produktiven Mediengebrauch Älterer. Die zahlreichen bis heute vorliegenden Inhaltsanalysen kommunikationswissenschaftlicher Art habe ich nur in Ausnahmefällen dokumentiert, weil sie zwar Blicke auf Stereotypisierungen, die Präsenz älterer Akteure in Spiel- und Reality-Formaten vor allem des Fernsehens und – allerdings meist nur grobe – Charakteristiken der Altersrollen ermöglichen, für das kultursoziologische Verständnis der sinnhaften Konstruktion von „Alter“ weder in soziologischer noch psychologischer Hinsicht aber nur selten ausreichend sind. Auch die inzwischen mehrfach bearbeitete Phänomenologie der Veränderung der Schauspielstile einzelner Akteure sowie die Entwicklung von Alter-Images von Schauspielern spielen in diesen Untersuchungen so gut wie keine Rolle.

Beigeben ist ein Verzeichnis der mir bekannt gewordenen Filmographien zum Alter im Film. Viele der Einträge sind annotiert (meist mithilfe der den Artikeln beigegebenen Abstracts), so dass auch ein erstes Verständnis der Forschungsfragen und Methoden der jeweiligen Untersuchungen möglich ist.

1. Altersbilder im Film.
   Bücher und Artikel

   Addison, Heather: “Must the players keep young?”
   Using articles and advertisements from the popular press, especially fan magazines, this essay investigates early Hollywood’s publicly constructed relationship to the process of aging and argues that a cult of youth was firmly established by the late 1920s. This cult of youth, which celebrated young adulthood as the most privileged period of life, was the product of a number of historical forces, including prevailing American views on aging; the demands of an emerging consumer culture; and concerns about the motion picture camera’s propensity to highlight the physical signs of advancing age.

   Anon.: Conference on Images of Old Age in the American Media. New York: American Jewish Committee 1978, 32 S.


The present study examined 100 top-grossing motion pictures spanning from the 1940s through the 1980s (20 movies from each decade). Eight hundred and twenty-nine characters were rated on attractiveness, character goodness, intelligence, friendliness, socioeconomic status, romantic activity, and movie outcome. It was hypothesized that ageist and sexist stereotypes would interact such that (a) older female characters would be more underrepresented, and (b) more negatively portrayed, than their male contemporaries. Both hypotheses were supported. Implications regarding double standards for age, and the media’s propagation of beauty-related standards for females were discussed.


Berner, Frank (Hrsg.): Individuelle und kulturelle Altersbilder. Wiesbaden: VS, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften 2012, 374 S. (Expertisen zum Sechsten Altenbericht der Bundesregierung. 1.).

Altersbilder sind mental-kognitive Phänomene in den Köpfen der Menschen mit orientierender und handlungsleitender Funktion.


In the introduction to her extensive 1970 essay on old age, Simone de Beauvoir states that her primary objective is to break a “conspiracy of silence”: apart from specialized sociological and medical works, she protests, old age is never talked about. This comment certainly applies to cinema; indeed, it becomes a truism when film is envisaged first and foremost as an extension of consumer culture, its overriding function to provide a type of fantasy entertainment that is aligned with consumer values. In effect, such is the power of the logic of ocultation that even in the face of aging Western populations, and in spite of the commitment to a different vision that includes trends of “realism,” independent and European cinemas seem almost as reluctant as their Hollywood counterparts to give space to the aging and the old. French cinema, for instance, has certainly produced at least a few feminine screen icons who, while growing older, retain their place in the pantheon of international stars. At seventy-three, Jeanne Moreau undoubtedly remains a highly regarded figure on the national and international scene. Yet in spite of her undaunted enthusiasm and activity, she has lost a great deal of her public prominence. Moreau’s management of her career as she grows older is interesting: the actress has taken a pro-active approach, initiating and producing theatrical adaptations and films which provide her with roles. Cet Amour Là her latest cinema project, however, received limited coverage and distribution. Younger than Moreau by ten years, Catherine Deneuve remains one of the leading internationally rated French female stars, but significantly she is celebrated for her aura, her function as beauty icon, and her agelessness. (1) This essay will only allude to the incarnation of femininity as the “mature” woman—a problematic addressed elsewhere and in particular through studies of Deneuve’s career (2)—focusing instead on femininity as the old woman, and on women who “play their age.” To help set a partly arbitrary marker, one may use as a reference the age of such established personalities in French cinema as Moreau and director Agnes Varda, both over 70. (3)


During the last decade there has been a growing interest in “images of aging” in gerontology, but representations of elderly people’s sexual lives still remain largely unexplored. This article attempts to elucidate the image of elderly people’s sexuality in popular culture by analyzing representations of elderly people in mainstream feature films. Between 1990 and 1995, only 9 films out of a sample of 2000 in Swedish theatres cast elderly people as leading characters. In this article, these 9 films have been deconstructed in order to identify the rules of representation that guide and limit the depiction of elderly people’s sexuality on film. One specific film is then analyzed in more detail to show how the rules were used to create a credible image of an elderly couple’s sexuality, and a frame analysis is used to identify how elderly people’s sexuality can be “packaged” on film to produce a slightly bolder representation of their sexuality.


This article looks at how The Simpsons’ representations of aging, considered ageist and stereotypical by some, can be viewed as a positive look at the elderly that attempts to subvert the same stereotypes
that it seemingly employs. The Baby Boom cohort is now seen as an attractive economic group, and as they continue their journey through the life cycle, they are drawing increased attention. A current scholarship exists that investigates the ways that the “aged” are seen, catered to, advertised at, seemingly marginalized, and represented in the larger context of the mass media. Relying primarily on the theoretical musings of Frederic Jameson and Linda Hutcheon, the article constructs a bridge that places The Simpsons squarely within a postmodern aesthetic and, using this rubric, shows how the inherent political nature of parodic irony can help to create an inversion of meaning.


In August 2010, the sixty-four-year-old Hollywood icon Sylvester Stallone premiered his latest project The Expendables, an action-adventure film starring a pantheon of “tough guys” from both past and present: Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzeneg-ger, Dolph Lundgren, and Bruce Willis. To understand the resurrection of this vintage Hollywood cast, we take up the title theme of “expendability” within the climate of the economic recession of 2008 and map its representation of masculinity, physical labor, and ageing. We do this by looking at The Expendables as essentially a labor text. In doing so, we find a smorgasbord of working bodies and types of physical labor that reveal multiple intersections among discourses of working bodies and types of physical labor that reveal multiple intersections among discourses of masculinity, class, ageing, and race that simultaneously reflect the divisions of (physical) labor in the industries in which the stars work – Hollywood film and professional sports.


This essay considers how ageism impacted the careers of freelance A-list Hollywood female stars working in the studio system during the 1930s to the 1940s, when the number of women working as free agents substantially outnumbered their male counterparts. Using studio contracts and internal studio correspondences as well as industry trades and press releases, I examine the economic and industrial ramifications for these key freelance female stars as they aged. Ruth Chatterton, Irene Dunne, Miriam Hopkins and Barbara Stanwyck all took a proactive role in shaping their careers through freelance labour practice when the studios manipulated stardom for their economic gain. The creative and economic independence of these women challenges the familiar patriarchal, ageist pattern of female celebrity thought to typify Hollywood, in which female stars can expect to find less...
work and receive less compensation as they age. Instead, as free agents, these women worked more independently and prolonged their careers beyond what is generally imagined of female actors, thereby dynamically participating in studio production practices. This comparative contractual analysis also considers the experience of male freelance stars so as to highlight the different historical experiences of ageing stardom in the studio system.


