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**Gerontology as a Literary Framework: A Comparative Analysis of
Aging and Senescence in Selected Works of Williams,
Karnad, and Chatterjee**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines gerontology as a significant literary framework for understanding the representation of aging and senescence in selected works of Tennessee Williams, Girish Karnad, and Upamanyu Chatterjee. By integrating concepts from social and psychological gerontology with literary criticism, the study explores how aging is portrayed not merely as biological decline but as a complex human experience shaped by memory, identity, culture, and existential awareness. The paper argues that modern literature provides a rich space for interrogating the realities of old age, revealing both vulnerability and resilience in elderly characters who struggle against isolation, loss of authority, and the fear of mortality. Through a comparative textual analysis, this study highlights how each writer constructs aging within distinct cultural and narrative contexts. Williams presents old age as a site of emotional fragility and alienation, where characters confront abandonment, shattered illusions, and the erosion of personal dignity. Karnad situates aging within myth, history, and tradition, portraying senescence as a phase that negotiates between wisdom and decay, thereby questioning rigid social hierarchies and moral responsibility. Chatterjee, using satire and realism, depicts aging individuals within contemporary society who oscillate between social invisibility and self-assertion, exposing the contradictions of modern attitudes toward productivity, usefulness, and relevance. The paper further investigates themes such as memory and nostalgia, bodily decline, intergenerational conflict, and the search for meaning in later life. It demonstrates that aging characters function as reflective agents who evaluate their past choices and redefine their sense of self in the present. Gerontology, when applied as a literary lens, enables a deeper understanding of how senescence becomes an existential and ethical condition rather than a purely medical or social problem. By foregrounding aging as a central narrative concern, this study challenges stereotypical depictions of old age as helplessness or redundancy and instead presents it as a vital stage of human consciousness. The paper concludes that the comparative approach to Williams, Karnad, and Chatterjee reveals a shared literary commitment to humanizing senescence and restoring dignity to elderly voices. Ultimately, gerontology as a literary framework broadens the scope of literary studies by connecting biological aging with psychological depth, cultural meaning, and philosophical inquiry, thereby offering new insights into the universal experience of growing old.