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THE FEMINIST SYSTEM OF *HERLAND*²

Abstract: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915) is regarded as the first feminist utopian novel. The novel was intended to be a social critique, and Gillman herself tried to create a frame for her own social vision where the society as a whole, women especially, would prosper. Using a utopian novel as a genre, Gillman in *Herland* provides readers with faults of a masculine oriented and dominated society. The first feminist utopia depicts a society where women through education and rationalization create an ideal socialist society and economy. Advocating for women's rights, Gilman claimed that through equality and financial independence of women the whole society could benefit. The aim of this paper is to discuss the influence of feminist philosophy on Charlotte Perkins Gilman and her novel *Herland*, especially the influence of Mary Wollstonecraft („founding mother of feminism“), who argued that women seem inferior to men due to their lack of education. This paper will also attempt to reveal the importance of education in the socialist system of *Herland*.

Keywords: feminist utopia, feminism, education, socialist society.

Utopian thought, even though not defined as such, is as old as the human civilization. Through dreams of heaven humans have always striven towards perfection, an ideal place where they could live a rewarding life after years of hardships. However, when Thomas More coined the phrase *utopia* literary utopias that have sprung afterwards referred not only to the ideal afterlife, but to the past, present or future perfect societies. As almost everything else, literary utopias provided a different insight into social

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structures and organization from the male point of view. Naturally, “man-made” world produced masculine oriented literature.

Following the “rebellion” of women and their demands for their rights and equal status with men, the social changes reflected in literature as well. Mary Wollstonecraft, “the mother of feminism”, back in the 18th century insisted on accepting women as equal to men, and liberating them from being only housewives, mothers and “queens of beauty and fragility” - the roles imposed on them by men:

Confined then in cages like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch. It is true they are provided with food and raiment, for which they neither toil nor spin; but health, liberty, and virtue, are given in exchange. (Wollstonecraft, 1796:118)

Wollstonecraft argued that the main difference between men and women was in access to education, and therefore, knowledge and power. She claimed that: “Without knowledge there can be no morality!” (Wollstonecraft, 1796:134) and insisted on allowing women to get equal education as men. Her objective was not to create “all-women” society where women would gain power over men, but: “I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves.” (Wollstonecraft, 1796:134). In her opinion, getting power over themselves and educating themselves both women and men would benefit: “Make them free, and they [women] will quickly become wise and virtuous, as men become more so...” (Wollstonecraft, 1796:406).

Following Wollstonecraft's ideas, during 19th and early 20th century women organized into feminist movements (this period of feminist actions was later labeled “first-wave feminism”) focusing primarily on women getting the right to vote. This movement was particularly active in Great Britain and the USA: “First coined in France in the 1880s *féminisme*, it spread through European countries in 1890s and to North and South America by 1910” (Freedman, 2002:18). Our attention is focused on Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a writer, socialist and feminist, who not only advocated for women's suffrage, but, influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft's teaching, for setting women free and educating them as well. Her utopian novel *Herland* (1915) was wrongfully neglected, and rediscovered and published in a book form in the late 1970s. A hundred years later its themes and topics are live and up-to-date, describing what women do when they are “allowed” to develop on their own, both physically and mentally. The aim of this paper is to analyze Gilman's female society in *Herland* and to compare them to her and to Wollstonecraft's ideas. Using the main points of their feminist philosophies and comparing them to the ideas presented in *Herland*, the paper will attempt to show the influence of those philosophies on this particular literary work, and to identify feminist ideas incorporated in it.

Herland is a story of an isolated, faraway society of women. This secluded “realm” of women is a consequence of both natural (volcanic eruption) and human (rebellion and monstrosity of slave men) causes. Faced with the imminent extinction, women are “blessed” with a miracle of parthenogenesis, and they are able to prolong their society via asexual reproduction. They had been living peacefully for 2,000 years before they had three uninvited guests: the three men. Further, we learn how those men accept the notion of menless society and how they come to terms with independent women who successfully run the whole society without men. Faced with the seemingly perfect female organization the men come to realize that their superior male world is far from being ideal. The novel ends with expulsion of the only man who refused to give up his “divine” male superiority and comply with the rules in the female society. He is accompanied by his friend and his Herlander wife, and the end of the story suggests its sequel (*With Her in Ourland*), where the outsider Herlander woman would face THE (MALE) WORLD.

