

CALL FOR PAPERS

Mary E. Wilkins Freeman Society

American Literature Association 38th Annual Conference

The Mary E. Wilkins Freeman Society invites proposals for presentations at the annual conference of the American Literature Association, due to take place May 26-29, 2027 in Boston.

Literary Environmentalisms: Reading the Works of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman Ecocritically

In a review of *Six Trees* published in the New York Times on February 21, 1903, the reviewer reads the story collection as an example of Wilkins Freeman's ability to "tell of the influence of environment on her people as testified by their relations to the six trees" ("Six Trees Review"). Wilkins Freeman has often been understood as a writer of the environment that surrounded her; she is known for her regional stories, in which the environment plays a part in the ways in which her characters act and evolve. The question of how environmentalist factors influenced her writing remains fertile territory, however.

Cécile Roudeau, Stephanie Palmer, and Myrto Drizou claim that "Freeman was an ecocritical writer" ("Five Reasons") and recent criticism has explored such a claim. Susan M. Stone has argued for an understanding of Wilkins Freeman as an early ecofeminist, who drew from transcendentalism in her descriptions of nature while threading in more environmentalist concerns. Roudeau has read Freeman's descriptions of communication across human/non-human boundaries in collections such as *Understudies* (1901) and *Six Trees* (1903). This panel proposes that we take such groundbreaking claims further, and to explore how to read Wilkins Freeman environmentally, ecologically, and ecocritically.

Of particular interest is a re-reading of Wilkins Freeman's classic corpus (*A Humble Romance and Other Stories*; *A New England Nun and Other Stories*) as well as a reconsideration of her lesser studied texts (late corpus, novels, poetry, etc.)

Possible paper topics include, but are not limited to:

- New or expanded approaches to the environment in Wilkins Freeman
- Nineteenth-century environmental concerns and practices of environmentalism/ protection and conservation of wildlife and natural resources
- Human/non-human entanglements and nature/culture boundaries
- Ecofeminism (its interest and its limitations)
- Phytomorphism and plant intelligence
- Herbalism and herbology
- Indigenous epistemologies
- Land ethics, environmental ethics, and social ecologies
- Queer ecologies
- “Ecologies of Care” (Ensor)
- Anthropocene reading (Menely and Oak Taylor)
- Ecogothic readings
- Reading for the biophilia hypothesis in Wilkins Freeman
- Reading Wilkins Freeman against the backdrop of climate change

Works Cited

Anon., “Six Trees Review.” *New York Times*, 21 February 1903.

Drizou Myrto, Stephanie Palmer, and Cécile Roudeau. “Five Reasons to Read Mary E. Wilkins Freeman Today.” *Edinburgh University Press*, March 27 2023, <https://euppublishingblog.com/2023/03/27/five-reasons-to-read-mary-e-wilkins-freeman-today/>. Accessed September 22, 2026.

Ensor, Sarah. *Queer Lasting : Ecologies of Care in a Dying World*, NYU Press, 2025.

Menely, Tobias, and Jesse Oak Taylor, ed., *Anthropocene Reading: Literary History in Geologic Times*, Penn State UP, 2017

Roudeau, Cécile, “Untimely Freeman,” *New Perspectives on Mary E. Wilkins Freeman: Reading against the Grain*, edited by Drizou Myrto, Stephanie Palmer, and Cécile Roudeau, Edinburgh UP, 2022, pp. 253-271.

Stone, Susan M. ““Her Own Creed of Bloom””: The Transcendental Ecofeminism of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman.” *New Perspectives on Mary E. Wilkins Freeman: Reading against the Grain*, edited by Drizou Myrto, Stephanie Palmer, and Cécile Roudeau, Edinburgh UP, 2022, pp 43-59.

Please send your proposals (250 words) and short bios (100 words) to H.J.E. Champion (hannah.champion@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr) no later than January 10, 2027. Do not hesitate to send expressions of interest before that date.

The MEWF Society will also consider a limited number of panel proposals (of no more than 500 words) on other topics, for a second author panel.

We encourage you to join the society by the time of the conference. Registration is free. Information about the Society can be found at the Mary E. Wilkins Freeman Society website: <https://wilkinsfreemansociety.wordpress.com/>