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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the remarkable dearth of old woman narrators in British fiction between 1790 and 1860, both documenting their under-representation and explaining it as, in part, a product of a wave of medical discourse disparaging the physical and mental vitality of post-menopausal women.

Regarding methodology, I perform a random sample upon a corpus of first-person novels published in the period and categorize each according to the gender and age of the narrator. This analysis exhibits, unsurprisingly, that most narrators in the dataset are either in the first half of their life, male, or both. Old women represent only a fraction of the narrators in the set.

Regarding explanation, I point to widely cited and republished writings of physicians from the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century. These documents suggested that menopause, though often occurring in what we today would consider middle age, marked the onset of female senescence. After this "change of life," as it was euphemistically termed, women who did not mellow and recede as expected were seen as transgressing biological "laws" that prohibited their bodies from biological reproduction. And as the biological was often conflated with the social, post-menopausal women were also, by extension, sometimes thought unfit for creative or literary production.

Though such medical discourse is by no means the only influence on this era's marginalization of older women, it is a significant one that merits further study. By investigating how gyno-gerontological discourse came to bear on the inclusion—or rather, exclusion—of old female narrators within nineteenth-century fiction, this thesis contributes to a growing body of works within literary gerontology. The hope is that as literary gerontology continues to expand as a field of study, more scholars, students, and eventually general readers will become more conscious of the obstacles and frustrations faced by older generations—especially older women—in a world that, even by means of institutions as apparently disinterested as medicine and health care, is constantly overlooking, demeaning, or sidelining their experiences in favor of those of the young.

Keywords: old women, old age, medicine, menopause, gerontology, narrators, nineteenth century, fiction, digital humanities

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Introduction

Explaining in an 1847 letter to her publishers her decision not to include a preface in a new edition of her works, the 80-year-old novelist Maria Edgeworth lamented that, "my life, wholly domestic, cannot afford anything interesting to the public: I am like the 'needy knifegrinder'—I have no story to tell" (*Memoirs*, iii. 259). Paralleling her aged life with that of the misunderstood and story-less wretch in George Canning's 1797 satirical poem "The Friend of Humanity and the Knifegrinder," Maria Edgeworth expresses a relatively common nineteenth-century conception of a woman's geriatric years as a period of quiescence, reserve, and invisibility.[1]

The literary canon of the nineteenth century evinces the persistence of this conception; only modern literary criticism is more bereft of stories to tell about old women. Only within the last thirty-five years have critics given serious consideration to literary representations of old age. The first significant wave of interest in the subject came in the 1990s, when scholars such as Peter Stearns, Pat Thane, Lynn Botelho, and Susannah Ottaway documented historically shifting depictions of ageing and notions of late-life decline and laid the foundations for the subfield of literary gerontology. A second wave focusing largely on elderly women in literature began a decade later with Devoney Looser's *Women Writers and Old Age in Great Britain* (2008), which investigated how ageing Romantic-era women authors like Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and

[1] Though Canning's poem seems a rather obscure reference today, it is likely Edgeworth would have been familiar with the work as it was published in the short-lived though widely-read and immensely influential *Anti-Jacobin,* a satirical journal published between 1797–8. "The Friend of Humanity and the Knifegrinder" was published as a parody of Robert Southey's *The Widow* (*Anti-Jacobin,* 27 Nov. 1797), a moral poem reminiscent of the parable of the good Samaritan in which a various travelers pass by an old, suffering widow who, ultimately unhelped and forgotten, dies by the wayside.

Catherine Macaulay navigated sexist and ageist stereotypes.[2] A year after Looser's book, Karen Chase's *Victorians and Old Age* (2009) "trace[d] the power and powerlessness of age" through a range of characters in nineteenth-century novels, a genre that aptly "express[es] heightened emotions attached to ageing," especially for women (6). In 2013, Jeanette King's *Discourses of Aging in Fiction and Feminism* chronicled the mutually constitutive relationship between fictional representations of female ageing and real-life perceptions of nineteenth-century women's movements. And, most recently, Andrea Charise's *The Aesthetics of Senescence* (2020) has explored the ability of realist literature to meditation on the aging process throughout nineteenth-century Britain, an era of increased interest in population and demographics and also of a general malaise that society itself is "growing old."

While these important studies have been pathbreaking in bringing gender-specific research to bear on literary gerontology, they generally overlook the fact that, while we might relatively frequently *see* elderly women in nineteenth-century British fiction, we rarely *hear* from them. Indeed, in this era's novels old women are seldom found speaking or narrating, especially regarding their own lives. As a rule, the old women in this era's novels are minor or stock characters who, when allowed to speak of their lives, almost always focus on events from the distant past.

Ageist biases are so naturalized that it can be easy to overlook just how overwhelmingly young this era's narrators tend to be, especially in the subgenre of novels told by participant characters in the first person. While in the following examples I fly somewhat across a broad historical range, I home in on popular examples that most readers will easily recognize. To some

[2] Earlier studies of elderly women by such writers as Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Margaret Gullette, and Margaret Cruikshank focused on contemporary society rather than historical norms.

degree, this pattern began in eighteenth-century epistolary novels with the consistently young or, at most, middle-aged narrators created by writers Samuel Richardson (e.g., Pamela Andrews, Clarissa Harlowe, Harriet Byron, and Charles Grandison), Frances Burney (Evelina Anville and Camilla Tyrold), and William Godwin (Caleb Williams). But it became even more pronounced in the nineteenth century, when readers routinely met with under-forty narrators in the era's popular coming-of-age and marriage plots, including classic first-person tales like *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield,* and *Cranford*.[3]

There are, of course, famous exceptions to this norm in both centuries. In Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722)*,* for example, whose eponymous narrator is at least in her sixties by the time she purportedly narrates. Tellingly, though, Defoe dramatically undercuts her narrative authority in the novel's preface, where a presumably male editor admits that, in its published form, Moll's story "is a little alter'd, particularly she is made to tell her own tale in modester Words than she told it at first" (vii). In other words, though Moll certainly "speaks," her words and, by extension, the narration itself, are not entirely her own.[4]

Turning to later exceptions, many might think of the seemingly "old" Nellie Dean of *Wuthering Heights*, only to remember she is, in fact, barely in her forties. And while the eponymous narrator of Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) may seem elderly when she writes of wanting to record her life story before she "sinks into the grave," she is, we learn,

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[3] Considering the breadth of examples I reference in this paragraph, it is important to acknowledge that I recognize the difference between first-person participant narration and epistolary first-person narration. However, for my purposes here the two types of narrators have enough in common to group them together.

[4] Consider, for example, later and lesser well-known works like Henry Slingsby's 1825 *My Grandmother's Guests and Their Tales* or Archibald Crawford's 1825 *Tales of my Grandmother*: both works are, in the words of the former's editor, "derived from the recollections of the respectable old lady" (4) but are nevertheless composed, compiled, and edited by a younger male relative or acquaintance. We may, from this, conclude that when an old woman was allowed to act as a narrator, her words were not to stand alone, or appear unaltered.

only in her thirties or forties.[5] However, it is significant to note that Nellie Dean and Emma Courtney, though not especially "old," exclusively tell stories of bygone times. This seems generally to be the case with short fiction, too. Turning to that genre, we might light upon the old women narrators of Dinah Mulock Craik's collection *Nothing New* (1857) and Elizabeth Gaskell's "The Old Nurse's Story" (1852), but, again, the stories they tell almost exclusively concern the affairs of the young. Craik's old women narrators, for instance, including Mrs. Browne of "Lord Erlistoun: A Love Story" and Miss Reid of "Alwyn's First Wife," primarily relate romantic tales from their youth. Hester in "The Old Nurse's Story" describes the haunting events of decades earlier. It is as if, like Maria Edgeworth, these narrators have "no story to tell" of their present lives that would "afford anything interesting to the public."

