Herland Study Guide

Herland by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Herland was initially published in serial form, in 1915, in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's monthly magazine, *The Forerunner*. Rescued from obscurity by Ann J. Lane, the story was published in book form for the first time in 1979. An introduction by Lane sets the tone for this feminist utopia created by Perkins Gilman. *Herland* tells the tale of three adventurers who stumble onto an isolated, all-female land. Determined to keep their discovery secret until they have conquered the undiscovered country, Vandyck Jennings, Terry Nicholson and Jeff Margrave plan an expedition to Herland.

Vandyck, a sociologist, who presents the group's findings in a scholarly fashion, tells the story. Vandyck's narrative places their discovery within the context of then-current sociological beliefs regarding female potential. In the Victorian era in which the story takes place, the male-dominated American society views women as subordinate beings, wholly lacking in the skills required to form a functional society. Vandyck's beliefs that women are incapable of organization, cooperation, work specialization, as well as scientific and mathematical understanding are challenged by Herland society.

While Vandyck represents the scientific viewpoint, Jeff is the romantic who believes that women should be idolized and kept on pedestals. Terry's character is the least enlightened of the three; his macho perspective is firmly engrained and, of the three friends, Terry is least likely to open his mind to the wonders of Herland. The land is wondrous indeed. The women of Herland, isolated without male influence for two thousand years, have developed and maintained a smoothly operational society that puts American innovation to shame. The women have developed the capacity for virgin birth and population control. They develop their land fully and cultivate enough food to easily support their population of three million. Warfare is unnecessary as there are no men to fight, but the women are quite capable of defending themselves.

When the three explorers arrive by means of a biplane, the women overpower them and keep them captive in an ancient fortress at the edge of the cliff, which surrounds Herland. The captivity is by all means pleasant, reports Vandyck. The women treat them well and set about teaching them the language, history, and culture of Herland. Motherhood is the ethos that permeates the land; and every social, political, financial, religious, and personal decision is weighed against the effects it may have on the nation's all-female children. Once the men have been suitably trained and tamed, they are allowed to wander freely through the land and are encouraged to give lectures to young female students about American civilization.

The men eventually court and marry three residents of Herland, Ellador, Celis, and Alima. The men's expectations of marriage are vastly different from the reality and a difficult period of adjustment ensues. Vandyck and Jeff both learn to see women as people, not objects to be dominated. Thus their marriages cohere effectively. The women are initiated into the reproductive process with mixed results. Celis becomes pregnant to the joy of the entire nation. This new form of motherhood represents a Great New Hope to the formerly all-female populace. However, Vandyck's wife, Ellador,

teaches Vandyck that sexual relations are a form of gluttony and should only be engaged in with the intent of procreating. Vandyck struggles with this limitation, yet ultimately he comes to agree wholeheartedly that sex is superfluous to a loving marriage. Yet Terry insists on mastering his wife, Alima, and ultimately his attempts to sexually coerce her result in his banishment. Eager to see the outside world, Ellador agrees to accompany Vandyck as Vandyck escorts the banished Terry out of Herland. Author Gilman picks up the storyline of Ellador and Vandyck in America in her sequel, *With Her in Ourland*.

Introduction

Introduction Summary

The Introduction by Ann J. Lane characterizes *Herland* as feminist-socialist satire. Lane presents a brief biography of Charlotte Perkins Gilman then places *Herland* in context as one of three utopian works created by the author. Lane also discusses Gilman's notable reputation, largely forgotten by scholars at the time of Lane's writing (1979), and links Gilman's work with the birth of the feminist movement in America.

Notable elements from Gilman's biography include a difficult childhood, Gilman's two marriages, a terminal cancer diagnosis and her ultimate suicide. Gilman was born Charlotte Anna Perkins to a man of letters, Frederic Beecher Perkins, who abandoned his wife and child shortly after his daughter's birth. Struggling to raise her daughter alone, Mary A. Fitch moved nineteen times in eighteen years, living in fourteen different cities. This traumatic childhood for Charlotte is followed by her marriage in 1884, at age twenty-four, to artist Charles Walter Stetson. A daughter results from this union, Katharine Beecher. Charlotte, apparently suffering from postpartum depression complicated by an unhappy marriage and the lingering effects of her difficult childhood, is forced to undergo a "rest cure" which prohibits her from writing and reading. She flees this unhappy circumstance, leaving her marriage and daughter and heading to California.

In California, Charlotte's depression lifts. She finalizes her divorce and retrieves her daughter. Charlotte begins to write and lecture during this time. She writes *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a story that chronicles the damage a loving husband does to his wife by following misguided medical advice and imposing a rest cure. Like her mother before her, Charlotte struggles to raise her daughter. Her fledgling career becomes more established in time and she becomes deeply interested in socialism, influenced primarily by Edward Bellamy's utopian novel about a socialist society - a concept he calls Nationalism. Charlotte also involves herself in the women's movement and lectures professionally to various social interest groups about the benefits of socialism and the woman's role in the construction of an ideal society.

Eventually, her ex-husband marries her childhood friend and Charlotte makes the decision to allow Katharine to be raised by Stetson and his new wife. Charlotte is deeply criticized for this decision as well as for the divorce. She responds by moving frequently, unwilling or unable to create a home for herself. When she is forty, she remarries, this time to a man who supports her writing ambition, George Houghton Gilman. The couple spends twenty-two happy years living in New York before moving to Connecticut. Ten years later, Charlotte is diagnosed with terminal cancer. Two years after this diagnosis, George unexpectedly dies. Gilman moves back to California to be near her daughter and her old friend, now widowed by Gilman's first husband, Stetson. She completes her autobiography and then commits suicide. Her suicide note indicates that she is choosing death by chloroform over death by cancer.

Lane goes on to discuss Gilman's influence in her time. Gilman considered herself a humanist and passionately believed that a combination of socialism and feminism could transform the world. Gilman's writings are often a response to Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwin's theories led some scholars to believe in a form of Social Darwinism, in which evolution, not man himself, determines mankind's social progress. Gilman disavows this theory in her writing and espouses a different kind of Social Darwinism, in which human beings possess the ability to consciously shape their world within the guidelines of evolution. Given this belief, it is unsurprising that she chose to write three utopian novels. Her goal was to convince others that society could be consciously shaped. She also believed that women need to play a role in shaping society if humanity is to transcend its violent history. Socialism is the solution she offers, and in all three of her utopias she blends feminism with socialism to produce a fictional world more to her liking than the reality in which she lived.

Introduction Analysis

The biographical and background data on the author presented by Ann J. Lane provides several important keys to understanding Gilman's utopian ideal as presented in *Herland*. Given Gilman's passionate belief that feminism and socialism are the keys to creating a more enlightened society, the reader can already sense that *Herland* is written, not to entertain, but to persuade. The context provided by Lane also makes the reader aware of the particular brand of socialism to which Gilman aspired, and the biographical data puts an interesting slant on Gilman's view of feminism.

The Social Darwinism in Gilman's era attempted to use Darwin's theory of evolution to justify mankind's history of violence as well as the subordination of women and certain ethnic groups. This is a case of sociological hubris in which the white male power structure of America suborned scientific principles to perpetuate the dominant class structure. Using Darwin's theory to squelch the rights of women and ethnic groups provides a supposedly iron-clad, scientific excuse for shoddy behavior. It also indicates that mankind bears no personal responsibility for its attempts to dominate, as human beings are fundamentally hard-wired to do so. This Social Darwinism also implied that women are inherently inferior intellectually, just as previous generations used similar junk science to justify the enslavement of African-Americans.

According to Lane, Gilman does not disavow Social Darwinism entirely. In Chapter 7, one of the female characters, Moadine, refuses to disagree with Social Darwinist statements, yet she presents altogether different beliefs and regards Social Darwinism with quiet contempt. Yet according to the Introduction, Gilman's other utopia novels border on racial prejudice and appear to support Social Darwinism far more than is seen in *Herland*.

Gilman's take on feminism is highly colored by her own personal history and the inadequate psychological support available in her day. *Herland* finds no value in the male of the species and implies that all of society's ills are products of base masculinity. Given Gilman's life circumstances and the stifling restrictions on women in the Victorian

era, her angry viewpoint is understandable. Seeking to conquer the conqueror is often the first reaction of an oppressed group wanting to throw off the shackles. As such, Gilman does have, as Lane states, a place in the feminist movement. It was in support of the women's movement that Lane sought to revive *Herland* in printed form. Yet this anger of the oppressed, mirrored greatly by the women's movement of the latter twentieth century, led to a reactionary disavowal of men, marriage, and home life instead of a healthy integration of women into the power structure. Gilman's condescension towards men proves the lie to Lane's statement that *Herland* "is a world in which human social values have been achieved by women in the interest of us all." (pg. xxiii)

Chapter 1, "A Not Unnatural Enterprise"

Chapter 1, "A Not Unnatural Enterprise" Summary

Vandyck Jennings laments the loss of his notes, photographs, and other supporting documentation. He promises to do his best to describe the cities, parks, and of course the women, from memory. He has chosen not to reveal the location of the country he describes for fear that greedy expansionists, missionaries or traders will move in.

Vandyck introduces his fellow explorers, Terry O. Nicholson and Jeff Margrave. The three have been friends for many years and share an interest in science. Terry is a wealthy man who owns many boats, cars, and airplanes. An explorer at heart, his principal complaint in life is that there are few unexplored wilderness areas left to chart. Jeff is a doctor with a poetic nature; he is studious and enjoys biology. Vandyck is a sociologist with an interest in all the cross-disciplines of science. Together the three men join a scientific expedition with the purpose of charting tributaries along a great river.

As the scientific party travels upstream, Vandyck becomes intrigued by conversations he overhears amongst the guides. The guides belong to local savage tribes and Vandyck takes an interest in their folklore and mythology. The further they progress upstream, the more frequently the guides refer to "a strange and terrible Woman Land" further upriver. (pg. 2) This land is reputed to be populated entirely by women, where even the children are all girls. At the apex of the expedition route, a guide shows Vandyck and his friends a river of red and blue water. In a pool at the base of a waterfall, the friends find a fragment of scarlet cloth. The detailed pattern of the cloth indicates civilized people made it. It is not the rough cloth of the savage tribes. The guide points up to the top of the waterfall and indicates that Woman Country is located there.

The three friends consider the impregnable cliff surrounding the waterfall. They realize that even if they find a way to scale it, they do not have time, for they must return to the main body of the expedition by nightfall. Terry suggests they keep their discovery quiet and return at a later time with an expedition of their own. The three bachelors cannot help but be charmed by the idea of discovering an Amazonian country in which they would be the only men. Skeptical of the existence of such a land, the men are nevertheless excited by the possibility. Terry funds the expedition himself. He prepares his large steam yacht for the voyage and loads aboard a custom-made motorboat and biplane, along with all the necessary provisions and supplies. Their plan is to leave the yacht at the closest safe port, motor upriver in the motorboat, then fly to the top of the cliff. The motorboat will be left in the lake at the foot of the cliff where the previous expedition stopped.

They begin the long voyage on the yacht, spending lazy days on deck discussing the possibilities ahead of them. Despite their hopes of finding an all-female country, they are prepared to defend themselves should they find men. They decide to leave a rough map

of their intended route on the motorboat in case they are lost, so that rescuers may find them. Jeff, the romantic, hopes to find a land of gentle women, flowers, and babies. Terry, the ladies' man, expects to conquer the native women with his particular brand of charm. Vandyck, the sociologist, cautions them that an all-female society is likely a primitive matriarchy in which the men and women live separately. He believes they will find a primeval society, a remnant of ancient savagery. Their theories range widely. Terry conjectures a disorganized society of jealous, competitive women. In his view, women are not capable of cooperation. Jeff imagines a harmonious, nun-like existence. Vandyck is a realist and tends to agree with Terry's view.

The men continue imagining their future as kings of the conquered female land, until their motorboat reaches the lake at the foot of the cliff. They assemble their biplane and load it with supplies, including guns. They fly reconnaissance over the land in a triangular route to learn the basic geography. The kingdom is sizeable and equally well-protected on all sides by the cliff. The land is covered in forests, but the interior houses cities and parks. The next morning they again climb into the biplane and this time they fly lower to get a better view. Their first impression is that the entire land is well-cultivated, even the forests. They see no cattle, but they fly over a beautiful village with clean architectural lines. Women stream out of the houses at the sound of their plane, craning their necks to the sky. Eager to meet the natives, Terry finds them a hidden landing spot overlooking the lake. He is confident their plane will not be found. He christens the land Herland and sets off with his friends to explore.