Carroll notes that the theme of the film is the denial of death; the film returns again and again to the subject of aging and dying through motifs of sunsets, waxworks, and decay. But he is not content to discuss the film’s theme; he argues that the film has a thesis: “what is monstrous and unnatural about Norma Desmond is her resistance to accepting her age”.


The emergence of the modern celebrity, a figure made possible by the camera and mass communication technologies, is essential to understanding the structure of popular culture. The author argues that the star, rather than being a mere social text, is a tragic figure suspended between heroism and its loss.


In this article, I examine how the spectacle of aging film stars replicates and dictates the cultural attitudes that make risking the scandal of anarchonism “necessary and inevitable as a sign of life,” as Mary Russo puts it, even when age does not literally signify death (in other words, even when the actresses are only middle-aged) (21). With close attention to Hollywood films Sunset Boulevard and Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? I argue that the conflation of disability with gender and aging in the character of Blanche Hudson encapsulates the impossible standards imposed on all non-normative bodies (that is, all bodies) by Hollywood cinema. While aging bodies are not necessarily disabled, older people frequently face being treated as though they were physically less capable than they once were. The assumption that disability is automatic in later life has negative impacts both on those older people who do not experience significant physical impairment and on those older people who have lived with physical impairments since long before they were labelled old. In Baby Jane, the collision of Blanche Hudson’s physical disability with Jane Hudson’s psychiatric illness relies upon an understanding of their obsolescence as performers; their failed physicality mirrors their stalled career paths. However, as I will argue, the double-edged performances offered by Joan Crawford and Bette Davis undermine that obsolescence.

Chivers, Sally: The Silvering Screen: Old Age and Disability in Cinema. Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2011, xxii, 213 S.

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.

In Visions of Aging, Cohen-Shalev engages with both the peril and the promise of representing old age and aging in cinema by using a case-study approach that highlights the contrast between representations of aging from within, in films made by directors or actors who have actually experienced growing old, and from without, in films made by those for whom old age is as yet an unknown territory. In nine chapters, each focused on a particular film that deals with “the real issues of old age,” such as decrepitude, illness, or death, or on the works of a specific director’s portrayal of old age, such that of Bergman, Kurosawa, or Sautet, Cohen-Shalev draws on the text of a movie as well as the context of the director’s position in the life span at the time of production to illustrate the way in which both text and context influence a film’s cinematic vision of aging and old age. He further argues that, despite a recent increase in the number of movies dealing with aging or older characters, the majority of popular films continue to provide a distorted, dystopic, and degrading picture of age, and he attributes much of this distortion to the overrepresentation of a midlife perspective on old age. It is this perspective, Cohen-Shalev maintains, that causes most representations of aging to be sanitized and cleansed of the disturbing effects of old age in order to protect viewers from confronting their own deep-seated fears about the uncomfortable social and psychological realities of aging. Yet, he continues, if we are willing to look and listen, old age itself can endow both actors and directors with a unique perspective on life that manifests itself in what he calls “old age style,” a style that is marked by an ambivalence and ambiguity that resists the linearity and closure common to works by younger artists. One way Cohen-Shalev illustrates his point is by showing how Bergman’s Wild Strawberries, made while the director was thirty-eight and lauded as one of the first serious depictions of old age, turns out to be a midlife fantasy of old age in which the main task of the old is to conduct a life review in order to reach an integrated and meaningful sense of closure. By eschewing any possibility of new growth and development in life, this diminished picture of aging from the outside promotes a truncated idea of disengagement that neglects an examination of the complex and contradictory internal nature of old age. On the other hand, Cohen-Shalev points out, Bergman’s view of old age in Saraband, made when the director himself was in his eighties, is characteristic of old age style in that it both accepts the inherent ambiguity of old age, shown by the protagonist’s simultaneous desire to engage with life and to detach himself from it, and emphasizes the inability of linear and progressive logic to encompass his experience of growing old. Yet, in our youth-oriented culture, says Cohen-Shalev, the unresolved contradictions and lack of closure depicted in Saraband can leave audiences unsettled, stuck in a cultural reluctance to deal with a difficult and discomfiting vision of old age, and hence provides the film industry with little motivation to pursue a deeper vision of aging. Thus, the interface of old age and film can make visible the schism between what Cohen-Shalev calls the phenomenology of aging and its age-contingent cultural representation.

visibility of older women, the current proliferation of Hollywood films with older women protagonists, and the increased visibility of older female stars might seem to be cause for feminist celebration. However, this visibility is highly conditional on women’s participation in, and subjection to the regulatory regime of ‘successful aging’ at an intersection with a ‘youthifying’ cosmeceutical industry that includes using body doubles and extends from editing techniques through make up procedures up to drastic surgical procedures. Furthermore, older women’s visibility in Hollywood is regulated by a pathologising gaze that renders abject the aging female body, or indeed any signs of aging that threaten to disrupt the wrinkle smoothing procedures that underwrite its version of ‘youthified’ old age femininity.

Dompke, Christoph (2012) _Alte Frauen in schlechten Filmen. Vom Ende großer Filmkarrieren_. Hamburg: Männerschwarm-Verlag, 255 S.


This study examines whether greater television exposure predicts older individuals’ more negative images of aging, and whether an intervention based on maintaining a television diary of viewing impressions will increase their awareness of the stereotypical and infrequent manner in which elders are presented. Seventy-six individuals, aged 60 to 92, participated. As expected, all participants showed a correspondence between greater television exposure and more negative images of aging. Also as expected, the intervention-group participants developed a greater awareness of how elders are presented on television. Further, the intervention-group participants expressed their intention to watch less television in the future. These findings suggest that the promotion of awareness provides a means of helping elders confront ageism.


Donnar explores the action star image of Sylvester Stallone across five decades. Scholarly focus on Stallone’s ‘hard-bodied’ ‘muscularity’ underestimates the persistent importance of redundancy and ageing throughout his career, particularly since his breakthrough role in _Rocky_. Stallone’s action star persona is chiefly defined by his characters’ per-
ceived cultural, economic, and professional redundancy, and its longevity lies in his repeated identification with downtrodden white masculinities. Ageing is a similarly under-theorised feature of Stallone’s star image, from the first Rocky to recent franchise revivals of Rocky and Rambo and The Expendables series. Donnar concludes Stallone’s comeback is again associated with vulnerable, ageing white masculinities and nostalgia for American cultural, economic, and political certitude and ascendance following the ‘war on terror’ and the global financial crisis.


Focusing on The Expendables films, I identify the importance of discourses of professional and cultural redundancy in ‘geri-action’, an emergent sub-genre of Hollywood action film that has revitalised the careers of ageing action stars such as Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger. These redundancies, which hold long-standing significance in 1980s action film, are compounded in geri-action by advanced age and diminished physical capacity. In geri-action, the spectacle of once idealised, muscular bodies is concealed and displaced onto oversized guns, fetishised vehicles and younger action bodies. However much geri-action resists 1980s action stars’ use-by dates, it ultimately admits physical and generic exhaustion.