Building upon this fundamental if largely underappreciated insight, this thesis will pursue the two-fold objectives of formally documenting this dearth of old women narrators in British fiction of the first half of the long nineteenth century and beginning to account for it.[6] Before turning fully to these tasks, however, I will first establish and justify the date range of my analysis and consider what, exactly, counted as "old" during my period of study. From there, I set out to substantiate the general under-representation of elderly women narrators in the era's novels by deploying broad and empirical methods to the question. Then, in the essay's concluding section, I review a range of broader literary and societal reasons for the paucity of old women narrators before emphasizing one crucial, if widely overlooked, contributor to the

[5] If we were to consider intrusive narrators in this study, readers might also think of the hoary-headed (fictional) editors and historians Jedediah Cleishbotham (*Tales of My Landlord)*, Jonas Dryasdust (*Ivanhoe* and *The Antiquary*), and Lawrence Templeton (*Ivanhoe*), along with the wizened Frank Osbaldistone of *Rob Roy*.
[6] Though, as noted above, there are notable patterns within the era's short fiction, the parameters of this thesis center around novels, particularly realist novels.

silencing of the era's older women, namely medical theories that engendered beliefs about the inherently "degenerated" minds and bodies of post-menopausal women.

Literary Gerontology of the Nineteenth Century

It is a common misconception that the nineteenth century saw scientific and medical advancements that made it so, for the first time in human history, Britons who survived the precarious years of childhood could reasonably expect to live at least into their sixties or seventies, if not beyond. Demographics, however, show that the percentage of persons above the age of sixty actually declined slightly at the beginning of the century, from 10% of the population throughout the height of the eighteenth century to 7% by 1811. The percentage continued to dip below 7% by 1826 and hovered around 6.8% through the 1860s. It only returned to 8% and continued from there to increase by the 1880s at least (Thane 20; Wrigley 615). On the other hand, from the late 1500s, the earliest period we can accurately estimate life expectancy, to the twentieth century, the percentage of Britons over sixty hovered between 7% to 10%, leading scholars to concede, in the words of Thane, that "throughout many centuries, older people were a substantial presence in English society" (20). Yet fluctuations in these percentages were mostly influenced in changing birth rates, and, accordingly, the dip in percentage of elderly persons in Britain during the nineteenth century can largely be explained by increasingly diminished infant mortality, which was heavily affected by advancements in science and medicine seen during this era. In other words, Britons were living just as long if not longer during the nineteenth century as in previous centuries; on the whole, however, the British population was younger because of increased birth rates.

Why, then, does so much scholarship in literary gerontology begin around or focus in on the nineteenth century? One immediate explanation is that, with the explosion of print media, the

nineteenth century offers more source material than earlier eras for studying literary gerontology. Beyond this, however, Looser presents one compelling factor: "If the proportion of the old remained relatively static," she writes, "the ability or willingness to perceive the old as a group changed dramatically [during the nineteenth century]," largely due to shifts in population and the Industrial Revolution that impelled families and communities to reevaluate how they were to care for their less-able bodied elders (12). Two narratives spring from the nineteenth century's new attention to the elderly population. First, what George Rousseau calls a "geriatric enlightenment" that began during the latter half of the eighteenth century ushered into the nineteenth century a fresh "optimism—the sense that old age could be as blissful a time as youth" (31). For many thinkers of that era, the elderly population became an ensign of national progress and pride, evidence of the success of a modern nation that could not only produce but maintain into a good old age healthy and happy citizens. For others, however, the elderly population came to emphasize uneasy symptoms of a modernizing society. Describing these symptoms, Thomas Cole writes, "old age not only symbolized the old order, it represented a blind spot in the new morality of self-control…The decaying body in old age, a constant reminder of the limits of physical self-control, came to signify precisely what bourgeois culture hoped to avoid: dependence, disease, failure, sin" (35). Whichever narrative one focuses on, however, nineteenth-century Britons were thinking more, talking more, and writing more about old age than in previous centuries. And because of this increased interest, old age came to be seen less as a natural stage of the human lifespan than a problem to be solved—either a problem to be preserved and maintained, as per Rousseau's theory, or one to be reined in and regulated as per Cole's. In this light, one might expect to see more nineteenth-century fiction exploring the experience of the aged. This is not, however, the case.

Rather than conforming with traditional literary periodization schemes (e.g., the Romantic era, the Victorian age, or even the long nineteenth century), I will follow medical historiography and focus on the period between 1790 and 1860. On the front end, as Thomas Bonner writes, "There was no more turbulent yet creative time in the history of medical study than the latter years of the eighteenth century. During this troubled era, familiar landmarks in medicine were fast disappearing; new ideas about medical training were gaining favor; the sites of medical education were rapidly expanding" (12). Many of these transformations had to do with the rapid professionalization of medicine, which remodeled the humoral (Galenic), tradition-guided, and often idiosyncratic methods of diagnosis and treatment into practices that were now regularized, disciplined, and increasingly "empiricized." Alexander Youngson rightly contends that this "methodicalization" was by no means a regular and universal phenomenon. The antiquated medical practices of the eighteenth-century physician persisted in pockets well through the 1860s despite various governmental acts and reforms and routinely produced scores of diagnoses and treatments that often contradicted each other (7). Nevertheless, medical historians generally agree that the very late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw more professionalization than any previous era in Europe.[7]

A major milestone in the modernization of British medicine was the 1815 Apothecaries Act, which sought to regulate unevenly trained medical practitioners, especially in the provinces, by introducing compulsory apprenticeship and qualifications.[8] After this legislation,

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[7] See, for example, Martin Staum's *Cabanis: Enlightenment Philosophy in the French Revolution*, which documents French physician and philosopher Pierre Jean-George Cabanis's ambitions to reinvigorate clinical methods in medical sciences in post-revolutionary France.

[8] After the Apothecary Act it took more than a decade for Oxford and Cambridge to reinvigorate their medical training programs, which they had been offering since the sixteenth century (Chaplin 83-88). Before these changes, Thomas Bonner writes that "the course in medicine was long, formal, and inflexible. It could take as long as fourteen years, beginning with a master's degree in liberal arts, and proceeding, as on the Continent, through the licentiate and then doctorate in medicine" (39). This process improved significantly after 1833 when many of the

unsurprisingly, medical schools and training programs across the nation proliferated and the increased rigor and standardization of medical training led, in the words of S. E. Shortt, to "a relatively homogenous and distinct occupational group" of medical men whose practice "coalesce[d] around a particular configuration of knowledge" (51). This methodicalization gradually granted nineteenth-century medical sciences significant social authority to a degree unparalleled in previous eras. As more and more Britons came to believe, in the words of Bonner, "that life could be more hopeful and happy if sickness, along with poverty and ignorance, could be given universal treatment and preventative care" (26), many saw more competent medical practitioners as the key to this aspiration.

The other bookend date of this study, 1860, marks the explosion of Darwinian science in the wake of *On the Origin of Species* (1859), which catalyzed a new paradigm shift in scientific and social thought. Darwinism introduced into the Victorian imagination the idea of evolutionary supremacy and the "survival of the fittest," and in the decades after, medical thinkers attempted to formulate an evolutionary theory of disease. Accordingly, medical Darwinism began to account for generational influences on disease and ageing, positing that those who aged into "green old age" were more evolutionarily advanced than those who aged into "decrepitude." Though scrutinizing such generational influences and evolutionary beliefs within literary gerontology would prove a fascinating study, its scope exceeds the purposes of this thesis. For this reason, I follow medical and scientific (rather than literary) periodization to delimit my investigation to the peculiar but potent years spanning the beginnings of medical

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impractical or irrelevant requirements of the degree were replaced with shorter and more hands-on study and examinations (Chaplin 92).

professionalization and social legitimization to the opening of Darwin's bio-sociological can of worms.

Having settled on a chronological range, the next challenge is determining what it meant to be "old" during this span of years—no easy task, as this signifier's multifarious and ever-mutable meanings make consistent definitions of "old age" difficult to come by. Prior to the 1908 Pension Plan Act, which set 70 as the age of retirement, there was no officially defined threshold for old age. According to Janet Roebuck, most people in the early nineteenth century followed traditional understandings of old age by considering themselves or others "old" only once they exhibited physical or mental decline and "looked" old. Obviously, notions of what "looking old" meant varied widely, especially when it came to persons who aged "well" into a functional, "green" old age, or "poorly" into sad decrepitude (417). The former were typically those still able to perform their occupational functions well into advanced years, and the latter those who were unable to.

