

The Joyce Carol Oates Society

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Call for Papers 2026

Unique CFP for both

- JCO Society Panel at ALA Chicago in May 2026
- *Bearing Witness: Joyce Carol Oates Studies* Volume 7

We invite scholars to submit paper proposals on any aspect of Oates studies for our panel at the annual ALA conference in Chicago. Proposal deadline: January 10, 2026. Please send proposals of approximately 200 words, along with a short bio, to Tanya Tromble-Giraud (tanya.giraud@univ-amu.fr) and Randy Souther (southern@usfca.edu). Speakers will be invited to develop their papers into articles for submission to our journal.

For those who are unable to attend the ALA conference, we invite article submissions directly to *Bearing Witness* at any time: <https://repository.usfca.edu/jcostudies/>

In 2026, we particularly invite paper and article proposals on:

Intertextuality in the Work of Joyce Carol Oates

Joyce Carol Oates's writing is built upon a rich and complex system of cross-references which combines multiple levels and facets of intertextuality, intermediality and intratextuality in a vast web of references of varying degrees of visibility, which is certainly one of the reasons behind Greg Johnson's remark in his 1994 study of Oates's short fiction that her "assimilation of literary tradition is more wide-ranging than that of any other American writer" (5).

From the completely transparent borrowing of famous titles (Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, James Joyce's *The Dead*, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*) to partial references to well-known works (*Wonderland*, "Accursed Inhabitants of the House of Bly," "The White Cat"), to the allusion to famous authors in the title of *Wild Nights!: Stories about the Last Days of Poe, Dickinson, Twain, James, and Hemingway*, intertextuality abounds in Oates's *oeuvre*, where it can be intentionally highlighted by the author to varying degrees, or not at all.

Exploration of Oates's wide-ranging assimilation of literary tradition could also be expanded to include her experimentation with well-established genre codes. For example, her

parodic gothic quintet begun in the 1980s—*Bellefleur*, *A Bloodsmoor Romance*, *Mysteries of Winterthurn*, *My Heart Laid Bare* and *The Accursed*. However, though Oates often clearly works with the framework of established genres, she does not typically write “genre fiction.” Rather, she manages to create an art that might be described as “between the categories,” to borrow a term used by Saul Bellow to describe “our American and universal condition” and picked up by Eileen Teper Bender to qualify Oates’s fiction (qtd in Bender 415).

Oates has long considered herself a formalist who likes to experiment with structure, form and genre. In a 2025 interview for *CrimeReads*, she gives a few clues as to how she views this process at work in three of her more recent novels:

Fox is a genre novel imagined as a postmodernist experiment with genre – as *Blonde* is a postmodernist “bio-fiction” narrated by the posthumous Blonde Actress who is seeing her life rush by her on a movie screen. *Babysitter* is an experimental sort of “thriller” in which, it sometimes seems, the narrator is Hannah herself, as she lies (dead, awaiting dissection for an autopsy) on a gurney in a morgue. (Turbeville)

The goal is not to send scholars on a wild goose chase of obscure learned references lurking in and/or between the lines of Oates’s vast *oeuvre*, nor to promote any one theory of intertextuality in particular. However, given the nature of Oates’s literary life, the realm of intertextuality—inasmuch as “it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life” (Allen 5)—is a particularly fruitful area of study, of which Oates scholarship has only begun to scratch the surface.

We invite scholars to take up the challenge implied by Oates in a recent interview with *The Observer*—“I did it with *Babysitter* [2022] too, but apart from maybe a writer friend of mine, probably almost nobody reads these novels with the care they would need to understand them” (Cummins)—to examine her various textual means of creating doubleness, or multiple ways of understanding the text, and build upon the existing scholarship listed below in any way that continues the study of intertextuality in the work of Joyce Carol Oates: from analysis of specific references to other works of art within Oates texts, to studies of Oates’s experimentation with well-established genre codes, to the transformative relation within Oates’s *oeuvre* between one Oates text and another Oates text, and beyond. If a reader’s knowledge of another work of art or understanding of certain genre codes may contribute to an enhanced understanding of an Oates work, then the issue is of pertinence to this discussion, whether or not the relationship is believed to have been intentional on the part of the author. In this way, we will continue to advance our understanding of the ways in which Oates weaves words and forms into a vast web of interconnected meanings.

Works Cited

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