Chapter 1, "A Not Unnatural Enterprise" Analysis

The author writes from the Victorian Era, a time when women were considered, by the conventional wisdom of the day, to be emotionally and physically frail, hysterical, dull-witted, and by all means incapable of possessing constructive traits such as courage, initiative, or basic organizational abilities. *Herland* is an attempt to convince readers that such views are mere prejudice, not scientific fact. As such, Gilman selects a sociologist, Vandyck Jennings, as her narrator. In Chapter 1, Vandyck clearly subscribes to the prevailing wisdom regarding the inherent limitations of the feminine gender. He represents the established, "scientific" viewpoint that the author seeks to discredit. If a man such as Vandyck can reasonably be convinced of the greater capabilities of women, then, she hopes, her readers must also be convinced.

The foreshadowing in this chapter relates to Vandyck's ultimate attitudinal change. This foreshadowed change contrasts greatly with Vandyck's own account of his beliefs at the start of the expedition. When the men first fly over the cities, they dismiss the evidence of their own eyes because they cannot rationally credit an all-female population with creating buildings and towns. Vandyck establishes himself as the level-headed scientist of the group - and thus the man with the most trustworthy opinions - for he insists that there are cities below. Yet Vandyck can only conclude that there must be men present to have authored this civilization. Through this interchange, the author establishes Vandyck's 'credibility' as a rational man of science who subscribes to prevailing wisdom.

The author hopes that by converting this fictional narrator to her point of view she may convert her readers as well.

Chapter 2, "Rash Advances"

Chapter 2, "Rash Advances" Summary

The men leave their biplane behind and traverse fifteen miles to the village they sited from the air. They travel through the forest to keep their presence a secret for the time being. Given the evidence of civilization, the men load their weapons, prepared to encounter the men who have built it. They conjecture that the men may live in the mountains and keep the women concentrated on the plain as a harem of sorts. As they walk, they notice that the forest is carefully tended and landscaped. All of the trees grow food or valuable timber. They notice no wild or ornamental trees. Everything has a purpose. Birds abound in the forest and the men assume the male citizens have killed off the local cat population. Suddenly, amidst the birdsong, they hear feminine giggles.

The sounds come from a large tree in the middle of a glade. The men notice that the lower branches have been trimmed back with stumps left for easy climbing. They see three figures climb swiftly higher at their approach. Quickly, they climb the tree, but the figures each advance to the end of a separate branch. The men cannot pursue or the branches will break from the added weight. They realize the figures are girls, and the three men stare curiously at them. They notice the girls' short hair and listen to their musical language. Vandyck notices the language does not have the sing-song quality of savage languages. It sounds civilized. Terry bows low and uses had gestures to make introductions. The girls respond in kind; Ellador introduces herself and her two friends, Celis and Alima. Ellador uses hand gestures to indicate that the men should leave.

Terry grins and tells his friends he will use bait. He dangles a shiny necklace enticingly in front of the girls. Terry wears a predatory smile as he waits for one of the girls to take the bait. Alima tricks him by reaching timidly with one hand then seizing the necklace with her other hand. This happens so fast Terry grabs only empty air when he lunges for the girl. All three girls swiftly drop onto lower branches then climb down the tree. The men descend and chase after them, but the girls are too fast. Vandyck, to explain the girls' athletic prowess, suggests that the inhabitants of this land are arboreal.

Terry insists they follow the girls to the nearest town, where they appear to be headed. Through their field glasses, the men see that the houses are pink and surrounded by cultivated gardens. They spot the girls running toward the town and give chase. When they reach the road leading into town, Jeff notices it is hard-topped and engineered perfectly to accommodate vehicular traffic and rain sluice. Alongside the road are footpaths, flowers, and benches. The men are impressed by the careful construction and cultivation they have found so far. When the town appears before them, they see the work of excellent landscapers and architects; the buildings mesh beautifully with the surrounding land. The homes all seem too large to be private homes. White buildings among the pink palaces appear to be public buildings. Jeff notices the lack of smoke, dirt and noise.

As the explorers turn the corner into the center of town they find a line of women waiting for them in the road. From behind, another line of women marches towards them. They are surrounded. Jeff and Vandyck feel like little boys caught creating mischief, but Terry merely notes that every one of the women is over forty. Vandyck realizes that these are not young women, but neither do they appear old. Every one is full of health and vigor. The women are unarmed; but none of the men wishes to shoot at women, so they keep their weapons holstered. Terry steps forward and presents a filmy scarf to one of the women. She accepts it graciously and passes it to her companions. Terry also offers a rhinestone circlet and a jeweled crown. The women do not marvel over the gifts and, to the men's surprise, they demonstrate no fear.

Six women step forward, two to each man, and begin to march the men toward a gray stone building, unique among the pink and white buildings in town. The men decide to play along for the moment, but when they reach the entrance the women close ranks and encircle them completely. The men balk at entering, knowing they may be trapped and imprisoned inside the building. One woman steps forward with a hand-drawn sketch of their biplane and points to the surrounding countryside, clearly asking the men where they left the plane. The men will not show them the direction and decide to fight the women, even though this is contrary to their upbringing. To their surprise they find themselves easily overtaken. Terry pulls his revolver but the women disarm him. Five women seize each man. Inside, they are brought before a majestic woman, apparently a judge. Moments later Vandyck smells the characteristic scent of anesthesia.

Chapter 2, "Rash Advances" Analysis

In this chapter the author highlights some typical male assumptions from her day. Vandyck, Jeff, and Terry have traveled to Herland on the assumption that the feminine occupants of the country will be lovely, impressionable, young ladies, just waiting to be dominated by men. They do not imagine that the women might have a will of their own. Even so, they do not imagine women are capable of actually carrying out their own will. Terry's actions affirm this masculine belief that women are property or pets and belong to any man who can overpower them. This masculine sense of entitlement is fed by the objectification of women. Women in this era are considered prizes that men earn by being manly. Since women are not perceived to have minds of their own, women are incapable of denying consent, and certainly there is no need for them to give it.

Unfortunately this attitude causes two major social problems for the Victorian Era. The first is that a woman is treated as a slave and may be forced to engage in physical labor and sexual relations against her will. There are no repercussions for the man who enforces his rights, particularly if the man has married the woman. A marriage license is considered, at this time, to be a contract of ownership. Women also have no intellectual rights and thus both they and society as a whole fail to benefit from their intellectual gifts. In Gilman's utopia, she attempts to solve this problem by presenting a society that has greatly benefited from the intellectual gifts and free will of women. In fact, critical thinking and the responsible use of free will are two of the basic tenets of Herland society, upon which Gilman will shortly expand.

The second societal problem resulting from the objectification of women is not addressed, but rather compounded by *Herland*. Many women, such as the author of Herland, come to view traditional gender roles as vehicles of dominance. Their response to this is to disavow sex, marriage, domesticity, child-rearing, and any other aspects of life which have been forced upon them in negative ways. Any socially or personally valuable facets of marriage are disavowed by the emerging feminist point of view. Women such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman have been ill-treated and have come to believe that sex equals rape and marriage equals imprisonment, as has perhaps been their experience. In their minds, asserting women's rights becomes linked with a complete repudiation of men and their own sexual desires. In Gilman's case, she attributed her childhood impoverishment and homelessness to her father's abandonment. Her resulting anger at him caused her to continue living nomadically in her adult life, unwilling to allow herself the home, which had been denied her as a child. This repudiation of sex, men, and home life will be delineated in great detail as the story progresses.

Chapter 3, "A Peculiar Imprisonment"

Chapter 3, "A Peculiar Imprisonment" Summary

As the anesthesia wears off, Vandyck awakes in a comfortable bed in a large, light, and airy room. He notices his friends stirring in the two other beds. All three men wear seamless and comfortable nightclothes. In the bathroom, they find their personal effects; only their clothes, shaving razors, and weapons are missing. Terry insists they hold a war council and they sit down on the beds to discuss their situation. Jeff is impressed that the women have done them no harm, especially as he recalls injuring some of them during their scuffle outside the building. Vandyck states that the women are harmless so they can relax while they plan their escape. Reluctantly, they put on the clothing provided in a large closet inside the room.

The men are impressed with the comfort, efficiency, and style of the clothing. Once attired, they knock on the locked door and it opens immediately. In the large, adjoining room, they find eighteen women and various clusters of tables, chairs, and sofas. The furniture, like everything else, is sturdily yet beautifully designed. Terry is distinctly disappointed that the women waiting to receive them are the elders; Terry brands them "the Colonels." For each man, there are five female guards; the men have already learned that this five to one ratio allows the women to easily overpower them. In addition to the guards, each man is seated at a food-laden table directly opposite a female host. Next to their plates are books, which appear to be children's primers. They deduce that they are to be taught the local language and that these three women are tutors.

The men believe enhanced communication is to their benefit and gladly begin their studies. They are provided ruled writing tablets on which to write any new words they learn as well as the corresponding English word for their hosts' benefit. After the meal and study session, they are returned to their rooms. Here they conjecture about their hosts. The three explorers agree that men must have created an advanced civilization such as this one, with books, well-designed homes, and engineered roads. They wonder why the men live separately and where they might be. Their talk turns to escape, and they examine their windows. The windows are not barred, but the high-walled garden below drops off at a sheer cliff face. They are housed in a fortress. The men decide to wait and see if a safer opportunity for escape presents itself.

The three men are surprised that none of the women has reacted to their maleness. They are simply treated as fellow human beings. As the days progress, they get to know their tutors. The Colonels vastly disappoint Terry. As far as he's concerned, the only women worth knowing are young, attractive ones. He laments not having caught the girl in the tree. They might have used her as a hostage. Jeff, however, is quickly charmed by his tutor. Jeff laments the fact that the women have short hair, which all three men agree makes them look unfeminine. Yet Jeff and Vandyck, unlike Terry, begin to enjoy their hosts. Vandyck believes these pleasant ladies will free them if they can convince

the women they mean them no harm. He believes learning the language is their best hope of freedom; and so with a sociologist's keen eye, he attacks his studies.

The men are permitted to spend time in the gardens. The guards, who always accompany them, spend their time reading, playing games, or knitting. For exercise, the men join in the enjoyable and dance-based calisthenics of the guards. Terry is discouraged by the athletic prowess of the women, but Jeff and Vandyck are impressed. The men begin to learn the local games. Terry finds them dull, lacking in fight and competitive spirit. Jeff appreciates the educational aspects of the games. Their lessons progress swiftly. Vandyck's tutor is named Somel, Jeff's Zava, and Terry's is named Moadine. Zava reminds Jeff of his favorite aunt, but Terry complains that they are impudent old maids.

As weeks turn into months, Terry's complaints grow more vociferous. He talks the others into attempting a dangerous nighttime escape over the cliff. They break a glass and use it as a cutting implement. Then they create a long rope using all the fabric in the room. Tying the rope to a window hinge, they lower themselves into the dark garden. They stand three-men high, on each other's shoulders, so the uppermost man, Terry, can cut the rope high up, preserving its length. They secure the rope to a sturdy shrub at the edge of the cliff and Terry lowers himself over. The others wait for three quick tugs on the rope, indicating that Terry has found secure footing somewhere in the abyss, below. The tugs come and the men gratefully follow him over the side of the cliff.

Chapter 3, "A Peculiar Imprisonment" Analysis

Chapter 3 begins to acquaint the three male characters with the society of Herland. Their imprisonment is considered "peculiar" because unlike male captors, the women make no effort to hurt, humiliate, or punish the men. This educational phase initiates the men into Herland. As with most literary paradise themes, the men must earn the privilege of entering utopia. However, the men, Terry in particular, have not yet achieved sufficient enlightenment to consider their entrance to Herland a privilege. At least this is what the author implies. Gilman, as will be shown in the next chapter, presents the men's escape attempt as the act of immature truant boys. As such, she completely disavows the natural human desire for freedom. Gilman trumpets freedom as an essential part of her utopia, but apparently this freedom does not apply to men unless they can convince the feminine power structure to grant it. This gives Gilman's matriarchy the same heavy-handed quality as the Victorian Era patriarchy in America.

Chapter 4, "Our Venture"

Chapter 4, "Our Venture" Summary

The men find themselves on a sloping rock ledge. Terry attempts the dangerous descent first. The others follow successfully then they all climb down a rock chimney and make their painful way to the ground below. Here they follow a stream to gain as much distance as possible from their prison. The men take nuts from a tree; Vandyck remarks on the innumerable pockets found in the clothing they wear, which allows them to carry as much food as they can find. At dawn they hide themselves, prepared to stay out of sight until nightfall. Terry allows himself a superior laugh as he considers their escape. Vandyck reminds him they are not free yet; they must find their biplane in order to leave.

They travel by night for a considerable distance, staying close to the cliff that surrounds the entire country. They realize the cliff is totally impenetrable and doubt they will be able to descend without their airplane. To their delight, their plane is still at the landing site. However, the machine has been covered by a tough material and expertly sewn shut. Without knives, they cannot remove the cover. Their efforts to use jagged rocks are futile. They hear girlish giggles and turn to find the three young ladies they met upon arriving: Alima, Celis, and Ellador. The men advance slowly to indicate their good intentions, hoping the girls will have knives to lend them. With their minimal command of the language, they explain their captivity and difficult escape. To gain their sympathy, they pantomime being exhausted and hungry. The girls take pity and give them food.