Films often portray the complexities of real-life ageing issues, showing how they are apparently handled outside of and around the law or legal issues. Furthermore, films considering the aged and the social issues associated with ageing also reveal how the law actually functions as a framework around and within which people develop customs, habits, and behaviors related to the issue of old age. Exposing these hidden socio-legal boundaries allows us to better understand both the films concerned and the place of law within our aging society. In an attempt to better understand these issues, this article deconstructs five relatively modern and well-known films. All feature aged protagonists, and all tell their stories against a background of legal issues that are only alluded to, and remain hidden ‘behind the scenes.’ Two main questions are addressed by this analysis: First, to what extent does the reality of old age as described in the films considered here reflect familiar social phenomena identified by empirical studies? And, second, to what extent does the legal infrastructure embedded in the narrative of these films reflect the legal regulations that govern the aged in today’s society. The conclusions that arose from the analysis of the cinematic and the legal reality expressed in the films demonstrate that the current level of discourse on major issues in social gerontology ignores the importance and relevance of law. Therefore, it behooves us to “bring the Law to the gerontological stage,” where the current situation as it actually exists can be analyzed and perhaps even changed.

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If movies reflect the social view of a phenomenon such as old age, as well as influence its representations, it is of importance to address the projection of images of elderly persons on the silver screen. Recent fiction movies present seniors as sexual beings that engage in sexual activities. A retrospective view could demonstrate how cinematographic representations of the sexuality of seniors have transformed themselves throughout the last two decades, going from a negative perception to a clearly more positive one. Movies would thus give evidence of a sexual liberation movement of elderly persons.


This article discusses and describes how to use film as a creative, powerful, and effective technique for teaching social work with older adults at both the undergraduate and graduate levels of education. An analysis of student responses about the effectiveness of this teaching pedagogy is presented. The findings support the idea of using film as a technique to engage students in learning about the process of aging.

Faircloth, Christopher A.: Aging Bodies: Images and Everyday Experience. Walnut Creek, Cal.: AltaMira Press 2003, vi, 299 S.

Inhalt: Visual representations of late life / Bill Bytheway – The dead body and organ transplantation / Betina Freidin – The female aging body through film / Elizabeth W. Markson – Images versus experience of the aging body / Peter Öberg – The body and bathing : help with personal care at home /
Julia Twigg – The homosexual body in lesbian and gay elders’ narratives / Dana Rosenfeld – The everyday visibility of the aging body / Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein – The bodies of veteran elite runners / Emmanuelle Tulle – Aging and the dancing body / Steven P. Wainwright and Bryan S. Turner.

The ageing male action hero is a figure many are familiar with through the character of Bruce Willis in the Die Hard series. However, physical strength, speeds and agility are usually not associated with old age. Whether age makes a difference in the action hero genre is a question Rebecca Feesey deals with in this article.


This article discusses various issues related to the cinematic images of old maids, with specific reference to the film “The Old Maid.” This film presents one cinematic stereotype of the never married woman found in many American movies, that of the old maid or spinster. In general, never married women tend to be stereotyped either as prostitutes, mistresses, and other promiscuous women, or as more asexual characters such as nuns, social reformers, and old maids. Often, the never married woman wants marriage and a home of her own, but she has no opportunity to form relationships with men. If the woman does not marry by the time she is twenty-five to thirty-five years old, she is usually considered to be an old maid by other characters in the film. Some women are portrayed as teachers, nurses, or librarians who, due to circumstances beyond their control, end up as spinsters. Even if these women actively choose not to marry and are successful in their careers, their regret for not marrying is stated either implicitly or explicitly in the film narrative.


Im Folgenden wollen wir über die Ergebnisse einer empirischen Studie berichten, die die Frage untersucht hat, welche kollektiven Altersbilder gegenwärzig in den deutschen Daily Soaps vermittelt werden. Gerade weil die deutschen Seifenopern vor allem für die Generation der 14- bis 29-Jährigen ausgestrahlt werden, „Alter“ deshalb nur nebenbei thematisiert wird, stellen die Soaps für unsere Fragestellung ein relativ zuverlässiges Datenmaterial dar. Denn wir vermuten, dass die wenigen Altersdarstellungen in den Soaps „ehrlicher“ ausfallen als in den Sendungen, die an die Erwachsenen oder gar an die ältere Generation adressiert sind. Sie müssen weniger Rücksicht auf „political correctness“ nehmen. (DIPF/Orig.) [URL]


The purpose of this article is to challenge the congruity of dramaturgical metaphors, especially in the mask-of-aging thesis among older actors, and to explore what these metaphors represent for them late in their careers. The case study is a group of veteran actors in the Israeli theater who subscribe to the Method acting approach. In-depth interviews were conducted from 2007 to 2009 with 22 such actors, aged 62 to 95 years, on the topic of their acting profession. The data suggest that actors make no distinction between performative self and interior self in their attempts to define their selves. In contrast to theory, the actors’ work abets a reversed structure of the self in the acting arena. An actor or actress experiences a correspondence between the mask (“front stage”) and the way in which he or she talks to himself or herself (“back stage”). The author discusses the importance of the performing self for self-esteem under contemporaneous social circumstances.

Garvey uses the late career of James Mason to consider how questions of stardom, performance, and gender are inflected by ageing. Establishing the actor’s core screen persona as that of the ‘perverse patriarch’, he examines how this is deployed and modified in later films such as North by Northwest, against the ageless charisma of Cary Grant, and Lolita, where Mason is used to embody the exhausted values of an old Europe. Garvey shows how the actor’s combative image, both on- and off-screen, mellows from the 1960s onwards, and his performance style recedes towards minimalism. Mason’s acclaimed final roles, in Doctor Fischer of Geneva and The Shooting Party, are analysed as emblems of his late career style.


Algemein zur gesellschaftlichen Hervorbringung von Altersvorstellungen.


Darin v.u.: 3: Victims in/of Time: Gay Aging as Ritualized Horror.


Zusatzinformationen: "This is an examination of the ways that aging and old age are represented and 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, the author evaluates how a given film both portrays characters and tells the story of aging itself."– Provided by publisher.


This study assesses the frequency, attributes, and manifest social behaviors of the elderly on network fiction television series in 1975, 1976, and 1977. The content analysis shows that the aging represent a small and decreasing proportion of all television characters, with a decline from 4% to 2% across the three seasons studied. Elderly characters appear disproportionately in situation comedies; compared to other age groups, the aging are more likely to be male and lower class, and less likely to break the law.


Through textual analysis this paper explores neo-noir film I, Anna (Southcombe, 2012). This paper promotes the concept of the femme fatale in modern film noir as having much to offer women and ageing studies. Older women on screen have commonly been theorised within two opposing paradigms: ageing as decline, and ageing successfully. This paper argues that through a specific representation of the aged femme fatale body I, Anna offers a destabilisation of the common femme fatale stereotype. This contributes a more nuanced understanding of women and ageing on screen than the representations that are usually discussed in film and/or ageing studies. This paper also marks out this neo-noir British film as an interesting avenue from which to explore the representation of ageing women in film, as existing research has so far fo-
cussed on romantic comedy and bio-pic. This paper therefore seeks to add to the growing body of new work on female ageing and representations in the media.