As one might expect, perceptions of physical and mental senescence also varied greatly according to class and gender. Susanna Ottaway describes how the laboring poor, for example, who often worked until they died or were forced into almshouses, experienced senescence much differently than the more privileged middle classes, who could retire from work earlier and age less conspicuously, and the upper classes, whose societal value was not determined by work at all. Especially early in the century, some believed the lower classes aged more slowly than the elite, speculating increased activity and decreased leisure extended their vitality. Contrarily, many others believed that the improved diets, healthier environments, and access to better medical care of the middle and upper classes increased chances of living to a "good old age" (16). Interestingly, however, the threshold for "old age" remained, at least in official reports,

relatively stagnant across the classes. According to Poor Law regulations it was customary to allow aged almshouse inmates a few luxuries such as butter and tea, and most of these luxuries began to be administered to those "impotent poor" of 50 or 60 years when they became unable to support themselves (Roebuck 418). This age designation mirrors the evaluations of the beginnings of bodily decline and, by extension, the onset of "old age" by many contemporary medical writers whose patient clientele were, unless specifically noted otherwise, drawn from the middle or upper classes.

There was less debate, however, surrounding the perceived differences in female and male ageing. While nineteenth-century prints representing the human lifespan often the age of 50 as the peak for both sexes, those focusing solely on women suggested they peaked at thirty (see fig 1). Contrarily, men's apex was almost always depicted at fifty (see fig. 2).

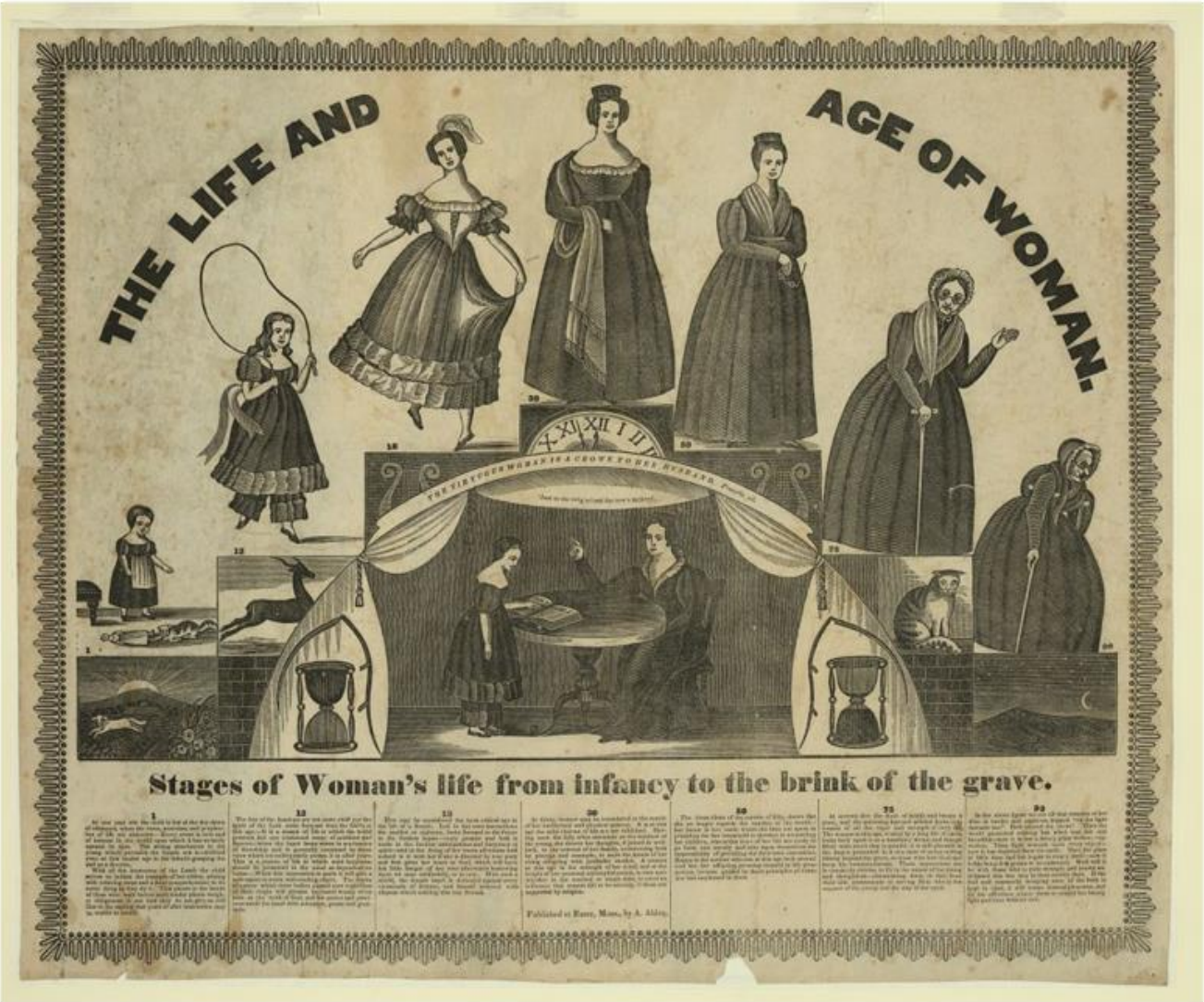

Figure 1. *The Life and age of woman, stages of woman's life from the infancy to the brink of the grave*. A. Alden, 1835. Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/2006686268/>.

Figure 2. *Life and age of man, stages of woman's life from the infancy to the brink of the grave*. Currier & Ives, 1856. Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/2006686268/>.

These perceived differences are elucidated even more starkly in the captions of the two above images, *The Life and Age of Woman* and *The Life and Age of Man*. In *The Life and age of woman* (fig. 1), the description for a woman at thirty reads:

> At thirty, woman may be considered at the zenith of her intellectual and physical powers. It is at this age the solid charms of her sex are exhibited. Having seen the folly often attendant on the conduct of the young, she directs her thoughts, if joined in wedlock, to the interest of her family, endeavoring both by precept and example, to store the minds of her rising offspring with profitable studies. A woman at this

> age in the strength of her mind, and at the height of her personal accomplishments, is ever sure whether in the married or single state, to exert an influence that cannot fail to be salutary, if these are supported by religion.

By fifty, the woman of this print has donned the apparel of old age and, confined to her home, acts primarily as a sidelined support to her now-grown children. The caption continues:

> The dress alone of the matron of fifty, shows that she no longer regards the vanities of the world—her home is her castle where the time not spent in providing for her household is devoted to counseling her children, who at this time of her life are ready to go forth into society and take upon themselves the responsibility of providing of their own necessities. Happy is the mother who can at this age look around and see her offspring pressing onward in life prosperous, because guided by those principles of virtue she has implanted in them.

In contrast, the caption for *The Life and Age of Man* (fig. 2), reads as follows:

> With bull like strength to smite his foes, At Thirty to the field he goes.
> At Forty naught his courage quails but lion like, by force prevails.
> Strength fails at Fifty, but with wit, fox like he helps to manage it.
> At Sixty, oft by stealthy ways, wolf like he tries his wealth to raise.
> At Seventy, news he'll hear and tell, but dog like loves at home to dwell.

According to this print, though a man's strength begins to fail at fifty he continues to barrel forward towards the apex of his productive life at sixty and it is not until seventy that he begins to confine himself to home.

Accordingly, although women or this era typically lived longer than men, they were almost always considered "old" much earlier.[9] Herbert Covey suggests that one reason for this paradox might be because of a lingering belief that "a woman's social worth [was] based on her sexual attractiveness. When attractiveness declines, the worth of the woman is also perceived as declining, at least in the judgment of men. Sexual desire for women has been thought to cease after menopause, while male decline is less dramatic and thought to occur fifteen to twenty years later" (330). Eric Pfeiffer, Peter Stearns, and Jessica King, among others, all note that nineteenth-century medical texts supported this understanding and assumed that women were inherently old after menopause (35; 45; 8). This is because, for women, menopause has traditionally marked the moment when a woman loses her supposed main biological purpose, the ability to bear children. Though the age of menopause varies greatly depending on genetics and environment, one 1850s medical tract gave 45.7 years as the average age of its onset, a number that essentially mirrors that of today (King 8). As assumptions and perceptions are often more decisive than fact in human interactions, even if a woman began menopause in her late fifties, she could have been considered "growing old" by her mid-forties, merely because people believed menopause to generally begin by that age. Men, on the other hand, had no such stark "biological clock" and could often escape perceptions of senescence for fifteen or twenty years beyond their female counterparts despite their own graying hairs and softening features.

