

Jonathan Bayliss Society

Call for Papers: 2024 American Literature Association Conference

The Jonathan Bayliss Society is sponsoring two roundtable panels for the 35th Annual Conference of the American Literature Association, to be held May 23-26, 2024, at The Palmer House Hilton, 17 East Monroe, Chicago. For additional information about the conference see <https://americanliteratureassociation.org/ala-conferences/ala-annual-conference>.

Please send abstracts of no more than 250 words to Gary Grieve-Carlson at grieveca@lvc.edu by January 23, 2024.

Roundtable 1: Modern and Contemporary Regional Writers

Many American authors of the later 19th and earlier 20th centuries are considered “regional writers” in some if not all their works. While their novels share a number of characteristics in their focused setting, local dialects for narration and/or dialogue, and characters reflective of the region described, these writers represent a notable range of geographic diversity. At their best, William Faulkner, Willa Cather, Sherwood Anderson, Kate Chopin, Flannery O’Connor, Harper Lee, Sarah Orne Jewett, Garrison Keillor, Eudora Welty, Mark Twain, and Harriet Beecher Stowe write works whose significance and import is not limited to the region they so carefully describe, often in remarkable detail.

In his tetralogy *Gloucesterman*, Jonathan Bayliss sets three of the four novels (*Gloucesterbook*, *Gloucestertide*, and *Gloucestermas*) in a fictionalized Gloucester, Massachusetts, where he lived for most of his professional life as a businessman and city administrator, and in retirement.

The Jonathan Bayliss Society invites submissions for a roundtable on “Modern and Contemporary Regional Writers.” What writers in the late 20th and early 21st centuries are working in or expounding the bounds of American regionalism? What authors of diversities of all kinds use this rich tradition to their own purposes?

Roundtable 2: Tangents and Divagations

“By plot,” writes Aristotle in the *Poetics*, “I mean the arrangement of the incidents,” and he goes on to distinguish plots in poetry, in which the incidents will have a “necessary” relationship to one another, as superior to plots in history, in which the incidents often have no such relationship. If a poetic plot includes unnecessary elements, they are tangents, and aspiring writers are taught to delete them. But writers such as Melville, Sebald, and Herodotus are famous for their tangents, and Thoreau worries in *Walden* that his writing may not be sufficiently extravagant, or “*extra vagance*,” “wandering outside” its proper limits. For this year’s American Literature Association Conference (Chicago, May 23-26), the Jonathan Bayliss Society invites submissions for a roundtable on “Tangents and Divagations.” What do writers gain when they digress or divagate, when they abandon Aristotle’s ideal poetic plot, when they clutter their text with the extra-vagant? Do such things carry the plot forward, or do they work against the current?