Gilman herself led quite an unusual life:

When Charlotte Perkins Gilman was twenty-three, she was in the middle of the central crisis of her life. In an untitled poem dated April 1, 1883, she wrote that she suffered from “wild unrest.” Her deep distress, she believed, sprang from the inner war between her “two strong natures.” One, her female side, desired a man’s love and its full expression in marriage and children. The other, the self that in her mind had no sex, felt the need to be independent to act in the world—to write, convince others of her ideas, and become famous. (Lefkowitz-Horowitz, 2010:1)

She married and then divorced, leaving the society in a state of shock when she decided to send her daughter to her father. Gilman realized that she was not fit as a mother and she believed that it was for the best to leave the role of a parent to her ex-husband and to pursue her dreams and a career:

Gilman had to choose between her world betterment campaign and her homemaking duties. As a single parent in a detached household, she could not sustain both the multiple responsibilities of head-of-family and those of Socratic improver of the race. Given the necessity of choice, she decided to favour her role as social reformer. (Allen, 1988:48)

Gilman used her writing to convey her socialist and feminist ideas. In that sense, *Herland* is a sort of a feminist manifesto: “Not only is Gilman’s use of utopia clever, but it becomes very effective as a vehicle to transport her feminist and socialist ideas to the reader” (Salinas, 2004:6).

The novel *Herland* was Gilman's attempt to show absurdities of the patriarchal system that undermined women's power and values. It was also a vivid depiction of a better world, coincidentally run by women only: "Like suffragists who claimed that empowering women would improve politics, Gilman hoped that superior female values could bring a more peaceful and just world" (Freedman, 2002:84). According to Laurence Wilde there are two central themes in *Herland*: "the ability of women to revolutionize social relations, and the irrationality of patriarchal relations that the explorers try to defend with increasingly embarrassing clumsiness" (Wilde, 2013:5). The very beginning of the novel shows a bias patriarchal society had (or it still has?) towards women and women's society ("Feminisia"). The three male visitors/impostors cannot grasp on the idea of women running a perfectly functional society:

"They would fight among themselves," Terry insisted. "Women always do. We mustn't look to find any sort of order and organization."
 "You're dead wrong," Jeff told him. "It will be like a nunnery under an abbess – a peaceful, harmonious sisterhood." [...]
 "Also we mustn't look for inventions and progress; it'll be awfully primitive."
 "How about that cloth mill?" Jeff suggested.
 "Oh, cloth! Women have always been spinsters. But there they stop – you'll see." [...]
 "But they look – why, this is a CIVILIZED country!" I protested. "There must be men." (Gilman, 1915:10,13)

Those men are representatives of 20th century men, although, they could well be seen as our contemporaries:

The narrator, Vandyck "Van" Jennings, and his two companions, Terry O. Nicholson and Jeff Margrave, are such perfect, brutal caricatures of masculinity, they feel fresh and relevant enough to populate any sarcastic modern-day feminist blog post. Terry is all puffed-up sexual entitlement; Jeff oozes chivalric "nice guy" condescension; and Van is your bog-standard faux-innocent demanding to be educated. (West, 2015)

The "weaker" sex, however, is more than capable to organize its smoke and dirt free habitat better than the most developed European countries (e.g. Germany), with perfect roads and paths surrounded with fruit-bearing trees, bushes and vines. However, as Daniel Klaehn pointed out: "The problem the men have with the system of Herland is simply that this culture has benefited without them" (Klaehn, 22). Later, we can also see that Gilman completely changed the architecture of the all-female country. The architecture, as she advocated for in real life, was completely different from the

conventionally used forms in building and organizing. For Gilman, every building and facility should serve its core purpose and be useful to its inhabitants:

All its villages, towns, and cities, for example, have the same “parklike beauty”. Town centers are built to resemble orderly college campuses. Conveniently located, free gymnasiums greatly enhance the physical fitness of all residents. Eating gardens and eating houses are scattered around the country. Community childcare facilities have been constructed, kibbutz-style, in the warmer part of the country. (Allen, 1988:98)

Gilman's idea was to change traditionally female household, which was quite bold as that was the only place where women had any form of power. She was trying to get women out of their houses and to construct facilities that would serve for betterment of life and leave out unnecessary elements: “She loved the idea of the apartment hotel in which each private unit, of whatever size, was serviced by shared facilities for dining, child care and maintenance (Allen, 1988:59). Herland, therefore, is a picture of “a communistic existence marked by cooperation, sustainability, intelligence and innovation” (Wilde, 2013:1).