Obviously, these estimations of ageing and gendered ageing were and continue to be riddled with individual exceptions. However, this is not to invalidate the importance of such generalizations, especially in the context of literature, which, for ease of perception, believability, and relationality between the reader and the text, often must deal with the

[9] See, for example, Sinclair, *The Code of Health and Longevity.*

categorical rather than nuanced person-to-person differences. For the purposes of this essay, then, I will follow the convention of most nineteenth-century medical writers as well as modern historians of this era in treating 55–60 as the outset of old age for males and 45–50 for women.

Documenting the Dearth of Old Women Narrators: Methodology

Having justified my chronological range and established how I will define old age, I now turn to substantiating my claim that, during the first half of the nineteenth century, old women narrators were largely underrepresented in comparison to other demographics. It is, of course, notoriously difficult to verify any sort of historical or cultural absence, and in this particular case, the first challenge is proving that there was, in fact, a dearth of older narrators in general and elderly women in particular. A further challenge is substantiating the hypothesis that when elderly women *do* speak, they rarely narrate experiences from their current phase of life. To ground my inquiry in empirical data, I randomly selected 100 novels out of a corpus of 2,000 first-person novels published between 1790 and 1860 and then tagged the dataset by categories of male and female, young or adult, and older or old.[10] These categories are based on my discussion above: "young or adult" narrators are those whose ages fall within the first "half" of adult life (20 to 45 for women, and 20 to 60 for men), and "old or older" narrators are those who are in the second "half" of adult life (45 and on for women, 60 and on for men).[11] I distinguish

[10] I am grateful to Mark Algee-Hewitt of Stanford University for providing me with a full-text corpus, derived from a Chadwyck Healey database, of 2,766 British novels from between about 1770 and 1897. See this paper's appendix for a full list of the sampled novels as well as a summary of my selection methods.

[11] Though the age ranges 20–60 for males and 20–45 for females are obviously broad, the primary objective here is to demarcate "old" narrators from all others. Therefore, it makes little sense to spend much effort differentiating between the experiences of a young adult and a more mature adult, as long as they both, in their respective novels, narrate as adults with unwaned faculties and not as elderly persons. In further studies, it would certainly be interesting to examine if and how narration changes according to the decades of each narrator's age.

between "older" and "old" based on whether the narrator explicitly gives his or her age (in which case I mark them as "old") or if I had to estimate the narrator's age based on the novel's timeline (in which case I marked them as "older," the -er intended to indicate some level of ambiguity).

Within the random sample of 100 first-person novels, 70 were narrated by males and 27 by females. The remaining three novels were exceptions: *Blue-stocking Hall* by William Scargill (1827) and *La Belle Sauvage* by M. Lyttleton (1803) were epistolary and therefore "narrated" by male and female characters. *The Story of a Royal Favorite* by Catherine Grace Frances (1845) was narrated by the Queen's dog![12] Nine of the 70 male narrators self-identified as "old" (literally calling themselves "old" or using an equivalent phrase), and another fourteen can be deemed "older" based on the timeline of their novels. For the female narrators, eight self-identified as "old" and another three I calculated to be so (and are therefore marked "old*er*"). The remaining narrators in each subset were either adults or young adults (see fig. 3).

[12] These represent the "Other" category found in Figure 3.

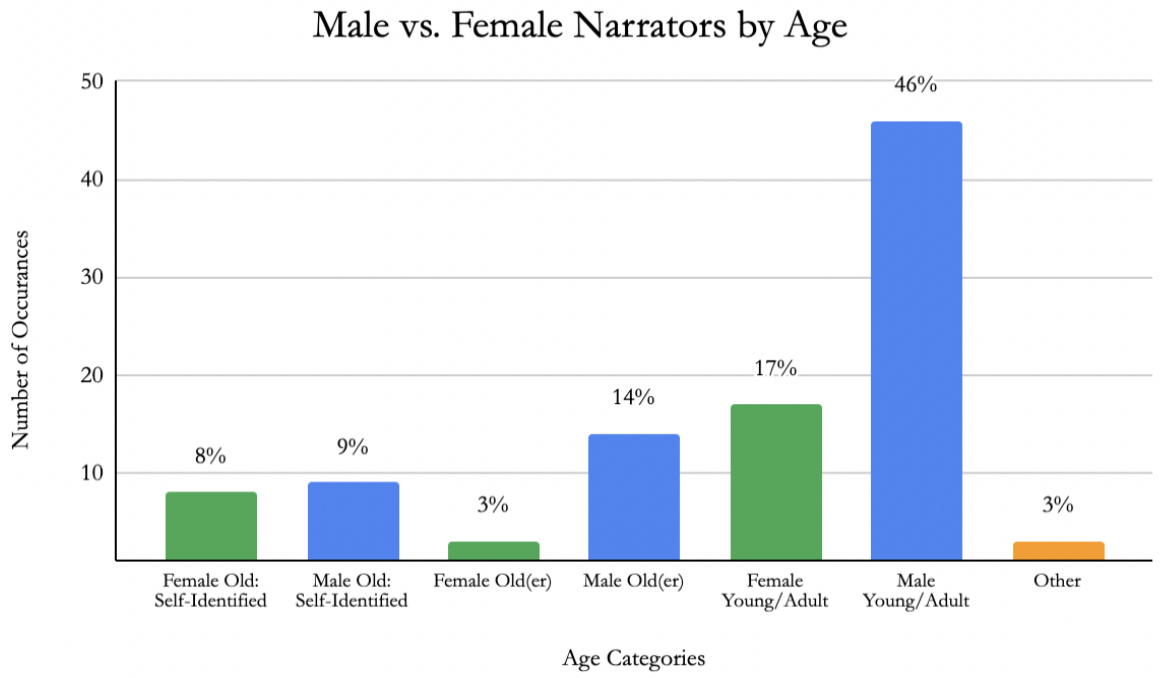

Figure 3.

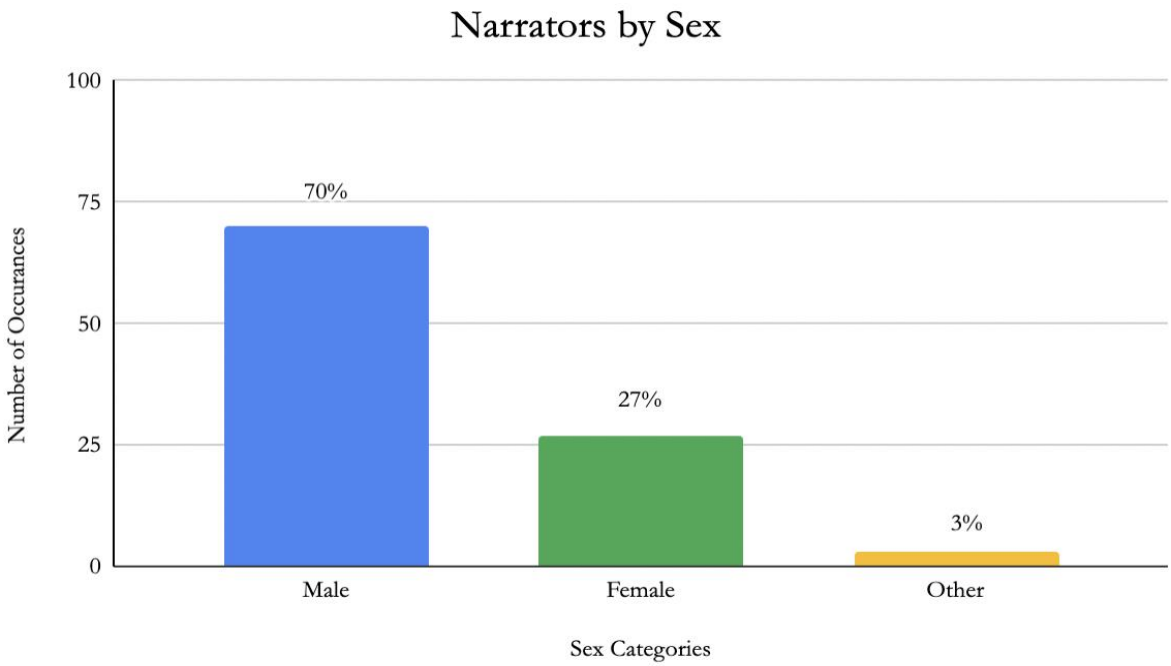

Figure 4.