The girls set up a large yellow nut on three balanced sticks and initiate a game with the men. The men play along, hoping to gain the girls' goodwill and their knives. The girls win and refuse to hand over their knives. Terry and the other men try to overpower the girls, but once again the girls are too fast for them. The men return to their plane only to find the Colonels surrounding it. The men dread the mistreatment they will receive for their escape attempt, but the women are good-natured as ever. Surrounded by guards, the men are loaded into cars and driven across the country. They are able to see more of the cities than before. They stop for lunch in a large town, where they glimpse women and girls of all ages, but no men. By nightfall, they are back in their damage-repaired rooms. No punishment awaits them, but the women do arrange to light up the gardens at night.

Their tutors are waiting for them and explain that they had known the men would head for their airplane, as there is no other way out of the country. Apparently women had been keeping tabs on them all along their escape route. The men feel decidedly foolish, like truant boys. The tutors explain that the men are being held captive because of the violence they displayed upon arriving. The men, with their new language skills, promise to do them no harm. The women dispense with the guards but keep the men in the fortress. The men are still not allowed their weapons or their shaving razors. Terry no

longer minds; his beard distinguishes him from the short-haired, similarly dressed women.

Terry finally asks if there are men in the country. Somel explains that there have been no men for two thousand years. The men are astounded that the women can reproduce without men. The women are glad to finally be able to communicate well with the men and a cultural exchange ensues. Somel promises to provide them with a full history of their civilization. She indicates that they have cats and birds in their land, although they have long since dispensed with larger animals like sheep, dogs, cattle, and horses. The women indicate that given their limited space, their population cannot support inefficient animals. Thus they have few male cats. Those they do have are kept in large, enclosed gardens except at mating time. Somel refers to males in the animal world as being largely useless apart from the act of mating. She is shocked to learn that in America cows are kept for milk; the women insist they have milk enough of their own and cannot stomach the thought of depriving young calves of milk. A further discussion of the meat industry causes Somel to feel ill and she politely excuses herself.

Chapter 4, "Our Venture" Analysis

The men attempt to take back their power by escaping. Not only does this attempt fail, but the men are left feeling like truant children. The fact that the women do not punish the men causes the men to feel as if they have disobeyed rules set down for their own benefit. In this way, the author communicates the motherly response of the female power structure. The men, due to their childish violence, must be locked up for their own protection until such time as they have outgrown their immature behavior. Gilman apparently sees this as a peaceful and positive response to human violence. She believes the mother instinct can overcome violent misbehavior and the women's response to the men's escape attempt in this chapter is designed to support the concept of a matriarchy.

Gilman does not seem to notice the arrogance implicit in this approach, however. The men's initial violence is in response to the women's desire to take them captive. The subsequent breakout attempt is a simple bid for freedom. In Gilman's socialist-feminist utopia, freedom is a privilege granted by the maternal power structure. This concept is as inherently condescending as any male-based power structure that seeks to limit human freedoms based on the populace's perceived worthiness. Gilman will espouse a free society in subsequent chapters, yet she makes it clear in this chapter that the state not only limits freedom, but also seeks to convince its subjects that freedoms are curtailed in the best interests of the citizenry.

Chapter 5, "A Unique History"

Chapter 5, "A Unique History" Summary

Vandyck informs his readers not to expect an adventure story. His account is an academic cultural study. Additionally, the men had no adventures, as "there was nothing to fight." (pg. 49) The only beasts in the country are cats. Vandyck explains that through a careful breeding process, the women have achieved a race of cats that does not meow and only attacks vermin, not birds. Noting their interest in birds, Terry asks if they wear feathers on their hats. The women are unfamiliar with the concept of dressing decoratively and cannot comprehend why women in the outside world dress any differently than men.

The women question them intently about the outside world. "'I wish I could represent the kind, quiet, steady, ingenious way they questioned us. [...] But they were bent on understanding our kind of civilization, and their lines of interrogation would gradually surround us and drive us in till we found ourselves up against some admissions we did not want to make." (pg. 50) The men are cornered into admitting that the dogs which they claim to love are imprisoned, only allowed out on leashes, and that people much prefer male dogs to female. The women also infer that burglary is a problem from the men's statements about keeping dogs for protection.

From their tutors, the men learn the history and geography of the country. Many years ago, Herland had free passage to the sea. At this time they are still a "bi-sexual" race, as the women call it. Ruled by a king, the country possesses ships, commerce, and an army. War reduces their population and eventually the survivors are driven back from the coastline to the land atop the cliff. The army is posted at the bottom of the cliff to protect them from invasion. At this time their society is polygamous and slave-holding. The fortress in which the Vandyck and his friends are kept is a remnant of this era, built by the male soldiers. A sudden volcanic eruption had closed off the passage to the ocean, burying the entire army at the foot of the cliff. Most of the men left alive are slaves. The male slaves, granted their freedom by this act of God, kill their male masters and the old women and attempt to take possession of the young women and girls.

Instead of submitting, the angry young women, outnumbering the male slaves, attack and kill them all. Thus freed, the women are nonetheless desolate. They now live on an isolated cliff with no way to escape and no way to procreate. Their civilization is doomed. However, young and not without hope, they begin to take care of each other and their land. They sew crops in the earth. The former slave women teach the others how to do the work. Some years later, a baby is born to one of the young women. When an exhaustive search finds no remaining men on the cliff top, the women decide the baby is a gift from God. They build the Temple of Maaia to honor their new Goddess of Motherhood. The new mother bears five girl children over the next few years.

The women wait and watch as these girls reach adulthood. Could the miraculous power be inherited? To their delight, these five initial babies each grow up to have five babies of their own - again, all girls. These Mothers of the Future transform the culture. The older women who still remember men die off, and the new mothers create a new race of women. From generation to generation, the old skills are taught and new skills discovered. Over time this proud race, descended from a single mother, comes to honor motherhood above all. The women discard their pantheistic gods of war and focus on the Mother Goddess. "Here was Mother Earth, bearing fruit. All that they ate was fruit of motherhood, from seed or egg or their product. By motherhood they were born and by motherhood they lived. Life was, to them, just the long cycle of motherhood." (pg. 59)

Cultural growth is achieved through cooperation not competition. Terry has a hard time believing this point. He tells them that competition is necessary to stimulate industry. The women are surprised to hear that Terry believes people will not work without incentive. To these women, all work is willingly performed for the benefit of their society's children. Terry admits that mothers do work willingly for their children, but that work takes place in the home. In the masculine world of business, competition is a necessary motivator. Terry proudly explains that in America the men do all the work. The women get Terry to admit that some women, poor women mainly, do work. They ask how many women fall into this category; Jeff tells them seven or eight million.

Chapter 5, "A Unique History" Analysis

As Ann Lane states in the Introduction, Gilman has created a coherent society in Herland and attempts to present a comprehensive treatment covering all aspects from its history to science to social development. In Chapter 5 Gilman arrives at the heart of her utopian ideal. She explains how the history of Herland, especially the divine gift of virgin births, has led to its present day focus on motherhood. While Gilman does present a coherent rationale for this pervasive motherhood ideal, it falls short of being convincing. Gilman equates men and women to animals in this section, calling fathers "useless" in nature whereas motherhood is the key to the natural life cycle. Yet none of the foods or plants she holds as examples of motherhood would exist without the duality of male-female fertilization principles. Examples of useful fatherhood abound in nature. Yet even as Gilman uses animal characteristics to justify her contention that males are useless, her purpose in writing this utopian work is to convince humans that they are not subject to their bestial nature but can transcend it for the betterment of humanity.

Chapter 6, "Comparisons Are Odious"

Chapter 6, "Comparisons Are Odious" Summary

The three men begin to feel ashamed of their own society as the women continue to question them. Once revealed that seven or eight million American women are poor, the women ask how many women are in the total populace. They soon discover that poor women make up a third of the total female population in America. Then they ask what poverty means, for there is none in their culture. Vandyck explains the Darwinian theory of survival of the fittest, linking it to the economic struggle for survival. Moadine assumes that the wealthier women are, as the men have explained, "'loved, honored, kept in the home to care for their children.'" (pg. 63) She further assumes that poor women do not have children. Jeff explains that poor women actually tend to have the most. Uncomfortable, the men are glad when the subject is changed. They learn of Herland's knowledge in the sciences, and are surprised at the depth of mathematical and scientific knowledge gained by the women. The men quickly realize that the general level of education is much higher than in their own country.

One day Terry confronts Moadine and demands to know what the women intend to do with them. Moadine thought they had made this clear: the women intend to teach and learn as much as possible. Terry asks why they are still imprisoned. Moadine replies that they do not feel safe allowing the men to roam the country because of the young women. Moadine adds that their concerns are for the men's safety, not the women's. Terry blusters angrily. Vandyck implies that Terry has a lot to learn.

The Herland concept of Motherhood infuses the entire culture. Raising children is considered more important than personal well-being, and motherhood in Herland is not the individualized ideal prized in America. Motherhood encompasses the willing sacrifice made by the Herland women who chose not to have children when the population threatened to outgrow their resources. Such women distracted themselves from their mother-longing by raising the children of other mothers. Abortion, called infanticide by the narrator, is abhorrent to the women. They simply choose not to become pregnant through the power of their will. Motherhood is a conscious choice, and each woman in Herland allows herself only one child so as not to expand the population.

In Herland, mothers only raise their own children for the first year or two. After that, the children are communal children, although the mother stays close by. Those who are held unfit to be mothers are not allowed children of their own, and those who are seen as exceptionally fit may have more than one child. These exceptional women are called Over Mothers, and are the closest thing to an aristocracy, which exists in Herland. Once the population limits were put into place, the women focused on increasing the quality of life for their children. Hygiene and sanitation were perfected, and illness is exceptionally rare. Thus a once-flourishing body of medical knowledge has receded into memory. Psychology is their chief art and used to develop their educational system and society as a whole. Every achievement is considered part of the communal motherhood. Having

learned all this, the men are finally considered docile and educated enough to see the country, and they are brought out of their confinement into Herland.

Chapter 6, "Comparisons Are Odious" Analysis

The author's arrogance has begun to match the level of male arrogance, which she seeks to debunk. The goal of this chapter is to prove that socialism and feminine dominance are inherently superior to all other ways of life, and that all other ways of life are considerably inferior. Whatever valuable points the author hopes to make are quickly swallowed up in extremist socialist rhetoric. Her writing begins to mirror the very qualities she so despises in men as she marginalizes and dehumanizes the opposite sex. Courage, nobility, wisdom, and valor have now been appropriated as exclusively belonging to the female gender. When the men attempt to display any such qualities, they are considered savage. This is discouragingly similar to the male ethos that courage, valor, or anger in women is a product of hysteria and cannot be taken seriously.

Gilman's supporters might conclude that she is merely giving the men a taste of their own medicine. Perhaps this is the case; but such gender discrimination has caused incredible damage to human society over the millennia, and perpetrating reverse discrimination can hardly solve the problem. History has not born out Gilman's ideals for communal motherhood or the enforcement of a single child per family. Socialism, a noble ideal in its incipience, has in reality resulted in violent, repressive totalitarianism; and there are dark hints of this in *Herland* with the women's blithe statements that criminals and unfit mothers have been eliminated from society. Around the time *Herland* was published in book form, the one family - one child policy in China was instituted, leading to infanticide and a marginalized existence for the extra, illegal children sometimes born into families. In the U.S.A., the feminist movement at the time of *Herland*'s publication was teaching women that they were letting themselves and their sisters down if they chose to love or marry a man. Disrespect for men rose in tandem with the divorce rate, and the adult children are now dealing with the aftermath.

Perhaps the most appalling idea Gilman espouses, which has unfortunately permeated modern culture today, is that good parenting is not achieved through education and societal support, but rather parents are either inherently "fit" or "unfit." What Gilman, and modern society, fail to address, is who should rightly be the arbiters of fitness or unfitness. Rather than allow the individual to flourish as such and make parenting decisions based upon individual beliefs - the basic ideal upon which the United States of America was founded - a mass belief system is imposed as to what is right or wrong. Ironically, many of society's most revered historical figures were considered heretical or deluded in their day. Thus if society is allowed to choose the fitness and unfitness of parents, many brilliant visionaries will never be born.

Chapter 7, "Our Growing Modesty"

Chapter 7, "Our Growing Modesty" Summary

"Being at last considered sufficiently tamed and trained to be trusted with scissors," the men are allowed to barber themselves. (pg. 73) Their three tutors, Somel, Zava, and Moadine, accompany the men on an extended tour of the country. Vandyck and Jeff join Moadine in mocking their savage friend Terry, although Terry is too dim-witted to notice. Terry has sunk in the esteem of his friends. Back home, they had seen Terry as a man among men; but here among the women, those same manly qualities make him seem ridiculous. The saintly Moadine somehow manages to maintain a friendly relationship with Terry even as she demonstrates her quiet superiority.