Another surprise for the men is the physical appearance of the Herlanders (quite far from being “damsels in distress”) and their behaviour (not very interested in fashion, jewelery or men). However, being captured and feeling helpless, they develop a feeling of owe:

They were not young. They were not old. They were not, in the girl sense, beautiful. They were not in the least ferocious. And yet, as I looked from face to face, calm, grave, wise, wholly unafraid, evidently assured and determined, I had the funniest feeling – a very early feeling – a feeling that I traced back and back in my memory until I caught up with it at last. It was that sense of being hopelessly in the wrong that I had so often felt in early youth when my short legs' utmost effort failed to overcome the fact that I was late to school. (Gilman, 1915:21-22)

The women in Gilman's *Herland* are not beautiful in a conventional sense. The author herself believed that physical fitness and continuous care of the body is very important both for physical and mental health. She urged women not to be fashion slaves and encouraged them to wear clothes which would make them feel comfortable, and not beautiful in a male sense of the word. Therefore, the women in Herland wear comfortable, unisex clothes (“sexless costumes”), they have boy-like haircuts (“cropped hair”) and do not pay attention to frivolous, shiny gems and beads used by women in male world to adorn themselves: “Gilman helped create a new standard of female

beauty, suggesting that only an organism that used all its faculties was truly beautiful” (Allen, 1988:137). The reason why Gilman strips her heroines off fashionable clothes is practical, they are only for display and they do not allow women to feel free and to move freely: “But the idle woman, the Queen of Society, who must please men within their prescribed bounds; and those of the half-world, who must please them at any cost – these are the vehicles of fashion” (Gilman, 1911:258). Fashion is enforced by men and: “in exact proportion as women grow independent, educated, wise and free, do they become less submissive to men-made fashions” (Gilman, 1911:256).

The Herlanders are, as Gilman wished for women all around the world, extremely fit. They are aware that they cannot match physical strength of men, but what they lack in physical strength they make up in numbers and determination. However, they are not brutal to their male uninvited visitors, they prove to be highly civilized. Being outnumbered by determined, fierce women, the male impostors find themselves in a situation common for the women and feminists in their world: “Then we found ourselves much in the position of the suffragette trying to get to the Parliament buildings through a triple cordon of London police” (Gilman, 1915:25). Gilman believed that all people could be classified as male, female and human (both male and female), but the androcentric culture equals male and human (Gilman in *The Man-Made World: Or Our Androcentric Culture*, 1911). Terry summarizes the ridiculous notions of patriarchal society toward women when he exclaims: “Of course they can't understand a Man's World! They aren't human – They're just a pack of Fe-Fe-Females!” (Gilman, 1915:82). The Herlanders treat equally all human beings, regardless their difference in sex: “They don't seem to notice our being men,” he went on. “They treat us – well – just as they do one another. It's as if our being men was a minor incident” (Gilman, 1915:32). Therefore, it is surprising for the men in Herland to find that women are equally human as men, and that they do not resort to physical violence and combat, but choose more humane approach: “Gilman also celebrated female difference and strongly criticized the “man-made world” for its aggression, competition, and destruction of female values of peace, cooperation and life giving” (Freedman, 2002:83).

Herland is a country “size of Holland” with the population of “three million”. Being written at the turn of the twentieth century *Herland* is up-to-date with the stories of conquests of new lands. The three male visitors trying to convince women of Herland that their world is superior and perfect, resemble the imperialistic force trying to subdue and colonize new lands. In that sense, we could say that Van, Terry and Jeff represent the strong, male, imperialistic America, whereas Herland could be seen as a South American country, weak, female, waiting to be conquered and enlightened:

When considered in the context of rapidly changing gender roles in American culture at the turn of the twentieth century, these imperialistic enterprises could be regarded as a gendered phenomenon wherein male anxieties over women's growing autonomy at home found release in a traditionally masculine enterprise: the conquest and domination of new lands whose populations were often culturally constructed as feminized, exotic Other.” (Davis & Knight, 2004:166)

