

CALL FOR PAPERS

William Gilmore Simms Society Sessions

36th Annual American Literature Association Conference

May 21-24, 2025, Boston, Mass.

Panel One: Gender and Antebellum American Literature

Americans prior to the Civil War experienced rapid and widespread cultural, political, and social change. Among these transformations were models of and expectations for gender. These were influenced by and were, in turn, influencing the literature of the era.

This panel will explore how gender was constructed, replicated, and contested in antebellum American texts, as well as how it contributed to other early 19th-century conversations about identity, society, and power.

While William Gilmore Simms himself was closely associated with the South, his perspectives on and representations of gender occurred as part of national conversations on these topics. We thus welcome papers addressing not just regional representations of gender, but also gender in national and comparative frameworks as well.

This panel seeks to bring together scholars from diverse backgrounds and with diverse methodologies to discuss topics including, but not limited to:

- Conventional regional representations, such as the creation of the belle, the gentleman planter, and the poor white, but also images that challenge those gender archetypes.
- The intersectionality of gender with race and ethnicity in portrayals of indigenous peoples, Africans and African-Americans, Latinx, and Asian residents and immigrants.
- Gender and narratives of enslavement, including how gender influences the portrayal of slavery, resistance, and freedom.
- Queering antebellum literature, including explorations of non-binary gender identities.
- Representations of femininity, including by women navigating tensions between performing prescribed gender roles and challenging those stereotypes and tropes.
- Women writers' engagement with domesticity, education, and suffrage.
- Representations of masculinity, including negotiating competing influences as well as relationships to race and class.
- The connections between gender and national identity.
- Gender, literary form and audience, including implications of and resistance to conventional expectations involve aesthetics, genre, and style.

Graduate students are particularly encouraged to submit proposals. Two competitive travel stipends are available for graduate student attendees.

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 2025 Submission” for the subject line. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2025.

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 the grotesque and 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.
- Genre and form, including changes in the novel, innovations in meter, and hybrid genres.

Graduate students are particularly encouraged to submit proposals. Two competitive travel stipends are available for graduate student attendees.

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 2025 Submission” for the subject line. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2025.