Given the underlying assumptions of this study, it was initially surprising that as many as eleven narrators (11% out of the 100 novels) are old women. Perhaps tellingly, though, none of these eleven novels are canonical and only two are by moderately well-known authors (Margaret Oliphant and Dinah Murdock Craik). In fact, only Oliphant's *Lilliesleaf,* Julia Melville's *Old Memories,* and Craik's *Nothing New* were popular enough to have gone into a second edition, with *Lilliesleaf* reaching a fifth edition within ten years. That the remaining eight were never reprinted may further underscore the reading public's general lack of interest in hearing from elderly women.

Another somewhat unexpected pattern is that old women narrators were generally more forthcoming about their age than their male equivalents.[13] Whereas the male narrator typically indicates his advancing age by noting that "twenty years have passed since" a particular event or that he is "no longer the man he was at twenty," an older woman narrator was more apt to describe herself using old age signifiers. This is the case with Julia Melville's narrator in *Old Memories,* who calls herself "a grey-haired woman," (9); with Margaret Oliphant's narrator in *Lilliesleaf,* an "aged woman," (27); Anne Manning's *A Poplar House Academy* narrator, an "old maid" (126); and Mrs. S.C. Hall's *A Woman's Story* narrator, an "observant old woman" (16). This is not to say that old male narrators were coy; rather, I conclude that their relatively frequent silence on their specific age was often born more of indifference than embarrassment. Simply put, with old age mattering less to men than women, elderly male narrators were less inclined to remark on their age for the simple fact that it seemed less important. This considered, old women narrators' frankness is perhaps surprising considering the harsh societal biases heaped on their

[13] Note that it is the *proportion* of self-identifying old women that suggests this. Though there is technically one additional self-identifying old male narrator, only 9 out of 23 total were self-identified as old (39%); for females, 8 out of 11 self-identified (72%).

demographic subgroup. One might expect them to be tight-lipped concerning the piece of information that might jeopardize the ethos of their narration.

Arguably, though, it was perhaps precisely these biases that compelled old women narrators to be so forthcoming. To this point, Looser has shown that many celebrated, but ageing, women writers of this period were simply too well known to hide their age from admirers and critics. She compares, for instance, Fanny Burney's unsuccessful attempts at minimizing her age with Maria Edgeworth's more deferential compliance with the new expectations her age brought. Looser concludes that "Burney, whose writings deviated from properly feminine representations of old age, was repeatedly chastised or rebuked for overstepping or ignoring these invisible boundaries. Edgeworth, with her more conventional performance of female old age, within and outside of her late fiction, was treated with less rancor" (32). In a similar way, by being forthright elderly women narrators could frame their old age in ways that catered to overarching societal beliefs about the role of aged women and established themselves as exceptions to the stereotypes of the garrulous, out of touch, or gauche old lady.

Whether or not elderly narrators were forthright about their age, nearly all focused on events from before their current stage of life. (The one prominent exception, the narrator of Margaret Oliphant's *Lilliesleaf,* is less an outlier than it might initially seem because she adheres to societal expectations for old women by helping "usher in" the coming generation rather than focusing on her own life.) None of the eleven novels in my sample set centers on the aged character's current activities. This, again, is perhaps unsurprising. On the one hand, the decreased social and physical mobility of older persons might naturally lead one to assume that they have little to offer regarding exciting tales of adventures or community machinations, excepting, of course, those heard from other sources. Their days of adventure supposedly having

come and gone, replaced by what society often assumed were slow, quiet, pensive days in empty houses, elderly persons likely had little else to offer an audience besides reminiscences on bygone days. On the other hand, an old narrator is a convenient framing device, allowing an author to easily preserve the relatability of a first-person narrator while still providing the semi-omniscience of hindsight that often otherwise only comes with a third-person narrator. As Looser and Chase have argued, old age is, in fact, perhaps the ideal state for a narrator, as it provides the emotional distance, wisdom, and perspicacity that much moralistic nineteenth-century fiction desired (19; 114). Consequently, even older narrators seemed to bolster the notion that the later stages of life are less eventful and interesting—narration in old age was often merely an apparatus by which an author could present a compelling love-plot or adventure narrative of younger days.

Nineteenth-Century Stereotypes of Old Women in Language and Image

That the old—particularly old women—should function as ancillaries to other, more compelling characters and plotlines is just one of the common biases and stereotypes that contribute to some of the more straightforward reasons for authors' reticence concerning old women narrators. Throughout the century it was a commonly expressed belief that aged women were expected to dedicate their remaining years to propelling forward the future generation of society. One article from the evangelical periodical *Good Words*, published in 1877 though expressing sentiments held throughout the century, casts the model grandmotherly type as "a veteran, no longer mingling so actively in the warfare, with what healing gentleness, what strength-inspiring lovingness, she may cheer and soften the pain-worn, storm-tossed spirits of

those who are yet fighting in the very thickest of the battle" (476).[14] To not dedicate oneself to the youth during old age was often deemed worthy of derision. For example, in 1845 *The Ladies' Cabinet of Fashion* lamented the waning number of traditional old women "of yore," who "bravely took [their] stand in the rank of old women…and took upon [themselves] with praiseworthy resignation, the highly honorable and extremely useful task of constituting [themselves] the directress of some important mission in her sphere of life, likely to improve and instruct the rising condition of the youth around [them]" (310). In the present day, the writer complained, old women "live a life of useless folly, and die in obscurity.…After ten or dozen years of bustle and agitation a female of our present day, turns soured by the advance of time, and regretting the pleasures of by-gone hours, commences a perpetual warfare against those who are just launched in the career she can no longer pursue" (311). The remainder of the article catalogues countless instances of "ridiculous" old women who shirk their societal expectations to recede into the shadows by dressing youthfully, painting their faces, and acting giddily. Countless satirical cartoons similarly highlight the extent of the ridicule old women faced when attempting to minimize their age and remain *au courant* (fig. 4). Thomas Rowlandson's *An Old Ewe Drest in Lamb Fashion,* for instance, depicts an old woman dressed in youthful garb fooling those who cannot see her face and horrifying those who can, seeing her true age.

[14] This sentiment is why Oliphant's *Lilliesleaf* is not terribly exceptional—the narrator and main character, Aunt Margaret, does absolutely nothing if not to foster the success of her young niece and her young niece's children. And it is also this same sentiment that makes the ladies of *Cranford,* for example, not a radical community of "Amazons," brazen in their rejection of male-dominated households and capitalistic endeavors, but sweet, slightly ridiculous widows and old maids to be condescended to, not feared. At the core, their little sisterhood seeks to aid the younger generation's progress towards the future in socially sanctioned ways. Amidst their household dramas, the women gently facilitate the marriage of Martha to Jem Hearn and Jamie Brown to Major Gordon, help the young and burgeoning Brunoni family get back on their feet, and encourage the narrator, Mary Smith, *not* to become an old maid. Because their intent is to help the young and because they interfere in the young's lives in unobtrusive ways, the Cranford ladies conform to overarching beliefs about their societal roles as old women despite the unique, male-less community they create with each other. Similarly, old women narrators whose main intent is to "help" the young by relating their stories or providing stories relatable to them sidestep potential accusations of transgressing social codes and maintain a harmless, manageable semblance.

Fig. 4. Rowlandson, Thomas. *An Old Ewe Drest in Lamb Fashion.* October 25, 1810. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/811405.