Gilman's fantasy novel *Herland* stands opposite the overpowering “masculine world of the naturalist novel” (Davis & Knight, 2004:168), popular in the USA at the beginning of the twentieth century. As mentioned before, the novel does not only criticize the patriarchal structure of the outside world (American society, in particular), but it also criticizes its culture and its domineering tendencies as well. Listing and analyzing the benefits of the Western civilization (which eventually prove to be shortcomings) it seems that Gilman's matriarchate of Herland sheds a negative light on patriarchal America: “Gilman's utopian vision is courageously and wittily recounted and deals frankly with the shortcomings of Western “civilization”...” (Clemons, 1999:12).

Apart from being a cultural feminist (Gilman believes that women are the true founders of human society), Gilman does not approve of male tendencies to fight, conquer, and to see each situation in life as a sort of combat. Therefore, male impostors cannot conquer “weak” bodies and minds of women in Herland. “Her governing principle being growth and not combat, her main tendency being to give and not to get” (Gilman, 1911:405), Gilman shows us how stupefied men are when they realize that a flawless social system could exist without any competition and desire to fight for power. The author vividly depicts a society where women use their “womanfully” attributes (their strength of body and will combined) for the betterment of the world, compared to faulty, “cocksure” (male) social order and organization: “It is inconceivable also, that in the management of a nation, honesty, efficiency, wisdom, experience and love could work out good results without any element of combat” (Gilman, 1911:334).

Gilman was against the belief in the original sin, vengeful god, eternal punishment and heavenly reward. Her heroines belong to and practise the religion of “Maternal Pantheism”. They had chosen to practise and believe in love and human ideals: “Such high ideals as they had! Beauty, Health, Strength, Intellect, Goodness – for those they prayed and worked” (Gilman, 1915:61). *Herland* expresses Gilman's firm belief that there is no presence of evil in the world, only things that people hold on to and that are close to human wrong (e.g. individualism, competition, jealousy etc.). The morality of Herland could be summarized as follows: “To Be (survive), To Re-Be (reproduce), To Be Better (improve) (Allen, 1988:128). Herlanders, therefore, have no

horrid ideas, and they do not worry about the past but march boldly towards the future, all the while being “inconveniently reasonable”.

“Appropriating Darwinian ideas in the service of women's rights, Gilman argued from biology that life-giving women were naturally superior to men, whose behavior reflected a primitive aggression” (Freedman, 2002:83). Finding examples in the nature, Gilman concluded that: “We [women] are the only race where the female depends on the male for a livelihood” (Gilman, 1911:90). In the same book (*The Man-Made World: Or Our Androcentric Culture*, 1911), she gives the example of a common misconception of women at that time: “As one English scientist put it, in 1888, ‘Women are not only not the race – they are not even half the race, but a subspecies told off for reproduction only’” (Gilman, 1911:19). This female ability, even though essential for the world and population growth, is by patriarchal system characterized as negative and demeaning. The Herlanders are unpleasantly surprised to learn how females are treated in the “civilized” world:

“Then we explained that – well, that it wasn't a question of fathers exactly; that nobody wanted a – a mother dog; that, well, that practically all our dogs were males – there was only a very small percentage of females allowed to live.” (Gilman, 1915:53)

In Gilman's opinion, this [maternity] is the very difference between men and women that goes in favour of women and shows their superiority: “Government by women, so far as it is influenced by motherhood, and that would mean care, nurture, provision, education” (Gilman, 1911:277). Therefore, the philosophy and religion of the Herlanders focuses on motherhood. As they nurture and provide for their children, Herlanders behave in the same fashion towards their society and their economy. Being taught always to give instead of get, and to respect and follow the laws of the nature, they cannot grasp on the ideas presented to them by men from the “civilized” and “highly-developed” world:

[on milk industry] “Has the cow no child?” asked Somel earnestly.
 “Oh, yes, of course, a calf, that is.”
 “Is there milk for the calf and you, too?” (Gilman, 1915:50)

However, no matter how important motherhood is for Gilman and the Herlanders, that is not the sole purpose of women. Gilman encouraged her contemporaries, as she described in *Herland*, to pursue careers other than being housewives and mothers, and to improve their intellectual abilities.

