USC FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA
UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

Traballo de Fin de Grao

By Women, For Women: Feminist Visions of Utopia in North American Literature (1848-1920)

Autora: Lucía Dapena Barba

Titora: Laura María Lojo Rodríguez

CURSO 2019–2020

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3 0 OUT. 2019

E N T R A D A
Nº.............................

Formulario de delimitación de título e resumo
Traballo de Fin de Grao curso 2019/2020

APELIDOS E NOME: DAPENA BARBA, LUCIA

GRAO EN: LINGUA E LITERATURA INGLESA

(NO CASO DE MODERNAS) MENCIÓN EN:

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LIÑA TEMÁTICA ASIGNADA: LITERATURA EN LINGUA INGLESA

SOLICITO a aprobación do seguinte título e resumo:

Título: By Women, For Women: Feminist Visions of Utopia in North American Literature (1848-1920)

Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the literary and ideological repercussions present in North American feminist novels which depict matriarchal or single-sex societies such as Annie Denton Cridge's *Man's Rights; or, How Would You Like It* (1871) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), by comparing them with the historical context in which these narratives were produced. Feminist utopias are typically written as a way of giving voice to the problems and demands of women at a particular historical time: in so doing, these narratives fictionalize women's aspiration to live in a freer and more egalitarian world, as Anne Mellor observes in her essay "On Feminist Utopias" (1982): "feminist theory is essentially utopian".

In fact, women authors of utopian fiction from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, often considered as the first feminist science fiction writers, reflected in their narratives the crucial social changes which we may now refer to as first-wave feminism, such as the right to vote, freedom from marriage and the household and claims for visibility in the traditionally male public sphere. The chronological framework of first-wave feminism in North America dates from 1848 to 1920, corresponding with key events on women's suffrage: the Seneca Falls Convention and the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, respectively.

Therefore, this dissertation will examine first-wave feminist demands and their context in order to critically discuss how their claims are fictionalised in the utopian narratives they produced. In this sense, special attention will be given to the nature of said utopias in terms of their depiction either as plausible societies or separatist, only-female worlds, examining the extent to which issues such as technology, reproduction and economy are touched upon in these narratives.

SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

Santiago de Compostela, 30   de   OUTUBRO   de 2019.

Sinatura do/a interesado/a	Visto e prace (sinatura do/a titor/a)	Aprobado pola Comisión de Títulos de Grao con data
		1 5 NOV. 2019
		Selo da Facultade de Filoloxía

SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

Acknowledgements

Writing this dissertation during the unprecedent situation of the COVID-19 pandemic would have been impossible without the help of websites like Sci-Hub or Library Genesis, which provide free access to research papers and books: not only because physical libraries remained closed for the most part of the year, but because academic information is often out of reach for working-class students and researchers due to economic reasons. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Professor Laura Lojo, for being reachable at all times, always offering much-needed help, and having a wonderfully positive attitude that got me through the long writing process.

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Introduction

The utopian genre is commonly known as the literature of dissatisfaction, as it tends to be written during times in which reality fills the writer with discontent, thus imagining the possibility of a better society through words. In that sense, women have yet to live in a time and place where gender equality is authentic; therefore, utopian literature functions as a lifeboat to feminist writers, who have always had to imagine a better world in which to live life to the full. Feminist thought is essentially utopian in its aspiration towards gender equality in social and political terms, and female writers of utopia must constantly draw inspiration from real life to construct an ameliorated world through their imagination and literary works, while simultaneously, overtly or covertly, criticising their contemporary sexist society.

The idea for this dissertation was inspired by my reading of Mary Beard's *Women and Power: A Manifesto* (2017), where she shows how poorly history has treated and portrayed powerful women and female characters. In this book, Beard mentions Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915) as an example of how men try to assert their masculinity and power in situations even when they are clearly the weakest contender, and describes how Gilman created this novel by means of imagining a possible world where men simply do not exist. Upon further reading on feminist utopias in general, worlds turned upside-down in which women were powerful —something rare to see, especially in Gilman's time— draw inspiring connections between real life sexism and feminist utopias, which developed into a fascinating topic for my research.