The men learn that the women of Herland do not have surnames, although they may sometimes acquire a second or third name as an honorific. The men are surprised that the children are not given their mothers' names and ask if the women do not take pride in their children. Somel explains they take great pride in their children, but not in the pride of ownership. As the tour progresses, the men learn that Herland society is based on two core concepts: the critic and the inventor. Those with critical minds are trained to their highest potential in their specialized field. They then put their minds toward noticing the shortcomings of the existing processes. The inventor minds respond to this criticism with suggested improvements. Vandyck is chagrined that his own society does not focus on conscious improvement. Jeff and Vandyck begin to believe in the superiority of Herland.

The food supply appears to be the crowning achievement of Herland. Long ago it was decided that food-bearing trees are a more efficient use of space than field crop cultivation. Thus a variety of food-bearing trees has been carefully cultivated and tended to produce the highest possible yields, and the soil is replenished continually. Terry demands to know how plants and people could be improved without the cross-fertilization procedures employed in his world. Moadine explains that both with plants and people, the women encourage any positive traits that arise spontaneously. Terry insists that acquired traits cannot be passed down genetically. Moadine does not contradict him, although the plants and people of Herland demonstrate that acquired traits have been passed down. Jeff suggests that the answer may lie in the secrets of soul culture and psychic growth, two areas about which American society is largely ignorant.

Vandyck reviews the men's tour of Herland. The women have apparently achieved a perfect society. There are no criminals. The population and food supply is perfectly balanced. Oddly, the women do not dress in a feminine manner, as if this, too, has naturally disappeared as a result of the absence of men. Somel admits that they once had criminals, but such individuals were trained and bred out of the population. Vandyck is horrified by the idea that girls considered unfit are not allowed to breed, and that most girls considered fit to bear children are not considered fit to raise them. Somel explains

that the education of a child is such an important art that only the most qualified women are allowed to work with the children. Mothers willingly allow others to raise their children for "'there are others whom she knows to be wiser. She knows it because she has studied as they did, practiced as they did, and honors their real superiority.'" (pg. 83)

Chapter 7, "Our Growing Modesty" Analysis

The concepts of soul culture and psychic growth presented in this chapter are intriguing, particularly in context of the Darwinian debate which Gilman also addresses here. Gilman purports to be a different kind of Social Darwinist, but from this chapter one gleans that what she really means is that she believes Darwinism to be in error and her belief in a modified Darwinism is merely a polite way of disagreeing with the theory entirely. This comes across through Moadine's character. Moadine demonstrates that acquired traits can be passed down through the generations even as she agrees with Terry that they cannot. Jeff's reference to a soul culture is an intriguing addendum to the Darwinist discussion. Gilman was quite ahead of her time with this idea. A few years after Herland was written, physicists such as Werner Heisenberg began speaking of directed evolution, which Gilman seems to espouse. Whether it is directed by God or man is rarely discussed by directed evolution advocates. Yet Gilman, like many metaphysic philosophers, holds that mankind directs evolution, or co-creates with God.

Chapter 8, "The Girls of Herland"

Chapter 8, "The Girls of Herland" Summary

At long last, the men are allowed to meet the young ladies of Herland. They have been asked to lecture to girls' classes on the history of the outside world. The information the men have given their tutors has been condensed into a digest and distributed, thus the audiences will already have a basic grounding in external world history. The men are soon confronted with hundreds of bright young ladies. The girls begin to ask questions that are over the men's heads, and their friendly tutors rescue them by bringing the formal part of the engagement to an end. The girls form informal groups around the men. The girls in Terry's group quickly become offended by his overly intimate compliments and overbearing manner. All but the most argumentative desert Terry's group and join Jeff's or Vandyck's. Jeff, the romantic, is more popular than Terry but only with the least practical girls, the artists, ethicists, and teachers. Vandyck, to his bemusement, finds he is highly popular. As the tour continues, Terry learns to reign in his offensive manner.

With his new freedom and integration into Herland society, Vandyck finally learns how the women view the three explorers. The women see the men as a chance to reestablish a bi-sexual country. Yet they proceed cautiously, wanting to be sure this change is in the best interests of their future children. This new method of motherhood enthralls the women and thus they are all keenly interested in the men. The men believe they have their pick of the young women, but Vandyck later learns that the women decided amongst themselves. Celis, Alima, and Ellador are given the honor of courting the men.

Celis and Jeff pair off. Jeff idealizes her, which confuses Celis. Terry tries to play the field before settling down to court Alima but is met with continual rejection. He and Alima have a stormy courtship; Terry tries to pair off with other women during their frequent breakups but no one will have him out of loyalty to Alima. Vandyck's relationship with Ellador evolves slowly. They first become peers and friends. Vandyck has trouble initiating romance because Ellador's culture has lived without sexual relations for two thousand years. Fortunately for Terry, Alima retains some "faint vestige of long-descended feelings" which enables her to respond to his masculinity (pg. 93). Terry is patient, but his end goal is always to master Alima. The men flounder in their courtships due to the loss of established gender roles. The women insist on equal treatment in every respect, refusing to acknowledge any differences. The women do not have a cultural understanding of the words *home*, *family*, or *marriage*. Their personal lives are subordinate to their love of country, which exceeds patriotism as the men understand it.

Chapter 8, "The Girls of Herland" Analysis

In this Chapter, the author begins to equate gender equality with the elimination of the sex drive. Earlier in the story Gilman lays the groundwork for this by frequently referring to the women's androgynous attire. Because the women don't look like women, with their short hair and lack of feminine adornments, the men are able to see them as people first, females second. Early feminists often took this approach to gender equality, disavowing femininity as an art created by men and forced upon women. Unfortunately, by espousing the belief that sexual tension can be eliminated if women don't dress the part, Gilman and other such feminists unconsciously create the corollary: women who do dress in a feminine manner are responsible for creating male lust. This attitude is no different than blaming a rape victim for dressing provocatively. Thus the modern feminist movement has largely abandoned the concept of androgyny.

Chapter 9, "Our Relations and Theirs"

Chapter 9, "Our Relations and Theirs" Summary

The men's ideas about relationships are difficult to convey to these women, although they try. The women are not receptive to the concept of forming an individual home with their male partners. Terry explains that women take care of the home and the children. This is their work. The idea of staying home sounds like imprisonment to them. Terry becomes bored with Herland and its lack of vices. There is no smoking and no drinking. Terry's occasional late night attempts at wandering or escape are always thwarted by the Colonels. The men's freedom is still limited. Terry complains that the society is too perfect. There remains nothing to accomplish. Their literary drama is also limited as there is no sexual motivation, jealousy, or bloodlust. Jeff enjoys the harmonious perfection of Herland and Vandyck occupies himself with his sociological studies.

Vandyck learns more about the fundamental philosophy that governs Herland. The children of Herland begin life in group homes built to accommodate babies. Everyone is kind to the children, and their education is integrated into their natural sense of curiosity and playfulness. Every lesson is related to the overall culture. For example, Ellador became a forester because of a butterfly. When she was eleven, she caught an unusual butterfly and took it to the nearest insect teacher. The lady had explained that these butterflies are dangerous to obernut trees. Obernuts are a very popular food-nut, and Ellador was pleased to learn that by capturing the offending insect she had helped to save the obernut food supply. Ellador was highly praised and children all over Herland were taught the story and told to look out for these butterflies.

Girls are raised to believe that the world is a friendly, safe place that belongs to them. They are encouraged in their civic duty of motherhood and their individual desire to pursue a given career. They are taught personal decorum, but not shame. Their flaws are not presented as sins, but as errors and misplays. Their lives and education are like one giant, enchanting game. The women of Herland do not believe in an opposing dynamic of good and evil. All of life is about growth, and growth is their greatest pleasure. Mother-love is sublimated into national growth. Even their language has been simplified for the convenience of the children. Vandyck is so embarrassed by his culture's own stifling system of education that he prefers not to discuss it with Ellador.

Instead, he goes to his tutor, Somel, and asks for a detailed description of the educational system. Somel explains that critical thinking and individual will are the two qualities they most seek to develop. For sixteen hundred years they have devised and improved learning games for young children. Vandyck compares this with Montessori's theories. Vandyck is nonetheless skeptical that games could properly educate a child. Yet he has to admit that the people of Herland are better educated as a group and enjoy learning. Also, all the children he sees are eager and interested in life. Unlike the children in America, Herland's children never sit around and complain that they are bored and have nothing to do. Education in Herland is designed to entice children into

learning, and many fascinating learning opportunities are constantly available to the children.

Chapter 9, "Our Relations and Theirs" Analysis

On the subject of education, Gilman presents some highly positive ideas. Children have a natural curiosity and, in Gilman's day, educational experts were beginning to suggest that children might learn better if the process can be made appealing. Educational games and interactive learning, as opposed to the traditional rote learning system, have continued to gain prominence in theory in many private schools. Public schools, however, have gone in the opposite direction. As more and more standardized testing is required, rote learning and regurgitation is more prevalent than ever in America's public schools.

Chapter 10, "Their Religions and Our Marriages"

Chapter 10, "Their Religions and Our Marriages" Summary

As a Christian, Vandyck has difficulty grasping the Herland religion. Ellador asks about the various religions in the outside world and compiles a chart listing their characteristics. Ellador concludes that the commonalities of the religions of the outer world are beliefs in a dominant power and special behaviors needed to appease the dominant power. She approves of the gradual change from history's bloodthirsty gods to the Christian concept of a common Father. The story of the virgin birth does not surprise her, of course; but she cannot comprehend the necessity for the crucifixion or the belief in a devil and damnation. When Ellador learns that some sects believe in infant damnation she turns pale and questions how a supposedly loving God could be thought to burn little babies.

Ellador is so upset she rushes off to the nearest temple for comfort and counsel. Each village has a temple. Services are not held in the temples, for the women believe that all of life is service to God. However the temples are available to anyone in need. Ellador returns shortly, much relieved. The wise woman in the temple had assured Ellador that she simply had the wrong idea. She told Ellador she does not need to believe that such a cruel God ever existed. She reminds Ellador that ignorant people will believe anything they are told. Ellador explains to Vandyck that she and her people are unaccustomed to horrifying ideas, for they have none in their religion. Vandyck cannot believe this. Ellador explains that there must have been some, in the past, but as the religion grew, the horrible ideas were simply left behind. Vandyck asks how they can simply discard religious beliefs like that. Ellador does not understand how Vandyck's society can hold onto ideas, which are thousands of years old, without even trying out better ideas.

Vandyck asks how they worship their Mother Goddess. Puzzled, Ellador asks what he means by *worship*. "'But surely your mothers expect honor, reverence, obedience, from you. You have to do things for your mothers, surely?'

'Oh, no,' she insisted, smiling, shaking her soft brown hair. 'We do things *from* our mothers - not *for* them. We don't have to do things *for* them - they don't need it, you know. But we have to live on - splendidly - because of them; and that's the way we feel about God.'" (pg. 112) They conclude their dialogue on religion by discussing the patriarchal God, perceived as an authoritarian father figure, as compared to the Herland God, which is not personified. God is seen as a positive, supporting force.

Vandyck declares Herland's religion to be the most practical and beautiful religion he has ever encountered in his sociological or personal studies. With their focus on children, Vandyck believes them to be more Christian than any Christian. Yet he is

stunned to learn that Ellador's people do not believe in life after death. She calls the idea foolish. They already have paradise on earth, why should they put this idea off until they die? Ellador assumes Vandyck's world is equally wonderful. He does not disabuse her of this notion. In fact, by this point all of the men are actively hiding the ills of their world.

The men talk more and more about marriage, a topic they feel the women will appreciate. Unfortunately the women do not take well to the notion that women outside of Herland exchange their fathers' names for their husbands' names upon marrying. They are upset that the men do not similarly take their wives' names. To please the men, the women agree to a marriage ceremony. There is a huge turnout and someone even writes a beautiful new song for the occasion in honor of the New Hope of Fatherhood. The ceremony is beautiful. The tutors express the nation's thankfulness that the arrival of the men has at last made it possible to create ties, once again, with the outside world.

Chapter 10, "Their Religions and Our Marriages" Analysis

In this chapter, the author lampoons Christianity in a manner that was extremely daring for her time, and is still daring today. Of particular note is Ellador's surprise that people would cling to two thousand year-old ideas without reevaluating them in light of present-day enlightenment. Yet ironically, in the very next chapter, the author actually promotes the patriarchal Christian notion that sexual relations should only take place with the intention of procreating. This notion has been widely criticized in twentieth century literature for the negative psychological consequences associated with sexual shaming and the fear resulting from religion's attempts to demonize human sexuality. Most modern-day feminists seek to discredit, not support, this patriarchal denial of human sexuality. Modern Christian groups also attempt to promote loving intimacy between marital partners in an attempt to undo the effects of former misogynistic teachings. Thus it is paradoxical that the author, who appears to be fundamentally opposed to patriarchal Christianity, would support the idea that women, like animals, should only engage in sexual relations when they are in heat.