In order to provide a reasonable explanation for the existence of *Herland*, Gilman, once again, resorted to nature. To avoid the unavoidable conflict between men

and women (that would, surely, lead to the extinction of men) and justify the continuance of female population, Gilman introduces the phenomenon of parthenogenesis (asexual reproduction). This miraculous occurrence prevents the extinction of the surviving women, once again proving the superiority of the “weaker” sex and their ability to function without men. Losing half of their population forced them to consciously improve themselves, that is, to improve their female nation. Even though they all descend from the same ancestral mother, Herland is a variety of women in terms of physical appearance. This variety Herlanders explain by their constant education and natural laws of mutation.

At first, a young woman bore a child. This incredible virgin birth, the Immaculate Conception of a sort, was accepted only when it was proved that there were no men involved, and the woman gave birth to four more children – daughters. Those five daughters themselves gave birth to five more girls each, and the creation of the new nation had begun. Centuries later Herlanders realized that this exponential growth of the population would lead to overpopulation, therefore, lack of food and deterioration of the standard of living. Being extremely rational and sensible, women of Herland decided to resort to “negative eugenics” and appeal to their countrywomen not to have children. In most cases, they would appeal to women who were seen as inappropriate “material” for reproduction and for passing on their genes.

Even though motherhood is the highlight of their lives, the children do not “belong” only to women who gave them birth, but to all women in Herland. The whole nation functions as “one big happy family”, where any kind of individualism is frowned upon: “To them the country was a unit – it was theirs. They themselves were a unit, a conscious group; they thought in terms of the community” (Gilman, 1915:81). Following the teaching of Mary Wollstonecraft, Gilman argued for the importance of education for women, as education is the only way to correct and improve the society. In *Herland* women are very conscious of the importance of education and improvement of their intellectual abilities. Therefore, they focus on their children and put a lot of emphasis on their continuous education:

Motherhood – yes, that is maternity, to bear a child. But education is our highest art, only allowed to our highest artists. [...]

The care of babies involves education, and is entrusted only to the most fit, she repeated. (Gilman, 1915:85)

Being criticized by men that they bereave mothers of their babies, we get further explanation of the motherhood of Herland:

It is her baby still – it is with her – she has not lost it. But she is not the only one to care for it. There are others whom she knows to be wiser. (Gilman, 1915:86)

Gilman believed that: “What is required in organized society is the specialization of the individual, the development of special talents, not always of immediate benefit to the man himself, but of ultimate benefit to society” (Gilman, 1911:83). It does not come as a surprise that women in Herland specialize and improve their talents both for educating and bringing up children and for the improvement of their society as a whole. The lack of men in Herland is seen as an advantage for the system of education: “So the conclusion must be that without competition [a manly feature] education exists in its purest form, learning” (Klaehn, 22). Educational system, as known in the Western world, does not exist. It is more an organized form of life-long learning through games (which are often changed and improved) and joining with nature. Formal schooling is replaced with individual development in the service of the nation: “The women cultivate the mind and body so that ignorance is calmly eliminated” (Klaehn, 19).

As animal mothers teach their young, Gilman points out that education in its purest form is maternal. “Play in the educational sense should be encouraged or discouraged to develop desired characteristics” (Gilman, 1911:162), but all the games have to have the purpose and to be in accordance with the environment and nature:

Large soft ropes, running across here and there, within reach of the eager, strong little hands, would strengthen arms and chest, and help in waking. A shallow pool of water, heated to suitable temperature, with the careful trainer always at hand, would delight, occupy and educate for daily hours. A place of clean, warm sand, another of clay, with a few simple tools, these four things water, sand, clay and ropes to climb on would fill the days of happy little children without further toys. (Freedman, 2002:114, Gilman in *No Turning Back, The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*)

Following the misconceptions on the nature and intellectual abilities of women, the male visitors in Herland are forced to admit they had been mistaken to believe that Herlanders were as ignorant as children or savages. The women in Herland analyze and rationalize everything, choosing the most sensible and advantageous option: “What we had been forced to admit, with growing acquaintance, was that they were ignorant as Plato and Aristotle were, with a highly developed mentality quite comparable to that of Ancient Greece” (Gilman, 1915:88). Herlanders create a powerful nation through educating their children:

They had faced the problems of education and so solved them that their children grew up as naturally as young trees; learning through every sense; taught continuously but unconsciously – never knowing they were being educated. (Gilman, 1915:98)

Once again, the power of this female nation mirrors in the development of one's abilities for the benefit of all. Although seen by men as "uncivilized", this female society had managed to eradicate diseases, weeds, control the population growth etc. Van, Terry and Jeff realize how faulty their rigid system of education is and, faced with seemingly innocent questions from Herlanders, they realize how impractical their scarce knowledge is.