This chapter deals with a representational recurrence in twenty-first-century film towards the depiction of later life masculinity in pronounced paternal terms. This is a phenomenon that can be productively interrogated as symptomatic of a number of wider cognitive discursive trends. These include the sharp rise in the cultural visibility of old age, broader trends in postfeminist culture with respect to the configuration of masculinities in terms of fatherhood, the powerful appeal of this discourse of masculinity in effecting the recuperation of troubled or maligned masculinities, and the attendant stakes raised for feminism by all of these issues, especially with respect to the troublingly gendered cultural double standards of ageing revealed by their easy negotiability.


The Golden Girls is a highly popular television series which, since its inception in 1985, has received praise for presenting the elderly on television in a positive light. Research, however, has not investigated the messages of the show in any depth and the current study aims to remedy this. A discursive analysis of the show is conducted to identify ways in which the show marks age and achieves humorous effect.

Hartung, Heike / Hülsen-Esch, Andrea von (Hrsg.): *Alte im Film und auf der Bühne. Neue Altersbilder und Altersrollen in den darstellenden Künsten*. Bielefeld: Transcript 2016, 336 S. (Alter(n)skulturen. 3.).


This article describes an examination of recent television ads, primarily in respect to the treatment of older persons. The purpose was to analyze the ads to determine if older people and images of aging are portrayed in negative or stereotypical ways. A total of 136 commercials were selected for content analyses. The sample of older persons and people of other age groups were viewed and coded by a minimum of two judges. The most significant finding was the absence of the elderly in television commercials. Only 11 of 358 human characters were judged to be 60 or older, only 41 were 50 or older. Of the 130 human characters judged to be central figures, only 6 were thought to be 60 or older. This article provides several implications for educators. They center around the notion that the educator must become assertive in helping both the older person and the Madison Avenue executive take steps to portray the older person more positively and realistically.


In popular feature films of the 20th century, the aging male is generally presented as a kindly, if feeble, old grandfather or as a ruthless villain. A handful of films from this era broke with tradition and took the bold step of exploring the social and medical implications of latent sexual impulses in this age group. Love for aging males was typically presented as a dangerous aberration that held the promise of tragic consequences. This paper will demonstrate that cinematographic presentations of geriatric male sexuality faithfully adhere to the medical dogma of the day.


 Previous research into film preferences and functions has looked above all at teenagers and younger to middle-aged adults. There is a lack of information in this area with respect to the behavior and preferences of older adults. In this study, for the first time, the fifty-and-older cohort was questioned in a representative sample about their film preferences. The analysis shows that the film preferences of the majority of those questioned were formed before the age of thirty. These early preferences remain relatively stable. Older people generally prefer films set in a time period or dealing with historic events that they themselves experienced and with which they therefore have a certain expertise. With increasing age, older men prefer film genres that otherwise tend to be preferred by female viewers. Women, as they are older, tend to increasingly prefer female film content.


Assessing ageing is one of the key tasks confronting celebrity and star studies today. If film could reflect upon its own relation to death only from the 1950s on, in films such as *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane* (1962), where 'the aging process of the first generation of stars exposed a glamour worn thin on screen', today 'the allure of the star’ is most definitely ‘inseparable from his or her heroism and ruin’ (Celeste 2005, *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 33, S. 32, 29). Today, moreover, middle age increasingly matters. With 78 million people in the US aged 44–62, internet and print marketing, movies, television and more tout rejuvenation through Botox, steroids, plastic surgery and wardrobe/cosmetic make-
overs. Hollywood stars and celebrities point us towards a brave new world where mature adulthood is seen primarily in chronological, biological and medical terms. It is no coincidence that photographs of healthy, wealthy stars grace each issue of AARP Magazine. Trainers, nips, tucks, lighting, make-up and digital retouching all help. Nor is it coincidence that roughly half are men – most white; a goodly number black. What, however, of middle-aged, Asian, male celebrities? Global megastar Jackie Chan offers the perfect opportunity to explore ageing, race and masculinity in transnational action. Drawing upon Gina Marchetti’s analysis of Chan’s ‘flexible masculinity’ in the Rush Hour trilogy (2009), I study the nine films released theatrically post-2000 featuring the middle-aged star. In conclusion, I speculate upon what the future will bring, remembering that we are all ‘aged by culture.’ Screen Actors Guild (SAG) statistics chillingly indicate just how few roles are available to actors (if especially to actresses) of all races after 40. Asians in particular are marginalised. Might other models of ageing be possible? How do film stars and celebrities impact upon conceptions and experiences of ageing today in our increasingly ‘mediagenic’ culture? Jackie Chan serves here as ‘special case’ and as ‘test case.’


Einleitung zum Themenheft Back in the Spotlight: Female Celebrity and Ageing.


In recent years, following films such as Something’s Gotta Give (2003), Mama’s Boy (2007) and Because I Said So (2007), Diane Keaton has emerged as ‘the poster woman’ for a body of newly inflected romantic comedies, films which have placed the desire of and for an older woman heroine at their centre. Through textual analysis, particularly of Something’s Gotta Give (which was widely touted as her ‘comeback’ vehicle) and media discourses surrounding both this film and Keaton more broadly during this period, this article explores how Keaton returned to such prominence, specifically in this genre and at an age when it is typically presumed most women actors will have receded from the spotlight. I suggest three key themes emerge from this analysis. First, for many audiences, Keaton carries what we might call a heightened (and gratifying) sense of history, that is, that her oeuvre has built over the course of some four decades to shore up a recognisable performance style and to enable numerous reflexive connections across her films. Second, Keaton is a star whose performance style and characters are recurrently received or understood as being enmeshed with the ‘real’ Diane Keaton. Third (and linked to both of these), over time the theme of motherhood emerges as increasingly significant to both her film roles and the media coverage of her. What, then, might her later career and the blossoming of her romcom persona have to tell us about the contem-
porary Hollywood film industry, about the rom-com genre and about the place of older female stars within all this?


In a January 2010 Vanity Fair profile of Meryl Streep, Leslie Bennetts proclaimed with some wonder that against all expectations in an industry seemingly preoccupied by youth, at 60 the star had become Hollywood’s ‘new box-office queen’. With a record-breaking 18 Academy Award nominations (including three wins) under her belt and a film career dating back to 1977, Streep’s CV might be considered exceptional by anyone’s standards in terms of longevity and critical success. Yet as Bennetts noted, ‘even her most ardent fans, until recently, wouldn’t have linked her name with blockbuster receipts.’ Following the phenomenal success of Mamma Mia! (Phyllida Lloyd, 2008) and Julie and Julia (Nora Ephron, 2009), however, Streep has become box-office gold. Since it has long been received wisdom in the industry that studio executives and the highly sought after young male audience have little interest in films about women, and even less about older ones, Streep’s reinvention was all the more remarkable; it was nothing short of ‘a Hollywood revolution’, in fact, as the subsequent success of rom-com It’s Complicated (Nancy Meyers, 2010) underlined further still. Indeed, the box-office performance of all these films appears to point to changes in cinema-going demographics and the growing evidence that ‘new’ audiences, including groups of older women, are becoming increasingly important to the industry.


