

The American Literature Society invites contributions for a panel at the upcoming American Literature Association Conference in Boston, May 23-26, 2019.

Growing up and Growing Old: Age, Race and Gender in American Literature

From the Revolutionary War era, when the U.S. considered itself an "infant nation" through the nineteenth century's fascination with urchins, orphans and other deserving cherubs, childhood has been a central organizing metaphor for American authors. As recent work in Critical Age Studies and Childhood Studies have shown, narratives of progress, development, and eventual mastery are cast as seemingly universal American stories, even as the option to "grow up American" is systematically refused on the basis of race, ethnicity gender, sexuality and ability. This panel seeks to explore how the concepts of age and aging are constructed in conversation with--and often in opposition to--other forms of identity in American literature.

Some possible topics include, but are not restricted to:

Childhoods of color

How do we think about age without falling into narratives of growth and decline?

Growing up gender fluid and/or other modes of queering childhood

Institutions (prisons, schools, hospitals) and the process of growing up/old

Rethinking the bildungsroman

Who gets to grow up?

Racial temporalities and the aging process

Colonizing childhoods

Metaphors of infantilization

Rethinking the parameters of children's literature

Childhood in the literature of social justice

Children as political actors

Please send a 200 word abstract and c.v. to Anna Mae Duane at amduane1@gmail.com by December 20th, 2018.