"In stark contrast to conventional Western educational models, the Herlanders also possess the freedom to take up new educational and vocational pursuits at any time" (Clemons, 1999:4). The men in Herland cannot grasp on the idea of free independent women working, let alone on the idea of them changing professions in accordance with their desires and potentials. They try to explain to women (with little success) why the women are "protected" in their world:

We do not allow our women to work. Women are loved – idolized – honored – kept in the home to care for the children. [...]
 But Zava begged: "Tell me first, do NO women work, really?"
 "Why, yes," Terry admitted. "Some have to, of the poorest sort."
 "About how many – in your country?"
 "About seven or eight million," said Jeff, as mischievous as ever. [...]
 "About one-third, then, belong to the poorest class," observed Moadine gravely. [...] This inferior one-third have no children, I suppose?"
 Jeff – he was getting as bad as they were – solemnly replied that, on the contrary, the poorer they were, the more children they had. (Gilman, 1915:63,65)

The feminist heaven of Herland where all HUMANS are equal, does not recognize sub-communities or any class distinctions. A country where motherhood is a blessing cannot accept the world where maternity is seen as a punishment for the poor. Herland does not allow selfish individualism precisely because it leads to the stratification of society. All feminists (as early as Mary Wollstonecraft) advocate for equality between men and women. However, the inequalities between men and women in the "civilized" world are obvious in the very language:

"Among mating animals, the term VIRGIN is applied to the female who has not mated," he answered.
 "Oh, I see. And does it apply to the male also? Or is there a different term for him?"

He passed this over rather hurriedly, saying that the same term would apply, but was seldom used. (Gilman, 1915:48)

Consequently, as there is MOTHERHOOD there should be FATHERHOOD as well. The men, however, do not accept this term as giving birth to and taking care of their offspring is solely women's responsibility. Mary Wollstonecraft wrote about the importance of men and women being equal in the society: "The conclusion which I wish to draw is obvious; make women rational creatures, and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives and mothers; that is – if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers" (Wollstonecraft, 1796:412). However, men obviously are not ready (not even in the all-female society) to take on themselves the fair share of responsibilities.

Truth be told, developed without men the Herlanders are not familiar with the concept of a family as a smaller unit of the society. For them the nation is the family. However, rationally thinking that two sexes are better than one and that together they can prosper, the menless society of Herland accepts the opportunity to revive the society of men and women. Three girls accept to marry their male visitors. They are ready to be a part of a loving union and a partnership of equals, but they are not prepared for a patriarchal notion of a family:

The patriarchy, with its proprietary family, changed this altogether. The woman as the property of the man was considered first and foremost as a means of pleasure to him; and while she was still valued as a mother, it was in a tributary capacity. (Gilman, 1911:42)

The Herlanders cannot understand the importance of a surname as a sign of belonging to a certain person/family, as they are taught to belong only to a big family of women. They are reluctant to accept the "owner" and to be reduced to a mere commodity: "Friendship does not need a "head". Love does not need a "head". Why should a family?" (Gilman, 1911:59) The girls are shocked to find out that men desire sexual intercourse without the purpose of procreation. For them, each act in life is rational and with a specific purpose, any other sentimental and impractical deed is seen as a waste of time and resources.

Although Gilman's *Herland* was widely praised for its endorsement of feminism in a form of a bold statement of patriarchal repression of women, that praise did not come until decades after its original publication: "While Gilman's Herlanders deconstruct the patriarchal ideology of marriage, sex, motherhood, love and education, Gilman herself reconstructs that ideology in the shape of her novel" (Lant, 1990:297). Ground-breaking as it was, both her ideology and her novel received criticism too. Even though Gilman claimed to be blind for racism and class distinction, her utopian Herland that lauded equality also promoted inequality among women. All Gilman's heroines are

strong, tall and fit, which imposes the idea that only those “superior” women could be the pillars of a society. Also, her socialist system is quite repressive: it does not allow certain women to procreate, and when it allows it is one child only (except for exceptional women). Finally, Gilman founded her ideology of superior, able women and sustainable all-female society following the laws of nature. However, the downside of that ideology was that she only used the positive examples from nature which served her purpose of popularizing female strength and potential.