This article explores the various forms that the ‘cougar’ – the mature and sophisticated woman who dates younger men – takes in television and film in the new millennium, contrasting fictional representations with ‘real’ celebrity cougars currently in the media spotlight. First, it examines the film cougar in a new cycle of the romantic comedy that emerged in the 2000s (Rebound, 2009, I Could Never Be Your Woman, 2007, Prime, 2005, Something’s Gotta Give, 2003); films which concentrate on and/or include relationships between older women and younger men, reversing the traditional May–December cycle of the 1950s. It also examines Cougar Town, the ABC sitcom launched in September 2009, starring Courteney Cox as a re-
ently divorced, 40–something woman who starts sleeping with younger men in order to replace her lost youth. *Cougar Town* is especially significant to this movement, since Cox is also a ‘real’-life celebrity cougar who married a younger man and is not afraid to embrace the label attached to her by the media. Drawing on existing celebrity theory, this article explores the reactions that surround this ‘new’ woman, which range from prejudice and even contempt to positive embrace and acceptance. Using textual analysis of both fictional representations and media discourses about famous cougars, I reflect on how the ‘real’ cougar translates into the fictional one and whether both sets of representations negate or empower women in the twenty-first century.


American film has served as educator and purveyor of cultural consensus since the first grainy photographs sped across the consciousness of movie audiences everywhere. From silents to sound, from the brilliant textures of black-and-white photography to the impact and immediacy of Technicolor, the movies have enlightened as well as entertained generations of viewers. The purpose of this study was to analyze the portrayal of old people in American films about the elderly produced between 1970–1985. In addition to discussing the characterization of the aged in specific roles, the study also described the various social issues raised and evaluated the manner in which the lives of old people were presented. After summarizing how American film has portrayed older people during the past 60 years, the study focused on ”the geriatric genre”. Between 1970 and 1985, Hollywood began producing movies specifically about the elderly, featuring well-known older actors and actresses in stories that centered on themes and issues relevant to aging. Utilizing criteria derived largely from the review of related literature, seven selected films were subjected to a detailed content analysis. It was found that the majority of American films produced between 1930–1985 portrayed elderly characters stereotypically. The ”geriatric genre,” on the other hand, offered fully rounded personalities beset with the problems, conflicts, and concerns of contemporary aging. An emotional or spiritual ”quest” is a key element for the central characters in each selected film, and resolution leads to a sense of inner peace and an acceptance of mortality. The study concluded that the ”geriatric genre” offers a basically realistic view of old age in America, and therefore may educate audiences to the positive values inherent in an active, involved old age. Recommendations included: (1) an investigation into the background and development of the ”geriatric genre”; (2) an examination of the presentation of old people of differing racial and ethnic backgrounds in American film; and (3) a comparative study of the portrayal of old people in the films of various countries. (Copies available exclusively from Micrographics Department, Doheny Library, USC, Los Angeles, CA 90089–0182.)


Analyzing prime-time programs from the 2002–2003 season, this study examined the recognition and respect afforded characters in varying demo-
graphic groups. Although Americans 60 and older constitute 18% of the population, findings indicate that such individuals comprised only 4% of major characters in prime-time television. Overall, up to age 60, leadership and occupational power increased with age. However, middle-aged males were more likely to play leadership roles and wield occupational power than their female counterparts.


An analysis of the top 100 domestic grossing films of 2002 found evidence of a lingering double standard for aging female and male characters. Overall, major male characters outnumbered major female characters (73% vs. 27%); the majority of male characters were in their 30s and 40s, and the majority of female characters were in their 20s and 30s. Both women and men in their 60s and older were dramatically underrepresented compared to their representation in the US population. For male characters, leadership and occupational power increased with age. Men in their 40s, 50s, and 60s were more likely to play leadership roles and wield occupational power than were their female counterparts. As female characters aged, they were less likely to have goals.


Representations of older women in the media are defined by the double marginalization of age and gender. The analysis presented here illustrates four major stages in the development of such images: invisibility of older women, stereotypization, ghettoization, and integration. All of these forms continue to circulate simultaneously in popular media at the current time. The feminist critique of these representations suggests that they might be playing a significant role in how women interpret and experience aging. Thus, the authors argue that the complex dialogue between media representations of older women and the lived realities of these women may have meaningful implications for feminist therapy.


The content analysis revealed that older characters, regardless of sex, appeared less frequently and in less prominent roles than other adult characters, but not in comparison to adolescents and children. The older characters who did appear, however, were predominantly portrayed as cognitively sound and physically healthy. The thematic analysis provided a different picture, showing that older characters talked about age explicitly, strategically linking it to death and despondence, to influence younger characters. Communication behavior themes identified included supporting, superiority, and controlling for older characters, and reverence/respect for younger characters. Findings are compared to those from similar studies of U.S. media and discussed from a Cultivation Theory perspective in terms of their reinforcement of Chinese age stereotypes and the traditional values of filial piety and age hierarchy in the context of globalization and culture change.


There have been few studies of the concept of “double jeopardy” as it pertains to the effects of gender and aging on occupational outcomes. This research examines the utility of this concept in the field of film acting, traditionally a gender-integrated occupation. The results confirm significant negative effects of being female and being older on the number of film roles received by actors and their average star presence. Moreover, the gendered effects of aging on the career opportunities of actors have diminished somewhat over time with respect to number of film roles but not with respect to star presence.


This study examined the effects of differently valenced portrayals of old age on the emotional responses of elderly viewers. Lonely and nonlonely elderly people (as determined in a pretest) were given a series of descriptions of television offerings and indicated the degree to which they desired to see each program. In a separate session, they were randomly assigned to view a negative portrayal (involving an unhappy, isolated old man) or a positive portrayal (involving a happy, socially integrated old man). The results indicated that lonely subjects showed greater interest in viewing negative than positive portrayals, whereas nonlonely subjects exhibited the opposite preference. In addition, lonely subjects felt better after viewing the negative portrayal than after the positive portrayal, whereas nonlonely subjects felt better after the positive than after the negative portrayal. The findings therefore indicated that elderly viewers may benefit from varied portrayals of old age more than from uniformly positive or negative depictions.


Have changing demographics, increased life expectancy and findings about gender similarities and differences, altered portrayals of older people in American feature films during the past 65 years? We identified 3,038 films made between 1929 and 1995 in which actors and actresses, nominated at least once during their lifetimes for an Oscar award, appeared when aged 60 years or older. Academy Award nominees were selected because they offered a sample of ‘notable’ performers and an accessible database. We selected an eight per cent random sample for a content analysis of their roles. Throughout this period, men were more likely to be depicted as vigorous, employed and involved in same-gender friendships and adventure (whether as hero or villain). Women remained either peripheral to the action or were portrayed as rich dowagers, wives/mothers, or lonely spinsters. Despite changing gender roles in later life since the 1930s and despite social and economic changes for older Americans (earlier retirement age and better health are but two examples), their film roles have remained remarkably static in age and gender stereotyping. In feature films, the mask of ageing differs by gender. Male masks veil inactivity and physical changes, while female masks reveal ageist and sexist stereotypes.


