

CALL FOR PAPERS

William Gilmore Simms Society Sessions
35th Annual American Literature Association Conference
May 23-26, 2024, Chicago, IL

Panel One: Antebellum Reckonings with the Plantationocene

The Plantationocene focuses our attention on the impacts of large-scale agriculture, forced labor, and natural resource exploitation. The associated historical experiences of settler colonialism, race relations, and ecological destruction are imbricated with the history of the United States, particularly that of the American South. Author and public intellectual William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870) was one of many southern and non-southern writers in the mid-nineteenth century interested in or connected to the aspects and consequences of the Plantationocene (directly or conceptually). For this panel, we hope to explore writers and texts of the antebellum (or immediate post-War) period whose work, like Simms's, engaged related issues, experiences, and perspectives. Topics could include, but are not limited to:

- Nineteenth-century accounts of colonialism, whether historical or contemporary experiences.
- The interplay between structures of enslavement and exploitation in the US and other parts of the Americas or Global South.
- The role of agriculture, monoculture in particular, or ecology in antebellum US literature.
- Representations of and/or commentary on environmental degradation or change in antebellum US literature.
- The role of capitalism in the relationship between the Global North and the Global South.
- Depictions of slave labor and economic exchange.
- Analyses of the "Plantation Romance" literary genre and its representations of any of the above experiences.

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 2024 Submission" for the subject line. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2024.

Panel Two: 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.
- Class and social structure in the mid-nineteenth century, including emergent middle and professional classes.
- Public memory, including the creation and use of historical narratives.
- Race and ethnicity, including constructions of race and ethnicity or theories of romantic nationalism.

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