

For the 2024 American Literature Association conference, the Rebecca Harding Davis Society is organizing two panels.

Panel 1: Crisis and Healing in the Works of Rebecca Harding Davis

Throughout her life and writing career, Rebecca Harding Davis showed a particular interest in themes of crisis, catastrophe, and loss – both on a personal and on a societal level – and how human individuals respond to and survive such times. From the violence of war to loss, extreme inequality, societal disruptions, and existential crises, many of Davis’s writings explore in vivid detail how individual lives are affected by events and forces that challenge ideas of self, humanity, and the environment one inhabits. Often, Davis’s writings also focus on individual actions that are portrayed as counterpoints to such disruptive forces and that include ideas of healing or survival based on human solidarity and connection.

For this panel, we seek proposals that analyze the theme of crisis and/or healing in response to crises in one or more works by Rebecca Harding Davis.

Panel 2: New Directions in Rebecca Harding Davis Studies

This panel will focus on new work and works in progress that discuss Davis’s life and writing from innovative and understudied perspectives. We are especially interested in papers that focus on texts other than “Life in the Iron Mills” and welcome contributions from those new to Davis studies and established Davis scholars alike.

Sample topics might include but are not limited to the following:

- Davis’s journalism
- Trauma in Davis’s writing
- Representations of BIPOC characters in Davis’s writing
- Environmental and ecocritical themes
- The Anthropocene and ideas of human/non-human life in Davis’s work
- Regional identity in Davis’s writings
- Material culture
- Davis and her contemporaries

To submit a proposal, please send a title and abstract of no more than 250 words to Vanessa Steinroetter (vanessa.steinroetter@washburn.edu) and Robin Cadwallader (rlcadwall@gmail.com). Please use “ALA Panel 2024” for the subject line and specify which panel you are interested in. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2024. Panelists will be notified by January 18, 2024.