Chapter 11, "Our Difficulties"

Chapter 11, "Our Difficulties" Summary

Vandyck sums up his and his friends' view of marriage as follows: "He goes on with his business, and she adapts herself to him and to it." (pg. 122) Vandyck, Jeff, and Terry had all assumed that the women would adhere to their husband's views. Even though the women had expressed opposing opinions, the men still believed the women would naturally set aside their own views after marriage. This turns out not to be the case. Vandyck admits the love they receive from their wives is sublime, yet the women make no changes. They refuse to give up their careers and will not move in with their husbands. Each husband and each wife has his or her own personal set of rooms within larger communal buildings. No one in Herland has her own home. The women cannot understand why the men would want to live with them when they spend so much time together already. The men must fend for themselves at mealtime as they had when they were bachelors. Vandyck believes the men are missing a sense of possession.

Ellador cannot understand why Vandyck would wish to make love other than with the intent of fathering a child. She refers to the animals in the forests and how they only mate when the female is in season. When Vandyck makes advances, she treats him like a schoolboy trying to cadge a cookie before dinner. Vandyck attempts to explain the beauty of intercourse and intimacy, but Ellador expertly diverts him from the subject. Vandyck realizes that she is psychologically far superior to him and that he will one day share her views about sex being superfluous. But that time has not yet come. Despite his frustration, Ellador opens his eyes to the beauty of higher love and the wonder of being a part of such an advanced civilization. The fact that the women do not dress to allure helps minimize his desire, and eventually he comes to see his sexual needs as a form of immature gluttony.

Terry fares much worse with Alima. His view of sexuality is one of dominance and control. Alima is repulsed by his coarse advances. Soon she leaves him for good. Alima asks Moadine to stay next door to her and always travels with a sturdy female guard. Terry, convinced of his rights, breaks into her room one night and attempts to assault her sexually. Alima struggles valiantly and Moadine rushes in. Together they subdue Terry. Terry refuses to calm down and the women are forced to sedate him. Alima demands a trial. Vandyck notes that in America, Terry's acts would have been perfectly legal. Yet in Herland it is considered a grave crime and Terry is banished from the country.

Chapter 11, "Our Difficulties" Analysis

In this chapter the author seems to reveal her own tragic personal history through her limited, black and white views about sex. It is historically true that men in the Victorian era had the legal right to rape their wives. Since women were considered objects, many

men were ignorant of the subtleties of interpersonal relations. Sex was often imposed upon women callously, roughly, and often cruelly. Modern psychologists know it is not unusual for a woman who has been repeatedly raped to shun sexual relations. This is a normal reaction to abnormal circumstances. Yet the author, perhaps lacking the psychological awareness she touts in Herland, believes that all sexual relations are tantamount to rape, or at best are to be endured sporadically in the interest of procreation. The notion of voluntary, loving intimacy, espoused by Vandyck's character, is quickly discounted as an infantile notion that does not exist in reality.

Nonetheless, *Herland* does have a place in the early women's movement. Such expressions of anger and rejection of men were a starting point for the cultural advances which came long after. The women's movement in America worked many years to make spousal rape and date rape legally punishable crimes. The movement also worked to educate men about the nuances of interpersonal relationships. Even with the improved laws set down in the 1970's, a large percentage of women who are date raped today do not associate the event with the term rape. Many women suffer from rape trauma syndrome, a form of post-traumatic stress syndrome, yet do not consciously understand that what happened to them is quantifiable as rape. Sadly, many men also continue to behave in ways that legally and morally constitute sexual coercion or rape, without realizing their acts are criminal.

Feminists speak of a rape culture in contemporary society. Modern psychologists and criminologists back the assertion that young men are raised in an environment which promotes rape and the objectification of women. Still, modern American society is a vast improvement over the way women were formerly treated. Yet even in the darkest days in which marriage still constituted a legal contract of ownership, there must still have been many couples who engaged in intimate relations on a mutually consenting basis. To imagine otherwise is to hold as little faith in mankind as the author herself demonstrates.

Chapter 12, "Expelled"

Chapter 12, "Expelled" Summary

The men are unhappy that one of their members has been expelled. Terry pretends not to care, but Vandyck can tell this is a bluff. Terry is kept under guard whilst preparations for his departure are made. Vandyck decides to go along, because more than one person is needed to safely pilot the plane, and Ellador will go with him because they cannot bear to be parted. Ellador wishes to see the outside world. Jeff has neither interest in returning to his former home, nor much sympathy for Terry. Jeff advises Vandyck that the time has come to warn Ellador about the pitiable state of American civilization. Vandyck has learned at long last to view women as real people, but he shudders to think how Ellador will view his homeland, especially in light of her revulsion for Terry's brutal assault.

Vandyck assures the reader that the new wives did not wholly refuse sexual relations with their husbands. In fact, Celis has discovered, to the joy of the entire nation, that she is pregnant. As the bearer of the Great New Hope, Celis is revered by the other women. Ellador tells Vandyck it is better that she has not yet become pregnant, for travel could be bad for the baby. She insists they refrain from sexual relations for the duration of their trip to the outer lands. Vandyck squelches his disappointment and tells Ellador he would gladly give up anything to have her by his side. Vandyck is truly beginning to see that having Ellador's companionship is enough to keep him happy. Vandyck explains that he has benefited from loving a woman who is superior to him.

Terry is still in love with Alima, but she will have nothing to do with him. He and Vandyck discuss plans to return to Herland with other men and carve out a path through the cliff for others to follow. The women inform them that, for the present at least, there will be no open passage. Despite the men's attempts to cover up the baser iniquities of the wider world, the women have ascertained much. They decide that it is not safe to open their borders to a world that contains violence, poverty, and disease. They insist the men promise not to betray their location to the outside world. Vandyck promises, but Terry refuses. The women tell Terry his only alternative is to live as a prisoner in Herland. This threat secures his promise, and he, Vandyck, and Ellador leave Herland.

Chapter 12, "Expelled" Analysis

The *Herland* utopia is analogous to a Garden of Eden scenario, and this analogy is concluded aptly in the final chapter as Terry is banished from Herland. Terry's banishment relates to the Christian doctrine because he is banished for sexual misconduct. Yet the Biblical scenario is transposed in this feminist utopia for it is the man, not the woman, who is expelled from the garden.

Characters

Vandyck Jennings

Vandyck is the narrator of *Herland* and the story is told entirely through his point of view. As a sociologist, Vandyck's perspective is critical to the author's mission to convert readers to her socialist-feminist perspective. At the beginning of the story, Vandyck is the antithesis of everything in which the author believes. He subscribes to the then-current viewpoint that women are inherently inferior beings. Vandyck has been convinced by academic studies and statistics, which indicate that women are poor students of math and science. He also believes, as do most men of his era, that women are inferior athletes, and that on a social level, they are jealous, emotionally unstable creatures. Given all this irrefutable evidence, so prevalent in American society, Vandyck knows that women are incapable of creating a civilized nation. As a sociologist, the only female-dominated societies with which he is familiar are primitive matriarchies. Author Gilman, on the other hand, believes the future of civilized society requires the active participation of women. She attributes war, poverty, crime, and disease to the dominance of a male power structure and believes feminine influence can create a better future. The utopian society of *Herland* is Gilman's attempt to show what this future might look like.

Gilman's goal is to present her story in such a way that she makes a plausible case for Vandyck's change of heart. Gilman does not bother to explain that women perform poorly in math and science classes because their male professors do not take them seriously and refuse them the help and encouragement male students receive. She does not bother to explain that women in Victorian America are seen as emotionally unstable because the restrictive lifestyle they are forced to live is unacceptable to any human being and causes great anger and resentment. Rather, Gilman simply presents an ideal society, as it would look if women were allowed to create without any male influence whatsoever.

Vandyck, whose specialty is the comparative study of cultures, details this society for the reader in glowing terms. He sees the evidence of advanced development, the lack of crime, poverty, and disease, and begins to awaken to the power of the female perspective. By the end of the story Vandyck is wholly convinced. Yet the reader is less likely to be. Gilman takes Vandyck's conversion too far when he begins to view women as beings far superior to men. Whatever credible points Gilman sets out to make, she ultimately loses as Vandyck, unrealistically and somewhat ridiculously, completely disavows his former allegiances to trumpet the virtues of Herland.

Terry O. Nicholson

Terry's character is initially introduced as a ladies' man and a man among men. He is rich, sophisticated and has a highly intelligent mind. His hobbies are mechanics and

electricity, both considered very manly pursuits. Terry owns various cars, boats, and planes; and he has a macho, adventurous spirit. He is the type of character who would be considered one of society's elite, a social and financial asset. Terry is not unaware of his high status. As the explorers embark on their journey to Herland, he assures his friends that if they become lost, search parties will be sent for them as they are "valuable American citizens" (pg. 7). In the beginning, this does not seem like arrogance to Jeff and Vandyck, but they will come to see it as such.

Terry's social status among his two male friends begins to drop on an inverse parallel to the men's rising esteem for the women of Herland. Terry's viewpoint represents the unenlightened male. If he is celebrated back home, that is only because he belongs to an unenlightened society. Contrasted with the superior capabilities of the Herland women, Terry's belief system is challenged. Unlike his two friends, however, he does not rise to the challenge. Terry clings to his beliefs of masculine superiority. Despite all the evidence before him, he refuses to accept that women are capable of achieving cooperation or building a civilized society. His insistence that all women desire to be "mastered" leads him to attempt to rape Alima. To his great surprise and disgust, this act is punished by the legal system in Herland. Terry insists to the bitter end that he is within his rights. The author does not attempt to provide Terry with any character growth, for his one-dimensional character serves to highlight the arrogance of the chauvinist viewpoint.

Jeff Margrave

Jeff is characterized as a romantic and chivalrous man. He is a doctor by trade, but a poet by nature. Studious and idealistic, Jeff adheres to the old notions of women as damsels and men as their knights in shining armor. Part of the emergent feminist platform at the time Herland was written was to deconstruct this mythical view of male-female relations. Feminists felt marginalized by men such as Jeff. The concept of putting a woman on a pedestal - a euphemism for worshipping women - has many negative consequences in the real world despite its charming sentiment. Women who are worshipped are not allowed to make mistakes, and these romantic notions of women lead to excruciatingly harsh social judgment as well as a sexual double standard. Women learned to be wary of excessive chivalry as they began to demand their independence and sexual freedom. While to a certain extent chivalry is quite attractive to women, taken to an extreme it has negative consequences.

Men like Jeff see women as saints, vulnerable treasures in need of protection. Yet the downside is if the saint falls off her pedestal, she is no longer worthy of worship and no longer considered a good woman. Premarital sex, disobedience to one's husband, or a desire to engage in "manly" pursuits like sports were enough in those days to knock a woman off her pedestal; and as a result, she was often shunned and reviled by society. Over-protectiveness by men can also have disastrous consequences to a woman's personal freedom. For example, in Saudi Arabia, men are so protective that a woman is not allowed to travel without her husband, son, or other male family member acting as escort. These are the restrictions American feminists hoped to dispense with, and Jeff's

chivalrous nature is thus important to the storyline. Yet of course, many women enjoy chivalry within reason, and thus the author is much kinder in her attitude toward Jeff's character than toward Terry's.

Ellador

Ellador is Vandyck's love interest in the story and ultimately becomes his wife. She is not a protagonist, but she is the major female character in the story; and Gilman goes on to write a sequel in which Ellador is featured as protagonist. When the men first arrive in Herland, Ellador and her two friends, Alima and Celis, are the first citizens they encounter. Ellador immediately shows herself to be the leader of her group of friends, for she is the one who speaks for them and introduces them all to the men. The reader later learns that Ellador is also well known in Herland society. As a child, she made a serendipitous contribution to the well being of the forested food supply, and her grateful teacher made Ellador's story known throughout the land. The arrival of the men marks an important change for Herland society, and Ellador's fellow citizens display their trust in Ellador by selecting her as one of the three women to participate in a romantic relationship with the men. Nonetheless, like all the other female characters, Ellador's personality is not well developed. Her husband, the narrator, devotes a great deal of time to extolling Ellador's virtues. Vandyck's descriptions are high-flown and adoring, but not particularly concrete.