Outside of proscriptive texts like these articles that lauded the "ideal" old woman—or the loss thereof—the language used to speak of old women was more often than not negative. As Herbert Covey has noted, "terms for old men are sometimes defined in positive tones connoting wisdom and respect," such as *patriarch, gay old dog,* even *old salt*.[15] However, "old women have not been so fortunate in the biased, male-oriented cultural tradition.… Apart from the terms

[15] *Gay old dog* was used to refer to a lively old man, and *old salt* referred to retired or experienced sailors (Covey 293).

used to describe family relationships, the bulk of words associated with older women have had a decisively negative bias" (291, 295). Covey tracks how, throughout the history of the English language, terms associated with old women often connoted "bad temper, disagreeableness, spinsterhood, bossiness, unattractiveness, spitefulness, and repulsiveness" (291). Examples of such terms are *old womanish, hag, crone, witch, Grimalkin, old trout, old hen,* and so forth (295).[16] He adds that any reference to wisdom, which otherwise is an attribute often given to old men, is most often associated with mystic forces or the occult, such as old wives' tales. Similarly, Roebuck and Jane Slaughter have observed how in England, as in other countries, old women must suffer the dual consequences of stereotypes associated with both women and the aged, which share many similarities: weakness of constitution, inferior intelligence, economic vulnerability, and so forth (105). This is consistent throughout the nineteenth century, when both women and the elderly were often described as childlike, and when old age was often referred to as the "second childhood." To be a woman and to be old, therefore, was to be susceptible to compounded negative stereotypes that increased the likelihood of social disenfranchisement much more than most other segments of society.

Yet, as Jeanette King and others clearly elucidate, regression into stilled parlors, complete devotion to the younger generation, or settling into a "second childhood" was not often ageing or aged women's reality. After their childbearing days were over and any children grown and out of the house, many older women finally had the time and wherewithal to engage in public affairs for their own pleasure and fulfillment, filling their days with charity work, teaching classes, writing books, organizing community events and, as the century progressed, leading the

[16] *Grimalkin* was, according to Covey, "used by Swift in 1745, a British expression for an old she-cat and a term of contempt for a bossy old woman." *Old trout* and *old hen* meant a "disagreeable old woman." See Covey 295-6 for a more thorough list of pejorative names for old women as well as their explanations.

women's suffrage movement—of course according to class and means. In reality, these activities likely gave them many stories to tell other than of their or others' evanescent bloom of nineteen. Yet, if this was the lived experience of many real-life women in their "old age," one wonders why so much of nineteenth-century language and literature portray another reality. Why were old women in literature so rarely given voice, and, when so given, why did that voice almost always have to be directed to the past?

Interpreting Agist-Sexist Biases via Scientific Discourse in the Nineteenth Century

The surprising durability of such stereotypical "ideals" about old women over the actual facts of many women's existences can be explained, at least in part, by how the scientific philosophies and trends of the nineteenth century influenced popular opinion and culture. As the nineteenth century progressed and medicine increasingly became rigorous science rather than a blend of folk remedies, traditions, and mere best-guesses, medical experts became new sources of cultural authority that lay people began to trust and respect as providers of "truth." The emergent positivist tradition that dominated scientific paradigms during this era reified this notion, as it claimed science to be, as Richard Olsen puts it, "the sole source of positive, value-neutral, and culture-independent knowledge" (4). In other words, science was fast emerging as the significant arbiter of what is "truth." And physicians, being the incarnation of that scientific "truth" most visible to the lay public, assumed a prominent role in governing mortality.

In addition, the nineteenth century saw an increased popularization of medical discourse as well as of the sciences generally. The explosion of print media and higher literacy rates broadened the readership for scientific literature, and the rise of public lectures, demonstrations, and museums exposed the public more and more to the latest medical discoveries (Fyfe and Lightman). Together these factors eventually led to the creation of a population of British

consumers, primed by positivistic thought and medical advancements to believe science as "truth," who were not only intellectually capable of but *interested in*—for these were matters of life and death—reading about what new "truth" scientists and medical men had to offer them at any given time.

In *Disciplining Old Age,* Stephen Katz traces a number of major scientific transformations of the nineteenth century that help shed light on the marginalization of old women's voices and experiences in literature. Katz explains that during the nineteenth century the idea of ageing transitioned from the premodern conception of a mysterious phenomenon dictated by theological exterior forces to entail three general empirical assumptions. First, the aged body became a "system of signification," meaning that signs manifested on the surface of ageing bodies (such as wrinkles or dark spots on the skin) were not interpreted via interactions between the body and external forces but were understood to be "visible signs on its surface mask[ing] inner states of disorder" (41). Second, the aged body was "separate," meaning that before this era diseases were treated regardless of age (meaning that all ages were treated together similarly), but by the end of the eighteenth century, treatments *depended* on age. In other words, if before an aged, sickly body was just a sickly body that happened to be old, afterwards an aged, sickly body was a sickly one precisely because it was aged, and therefore had to be dealt with separately from a younger sickly body. Third, following Xavier Bichat's radical tissue and cell theories, old bodies were seen to be in a constant state of degeneration. Bichat posited that death and decay began in the tissues and slowly disseminated themselves throughout the body. The ageing process, then, was a process of "constant dying" and the aged body, which was therefore mutually constitutive with disease, was "reduced to a state of degeneration" (41).

These three assumptions applied to men and women alike, though they were particularly severe to old women. If in the premodern era old women were thought to be afflicted by some exterior, divine force; were no different than a younger body save for being older; and were not dying until on their deathbed—then *now,* the responsibility for old women's pathologies rested inside themselves; their age separated them indefinitely from other populations; and, finally, their bodies were constantly degenerating the moment they were supposed to be growing old. Uncoincidentally, these descriptions are very closely associated with how the medical community, and therefore society at large, understood and viewed menopause, or, as it was called then, the "change of life." Turning to popular medical tracts of this era, it is clear that there was little sympathy for a menopausal woman whose afflictions (both physical and mental) emanated from within her own body, whose degenerating body no longer served any purpose save to exclude her from main channels of society. And this disregard, I will show, helped to heavily regulate old women's inclusion in the era's fiction literature.

The most immediate instance of such disregard for menopausal women can first be noted in the fact that the myriad articles on female health, such as published in *The British Medical Journal* and the *Medical and Chirurgical Review,* or even books dedicated to the female life span like Edward Dixon's *Woman, and Her Diseases* (1847) almost always concluded *at* menopause or shortly thereafter. Generally speaking, the sections on women's health post-childbearing and child-rearing were given the shortest portion of pages. For example, of the 309 pages dedicated to describing the female lifespan in Dixon's book, only seven are given to post-menopausal life—and most of what is said in those seven pages refers to the immediate years after menstruation has ceased. In *A Manual of Midwifery* (1831)—a book that, contrary to its narrow title, is in fact a general study of the "most important diseases of women"—Michael Ryan

dedicates less than five of his 353 pages to women's "change of life" and only *one* sentence to post-menopausal life. And in William Buchanan's 700-page *Domestic Medicine* (1769)—a text that remained seminal in medical research deep into the nineteenth century—just three paragraphs deal with the "ceasing of the *menses*" (370). Far from exceptional cases, these texts reflected the mainstream assumption that women's development, or at least their scientific value, effectively ended the moment their childbearing capabilities dried up. The years that extended beyond menopause were, in effect, of no account. This assumption included both old women's physical lives—sexuality included—and their mental lives.

When medical writers did write about post-menopausal women, they most often began by reporting their observations of women's exterior "degenerations." For example, in an 1851 anonymous article entitled "Woman in her psychological relations," published in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology,* the writer observes,

> With the shrinking of the ovaria and the consequent cessation of the reproductive nisus, there is a corresponding change in the outer form. The subcuteous fat is no longer deposited, and consequently the form becomes angular, the body lean, the skin wrinkled. The hair changes in colour and loses its luxuriancy; the skin less transparent and soft, the chin and upper lip become downy. Sometimes, indeed, the male characteristics are in part developed (a change which has been observed in lower animals to occur concurrently with a change of the ovaries) and a hoarser voice accompanies a slight development of the beard. (35)

According to this source, rather than understanding the waning of reproductive functions as a symptom of ageing, it frames the waning of reproductive functions as the very cause of ageing in

females. Without menstruation and the possibility of childbearing, ageing women become something else entirely.

