



**Ageing, Gender, and Illness in Anglophone
Literature: Narrating Age in the Bildungsroman
(Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on
Literature)**

Heike Hartung

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This study establishes age as a category of literary history, delineating age in its interaction with gender and narrative genre. Based on the historical premise that the view of ageing as a burden emerges as a specific narrative in the late eighteenth century, the study highlights how the changing experience of ageing is shaped by that of gender. By reading the *Bildungsroman* as a 'coming of age' novel, the book asks how the telling of a life in time affects individual age narratives. Bringing together the different perspectives of age and disability studies, the book argues that illness is already an important issue in the *Bildungsroman*'s narratives of ageing. This theoretical stance provides new interpretations of canonical novels, visiting authors such as Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Samuel Beckett, and Jonathan Franzen. Drawing on the link between age and illness in the *Bildungsroman*'s age narratives, the genre of 'dementia narrative' is presented as one of the directions which the *Bildungsroman* takes after its classical period. Applying these theoretical perspectives to canonical novels of the nineteenth century and to the new genre of 'dementia narrative', the volume also provides new insights into literary and genre history. This book introduces a new theoretical approach to cultural age studies and offers a comprehensive analysis of the connection between narratology, literary theory, gender and age studies.

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