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# Geographies of the Mind: Narrative Spaces and Literary Landscapes in William Gilmore Simms's Antebellum Fiction

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GEOGRAPHIES OF THE MIND: NARRATIVE SPACES AND LITERARY LANDSCAPES  
IN WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS'S ANTEBELLUM FICTION

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department  
of English and Comparative Literature in the College of Arts and Sciences.

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## Abstract

Genre affords a theoretical and conceptual framework for knowledge production and knowledge distribution. Rhetorically, genre affords a political, artistic, and ideological tool that enables a rhetor to respond to personal and cultural anxieties. *Geographies of the Mind: Narrative Spaces and Literary Landscapes in William Gilmore Simms's Antebellum Fiction* examines ten of nineteenth-century American author William Gilmore Simms's works, including three manuscript-only ones. Drawing upon rhetorical theory and narrative theory, this project uncovers the breadth of Simms's rhetorical and literary practices within the confession narrative, the ghost story, the pirate romance, and the sentimental novel. I demonstrate that Simms's texts both adhere to and subvert the boundaries of generic conventions

and, in doing so, elucidate legal, psychological, and transnational concerns of the time. By focusing on the narrative spaces of Simms's texts, I prove that Simms's geographic spaces reverberate with hauntings that serve to mark moments of intellectual, personal, and historical disconnect, thereby voicing the disjunctive nature of antebellum southern spaces. By connecting rhetorical theory with literary and spatial considerations, this project offers a detailed analysis of Simms's work, positing that narrative practices are dynamic and responsive spaces, ones that are reflective of and responsive to the geographies of the mind.

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