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# FIGHTING THE 'DEMENTORS': RECONSIDERING (CULTURALLY) CONSTRUCTIVE VERSIONS OF FORGETFULNESS

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the eminently popular Harry Potter series imagined “Dementors” as evil forces whose “kiss” leaves victims in a state akin to negative depictions of late-life dementia. In today’s cultural climate, dementia is often depicted as a crisis of ageing but increasingly through indirect, metaphorical pathways. As we will argue, dementia or the fear of it, has entered the cultural domain of mainstream literary productions on a larger scale, often perpetuating harmful stereotypes and reinforcing the othering of people living with the disease. In a first step, we will analyse culturally influential examples of negative representations of dementia, examining its effects on the othering of people with dementia. In a second step, we will turn to positive examples to analyse aesthetic strategies employed to gain more humane portrayals. In conclusion, we argue that a cultural politics of dementia is needed in order to achieve attitudinal changes to dementia in particular and ageing more generally.



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Heike Hartung, PhD habil, is a senior scholar in Anglophone Literatures at the University of Potsdam in Germany, with a research focus in narrative theory, ageing, disability and gender. She is an honorary research fellow at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care at the University of Graz. Recent co-edited publications include *Masculinities ageing between Cultures: Relationality, Kinship and Care in Dialogue* (2024) and *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Ageing in Contemporary Literature and Film* (2023).



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