Old Age in the Victorian Novel: Literary Age Studies

Literary Age Studies: Key Ideas

Old age is conventionally considered as the end stage of life anticipating death, as chronological end of life, distinct and separate from youth.

Instead, old age might be considered as contiguous with youth, not as a stage distinct from it. Old age is in tension and flux with youth, the same way the past is with the present.

Rather than thinking of the aged as surplus, senile, of having already lived, of being physically wasted, unattractive, garrulous, we can consider what older characters offer and contribute to others, to society.

For women in particular, common perceptions of old age reinforce gender stereotypes that focus on a woman's appearance, behavior, and psychology. Value is placed on youth, marriage, and reproduction. Like gender, age can be/is a social construction.

How does *Mary Baron* represent aging? Old Alice, Job Legh, Mrs. Wilson?