Be that as it may, *Herland* (though neglected for long) is invaluable both for being the first female utopian novel and for the reflection of the first-wave feminist philosophy. Herself being a feminist and a socialist, Gilman embedded her own ideology into the plot of *Herland* and also the ideology of feminist predecessors (Mary Wollstonecraft) and the American suffragists at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gilman did not negate the role of motherhood, but she urged women to use their potential to the fullest extent:

To be woman means to be mother. To be mother means to give love, defense, nourishment, care, instruction. Too long, for too long has motherhood neglected its real social duties, its duties to humanity at large. Even in her position of retarded industrial development, as the housekeeper and houseworker of the world, woman has a contribution of special value to the state. (Gilman, 1911:361-362)

Following the footsteps of Mary Wollstonecraft, she insisted on the importance of education for both men and women. Gilman did not only advocate for equal position of women in the society, but she emphasized that through education, equal participation and sharing the responsibilities it is possible to create a perfect, fully functioning society. Gilman proposed certain changes in the architecture of households and the country as a whole, but her main contribution lies in the fact that she broke the tradition of misconceptions of the nature of humans (both male and female) and suggested a new, alternative, and, at the same time, sustainable reality.

Gilman's utopian society avoids any kind of physical violence and oppression, and celebrates the existence of HUMANS. Although there are some inconsistencies in her philosophy, Gilman incorporated her firm beliefs into this literary work. This feminist utopia promotes unity and community as opposed to individualism that creates gaps between people. Gilman promoted women and encouraged them to develop, without trying to undermine the role of men, but trying to urge both sexes to complement each other. Therefore, *Herland* is of a great importance for the feminist and utopian thought. It provides a valuable insight into a society of free women allowed to develop their body and mind, showing their real power and potential that could be used for the benefit of all HUMANS.

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ФЕМИНИСТИЧКО УРЕЂЕЊЕ *ЗЕМЉЕ ЖЕНА*

Резиме: *Земља жена* (1915) Шарлот Перкинс Гилман се означава као први феминистички утопијски роман. Гилманова је покушала да инкорпорира у овај роман елементе феминистичке и социјалистичке идеологије за које се залагала и у стварном животу. Ишавши стопама Мери Вулстонкрафт, „мајке феминизма“, Гилманова се такође залагала за једнакост жена и мушкараца, пре свега, у погледу образовања. *Земља жена* описује функционално друштво жена где је свака жена тј. сваки ЧОВЕК једнак по правима и могућству остваривања својих потенцијала за добробит читаве нације. Индивидуалност и надметање, као типично мушке особине, се обесхрабрују јер не воде добробити нације, али се охрабрује коришћење и развијање индивидуалних потенцијала са циљем развоја друштва у целини. У *Земљи жена* акценат је стављен на материнство у коме лежи будућност нације и образовање које траје читавог живота. Засновавши роман на дарвинистичкој филозофији еволуционог развоја, Гилманова гради женско друштво у складу са природом. Жене се, поред улоге мајке, остварују и у другим професијама, показујући да мајчинска љубав и брига, рационално размишљање и делање, могу довести до савршено организованог друштва. Континуирани физички и ментални развој, уз практиковање вере Материнског Пантеизма, довели су до искорењивања проблема који постоје у цивилизацији Запада. Овим романом Гилманова жели да покаже да је у праву када сматра да су жене супериорније у односу на мушкарце, и да их је природа предодредила да буду лидери. Иако постоје одређене недоследности у Гилмановој филозофији, ово дело је и читав век касније значајно за феминистичку и утопијску мисао. *Земља жена* пружа увид у друштво какво би могло да постоји да је женама дозвољено да слободно развијају, и стога је овај роман био и остао својеврсни феминистички манифесто.

Кључне речи: феминистичка утопија, феминизам, образовање, социјалистичко друштво.

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