Examines the onscreen construction of adolescent, elderly, and disabled subjects in Spanish cinema from 1992 to the present. Applying a dual lens of film analysis and theory drawn from the allied fields of youth, age, and disability studies, this study is set both within and against a conversation on cultural diversity—with respect to gender, sexual, and ethnic identity—which has driven not only much of the past decade’s most visible and fruitful scholarship on representation in Spanish film, but also the broader parameters of discourse on post-Transition Spain in the humanities. Presenting an engaging, and heretofore under-explored, interdisciplinary approach to images of multiculturalism in what has emerged as one of recent Spain’s most vibrant areas of cultural production, this book brings a fresh, while still complementary, critical sensibility to the field of contemporary Peninsular film studies through its detailed discussion of six contemporary films (by Salvador García Ruiz, Aghero Mañas, Santiago Aguilar & Luis Guridi, Marcos Carnevale, Alejandro Amenábar, and Pedro Almodóvar) and supporting reference to the production of other prominent and emerging filmmakers.

Mars, Marie-Louise / Cantor, Joanne: Elderly viewers’ responses to televised portrayals of old age:


Popular films often feature representations of older people and interpretations of the aging experience. Interpretations of aging in film parallel concepts and theories in contemporary gerontology. This article examines gerontological themes in the classic popular film, The Treasure of the Sierra Madre. The ubiquity of aging motifs in popular film offers gerontology a significant opportunity for public education.


The article examines the difficulties facing older motion picture actors and actresses in finding lead roles in films. The dominant role of young adults in motion picture audiences has led producers to avoid scripts focusing on older or middle-aged per-

sons. Veteran actor Jeff Bridges, whose role in the motion picture Crazy Heart is an exception to this trend, notes that the recession means that fewer motion pictures of any kind are being produced.


Critics have charged that American advertisers have often portrayed the elderly with negative stereotypes. These negative portrayals, they suggest, not only offend elderly consumers but also contribute to ageism. This study examined whether American advertisers have indeed used a great deal of negative stereotyping of the elderly, as the critics have suggested. Employing a concept of stereotypes found in cognitive psychology, the authors examined trends in the portrayal of the elderly in television commercials produced in the United States from the 1950s through the 1990s. Results of the study do not support the contentions of the critics. Very little negative stereotyping was discovered. Analysis indicated trends in the appearance of several positive stereotypes, and differences in the stereotyping of gender groups and age segments within the elderly group. Results are interpreted from both marketing and social science perspectives.


Negra, Diane / Holmes, Su (eds.): In the Limelight and Under the Microscope: Forms and Functions of Female Celebrity. London/New York: Continuum 2011, 352 S.

Darin: S. Grotesquerie as Marker of Success in Aging Female Stars / Anne Morey.

Newstead, Katie / Starmanns, Sabine: Deconstructing the ‘Croné’: Meryl Streep, Ageing and Contem-

Meryl Streep seems to have embraced the ageing process by refusing to submit to the pressures placed upon women to appear youthful. Streep seems to have chosen roles that do not rely on her looking young or glamorous; instead, some of her characters have qualities that are traditionally associated with wisdom and life experience. In this youth-obsessed culture, the assumption is that there is no place for the older woman, yet Meryl Streep appears to demonstrate that this may not be the case.


Oró-Piqueras, Maricel / Wohlmann, Anita (eds.): Serializing Age: Aging and Old Age in TV Series. Bielefeld: Transcript 2016, 276 S. (Aging Studies. 7.).


Analysis of three animated children’s films, each with heroic grandmothers motivating their plotlines, suggests a shift in the representational political mediating older women to child audiences. The films function as critiques, reflections, and mechanisms of contemporary capitalism’s available sociocultural locations for older women, modelled through varying degrees of subversive performance. Interrogating the agency potential of housework, nurture and extreme sports, this article assesses the role and function of the “Granny trope” in contemporary children’s media.


Pietrini, Sandra: Time and Theatricality in the Films about the Stage. In: Mimesis Journal 2,1, 2013, online.

The article explores the interaction between theatre and cinema in films about theater, more specifically in relationship to the concept of time, in two different meanings: as a subject hinting to the passing of generations on the one hand and as a manipulation of a story on the other. As I will try to show, these very different perspectives can intersect and superpose, giving birth to negative or positive visions of the stage and theatricality. Theatricality can be a great resource (as in To Be or Not To Be by Lubitsch and Le carrosse d’or by Renoir) as well as a path of tragic circularity (as in O’thiasos by Anghelopoulos or in films showing an artist’s decline, like Mankiewicz’s All About Eve). The films on theatre show an extreme variety of attitudes towards the stage, confirming the importance of this original and primitive model in the re-elaboration of time and space made possible by the new art of cinema.


The article focuses on the fear of aging among women and the dominance of older women characters in Western horror films. It points out that the fear of aging is not gender-neutral. The fear of aging is attributed to the fact that it is unavoidable. Also noted is the tendency of women to hate the characters instead of acknowledging the fact that aging is the real culprit behind such emotion.

Rasche, Heather Lupton: Actresses, Age, and Anxiety: A Study of Midlife Women in the Film and Television Industry. Santa Barbara, Cal.: University of California, Diss., 2006, x, 178 S.

Scholars agree that cinematic images of women influence cultural attitudes about gender and aging. However until now, actresses themselves have not been included in this important academic conversation. Based upon analysis of oral histories with actresses and industry professionals, this dissertation re-considers plastic surgery, other disguises of youth, and altered images of midlife women in filmed performance from the point of view of the actresses who embody those images. They offer a refreshingly practical perspective on the manner in which gender and aging are performed. American popular culture’s current fixation with the young, sexy female body is putting midlife actresses out of work. Unprecedented profits realized by recent films that target younger male audiences have created a hostile professional environment for aging actresses. In order for a midlife actress to stay employed in the business today, she must consider strategies designed to maintain an illusion of youth. There are a variety of disguises available to aging actresses including plastic surgery, Botox, or those a cinematographer might employ on her behalf. However, these methods are becoming “old-school” as advancing digital technologies make it possible to youth an aging actress’s image in post-production. But this raises several questions: does erasing the signs of age on the female face undermine an actress’s work and challenge the autonomy of her performance? How does an actress’s projection of youth affect her audience, particularly those who are female and midlife? What does an actress do to survive in this climate? This study answers such questions by examining the words of fifteen prominent actresses in Hollywood and New York who participated in this oral history project. These actresses, who agreed to be interviewed only under the protection of anonymity, say they experience a “menopausal blackout,” a lack of employment at midlife that suggests gendered ageism. However, they worry that the strategies they use to stay employed, and the stereotypes they are frequently forced to play when employed, adversely affect the health of their midlife female audience. This dissertation analyzes, the cultural discomfort surrounding midlife female sexuality, and invites film, gender, and gerontological scholars who study images of women to go behind the scenes to hear what actresses have to say about the roles they play and the strategies they deploy.

Reich, Jacqueline: Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2003, 216 S.


Stereotypes arise in children’s lives from their direct experience and also from the media. Today, television and movies serve as an important socialization function supplying many children with images that can form, change, and reinforce stereotypes. Researchers have found that by the time children enter elementary school, they have already developed negative views of older adults. This research examines the representation of older people in Disney animated film in terms of their gender, race, appearance, role, personality, and physical characteristics of older characters. Disney films hold a prominent position in children’s media consumption and children today come to know Disney’s characters and stories just as their parents and grandparents. The findings indicate that while the majority of older characters are portrayed as positive characters, there is still a large percentage that is portrayed in a negative manner. These results help explain why children have negative feelings toward older people.


