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Uncanny Subjects

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PREFATORY NOTE

DEFINING AGE

MY FOCUS in *Uncanny Subjects* is primarily the condition of “old” age, or more precisely, the experience of aging into old age. Of course “old” is a highly relative term, largely dependent on perspective—hence the common preference for the more transparently comparative term “older.” However, governments and institutions frequently erect boundaries based on age in their designation of “seniors” and appropriate, or even mandatory, ages for retirement: typically, the age of sixty-five has been the border used to distinguish between the old and the not-yet-old. I am not so rigid in my categorization. My theorization depends on the relationality of aging, examining fictional subjects who, regardless of actual age, are forced to confront their status as “old.” Though many of my observations and arguments regarding age and aging are relevant to the overall process of aging, much of my analysis attends to “older” subjects, since, as I argue, this exaggerated, culturally loaded experience of becoming and being “old” can engender a new perspective on identity. Though the transitions from childhood to adolescence and adolescence to adulthood are clearly aspects of aging, the transition into the category of “old” compels older subjects to consider aging as a process of culturally determined decline.