Ellador's purpose in the story is to teach Vandyck about love. Vandyck reports his growing appreciation of her as a woman, a human being, and a soul mate. Through Ellador, he learns that there is more to love and marriage than sex and servitude. Ellador refuses his sexual advances with rare exception, and she does not buy into the traditional gender roles in which women prepare meals and keep house for their husbands. Ellador will not live with Vandyck, preferring to keep her own rooms. Through all this, Vandyck learns is that the male concept of marriage is one of dominance. Ellador's refusal to be dominated forces Vandyck to learn to love her as an individual. He respects her mind and enjoys spending time with her. Yet the author does not stop here. It is not enough for Gilman that Vandyck learn to love Ellador as an equal. Vandyck explains to the reader than instead of loving "down," he has learned to love "up" (pg. 141). In other words, he has learned from Ellador that women are superior, not inferior, to men.

Alima

Alima is the young Herlander who becomes Terry's wife in the story. Although she and the other Herland women are often referred to with admiring adjectives, her character is not well developed and the reader does not have a chance to see, firsthand, what makes Alima special. Perhaps a Victorian era reader could appreciate Alima more. In this era women were not thought to possess much athletic or intellectual ability. Alima, like her friends Celis and Ellador, is intellectual and smart. She has a career, although the author never divulges what that career might be. Nor does Gilman give the reader

any evidence of Alima's intelligence, simply because the character development is so incomplete that the reader has no chance to get to know Alima.

Gilman implies that Alima is the lowliest of the three women friends, for Alima possesses some genetic throwback qualities which allow her to love a macho man like Terry. Yet Alima triumphs in the end. When Terry tries to master her by forcing sex upon her, she masters him instead and fights off his advances. The author sees Alima's rejection of Terry as her saving grace. Alima's character provides a positive lesson when she stands up for herself in a case of attempted spousal rape. Such rapes were perfectly legal in the Victorian era, as the author notes. Thus Alima's situation is created by the author in hopes of changing society's views about the domination of women.

Celis

Celis is one of the original three girls (as the author refers to the women of Herland) the men meet when they first arrive in Herland. Her character, like most of the other female characters, is not well developed. However, the author does imply that Celis belongs the class of women, i.e., teachers and artists, who are not "practical." Gilman's unintended indictment of teachers is designed to explain to the reader that Celis' lack of practicality allows her to love a romantic like Jeff despite Jeff's flawed desire to put women on pedestals. As with Alima's romance with Terry, the author feels the need to justify why such an independent, resourceful woman as Celis would desire to have a man in her life. Again, as with Alima's character, the reader knows Celis is independent and resourceful because she is so described by the narrator. However no concrete examples or details are given to support this characterization. Other than these few hints of characterization, Celis is accorded no other character development or personality traits. Her career, which she refuses to give up after marriage, is not revealed to the reader. Celis' big moment in the story arrives when she becomes pregnant with Jeff's child. This New Motherhood, as the women of Herland call it, gives Celis the adoration of her entire society.

Somel

Somel is Vandyck's tutor, and apparently the most special of all the tutors. Vandyck quickly realizes her intelligence; and it is primarily through Somel's character that he comes to respect women as equals. While Vandyck devotes a great deal of his narration to extolling Somel's virtues, she is as undeveloped as all the other characters. Somel's role in the story is limited to divulging facts about Herland and posing questions about the outer world. The questions which she and the other tutors ask are awkward for the men because they force the men to compare their society's shortcomings with the superior virtues of Herland. Thus her role is important to the author's goal of converting Vandyck; and through him, the reader, to her feminist-socialist perspective. Yet Somel's lack of character development gives the reader no reason to care about her. So the author's attempts to present her as a brilliant, unique individual ultimately fail.

Moadine

Moadine is Terry's tutor. Vandyck and Jeff admire Moadine immensely for her wisdom and her patience with Terry. Terry dislikes her immensely for all the wrong reasons. His antipathy towards her is meant to portray some common male stereotypes of the Victorian era. His attitude towards Moadine is dismissive because in Terry's mind, only youthful, attractive women are worth his time. Terry does not believe that the female mind has anything to contribute, and thus the female body is the only worthy asset in a woman. Therefore elder women such as Moadine are useless to Terry's way of thinking.

Contrary to Terry's understanding, Moadine is highly intelligent. She possesses the wisdom of her experience and her culture. Yet Terry, if he could recognize this, would have ample reason to dislike Moadine, for Moadine treats Terry with quiet contempt. Her condemnation of him is so subtle that he fails to see it. Her air of superiority is lauded by Terry's friends, who come to share Moadine's contempt for Terry. Yet her attitude flies in the face of the ideals taught in Herland. The author makes a point of stating that girl children are raised with tolerance and respect. Even the girls who possess flaws are treated with kind patience for their lack of understanding. Terry is accorded no such respect. His ignorance of the female mind gives Moadine license to view him as inferior. Certainly no girl child in Herland would be treated in this way.

Zava

Zava is Jeff's tutor and one of the female elders of Herland. Jeff comes to think of Zava as a favored aunt, for she reminds him of his aunt at home. Thus Jeff is able to overcome the masculine belief that only young, nubile women are worth his time. His appreciation of Zava is set up to counterpoint Terry's chauvinistic contention that the elder women are worthless because he does not desire them. Jeff sees in Zava the accumulated wisdom of her culture and considers her a kind and worthy teacher. Towards the end of the story, when the men are married, the presence of Zava and the other tutors is the closest the men have to family present at the ceremony.

O-du-mera

The Land Mother, or ruler, of Herland was given the name Mera at birth. The name means "thinker." As she grew up, her wisdom became highly respected and "Du" was added to her name to indicate wisdom. The preface "O" was added in later years as homage to her greatness. Thus O-du-mera means "great and wise thinker." In the story, this example is given during a discussion of naming practices. The women of Herland do not have surnames. They are confused by the American practice of giving a child its father's name at birth, and even more confused by the fact that women replace their father's name with their husband's name when they are married, especially because men do not similarly take on their wives' names.

Objects/Places

The Red and Blue River

The men first find evidence of an all-female civilization in a river, which runs red and blue. The local guides explain that the colors of the river change frequently; and when the men find that the river's red color is caused by the bleeding dye of a scarlet cloth, they realize that the colorful river is evidence of Herland's existence.

The Cliffs

Sheer, rock cliffs surround Herland on all sides. The cliffs cannot be climbed by traditional means, and thus Herland is totally isolated from all other human society.

The Biplane

Terry's biplane is the machine that carries the men into Herland. As Herland is accessible only by air, the men have no way to enter or leave without the plane.

The Fortress

Located along the sheerest cliff surrounding Herland, the fortress is a remnant of the ancient days when men still lived in the land. It is an artifact of an earlier, warlike existence. When Vandyck, Terry and Jeff arrive in Herland, they are imprisoned in this fortress for several months until the women feel they have been suitably tamed.

The Rope

When, at Terry's behest, the men attempt to escape the fortress, they create a rope using pieces of fabric from the bedding, clothing, and wall tapestries found in their room.

Obernuts

Obernuts are, according to Ellador, the best food-nut in Herland. As a child she captured a butterfly of a species dangerous to the obernut tree. This experience sparked her interest in land conservation and led to her career as a forester.

The Necklace

Terry brings this piece of costume jewelry and uses it as bait, hoping to lure the young girls of Herland closer so he might capture them.

The Guns

The men bring guns into Herland in case they encounter savage men. During their initial struggle with the women, Terry pulls his gun and attempts to fire it. After this, the women confiscate the guns permanently.

The Primers

When the men are first imprisoned, they are presented with children's primers so that they can begin to learn the language of Herland. They are surprised that the primers are formally bound and printed, evidence that Herland is an advanced civilization.

Temple of Maaia

Maaia, the Goddess of Motherhood, is the only God worshipped by the monotheistic culture of Herland. The ancestors of Herland's women were pantheistic; but when the first virgin birth occurred, the women rejoiced and built a special Temple of Maaia. Over time, they renounced their belief in the war-like gods and focused entirely on the concept of Motherhood. Herland now has many temples dedicated to Maaia. While there are no formal worship services, there is always a wise woman in each temple ready to serve anyone in spiritual need.

Social Sensitivity

Those familiar with Gilman's other works— from fiction such as "The Yellow Wallpaper" to nonfiction like Women and Economics—are aware that her principal interest as a writer involves exposing the crushing gender inequities condoned by law and culture in her time. Herland is no exception.

In this novella, Gilman performs a kind of thought experiment, imagining what a world might be like if women were its only occupants and governors. Put simply, the world is nearly perfect; the three men who discover it wait and search in vain for a full year to discover some flaw in the system.

Thus, Gilman addresses concerns about the society in which she lives by pointing out how an ideal civilization would cure those social ills.

At the time Gilman wrote Herland, the gap between rich and poor in the United States was even more pronounced than it is today. The myth of the American dream remained popular; only a few years before Herland's publication, 1910, the number of Horatio Alger novels sold annually surpassed one million. Alger's books asserted that anyone could attain financial security and middle-class respectability. This myth, however, only legitimated the laissezfaire attitude that kept government from lending a hand to the needy and helpless. Aware that the desire for self-improvement, the driving force of capitalism, only turns the individual away from his or her less fortunate countrymen, Gilman made Herland a socialist society that depends on a universal commitment to the purpose of constant improvement. Van, the novella's narrator, comes to discover that "they thought in terms of the community. As such, their time-sense was not linked to the hopes and ambitions of an individual life." There is not competition among the women of Herland; some are privileged above others only in the number of children they are allowed to bear. In the absence of wage slavery or ranks of idle rich, the country manages to become not only self-sufficient but almost universally free of crime, aimlessness, or unemployment.

Gilman asserts that education is the key to building a just and reasonable society in which all citizens work only for the common good. She points out that "with these women the most salient quality in all their institutions was reasonableness." Having worked as a teacher and governess, Gilman was keenly aware that only after being given a reasonable education could anyone be expected to function as a reasonable and productive citizen. In Herland, therefore, women arrive at their life's work via a nurturing form of education that is free and available to all. Education becomes the most essential institution in Herland because the society operates on the assumption that "however the children differed at birth, the real growth lay later— through education."

Since all the inhabitants of this isolated community are literally sisters (descended from a single mother who conceived without the help of a man) the debate of whether nature or nurture plays a larger role in human development becomes irrelevant.

All citizens have the capacity to make great contributions; the extent and nature of their effect on the country's pursuit of perfection is determined in the years of their education where their vocation is chosen not for but by them. Herland's "education for citizenship" is, it seems, responsible for nearly all the benefits that follow. Gilman suggests, then, that the greatest shortcoming of her own society lay in the quality of its education. True, it might teach students the three R's, but training for citizenship, it seems, was grossly inadequate to her mind.

Another of Gilman's social concerns involves the way sex comes to enslave women.

In other non-fiction works, Gilman argues that in the modern world sex, useful in nature's eyes only for purposes of the species' perpetuation, has become inordinately important. Men view women as sexual objects and thus dehumanize them primarily because they place too high a value on the act of sex itself. The most explicit instance of Gilman's concern about the dehumanizing nature of sexual desire occurs after the three explorers are married to the three girls they first encounter. Van and Jeff are happy with their brides, even though Van occasionally complains about Ellador's deferment of his desire. Jeff, on the other hand, is enraged by Alima's refusal to have sex with him. Gilman never says so in so many words, but the implication is obvious. Eventually, Jeff loses all patience and tries to take Alima by force.

The attempted rape is thwarted and Jeff is exiled from Herland. That his act precipitates the end of the narrative underscores the importance of eliminating such unchecked desire in an ideal society.

Gilman also suggests that human societies must check their more material desires to create a perfect civilization. The nation of Herland is cut off from the outside world; therefore, the natural resources available to the women are necessarily limited. Fairly quickly after they begin to flourish, it becomes obvious to the women of Herland that they must both check the growth of the population and use the natural resources only in ways that allow them to renew themselves. Making these commitments involve great sacrifices for the individuals in any given generation; not all women could have children and they had to remove wasteful foods such as meat from their diets. The residents of Herland made theses sacrifices because they placed the good of the civilization far above their own desires. The analogy to the large world is obvious. We may not be isolated within a small portion of the Earth, but we are limited by the extent of our planet. Just as Herland would perish if its residents did not check their population and intake of resources, Gilman suggests that human society will disappear if improvements are not made in our allocation of resources. In advocating vegetarianism and natural cultivation (as opposed to harmful fertilization), Herland becomes recognizable as a environmentalist work as well as a feminist one.

Techniques

Because of its function as a social document, a Utopian novel often lacks some of the aesthetic merits of fiction. The story, in short, often becomes secondary to the political message contained in the narration.

One of Gilman's greatest assets as a writer is her competence as both a pragmatic, reasonable producer of political tracts and imaginative, innovative spinner of yarns.

Having produced both short stories and nonfiction polemics, Gilman combined her talents to produce a book that is at once highly readable and dense with carefully constructed criticisms of and solutions to the status quo. Aside from its political import, Herland contains real drama that might appeal to the casual reader.