Physician and medical writer Edward Tilt wrote of this effect in his 1851 book *On Diseases of Menstruation and Ovarian Inflammation*: after menopause a woman "will understand the saying of Madame de Deffand—'Autrefois quand j'étais femme'"—or, "Once, when I was a woman" (261). And John Braxton Hicks, a later writer much indebted to Tilt and his contemporaries (and after whom non-labor pregnancy contractions are still referred), wrote that after menopause women reverted to the "neutral man-woman state" (475). For these writers as for others, the most significant—and, perhaps, most lamentable—change to post-menopausal women's bodies was not mere ageing or the accumulation of wrinkles or grey hairs; it was the physical deterioration of the soft, feminine form into stringy, stubbly, unshapely manliness or, at best, to unseemly androgyny. A woman aged out of womanhood was an unsettling prospect, for such species no longer fell into the tidy binary of masculine-feminine, commander-commanded, and were therefore thought to be more prone to unruly, even socially transgressive behaviors. This was especially threatening considering that during this century the body was considered, as per Katz, a "system of signification" that indicated inner states of order or disorder. The anonymous writer from the *Journal of Psychological Medicine* continues,

> With this change in the person there is an analogous change in the mind, temper, and feelings. The woman approximates in fact to a man, or, in one word, she is a virago. She becomes strong-minded; is masculine in her pursuits, severe in her temper, bold and unfeminine in her manner. This unwomanly condition undoubtedly renders her repulsive to man, while her envious, overbearing temper renders her offensive to her own sex. (35)

A post-menopausal women's outer, physical deterioration, then, indicated an inner, mental deterioration that put her at odds with each corner of society. The "masculine" characteristics she supposedly assumed, however, were stripped of any power that a man might have. If, for a man, strong-mindedness, severe tempers, and boldness lent to authority and dominance, for a post-menopausal woman, these traits were sometimes paired with having, according to Tilt, a "dull stupid look," a "pale or sallow," complexion, and being "forget[ful] of familiar things" (30; 207). Therefore, not only could an old woman be bull-headed, but she could be stupid too. Though there are certainly exceptions to this belief—not all medical tracts had similarly unforgiving language—that such views were held at all is perhaps not entirely surprising.[17] This is because many maintained, as Michael Ryan did, that the womb was the determining factor for the state of the female mind, and outside of reproductive activities the female constitution was feeble and imbecilic (6).

Medical literature also described the period between menopause and death as relatively stagnant and prescribed that post-menopausal women should refrain from physical or mental exertion. For example, in his 1850 study of *The Morbid Emotions of Women*, Walter Johnson remarked that if women are at least preserved from cancer in their post-menopausal years, "this season is one of comparative repose, of quiet, which deepens gradually into the stillness of the grave" (6). Johnson's word choice is not insignificant: "repose," "quiet," and "stillness" point towards the assumed ideal qualities of post-menopausal women. Pointing similarly to those roles, in 1840 Thomas Laycock actually celebrated old age's tendency to blunt female sensibility, observing, "There is less of passion, less disappointment, less mortified vanity, and fewer causes

[17] Ironically, in later editions of his book *On Diseases of Menstruation and Ovarian Inflammation*, Edward Tilt recognizes that for some women, post-menopausal years could be some of the most fulfilling of their lives, as many uterine complaints and complications are well behind them (see edition 3, page 102).

for indulgence in evil tempers and foolish caprices; while those mental ills which unavoidably happen are soothed by more or less of religious feeling" (143). Further describing the frailty of post-menopausal women's mental exertions, Tilt wrote, "In the desert of her thoughts no refreshing fountain is heard to gush forth the melodious songs of hope; no palm-tree promises relief against a scorching sun" (261).

Significantly, early Victorian clinicians conveyed (and inspired) significant anxiety about post-menopausal women who did not take this medical prescription to heart. For example, in an 1847 medical tract by surgeon Edward Dixon, we find that "the mind and the uterine system [of older women] should remain in profound repose. Any excitement that will agitate the mind, will instantly re-act upon the blood-vessels of the uterus" (109). The implicit fear in Dixon's statement is that, with activity, a menopausal woman might resume regular menstruation and give birth "unnaturally" beyond typical child-bearing years. This was problematic for many doctors, who believed that children born during the mother's old age were more likely to be feeble and decrepit, or cause harm to the mother herself (Ryan; Velpeau). However, without access to any form of reliable birth control, some women could possibly continue to bear children well beyond the years deemed normative in mainstream medical discourse. So, when a frightening percentage of women during this era died from post-natal complications, especially if giving birth in their late thirties or forties, such precautions and hesitations about gestation in later life were certainly imperative.

Conclusion

Considering the issues we have investigated in this thesis, namely, that medical research throughout the nineteenth century achieved the status of reliable truth in British society, and that

this research consistently denigrated the physical and mental capacities of post-menopausal women, it is inconceivable that this did not affect writers' or readers' appetites for grandmotherly narrators. Indeed, there appears a clear conceptual relationship between procreative faculties and their stoppage and the supposed stoppage of creative faculties. If narration can be understood as creation—as bringing into existence and shaping stories—then women could be considered to have a threshold or deadline for literary creation just as much as for biological creation. Further, the fear of dullness, loquaciousness, or even transgression attached to elderly women hints at one of the implicit fears of literary convention, that a woman grown old might resume "regular" literary productivity and speak "unnaturally" beyond typical narrating years, producing something paltry, piddling, or a waste of time.

Understanding the nineteenth-century medical regime's injunction for older women to remain silent and out of sight sheds valuable light on how even champions of women's values and experiences like Jane Austen and George Eliot could lapse into ridiculing superannuated females who failed to assume a proper impassivity. We see this in their satirical treatment of post-menopausal women like Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* or Lisbeth Bede in *Adam Bede*, characters defined by their harping, agitation, and "poor nerves." Likewise, in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*, we see a community of old women that maintains its utopic strains as the ladies eschew any transgressive behavior by eliding post-menopausal love plots and remaining in relative cultural stasis. When the narrator Mary Smith visits one summer, for example, she finds, "There had been neither births, deaths, nor marriages since I was there last. Everybody lived in the same house, and wore pretty nearly the same well-preserved, old-fashioned clothes" (13).

These are just a few low-lying examples of how ageist biases permeate the era's fiction. More can be found in even the most cursory sweep of nineteenth-century literature. However,

considering how much work there is to be done to identify these biases, there is a shocking shortage of rigorous investigations undertaking the task. In an age of scholarship in which resistance to sexist, racist, and elitist stereotypes is the marrow of much literary research, this gaping blind spot is untenable. This is especially true considering how pertinent gerontological research has become in recent decades with ever-rising numbers of elderly people in virtually all Western nations. With nearly 17% of the population over the age of 65 in the United States alone—the percentage hovers between 18% and 22% for most of Europe—no longer can we prioritize other categories or subsections over age.

In this vein, my documentation of the dearth of old women narrators in British fiction comes to little avail if doing so does not help bolster a renewed frame of feminist inquiry focused on challenging social constructions of ageing in addition to gender. Future studies would be wise to home in on class and race in addition to age and gender. Considering each facet is crucial to gaining a holistic insight into how literature represents and shapes the lived experiences of women of all demographics. In tandem, doing so will surely help to remedy many of the grievances to women outside of literature that can crop up when such insights are hidden from view, unacknowledged, or ignored. Certainly, the instinct to this kind of intergenerationality comes unnaturally to societies primed by Western individualism, which, as Andrea Charise laments, are afflicted with "a chronic, ongoing, perhaps incurable insufficiency to imagine the plural subjectivities that exist outside our own identity cohort" (149). However, I do not hold such a dire view of what is possible in societies that are—slowly but surely—collectively dedicated to giving voice to populations that have been historically discounted in literature. Regardless of the avenue, the hope is that as literary gerontology continues to expand as a field of study, more scholars, students, and eventually larger society will become more

conscious of the obstacles and frustrations faced by the older generation—especially older women—in a world that is constantly overlooking, demeaning, or sidelining their experiences in favor of those of the young.