Although children as young as age three have already begun to manifest negative stereotypes toward older adults, attitudes toward older adults likely crystallize during late childhood and adolescence and become entrenched by the time an individual reaches young adulthood. Studies have shown that young people view older people in general as ineffective, dependent, lonely, poor, angry, overly wrinkled, ugly, dirty, disabled, and less physically active and healthy than younger adults. Because today’s children and adolescents have less
contact with older people than in past decades, it is likely that some young people get most of their information about older people and aging from the media. This is all the more likely during the teen years, when vulnerable adolescents purposefully seek out certain media to form their identity. This content analysis examined the 60 most popular teen movies from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s to determine how older people are portrayed. Older people were greatly underrepresented, according to their numbers in the actual U.S. population, making up only 7% of the total number of characters in teen movies. Older people were marginalized in terms of plot and were likely to be featured only as background characters. Of older characters, 60% were portrayed stereotypically, and only 45% of the older characters were portrayed in a positive manner. Also, 32% of older characters were portrayed in a negative manner, and one-fifth of older characters were portrayed only with negative characteristics. The stereotypes that adolescents today hold toward older people, including the belief that they are bad drivers, are angry most of the time, and are senile, were reflected in older character portrayals in these popular teen films. Given the negative representations of older people that adolescents are exposed to in their childhood and during the teen years, it is no wonder that they express negative attitudes toward older people. After years of exposure to media that negatively depict older adults, adolescents have been educated to stereotype older people. This has the potential to influence the quality of their interactions with older people, and also influence the way they come to view the prospect of getting old.


Characters 65 years of age and older continue to be an invisible generation on television. In a random sample of 100 prime time shows, only 2.8% (n = 34) of the 1,228 adult speaking characters were judged to be over 65. Only 8.8% of the 65+ characters were cast in major roles, suggesting that the role prominence of characters 65 and older has actually decreased since the 1970’s. While the number of male characters 65 and older has decreased since 1975, the number of female characters between 50 and 64 years of age has increased slightly during that time. There is not strong evidence that television is-graying with America, but there is reason to believe that characters between 50 and 64 are portrayed differently than characters 65 or older.


Researchers have found that children as young as elementary school age have already begun to develop negative stereotypes about older people. In order to determine television’s role in children’s perceptions of older adults, this study looks at how older characters’ mental, physical, and overall characteristics are portrayed in children’s animated television programs. The results indicate that although the overall portrayal of older characters is positive, there were a number of negative mental and physical characteristics used to portray the older characters. These negative characteristics were identical to the characteristics children reported to past researchers when asked to describe older people.


Stereotypes arise in children’s lives from their direct experience and also from the media. Today, television and movies serve as an important socializing function supplying many children with images that can form, change, and reinforce stereotypes. Researchers have found that by the time children enter elementary school, they have already developed negative views of older adults. This research examines the representation of older people in Disney animated film in terms of their gender, race, appearance, role, personality, and physical characteristics of older characters. Disney films hold a prominent position in children’s media consumption and children today come to know Disney’s characters and stories just as their parents and grandparents. The findings indicate that while the majority of older characters are portrayed as positive characters, there is still a large percentage that is portrayed in a negative manner. These results help explain why children have negative feelings toward older people.


A study of a selection of American disaster movies from the past decades reveals the presence of a certain kind of martyr character. These martyrs do not die for their religious or ideological faith but rather in order to save loved ones, sometimes the entire planet. These movie martyrs differ to a great extent from classical Christian martyrs as portrayed in medieval legends. The modern movie martyrs are usually old, and often social outcasts in different ways. Often they have failed as parents, are alcoholics or criminals. Their death is their way of redeeming themselves.


This paper reports a content analysis of 778 television commercials. Commercials were examined for the presence of older adults. Commercials featuring older adults were then examined more closely to describe the nature of the portrayals. Consistent with previous research, older adults were shown to be underrepresented in the commercials examined, as compared to their presence in the population. This effect was particularly strong for older women and for members of ethnic minorities. However, older adults were found to be presented in a relatively positive light – as active, happy, and strong. In addition, older adults were shown to be least underrepresented in advertisements for financial services and retail chains, and most underrepresented in advertisements for automobiles and travel services. The results are discussed in terms of the changing position of the older adult consumer in the marketplace. Suggestions for future research are provided.


Discusses sex in motion pictures between older actors. Focus on the relationship between Jack Nicholson and Diane Keaton in the motion picture Something’s Gotta Give; Comments about the sex scenes by the director of the film Nancy Meyers; Other films past and present that have older actors in sex scenes or scenes containing nudity, such as The Cooler and Calendar Girls.


Während die feministische Filmkritik aufgezeigt hatte, wie sich die patriarchale Struktur der Gesellschaft ins Kino hineinverlängert und wie der männliche Blick und die Männerphantasie den Aufbau des Films, die Konstellation der Geschlechter im Film bestimmt, liefert sie bislang keine Erklärungsmodelle für die weibliche Lust am Kino. Gegen die „asketische Ausgrenzung“ der weiblichen Lust an der erotischen Ausstrahlung der männlichen Filmmänner wendet sich die Autorin
mit ihrer ausführlichen Analyse der erotischen Wirkung von B. Lancaster in der Rolle des altern-"Dicken Fürsten in Viscontis Film *Der Leopard.* (PT)


Schweizerhof, Barbara: Der Zwang zur Rüstkunft. Über das Alter im Kino. In: *epd Film* 2009, H. 5, S. 20–25


Analyzing hundreds of films, including classics such as *You Can’t Take It With You, Rosemary’s Baby, Grumpy Old Men,* and *Nebraska,* this book critiques Hollywood’s representations of aging and the elderly from the silent era to the present. The authors examine how representations of the aging process and depictions of older people embracing or enduring the various experiences of longer lives have evolved over the past century, as well as how film industry practices have both reflected and influenced perceptions of aging in American society. Exposing the social and political motivations for negative cinematic portrayals of the elderly, ‘Fade to Gray’ also gives visibility to films that provide opportunities for better understanding and appreciation of the aged and the aging process.


The global response to the news of the death of Elizabeth Taylor underlined this actress’s status as
a remarkably enduring example of female celebrity whose prominence in the media spotlight lasted without interruption from childhood through to old age. Given the cultural investment in Taylor’s younger, glamorous image, however, her later celebrity has at times suffered by comparison, with certain sections of the media wont to resort to reductive, demeaning caricatures of the actress or to privilege the potency of her younger image in ways that deny the realities of her ageing altogether. This article maintains that such approaches overlook a complex fluidity to her on-screen presence (noticeable from her childhood career onwards) and her significance as a highly compelling example of ageing female celebrity who managed to articulate an ongoing, still evolving sense of personhood. It moves on to address the neglected role that television played in negotiating the actress’s transition from Hollywood movie star to older female celebrity, examining how her performing/star identity is developed through a trio of television movies that are explicitly concerned with the notion of the ageing female star making a comeback and the issues to do with selfhood and identity arising from this.


Strauß, Bernhard / Philipp, Swetlana (Hrsg.): Wilde Erdbeeren auf Wolke Neun. Ältere Menschen im Film. Berlin: Springer [2017], xxiii, 362 S.