The first few chapters read as any story of high adventure. The opening pages are rich with detailed descriptions of the exotic lands of South America where Herland is hidden. As the three explorers carry out their plan to penetrate the country's mountain walls, Gilman gives careful attention to their means; describing every detail of their plan and the machinery they use to carry it out. She is aware that to make her story plausible, she must account for mankind's failure to discover the secluded society until the twentieth century. To do so, she invokes the recently perfected technology of flight; Herland is accessible by plane but not by any other means. Thus, it seems totally reasonable that no explorer would discover the land until planes became available. While other writers of Utopian fiction often expect their readers to take the implausibility of their created worlds on faith, Gilman distinguishes herself by carefully expelling the most apparent doubts.

In addition to creating meticulously detailed physical descriptions of her characters, Gilman develops them as recognizable types with dynamic personalities. As noted above, the three men who discover Herland are radically different people. Each represents a type of man distinguished by his attitude toward women. Nevertheless, by including a good deal of dialogue and allowing each character to change slightly in the face of his experiences, Gilman's men do not devolve into caricatures or stereotypes. Furthermore, the women they love seem to step out from the uniform mass of Herland residents and make the force of their personalities felt.

Themes

Themes

Though the utopia she creates is, because it is populated by only one gender, free of the complications of romantic love, Gilman clearly realizes that, for it to serve any useful purpose in the real world, her work must give some indication of what equitable love looks like. She takes up as an important theme, therefore, the question of what love based on mutual respect is. She develops this theme only in the latter part of the novella where she depicts the courtship of Van and Ellador. Without any hope of a typical romantic union, Van is able to develop powerful feelings for this girl on a purely asexual level; they become dear friends. When it is announced that the elders of the country have decided to engage in a "Great Experiment" and allow the three visitors to marry and reproduce with three of their citizens, Ellador and Van marry happily. Because their relationship was fostered without sex as an issue, it appears based on respect, personal admiration, and a desire to be productive together. Thus, Van is relatively unaffected by the careful restriction of physical affection to procreative endeavors.

Thus, love, as Gilman suggests it ideally occurs, is more a spirit of cooperation than the result of sexual attractiveness. Cooperation, another principal theme of the work, is key to the success not only of marriages but of the entire social fabric of Herland. Throughout, the narrator and his teachers return to the analogy of the anthill where all individuals move with a common purpose. The beauty of the system of cooperation adapted in Herland lies in its simultaneous obliteration and affirmation of the self. All residents are, literally, members of a single family committed to a single purpose, the improvement of the social order. They need not, however, move, blind as drones, through a life of toil controlled by a powerful and privileged elite. Instead, the system of education allows each to contribute according to her interest and ability. Under this system, work and productivity become a pleasure in and of themselves, keeping Herland free of the corrupting specter of competition.

Perhaps the only thing Herlanders do compete for is the right to bear children.

Having restricted the number of children each woman may have, a necessity in a geographically isolated society, only the strongest or most clever women are allowed to become pregnant. The others gladly contribute to the rearing of children, regardless of whether they are the mothers or aunts. Motherhood itself, its psychological intensity and effects on the woman as a citizen, are another important theme. Gilman, in creating a world without men, retained motherhood as the principal feature of femaleness. Of course, maternal affection is not, in Herland, limited to a woman's own offspring. Since education is the key to their society, nurturing the young becomes a universal occupation.

Socialist-Feminism

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's story, *Herland*, represents a particular mixture of social and political ideology called socialist-feminism. Socialist and feminist ideologies both began to gain popularity around the time *Herland* was written. In tandem with the rise of industrialization in America, many American citizens began to debate the shape of the future. In a society where change was not only seen as inevitable, but was beginning to occur more rapidly than ever before, the citizenry naturally became concerned with the direction of social and economic change. Feminists began to speak out for women's rights and demand greater participation in society. At the same time, advocacy for socialism was on the rise due to the growing power of corporate greed. Socialism, often linked to the emerging power of the labor force, gained many advocates as the country unionized to combat the strength of big business. Thus it is no surprise that some feminists, hoping to participate more actively in the economy, would join forces with the socialist movement designed to empower the working class.

Gilman's socialist views manifest in her feminist utopia in various ways. The socialist belief in cooperation over competition as the dominant market force is highlighted through Terry's character. Terry does not believe women are able to effectively cooperate. Therefore Herland's socialist, cooperative society challenges his belief system. Gilman espouses communal living and cooperative child-rearing practices. By making child rearing the focus of her society, she insists that competition is unnecessary because mothers will work willingly and cooperatively in the interests of society's children. Thus she presents the mother instinct as the solution to the socialist goal of cooperation. Another socialist tenet is shown as the citizens of Herland use mass consensus to create law and order. Gilman explains that governance by consensus is possible if children are raised, trained, and educated in a free and equal manner.

Gilman also advocates some darker beliefs shared by some socialist groups. She indicates that the criminal element in Herland has been bred out of the populace. Elimination of unwanted social elements is a part of some socialist philosophies, and taken to an extreme has the capacity to produce mass human extermination and horrifying eugenic experiments like those performed by Adolf Hitler's regime. Gilman does not appear to be endorsing such extreme beliefs. Yet she rather frighteningly leaves unanswered the question as to who decides what is considered socially unwanted. American society is founded on the concept that all men are created free and equal and no governing body or person has the right to declare someone unworthy to procreate. Therefore Gilman's utopia remains as controversial today as it was in 1915 when it first appeared in her monthly magazine, *The Forerunner*.

Motherhood

The virtues of motherhood are extolled throughout the text of *Herland*. The author bases her entire utopian society around an ideal of motherhood, which is described as "the highest social service, [...] the sacrament of a lifetime" (pg. 88). Motherhood is the

concept with which the author links her beliefs in feminism and socialism. In Gilman's day, the concept of Social Darwinism, or survival of the richest, was used by greedy corporations to justify their ill treatment of employees and customers alike. This ideological perversion of capitalism spurs Gilman to advocate a socialist society in which everyone willingly contributes his or her skills to the good of the whole. An argument used by Terry's character to refute this concept is that no one would work if they were not forced to by a competitive, capitalist market. To this, Gilman responds that "a fully awakened motherhood plans and works without limit, for the good of the child." (pg. 102)

Yet there are many fallacies in Gilman's logic. First, capitalism is not founded on the idea that no one would work if not forced to do so. The foundation of capitalism is a free market competition based on both consumer choice and business owners' ability to set the price they choose. The debate as to whether people work voluntarily is peripheral. Additionally, fathers throughout history have willingly worked for the benefit of their children. Gilman imagines only mothers will do this, and this belief is likely sparked by her personal experience of having been financially abandoned by her own father as a child.

Finally, the greatest flaw in Gilman's concept of motherhood is that none of the mothers are allowed to be mothers. Gilman has done away with the concept of home and family. Mothers in Herland are not deemed fit to raise their own children. This work is reserved for the exalted few selected by the state to raise children. Gilman does not define the criteria used to determine who can and cannot be a mother. She assumes the collective wisdom of her socialist state will simply make the right choices, every time. Gilman herself chose to allow her daughter to be raised by her ex-husband and his wife, who was a friend of Gilman's. She believed they would be better parents to her child. Yet one wonders if Gilman would have been happy if the choice as to who raised her daughter had been taken out of her hands and decided by the state.

Vandyck's Conversion

Vandyck Jennings is the narrator of *Herland*. A sociologist, Vandyck's viewpoint represents many of the prevailing social myths that the author seeks to debunk, namely, that women are physiologically inferior beings. Vandyck represents the rationalist, "scientific" viewpoint of the Victorian era, with all its shortcomings. One of the great myths of science is that it is an impartial study of the natural world, and that all scientific conclusions are dispassionately equitable. This is certainly the intent of science. However, it has often been used by biased individuals to promote personal agendas. Often this occurs subconsciously, as all human beings have bias and preferences. Scientists are not always aware of how their bias colors their conclusions. The twentieth century has seen advances along these lines as sociologists go to great lengths to account for their personal and cultural bias in their studies. Further, physicists have shown that the outcomes of scientific experiments are determined by the scientists' expectations. Yet in the Victorian era when *Herland* was written, sociologists were still

actively promoting the scientific inferiority of women, minorities, and the lower class poor to justify the dominance of the white male power structure.

By choosing a man like Vandyck as her protagonist, Gilman's intent is to systematically convert Vandyck to her feminist and socialist views. At the story's incipience, Vandyck delineates his beliefs that women lack the brainpower and cooperative skills to form a society. He warns his compatriots that any female-dominated society they might find is likely to be a primitive matriarchy. The other men are so convinced of this that even when they fly over Herland and see cities and roads below, Terry and Jeff refuse to credit the evidence of their eyes.

Vandyck proves his credibility as an impartial man of science by insisting they acknowledge this evidence of civilization. However, he also quickly advances the theory that since Herland is civilized, there must be men there. As the evidence continues to mount that Herland is an all-female creation, Vandyck becomes scientifically intrigued by the women's accomplishments. Over time, as he gets to know the women, Vandyck becomes convinced that women have a far greater ability than heretofore acknowledged by his own society. In fact, Vandyck's conversion is so complete that he ultimately comes to see women as wholly superior creatures. His narrative thus takes on a true-believer tone as he extols the virtues of Herland.

Style

Point of View

Herland is a first person narrative recounted in a pseudo-documentary style by protagonist, Vandyck Jennings. Vandyck is hardly omniscient; but as a sociologist, he learns all that he can about the natives of Herland and passes this information along to the reader. His sociological viewpoint is critical to the author's central intent, which is to convince the reader of the feasibility of her utopian ideals. Author Charlotte Perkins Gilman writes *Herland* with an eye toward social change. Vandyck's character, as a man of science, represents the prevailing wisdom of the Victorian society, which Gilman seeks to change. If the author can make a case compelling enough to sway someone like Vandyck to her viewpoint, she believes she can succeed in changing the reader's mind as well.

Sociology, Vandyck's specialty, is not only considered a branch of science, but also integrates scientific theories into its students' views on culture. Social Darwinism, in Gilman's day, was a current and widely accepted sociological theory based on Darwin's supposedly incontrovertible scientific theory of evolution. Social Darwinism, and thus men like Vandyck, held that women were given second-class status in society because they were inherently inferior to men. Gilman attempts to prove to the fictional Vandyck, and to real readers like him, that humanity works in concert with evolution and that female subjugation is not natural law. By the end of *Herland*, Vandyck's point of view has radically shifted. He now sees women as people in their own right. His conversion is essential to the author's bid for social change, and she hopes her reader's point of view will mirror Vandyck's by the end of the story.

Setting

The setting of *Herland* is a fictional feminist utopia located somewhere in the wilder reaches of the North American continent. The location of the nation of Herland is integral to the plot, for Herland's isolation is the reason for its peculiar development. The development of the all-female nation resulted from a long-ago natural disaster. According to Herland history, some two thousand years prior, a volcanic eruption had permanently sealed off the only passage through the cliff-face, which surrounds Herland on all sides. Herland itself is a wide, forested plain located high atop the surrounding cliffs. Once the passage was sealed, the sheer, impassible rock-face prevented the women of Herland from ever leaving their cliff-top home.

Over time, a wholly unique society evolves in Herland. Through genetic mutation or sheer force of will, one woman develops the capacity for virgin birth. She and her direct descendants thus birth an entire nation. Herland's population grows to three million individuals before the women begin applying population control measures. The landscape of Herland is carefully cultivated to provide maximum crop yields, and food-

bearing trees are preferred to field crops for this same reason. There are no wild beasts on Herland, and the tame cattle and dogs which once existed there have been euthanized because they were deemed inefficient and a waste of space. The trees, cities, roads, and parks are carefully cultivated and engineered, and their beauty and efficiency far exceeds that of the outer world. The male explorers in the story are deeply impressed upon seeing how the women of Herland have transformed their country with such loving care.

Language and Meaning

Herland has been written in the style of an explorer's journal. Much of the information is presented in academic tones, yet the journal format is more conducive to story telling than to a structured, textbook style of writing. Vandyck's recollections of his days in Herland are presented as reminiscences, and his detailed accountings of Herland society are worked into the overall narrative. Vandyck tells his story chronologically. So the details of his knowledge build over time and they are not presented in an organized fashion. He is so charmed by Herland that he often interjects his personal feelings into his academic narrative. The prose is also characteristic of Victorian Era writing with its indirect, almost oblique allusions to matters such as sexuality, and with its tediously rapturous descriptive style.

A singular oddity throughout the text is the lack of importance given to names. If the citizens of Herland name their cities, Vandyck does not communicate this to the reader. The forests and lakes go unnamed as well. There are no names assigned to buildings or streets or metropolitan areas. While Vandyck describes meeting many women in Herland, both young and old, only the three female tutors and the three young love interests are named. Vandyck mentions in passing the name of the country's leader, but this is only in the context of his discussion about the lack of surnames in Herland. No additional characters are introduced and all women, save those listed here above, are referred to categorically, as teachers, guards, artists, etc. Whether the author intends to make a particular point with this naming oversight is unclear. Perhaps she sought only to save space on the page for the overall descriptions necessary in communicating her utopian system of feminist-socialism.

