

CALL FOR PAPERS

William Gilmore Simms Society Sessions

34th Annual American Literature Association Conference

May 25-28, 2023, Boston, Mass.

Panel One: New Directions in William Gilmore Simms Scholarship

The apocryphal story that the delegates to the Southern Commercial Convention in 1856 resolved “that there be a Southern literature” and “that William Gilmore Simms, LL.D. . . . write this literature” speaks to the association of Simms with the region’s *belles-lettres* in the minds of his fellow white southerners. The author of more than thirty novels and a dozen volumes of poetry (not to mention biographies, histories, speeches, criticism and innumerable articles for periodicals), Simms was instrumental in fashioning a regional consciousness prior to and in the decade after the Civil War. Simms was also a national and trans-Atlantic author as well, actively participating in the traffic of ideas, a network of authors, and the publishing world outside the American South. His long career, grand aspirations, and prolificacy across diverse genres make the author and his work relevant to many critical, theoretical, and historical perspectives. This open topic panel invites new scholarship on Simms, his oeuvre, his milieu, and his legacy.

Analyses of any aspect of Simms’s work, career, networks, and influence are welcome. Topics could include, but are not limited to:

- The body, including gendered representations, the grotesque, or 19th-century conceptions of the body, including notions of race and character.
- Emotion, including affective dimensions of Simms’s texts (and the response of readers) or Simms’s own emotional biography.
- Trauma, including that of characters in his work or Simms’s own experiences.
- Authorship, including the social function of the author, networks of writers, or the business of publishing.
- Intimacy, including textual representations of romantic and homosocial relationships or Simms’s and his peers’ own emotional and intellectual bonds.
- Race and ethnicity, including constructions of race and ethnicity or theories of romantic nationalism.

To submit a proposal, please send a title and abstract of no more than 250 words to John Miller at millerjd@longwood.edu or Sam Lackey at sam.lackey@gbcnv.edu. Please use “Simms ALA Panel 2023 Submission” for the subject line. The deadline for submissions is December 15, 2022.

Panel Two: Simms and Historical Memory

William Gilmore Simms’s life work was dedicated to writing the long, dynamic history of the American South. His antebellum historical romances, narrative poems, histories, and biographies imagined or illustrated the indigenous, colonial, and expansionist experiences of the region. In addition to fashioning a narrative of the South’s past, Simms leveraged it to create a sense of

collective white southern identity and political purpose that was increasingly oriented to regional independence. Following the failure of the Confederacy, Simms labored equally hard to curate the memory of the conflict, its causes, and its soldiers and politicians. Southern historical archetypes and Lost Cause mythology represented the success of Simms's ideological labors. And while statues of Confederates and slaveholding apologists may be coming down, their appeal and influence endures in some pockets of America and the South. This panel invites papers analyzing the work of Simms, other historical romancers, or similar 19th-century arbiters of historical memory. Topics could include, but are not limited to:

- The construction of historical narratives in the 19th century and the purposes and interests they serve.
- The materials of historical memory, including appropriated narratives and experiences.
- Competing historical memories, between and among regions and peoples.
- The evolution of historical memory in 19th-century American literature, including its emergence and decline.
- The legacies and consequences of historical memory.
- Narratives of historical memory in the classroom, including whether or how to teach them.

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