British contemporary fiction and the new dynamics of ageing
Title: British contemporary fiction and the new dynamics of ageing

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Abstract: This Ph.D. thesis consists of a novel, EXEUNT, and research associated with it, both being specifically concerned with literary/cultural representations of love and relationships over the age of sixty-five. In consideration of the changing dynamics of ageing, declared internationally by gerontologists during the 1990s, the research investigates the perceptions of British writers, publishers and readers regarding their acceptance of late-life sexuality in British contemporary novels. It identifies key stakeholders in specific interest groups, and operates within an interpretive perspective as a suitable analytical framework for a pragmatic mixed methods investigation. Although the initial focus of the research was on publishers and writers, the inclusion of readers resulted in wider consequences that call for more transparency and a fuller understanding of concepts linked to ageism. Having explored the dynamic between author, publisher and reader, the study concludes there is a superficial disharmony between them, whereas in fact they are mutually complementary. This dichotomy appears to be due to misunderstanding, and lack of trust. In reality, a large percentage of readers, in line with recent research on film audiences, feel it acceptable for people over the age of sixty to have such sexual needs and desires. This acceptability and the new dynamics of ageing inform the novel which places the research in a wider context and constitutes the second part of the Ph.D. The multi-layered novel EXEUNT, in part ontogenetic, works against ageism within current prejudice by depicting the lovers in their fifties, sixties and seventies, and by doing so reveals the wide gap between subjective reality and the perceived public image. Their relationship is accepted by the British woman’s friends, family and contemporaries, so that the epistemology of age is acquired only through negative opinions or actions, with the narrative embodying much of current research on the subject. Contrasting attitudes to ageing are found within the ethnographic detail of Romania during the period of communism, revolution and consequential freedom: 1982-2005. The frameworks of the fiction are encapsulated in the concept of Theatre as an analogy for life and death with a unique structure that portrays an ontological viewpoint. This underpins a reality where the attention of the reader/audience is disrupted by an intermittent reminder of the analogy. The term fictodrama has been used to describe this combination of fiction and theatrical effects.

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Appears in Collections: PhD Theses (English and Drama)
One major critique of postmodernist fiction is that it is inevitably steeped in erudition far beyond the reaches of the average reader. Fortunately, Byatt’s *Possession* makes such obsessive research both interesting and alluring, as the study of two 19th century poets becomes a love story for the two contemporaries investigating them. It is far more difficult to generate controversy with a novel in this day and age, but Welsh successfully outraged a number of critics and conservative moralists with his shocking description of drug use in Scotland. While the eventual cinematic adaptation would further bolster the novel’s popularity, Welsh has remained an icon of punk fiction on the literary scene. A very British story aimed fairly and squarely at British fiction lovers. 

CONTEMPORARY BRITISH FICTION
Nick Bentley
Edinburgh Critical Guides
Contemporary British Fiction
Edinburgh Critical

On the surface Thatcherism produced an ideology of individual success and the accumulation of wealth. These policies revealed new fears of the two nations idea of Britain. On the one hand there was a rise in the 4 State services such as the National Health Service became the targets for so-called rationalization. Read the full-text online edition of Contemporary British Fiction (2008). This critical guide introduces major novelists and themes in British fiction from 1975 to 2005. It engages with concepts such as postmodernism, feminism, gender and the postcolonial, and examines the place of fiction within broader debates in contemporary culture. A comprehensive introduction provides a historical context for the study of contemporary British fiction by detailing significant social, political and cultural events. This is followed by five chapters organised around the core themes: (1) Narrative Forms, (2) Contemporary Ethnicities, (3) Gender and Sexuality, (4) History, Memory and Writ