Structure

Herland is divided into twelve chapters in the book version. An Introduction by Ann J. Lane, dated November of 1978, advised the reader that prior to this time, *Herland* had never been published in book format. Initially, the twelve chapters were published serially in a monthly magazine put out by *Herland*'s author, Charlotte Perkins Gilman. The magazine was called *The Forerunner* and was published each month from November of 1909 to its final issue in December 1916. According to Lane, Gilman wrote every word of every issue, including the text for the few advertisements she allowed. *Herland* appeared in the magazine in 1915.

The serial nature of the story accounts for the individual chapter and overall structure. Wherever possible, the author concludes her chapters with a cliffhanger - quite literally in Chapter 3 where she leaves the men dangling off the edge of a cliff in mid-escape attempt. However, given that the story is more of an academic chronicle than an adventure, cliffhanger endings are not always possible. Thus, as an alternative, the author ends several chapters on a punch line in which she attempts to make a serious point in wryly humorous style. The serial nature of the story also accounts for the repetitive feel. Many subjects and themes are touched on repeatedly over the course of several chapters, likely to allow readers who may have missed previous editions to glean the author's major points. The story concludes rather abruptly. The author foreshadows the exposure of Herland's women to the outside world, but ends the story before this occurs. However, the author later devotes an entire sequel, *With Her in Ourland*, to fulfilling this promise.

Quotes

"He could tell us only what the others had - a land of women - no men - babies, but all girls. No place for men - dangerous. Some had gone to see - none had come back. "I could see Terry's jaw set at that. No place for men? Dangerous? He looked as if he might shin up the waterfall on the spot." Chapter 1, pg. 5

"'Have to use bait,' grinned Terry. 'I don't know about you fellows, but I came prepared.' He produced from an inner pocket a little box of purple velvet, that opened with a snap - and out of it he drew a long sparkling thing, a necklace of big varicolored stones that would have been worth a million if real ones. He held it up, swung it, glittering in the sun, offered it first to one, then to another, holding it out as far as he could reach toward the girl nearest him." Chapter 2, pg. 16

"'If we are good boys and learn our lessons well,' I suggested. 'If we are quiet and respectful and polite and they are not afraid of us - then perhaps they will let us out. And anyway - when we do escape, it is of immense importance that we know the language.'" Chapter 3, pg. 31

"Of course we looked for punishment - a closer imprisonment, solitary confinement maybe - but nothing of the kind happened. They treated us as truants only, and as if they quite understood our truancy." Chapter 4, pg. 42

"But this succession of misfortunes was too much for those infuriated virgins. There were so many of them, and but few of these would-be masters, so the young women, instead of submitting, rose in sheer desperation and slew their brutal conquerors. "This sounds like Titus Andronicus, I know, but that is their account. I suppose they were about crazy - can you blame them?" Chapter 5, pg. 55

"'I understand that you make Motherhood the highest social service - a sacrament, really; that it is only undertaken once, by the majority of the population; that those held unfit are not allowed even that; and that to be encouraged to bear more than one child is the very highest reward and honor in the power of the state.'" Chapter 6, pg. 69

"We had expected pettiness, and found a social consciousness besides which our nations looked like quarreling children - feebleminded ones at that. "We had expected jealousy, and found a broad sisterly affection, a fair-minded intelligence, to which we could produce no parallel. "We had expected hysteria, and found a standard of health and vigor, a calmness of temper, to which the habit of profanity, for instance, was impossible to explain - we tried it." Chapter 7, pg. 81

"She turned to me, with that high, sweet look of hers, and then, as her eyes rested in mine and her hands too - then suddenly there blazed out between us a farther glory, instant, over-whelming - quite beyond any words of mine to tell." Chapter 8, pg. 91

"They never knew they were being educated. They did not dream that in this association of hilarious experiment and achievement they were laying the foundation for that close beautiful group feeling into which they grew so firmly with the years. This was education for citizenship." Chapter 9, pg. 108

"They developed their central theory of a Loving Power, and assumed that its relation to them was motherly - that it desired their welfare and especially their development. Their relation to it, similarly, was filial, a loving appreciation and a glad fulfillment of its higher purposes." Chapter 10, pg. 114

"'Might as well not be married at all,' growled Terry. 'They only got up that ceremony to please us - please Jeff, mostly. They've no real idea of being married.'" Chapter 11, pg. 125

"Do not imagine that these young women utterly refused 'the Great New Hope,' as they called it, that of dual parentage. For that they had agreed to marry us, though the marrying part of it was a concession to our prejudices rather than theirs. To them the process was the holy thing - and they meant to keep it holy." Chapter 12, pg. 140

Key Questions

Reading Herland gives the twenty-first century reader a sense of how long the struggle for equality between the sexes has raged; at the same time, it makes plain the enormous obstacles that prevent any society from adopting a more equitable social code. If we accept Gilman's thesis, then we must accept that the greatest barrier between ours and a perfect civilization is the inadequacy of our educational system. A great society, Gilman argues, is built on properly trained citizens. This training, Gilman argues, should result in the erasure of ambition and selfishness as individuals dedicate themselves to the good of the community.

The individual does not, however, become a faceless cog in a machine in Gilman's ideal world. The women of the country she imagines still have a single ambition, to become mothers. Motherhood is the central concern of the whole population of Herland, a fact at once relevant to Gilman's social concern about education and her thematic interest in the nature of the relationships between mothers and their offspring. Though working toward a common goal, the women we meet reading Herland are vivid characters, as are the men who come to discover their isolated homeland. Gilman's novella is extremely valuable as a social document.

The drama and adventure it provides also makes it an excellent read.

1. Keeping in mind that Gilman wrote this novella in 1915, does it seem at all possible that an utterly segregated society might be "discovered"? How does technology play a role in both the discovery and understanding of Herland?

2. Do a character sketch of each of the three men who discover Herland. Who is the most likable? Why? Least? How might the privilege of narration affect your perception of Van?

3. What are your impressions of Herland's system of government? Could a civilization not isolated geographically maintain the political system Gilman describes?

4. Residents of Herland choose their own vocation as part of their education; their decision is not complicated, however, by material considerations such as potential salary or prestige. Whatever sacrifices you might have to make to live in an egalitarian society like that depicted by Gilman, would this freedom to choose your purpose in life make life there bearable? If you have already decided what you want to do for a living, ask yourself if you would have chosen the same profession if you had decided with the latitude enjoyed by the girls of Gilman's fictional world.

5. Why does Gilman spend so much time detailing the educational system of Herland?

6. Does the fact that three Herlanders eventually marry undermine the argument of Gilman's book? Do the women "sellout" by re-introducing the male sex into their

civilization? Do you think the society will continue to flourish in the decades after men and marriage again become common?

7. Read some of Gilman's short fiction.

Are the literary techniques she employs for her more explicitly political fiction much different than that she uses to write stories?

8. How does Gilman associate potentially harmful social forces like nationalism and patriotism with masculinity? What are the counterbalancing feminine traits Gilman believes could, if women were given full citizenship, create a perfect world?

9. In what ways is Herland a feminist book?

In what ways is it an environmentalist book? Is there a relationship between the two?

Topics for Discussion

The concept of *home* permeates Herland although none of the citizens live in private homes. Discuss the author's treatment of home in her utopia.

Summarize the author's treatment of marriage in *Herland*. In your view, would her beliefs work if put into practice? Why or why not?

Cite at least three parallels between the women of Herland's view of men and Victorian-era men's view of women.

Prior to reading this story, were you aware of the limitations imposed on women by an early American society which believed women to be inherently inferior? Which of these limitations still exist today? Which have been disproved by women ninety years since the story was written?

Research the late nineteenth-century concept of Social Darwinism. Write an essay discussing whether this concept still exists in modern American society. In what ways does it still exist or in what ways has it become obsolete?

Research modern statistics on date and spousal rape. How have society's views changed in the past ninety years? How do they remain the same?

Compare and contrast *Herland* with the standards set by other utopian literature models.

Literary Precedents

The ultimate precedent for Gilman's, as well as sundry other fictions that take the rubric "Utopia," is Thomas More's Utopia (1516). Originally published in Latin, More's speculative creation of an ideal world coined the term "Utopia" which means "no place."

The ideal world his narrator describes is a communist one where both men and women have access to education and all religions enjoy equal acceptance.

A more influential precedent for Gilman personally was Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward: 2000-1887 (1888). Gilman cited Bellamy's work as an influence on both her literary output and her general worldview.

The novel tells the story of a young man from Boston named Julian West who falls into a deep sleep a la Rip Van Winkle. He remains in his stupor from 1887 until 2000 when he wakes up to find society greatly changed. Poverty has disappeared along with capitalism. Instead of struggling to improve their own state, members of the state all work for the common good. The socialist system Bellamy's book presents in a glowing light is everywhere mirrored in Gilman's all-female civilization. It is not surprising that Bellamy's vision affected Gilman; he was widely read and highly influential. A political party, the Nationalist Party, was founded shortly after Bellamy published his Utopia; the party took advocating Bellamy's ideals as one of its principal aims.

Innumerable authors came between More and Bellamy, creating various fictional worlds that govern themselves by what their authors consider ideal laws. Modern students, however, are probably more familiar with the inverse of More's form, the Dystopia, the best examples of which are George Orwell's 1984 (1949) and Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932). Both of these works show not a perfect world hidden somewhere within our own but a frightening vision of what our own world might become. Dystopias are almost invariably set in recognizable geographical locations in the semi-distant future. Orwell's work is typical in the way it exaggerates the government's intrusion into private life present in his own day and transforms it into the awful specter of "Big Brother." Just as Utopias like Herland provide hope by depicting a goal toward which humanity should work, Dystopias provide chilling warnings that, hopefully, change a course pointed toward ruin.

Related Titles

While today's students are more familiar with "The Yellow Wallpaper" than any of Gilman's other writings, Herland is actually more closely linked to the nonfiction treatise Women and Economics than any of Gilman's other works. Published nearly twenty years earlier, Women and Economics attempts to explain how the imbalance of power between men and women has created a situation whereby male desire not only subjugates women but throws the fate of the human species into peril. Relying on Darwinian theories of evolution, Gilman explains how social taboos that discourage excessive (or sometimes any) procreation in the upper-classes makes inferior people the majority of the human gene pool. The fundamental flaw of human relations, she asserts, lies in the fact that "excessive sexindulgence is the distinctive feature of humanity" vis-a-vis the rest of the animal kingdom. Thus, instead of progressing on a teleological track towards a more perfect humanity, the species, slave to the excesses of the male sex drive, is degenerating. In the twenty-first century, where everyone is versed in the horrific consequences of Adolf Hitler's commitment to eugenics (the science of improving a species via the careful selection of parents), her ideas may sound vaguely discomforting. However, Gilman was working in a milieu that fully embraced the notion that Darwin's version of evolution applied to human societies. Furthermore, the highly influential book Degeneration (1892), written by German Mac Nordau, made the notion that the human race was degenerating via the pernicious effects of moral laxity a commonplace one.

Degeneration was one of the best-selling books the world over; its influence on Gilman can be sensed both in Women and Economics and Herland.

Putting aside the now taboo notion that some members of a culture are unfit to breed, Gilman's treatise still offers valuable insight into how an imbalance of power between men and women has profound and not immediately evident effects. Women and Economics is an excellent companion to Herland because it catalogs many of the restrictions placed on women that are resolved in her Utopian society. For example, Gilman notes that "so utterly has the status of woman been accepted as a sexual one that it has remained for the woman's movement of the nineteenth century to devote much contention to the claim that women are persons!" The women of Herland demonstrate the enormous productive capacity of women for whom this problem of confirming their identity as persons is not an issue.

Students who read Herland have most likely read Gilman's best known fiction, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892). In this unusual tale, a woman records her experiences as she endures one of the rest cures popular amongst middle and upper class women in the late nineteenth century. These cures, based on the ideology of the mother as an "Angel in the House" more than science, demanded that women abandon all physical and mental activity while their nervous systems recuperate from the strain of everyday life. As Gilman's narrator loses her grip, it becomes apparent that mental activity and personal expression in particular are crucial to the maintenance of her sanity.

One of the great benefits of the society Gilman creates in her novella is that it provides each individual woman with the opportunity to express herself via labor in whatever way best suits her talents and interests. "The Yellow Wallpaper" echoes one of the principal statements of Herland, that no member of a civilization should be silenced.

However, the title most closely related to Herland is With Her in Ourland (1916), the sequel that follows Van and Ellador back to the outside world. There, Ellador is horrified by the violence of western society. The work allows Gilman to more explicitly address the flaws in the social structure of her world. Instead of presenting them tangentially, this work explicitly examines such gross setbacks in the progress of human civilization as the Great War.

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