

Raquel Medina. (2018). *Cinematic Representations of Alzheimer's Disease*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 224 pp. ISBN 978-1137533708 (hardback)

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Using a feminist framework and an interdisciplinary theoretical approach, including film studies, the author undertakes the challenge of discovering the ways in which people living with Alzheimer's disease are represented in other cultures by diving into nonmainstream film representations. The depictions of dementia in the mass media have left the general population riddled by anxiety that their fate will be a state in which their mind is lost, and simultaneously, these stereotypical images bolster cultural narratives that act to dehumanize individuals living with dementia. The author sought to understand how global narratives might differ and perhaps offer positive portrayals of the resilience of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease, while balancing this with the struggles that are faced. Moreover, this exploration of film tackles the meaning-making that occurs through representation and parses how other common elements of life are handled through the lens of Alzheimer's disease.

The main crux of the author's analysis is the film that gives agency and personhood to the individual living with Alzheimer's disease – not to romanticize the illness but to avoid stereotypical depictions that are

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reductionistic and demeaning. Outside the Hollywood machine of film making, the approach taken to representation of people living with Alzheimer's disease offers viewers a chance to explore self, that is, both ontological and phenomenological, by casting the individual with the disease as the main character, whereby she/he can be seen sharing, loving, and communicating, that is, living her/his life. This reframe of traditional casting from the person living with the disease as object – seen primarily through the lens of the caregivers – to subject engenders empathy in the viewer as they can now see the experience of the individual living with the disease. In turn, this narrative elevates the voices of people living with dementia by truly showing the richness of life and challenges of cultural narratives that support fear and anxiety among the public and how they perceive life with dementia.

Each chapter in this book is analyzed within in its own theoretical context in order to fully examine the issue under investigation. A range of important constructs that surround age and aging are addressed through this analysis, including intergenerational interactions, gender, agency, masculinity, and historical memory. While mindful of critical gerontology and important concepts such as ageism, personhood, and the mind/body dichotomy, the author provides an in-depth analysis of these constructs and how their representations are critical to dismantling the negative stereotypes used to depict people with dementia. By showcasing the value of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease, public anxiety may be quelled, individuals living with the disease will be respected, and significant strides can be made on the societal level to support agency in the aging process.

This book not only offers new analyses but also proffers nonmainstream film as the focus for those analyses, which not only builds on the previous work of the author but also broadens the literature base for this type of research. Looking outside mainstream, Western depictions of people living with Alzheimer's disease provide key insights into how cultural narratives are shaped by mass media and reliance on negative stereotypes that indoctrinate the viewer into a narrow perspective and feed their anxiety and fears. This is an exciting area of research that is ripe for additional investigation and exploration, which can challenge the thinking of international readers, researchers, and academics.

Ageism, as a concept, is not rooted in everyday discourse, and as such, the stereotypes, both positive and negative, that support it are largely unchallenged in the wider public's mind. Jokes, memes, and general sayings (e.g. "I'm having a senior moment") act to reinforce notions of aging that are associated with physical and mental loss, depression, boredom, and loneliness. Impairment in memory and living with dementia are hallmark of these ageist beliefs, and the mass media relies on them as a lazy way to showcase an older person. Challenging these tropes is essential for change, and this book embarks on that journey by offering a film that stresses personhood and agency. Anyone interested in film analyses, cultural narratives, and critical gerontology would find a number of key insights by reading this book.