Cynthia Scott’s The Company of Strangers (Canada, 1990) is a disquisition on female aging, personal histories, memory, life and death, and the coexistence of past and present. This article briefly considers dominant representations of old women and the aged body, decoding the specific moral and political meanings attached to them. It then suggests how The Company of Strangers intermixes documentary and fiction to carve out a space for old women who refuse to become invisible in our culture. The film attends to the distinctive qualities within and between the women, and the commonality amongst them, without allowing the points of connection to suggest the group constitutes a stable category of old women or that they attest to a terminal point of subjectivity. What is at stake is changing the face of age to unleash the potentially radical female subjectivity of unruly old women.


Zuerst als Diss., Universität Paderborn, 2015. Süßwolto untersucht ausgehend vom Paradigma des demographischen Wandels aus diskursanalytischer und gendertheoretischer Perspektive die Konstruktionsmechanismen gängiger Altersbilder. Sie zeigt, wie literarische und filmische Fiktionen des Alters(n)s diese Konstruktionsmechanismen offenlegen und dekonstruieren, um ein Bewusstsein für alternative Vorstellungen des Alter(n)s zu schaffen und so eine ethische Funktion erfüllen. (Verlag)


Swinnen, Aagje / Stotesbury, John A. (eds.): Aging, Performance, and Stardom: Doing Age on the Stage


Negative stereotyping of the elderly has been identified as a significant social issue. The mass media are a potent source of socialization and may shape attitudes, especially those of children, toward the elderly. A number of studies have been done to investigate the portrayal of the elderly in the mass media. This study was undertaken to summarize and synthesize their findings. Twenty-eight empirical studies, based on analyses of television characters and characters in print media, including children’s books, magazines, and basal readers series, were reviewed. The elderly, especially older women, were widely under-represented, with characterizations failing to reflect the size and proportions of the elderly population in the United States. The majority of the studies found that the elderly were generally depicted in a negative light and that elderly characters were rarely cast in major roles or fully developed. Several implications for educational gerontologists are discussed.


This content analysis of 139 programs and 2,211 characters updates and extends previous research on the way elderly people, and especially elderly women, are presented on prime-time television. Findings indicate that females and the elderly continue to be significantly underrepresented. Comparisons of elderly men and women showed patterns of traditional stereotypes, with men more likely to be depicted positively on 7 of 9 desirable traits and women more likely to be depicted negatively on 6 of the 7 undesirable traits which showed a gender difference. However, the proportional differences for specific characteristics typically were neither large nor statistically significant, suggesting that there has been some change in television’s portrayal of the elderly during the 1980s. It also was noted that television appears to be more accepting and open to the portrayal of older middle-aged men than women in the same age category.


This article analyzes the evolution of a significant undercurrent within American culture challenging the dominance of the cult of youth and masculinity, through the interpretation of selected American popular films of the 1930s and 1970s/80s featuring heroines over 60 years of age. These two eras, which witnessed the impact of elder advocacy on national legislation and social policy, generated films such as *If I Had A Million* (1932), *Make Way for Tomorrow* (1937), *Harold and Maude* (1971) and *The Trip to Bountiful* (1971). Through analyzing these films as well as related media trends, psychoanalytic approaches to the study of female representation in cinema are critiqued. While psychoanalytic approaches often stress the cultural dominance of an ahistorical patriarchy, a sociological model conceptualizes culture as a process constituted by communication and negotiation, resistance and rebellion as well as oppression and domination.


As the scholarly field of celebrity studies has demonstrated, fame performs a valuable cultural work akin to other social formations such as religion or heroism in that it often polices and makes intelligible divisions between the ordinary and the extraordinary, between the normal and the excessive and even between life and death. Celebrity studies theorists have tended to focus on the film industry and the star system in their reflections on the meanings of fame. And while they have sometimes considered women, they have not always brought gender to the forefront as a critical analytical in the study of celebrity. In this article I seek to add to the conversation on celebrity and gender through the analysis of reality TV celebrity. I examine two case studies provided by one of the longest-running, most-popular and most internationally syndicated reality television programmes, *The Biggest Loser* (Three-Ball Productions, 2004–present). Through this analysis, I seek to demonstrate that when women who possess reality celebrity are asked to uphold the heavy lifting of mediaization and inspiration that celebrity theory has marked as the cultural work of fame, the terms for that fame shift. As demonstrated on *The Biggest Loser*, reality celebrity appears to offer a new position of liberation and empowerment that is amplified by women’s embodiment in what I call utopic infantile celebrity, or the belief that the youthful body confers dividends in opportunity and fame. Utopic infantile celebrity fissures, however, in matters of age and biological motherhood, since its promises of youthful possibility are restricted to those whose large bodies have blocked heteronormative romance and childbirth rather than those who have already experienced it.


This article examines the portrayal of midlife women’s sexuality in 13 recent U.S. narrative films. Content analysis of these films suggests that film portrayals of midlife women’s sexuality are relatively muted, with the most positive portrayals found in the broadest comedies. In addition, midlife women’s bodies are more often displayed as objects of humor than as objects of desire, the “female gaze” at the male body is shown only humorously, and midlife women’s sexuality is primarily validated for slim, white, middle-class women in committed romantic relationships with “age-appropriate” partners. Nevertheless, these films suggest that midlife women should have sexual desires, should act on those desires, should experience sexual pleasure, and should not sacrifice their sexual needs for a man’s approval.


Whelehan, Imelda (ed.): *Ageing, Popular Culture and Contemporary Feminism: Harleys and Hormones*. Basingstoke [...]: Palgrave Macmillan 2014, x, 228 S.


Discusses the ways age and gender are performed in film and art by analyzing a popular US film, ‘About Schmidt’ (2002), and the Belgian film ‘Pauline and Paulette’ (2001), as well as the alternative views presented in the work of artists Louise Bourgeois, Rachel Rosenthal, and Nettie Harris. The author also looks at her own “youthful ideas about aging” that reflect a sentimentalized view, and she points to ways ageism is a feminist issue.


Erw. in: tā kaiotprizōmena: das Magazin für Kunst, Kultur, Theologie und Ästhetik 17,93, 2015, URL.


This study of 14 international feature-length films (1988–2003) is aimed at providing gerontologists with models of successful aging that portray elders as being valued within the context of community. Elders serve as role models and mentors for the young, and they resolve mid-life crises for the middle-aged. Elders complete their life’s work in the context of community (aging in place), where they struggle to maintain abiding values and draws others to the community. The study concludes with examples of key visual metaphors utilized at the endings of selected films that affirm the role of elders as catalysts for change for the young, the middle-aged, and even their communities.

The two films reviewed below, *Ladies in Lavender* and *Autumn Spring*, both focus on the transformations of characters in old age. In the former, two old sisters live a quiet life in a cottage on the coast of Cornwall in 1936. One of them lost her fiancé in WWI. The other has never experienced a great love in her life. Suddenly their serene life is turned topsy-turvy when they rescue a young Polish man who is washed up on shore below their cottage. Bradley Fisher, the reviewer for this film, analyzes the awakening of love in old age both as a folly for one of the minor characters in the film and as a profound event for one of the two sisters.


Zugl.: Bonn, Univ., Diss., 2008.

2. **Bibliografie und Filmographien**


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„Many of the following audiovisual reviews were reprinted, with permission from 1987–1992 issues of *The Gerontologist*. Additional listings are from *Audiovisual Guide: Resources in Gerontology and Geriatrics ...*"


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