Appendix

The following list identifies the 100 first-person novels that I randomly sampled from Mark Algee-Hewitt's Chadwyck Healey corpus of 2,766 British novels from 1770 and 1897. This corpus was especially helpful to my study, as Dr. Algee-Hewitt and his DH team had run it through a machine learning model trained to distinguish between first and third person narrators. Included in the metadata, therefore, was a prediction of which type of narration each novel contained, as well as a confidence score (values close to 1 were very confident, values close to 0.5 were not at all sure). However, as there is not yet, to my knowledge, any machine learning model capable of determining a narrator's age or gender, I had to classify both factors by scouring the contents of each book itself. To do so, I began by sampling 100 of the 2,766 novels to create a subset of novels that I could feasibly categorize within a three-month period. This sampling was done using the programming language Python, which ensured that my sample was truly random and that, on average, the 100 novels in my subset are a valid general representation of the full corpus. However, additional sampling could increase accuracy.

The table below uses the following colors to identify the narrator's age and gender:

Female old self-identified	
Male old self-identified	
Female old(er)	
Male old(er)	
Female young/adult	
Male young/adult	
Other	

Title	Author	Date
Old Memories: A Novel	Melville, Julia	1856
Frankenstein: Or, The Modern Prometheus	Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft	1831
Jane Eyre. An Autobiography. Edited by Currer Bell. In Three Volumes	Brontë, Charlotte	1847
Ringrove; or, Old fashioned notions	West, Mrs. Jane	1827
St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century	Godwin, William	1799
Vivian Grey	Disraeli, Benjamin	1826
The Itinerant; or, Memoirs of an Actor	Ryley, Samuel William	1817
David Copperfield	Dickens, Charles	1850
The Son and the Nephew: or, More Secrets Than One	Ward, Catherine George	1814
Guards, Hussars and Infantry: Adventures of Harry Austin	Unknown	1838
Rob Roy [in, the Waverley Novels]	Scott, Walter	1817
The Three Paths	Grey, Herbert	1859
Hermsprong; or, Man As He Is Not	Bage, Robert	1796
Anastasius: or, Memoirs of a Greek	Hope, Thomas	1819
Walter Evelyn, or, The long Minority	Unknown	1853
Philip Rollo, or, The Scottish Musketeers	Grant, James	1854
Salathiel: A Story of the Past, the Present, and the Future	Croly, George	1828
Gertrude Cameron: a Novel	Daniel, Mrs. Robert Mackenzie	1853
The Victims of Society	Gardiner, Marguerite	1837
The Maiden Monarch; or, Island queen	Unknown	1840
Lady Susan	Austen, Jane	1794
Poplar House Academy	Manning, Anne	1859
The sheepfold and the common, or, Within and without	East, Timothy	1858
The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq., of the Kingdom of Ireland	Thackeray, William Makepeace	1856
The gentleman in debt; a novel	Daunt, William O'Neill	1851
Ardent: a Tale of Windsor forest, in the Nineteenth Century	Wilmot, R.	1832
The Tenant of Wildfell Hall	Brontë, Anne	1848
The Unfortunate Man	Chamier, Frederick	1835
Tom Thornton, or Last Resources	Thornton, Tom	1854
Herbert Chauncey: A Man More Sinned Against than Sinning	Elton, Arthur Hallam	1860
The Diary of a Désennuyée	Gore, Mrs. (Catherine Grace Frances)	1836

Rose Douglas; or, Sketches of a country parish	Whitehead, Sarah R.	1851
Lewell Pastures	Kettle, Rosa Mackenzie	1854
The Dominies Legacy	Picken, Andrew	1830
Ellen Middleton: a Tale	Fullerton, Lady Georgiana	1844
The Exile of Erin: A Novel	Gunning, Miss Elizabeth	1808
Madeline: a tale	Opie, Amelia Alderson	1822
Dunsany: an Irish story	Unknown	1818
The Student's Wife: a novel	Daniel, Mrs Robert Mackenzie	1852
Secresy; Or, The Ruin On The Rock.	Fenwick, E.	1795
History of George Godfrey	Gaspey, Thomas	1828
Mandeville: a Tale of the Seventeenth Century	Godwin, William	1817
The Adventures of Hajji Baba, of Ispahan	Morier, James Justinian	1824
The Journal of Llewellin Penrose, a Seaman	Williams, William	1815
Lilliesleaf	Oliphant, Mrs. Margaret	1855
Adventures of an Aide-de-camp, or A campaign in Calabria	Grant, James	1848
The Ring and the Veil: a Novel	St John, James Augustus	1856
La belle Sauvage, or A Progress Through the Beau-Monde	Lyttleton, M.	1803
The Story of a Royal Favourite	Gore, Mrs. (Catherine Grace Frances)	1845
Miriam Copley	Jeaffreson, John Cordy	1859
The School for Widows: a Novel	Reeve, Clara	1791
Tales of the Colonies, or, The Adventures of an Emigrant	Rowcroft, Charles	1843
Kate Vernon: a Tale	Alexander, Mrs.	1854
Maurice Elvington; or, One Out of Suits with Fortune	East, Wilfrid	1856
Villette	Brontë, Charlotte	1853
The Spirit of "The Book;" or, Memoirs of Caroline Princess of Hasburgh	Ashe, Thomas	1811
The Confessions of Sir Henry Longueville	Gillies, Robert Pearse	1814
Woodleigh	Robinson, Frederick William	1859
A Woman's Story	Hall, S. C., Mrs.	1857
The Persian Adventurer	Fraser, James Baillie	1830
The Rose of Ashurst	Marsh, Caldwell Anne	1857
Philip Courtenay, or, Scenes at Home and Abroad	Lennox, Lord William Pitt	1855
Village Anecdotes; or, The Journal of a Year, from Sophia to Edward.	Le Noir, Elizabeth Anne	1804

Walsingham; or, The Pupil of Nature	Robinson, Mary	1797
The Military Sketch-book. Reminiscences of Seventeen Years in the Service Abroad and at Home	Maginn, William	1827
The Life and Adventures of John Marston Hall	James, George Payne Rainsford	1844
Will Watch. From the Autobiography of a British Officer	Neale, William Johnson	1834
Rustum Khan; or, Fourteen Nights' Entertainment at the Shah Bhag, or Royal Gardens at Ahmedabad	Ottley, Thomas Henry	1831
Bleak House	Dickens, Charles	1853
The Parricide: a Domestic Romance	Reynolds, Frederick	1836
The Adventures of Hugh Trevor	Holcroft, Thomas	1794
The Woman in White	Collins, Wilkie	1859
My Life	Maxwell William Hamilton	1835
A Winter in Paris; or, Memoirs of Madame de C****:	C, Madame de	1811
The Wife Hunter; and, Flora Douglas : tales	Daunt, William O'Neill	1838
Memoirs of Emma Courtney	Hays, Mary	1796
The Married Unmarried	White, Charles	1837
The Life of a Sailor	Chamier, Frederick	1832
The Last Man	Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft	1826
Anastasius, or, Memoirs of a Greek	Hope, Thomas	1820
The Private Memoirs and Confessions Of A Justified Sinner	Hogg, James	1824
Traits of Travel; or, Tales of Men and Cities	Grattan, Thomas Colley	1829
The Light Dragoon	Gleig, George Robert	1844
The Story of a Life	Sherer, Moyle	1825
Percy Blake; or, The young rifleman	Rafter, Captain	1855
The History of Myself and My Friend; a Novel	Plumptre, Anne	1813
Blue-stocking Hall	Scargill, William Pitt	1827
Lavengro; The Scholar--The Gypsy--The Priest	Borrow, George Henry	1851
Sydenham; or, Memoirs of a man of the world	Massie, W.	1830
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Ursula: a Tale of Country Life	Sewell, Elizabeth Missing	1858
The Days of my Life. An Autobiography	Oliphant, Mrs. Margaret	1857
Stories of Waterloo: and Other Tales	Maxwell, William Hamilton	1829
The Observant Pedestrian Mounted; or A Donkey Tour to Brighton	Author of The Mystic Cottager	1815

Riverston	Craik, Georgiana Marion	1857
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