

ENTERTEXT

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Overview for the Special Issue

This special issue on Ageineth

and

9th of April 2011. The conference was part of the Fiction and the Cultural Mediation of Ageing Project (FCMAP) that was led by a research team from Brunel consisting of Professor Philip Tew, Dr Nick Hubble and Dr Jago Morrison and ran from 1st May 2009 until 31st January 2012 in collaboration with Demos, the Mass Observation Archive (MOA) and the University of the Third Age (U3A). FCMAP was part of the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) programme. The topics covered in this issue include representations of ageing in literary texts by Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, Sebastian Barry, Margaret Atwood and Philip Roth; storying 'Alzheimer's' disease; ageing in vampire fiction; ageing in the science fiction of Iain M. Banks; and an article on the FCMAP project

Introduction to the 'Ageing and Fiction' Special Issue

Emma Filtness, Nick Hubble, Joseph Norman and Serena Volpi

As representations of ageing circulate culturally as social and literary narratives, they UDGLFDOO\ LPSDFW XSRQ LGHQWLW\ DJHQF\ DWWLWXG quality of life. Fiction, biography, academic criticism and other discourses contribute to this cultural modality. Critical and qualitative analyses of such narratives help us understand ageing both as currently experienced and the emerging shifts that indicate ways in which it may well be experienced and represented in the future.

This special issue of *EnterText* brings together a selection of papers that were originally presented at the conference H 3 1 H Z & X O W X U H Hosted by Biddle J ' University London on the 8th and 9th of April 2011. The conference was part of the Fiction and the Cultural Mediation of Ageing Project (FCMAP) that was

sessions featuring an exciting international mix of young researchers and established and leading academics responding to the following invitation in the call for papers:

This interdisciplinary conference seeks to explore literary, filmic and other representations of ageing, addressing various questions including the following. In what ways can literature help to provide us with a longitudinal perspective on the changing experience of ageing in the post-war period? How are representations of ageing changing as we move through the early twenty-first century? In what ways are writers refiguring our imagination of the ageing body, as well as the social and physical spaces it inhabits? In what ways does literature figure ageing as a gendered experience, and in what ways have feminist and gender critics and theorists responded to these representations? What connections can be drawn between depictions of ageing in fiction and those in the other creative arts? How far can post-war and contemporary writers be argued to have perpetuated, or to have disturbed, sedimented stereotypes of ageing-as-senescence? What light can literature shed on the complex relationships between postcoloniality, globalisation and the changing experience of ageing in Britain and internationally? Does it make sense to speak of ageing subcultures, and how might literature help to shed light on the differential contexts and experiences of ageing in contemporary culture? In what ways have literary texts addressed the thorny questions of ageing and disability/capability?

The following papers illustrate something of the range of responses that were on offer at the conference. Scholarship on the relationship between ageing and fiction is an established field featuring well-known names such as Kathleen Woodward and Helen Small. The essays here refer to this existing scholarship but seek to extend analysis to new texts and also to a variety of genres, including science fiction, fantasy and life writing. We hope, therefore, that this collection provides a useful addition to the field and may perhaps provide suggestions for further work.

analepses, but a real-life phenomenon where reminiscence works as a form of death preparation.

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which representations of ageing and autobiographical motives are intertwined in
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Roth, arguing that these texts challenge accepted notions of social acceptability in
old age. Hobbs develops current understandings of the notion of late style by
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explored relatively little compared with other media ± D Q G E \ F R Q V L G H U L Q J μ U H
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W. Said and John Updike, Everyman features a protagonist mentally struggling to
prepare himself for death, while The Humbling describes a man futilely trying to fight
off his old age with sexual experimentation. Hobbs explores the fascinating
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which they constr XFW KHU DV DQ \$OJKHLPHU¶V SDWLHQW)DOFY
 the importance of popular novels such as Still Alice for articulating the possibilities of
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Marta Miquel- % DOGH On Pathology to Invisibility: The Discourse of Ageing in Vampire Fiction 'is concerned with the way in which the depiction of the vampire has changed from one of aged appearance during the Victorian period to outstanding youth in more recent fiction such as \$QQ 5LAFH¶s interview with the Vampire, adolescence in SWHSKHQLHTWILGH, and even childhood in John \$MYLGH /LQGH The Right One In. Miquel-Baldellou argues that this evolution from an old to a young appearance seems to respond to the significant change of interpretat LRQ IURP µWKH YDPSLUH DV QHPHVLV¶ WHP µWKH Y analysis of this evolution leads into a discussion of the way conceptualisations of old age respond to a constructed self-image as a result of interaction with others ±what Herbert Blumer would call symbolic interactionism. By analysing instances of the evolving image of the literary vampire, Miquel-Baldellou is able to evaluate the effects of the shift from the pathologisation to the invisibility of old age.

In Ageing Culture: Senescence, Rejuvenescence and (Im)mortality in Iain M. % DQNV¶ & xisW x DHS DSHU ZULWWHQ EHIRUH % DQNV¶ XQW Joseph Norman examines how ageing will be experience in the future as portrayed in the % DQNV¶ fictional world. In the pan-galactic civilisation known as the Culture, individuals experience childhood, adolescence and early adulthood as we do, before then enjoying a period of about three centuries of relatively fixed physical age. Theoretically, they could choose to continue taking anti-ageing treatments indefinitely but, as Norman discusses, Culture citizens tend to make the decision to stop taking the treatments after about this period of time and opt to oded23(40 1 341.71 3)-3(ri

Finally, *1 LFN +X EEOH DQG ³ÞKKΘUSI LHZQR GRXEW WKDW* *Everyday Narratives of Ageing* outlines the research and findings of the above-mentioned FCMAP Project in order to illustrate some of the advantages for researching ageing of the approach to narrative employed. In particular, this article compares the responses of U3A and MO participants in the project and uses this qualitative data to interrogate the relationship between the third and fourth ages. The examples discussed here are different but related to the qualitative data examined in the book-length publications resulting from FCMAP: Nick Hubble and Philip Tew, *Ageing, Narrative and Identity: New Qualitative Social Research*, which was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2013, and Louise Bazalgette, John Holden, Philip Tew, Nick Hubble and Jago Morrison, *Coming of Age*, which was published by Demos in 2011.³

Endnotes

¹ Details of the FCMAP Project and its findings can be found in NDA Findings 28:

http://www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk/assets/files/NDA%20Findings_28.pdf

² Will Self, Review of *Coming of Age* by Lewis Wolpert, Guardian, 30 April 2011:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/may/01/looking-very-well-lewis-wolpert-review>

³ *Coming of Age* is available to download as a pdf: http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Coming_of_Age_-_web.pdf?1302099024. Hubble and Tew also gave evidence to the Birmingham Policy Commission

R Q μ + H D O W K \ \$ J H & Q W O H U M % included in the resulting report:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/research/policycommission/healthy-ageing/Healthy-Ageing-Policy-Commission-Report.pdf>