

Jonathan Bayliss Society

Call for Proposals

American Literature Association Annual Conference
May 26-29, Boston, Massachusetts

The Jonathan Bayliss Society invites proposals for two roundtables at the ALA in 2027.

Roundtable 1: Historiography in American Literature

For Hayden White, “specifically ‘fictive’ elements” are foundational to all narrative historiography, and narrative historiography shares fundamental similarities with fiction and myth. In some fiction, history functions as background to fictional characters and plots. But can fiction, poetry, or drama function historiographically, i.e., can literature explain the past, or challenge existing historiographic explanations? In what ways are texts like Shaara’s *The Killer Angels*, Bayliss’s *Gloucesterbook*, Vollman’s *The Dying Grass*, Miller’s *The Crucible*, Olson’s *Maximus Poems*, or Forché’s *The Angel of History* works of historiography as well as works of literature?

Please submit abstract of no more than 250 words along with your academic affiliation (if any) and a brief biographical note to Gary Grieve-Carlson at grieveca@lvc.edu by January 25, 2027.

Roundtable 2: Ritual in American Literature

Powerful scenes of ritual in American literature include the Black Mass in Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown,” Ahab’s diabolical consecration of the harpoons in *Moby-Dick*, Father Duncannon’s revision of the Anglican mass in Bayliss’s *Gloucesterbook*, or the confirmation scene in Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. More broadly construed, rituals may be domestic, institutional, or social, as well as religious: weddings, rites of passage, graduations, inductions, funerals, initiations, invocations How does American literature imagine the significance of ritual? Is ritual imagined as efficacious, and if so, how? If ritual holds power, what is that power’s source? Or is ritual presented as a meaningless relic of a superstitious past, something to be striven against and overcome?

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Conference and hotel details are available at

<https://americanliteratureassociation.org/ala-conferences/ala-annual-conference/>.