That said, the purpose of this dissertation will be to examine the history and demands of US first-wave feminism history and demands, and to observe how such demands are reflected in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novel *Herland*, which is regarded by critics as a perfect example of feminist utopias. Not only gender, but also race will also be backbone of this dissertation, as critically informed by intersectional feminist theory in order to inspect the

racism inherent to both Gilman's novel and first-wave feminism in the United States. In consequence, the main literary source here examined will be Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), which will be critically approached through the lends of feminist academic writing —such as Alessa Johns' research on process-oriented feminist utopias or Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectional theory.

This dissertation will be divided into several chapters that will provide the context for both the utopian genre and first-wave feminism history in the United States, in order to eventually examine *Herland* as a case in point. Taking this into account, chapter one, entitled "Utopia and Utopianism" will elaborate on the complexity of its definition and clarifying the general characteristics of the utopian literary genre. The next chapter, entitled "Feminist Utopias" will deal with feminist utopias, exploring further the thesis that feminist thought is fundamentally utopian in itself, observing how traditional utopias have treated the subject of gender equality and exploring the history and characteristics of feminist utopias. The examination of such formal and ideological characteristics, making use of Johns' research on process-oriented feminist utopias will be of use for the analysis of Gilman's novel. Subsequently, chapter three, entitled "First-Wave Feminism in the United States: History and Criticism" will give context for Gilman's writing by means of a chronological explanation of first-wave feminism in the United Stated, and it will also introduce intersectional theory, in order to observe first-wave feminism with a broader perspective that includes race issues. The final section, entitled "Feminist Utopias in the United States (1848-1920): Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Herland (1915)" will focus on the analysis of Gilman's *Herland*, drawing parallelisms between the analysis of the novel and first-wave feminist demands at the time. In this chapter, intersectional theory will be of use in order to examine how Gilman's racist principles (which mirror first-wave feminism's) are portrayed in *Herland*.

1. Utopia and Utopianism

1.1. Origins and Debate around the Term *E/utopia*

The term utopia was coined by Sir Thomas More in his homonymous book, published in 1516. The original etymology of the word, from Ancient Greek, comes from *οὐ* ("not") and *τόπος* ("place"), hence meaning "no-place". Nowadays, this neologism has undergone a semantic melioration in standard usage and no longer refers to any non-existent society. With utopia as a starting point, other new words have been coined by derivation: dystopia, heterotopia, anti-utopia... Practically as a prophecy (or pun), More had already created in 1516 a second word using utopia as root, and which appears for the first time in the poem published at the end of Utopia: eutopia. Etymologically, it comes from Greek *εὖ* ("good") and ("place"), good place. It is reasonably self-explanatory of the concept it refers to: an imagined place, system or society in which everything is perfect. This close relationship between non-place (utopia) and good place (eutopia) may lead to think that More implied that perfect societies are non-existent and unattainable. As a matter of fact, eutopian proposals in literature and media have rarely offered any possibilities of implementing their ideas in the real world, given their lack of concision or realism. For that reason, they would be non-places as well. Commenting on the connection between eutopia and utopia, Vieira writes the following:

> By creating two neologisms which are so close in their composition and meaning – a lexical neologism (utopia) and a derivation neologism (eutopia) – More created a tension that has persisted over time and has been the basis for the perennial duality of meaning of utopia as the place that is simultaneously a non-place (utopia) and a good place (eutopia). (5)

We must stress an important distinction between utopia both as a word repurposed for many fields of study and as a literary genre, and utopianism as a tradition of thought, which

"goes back to ancient Greece and is nourished by the myth of the Golden Age, among other mythical and religious archetypes, and traverses the Middle Ages, having been influenced by the promise of a happy afterlife " (Vieira 5). As we see, although utopia as a proper literary genre is derived from the word coined by More, the idea of utopianism is much older. The notion of imagining other possible worlds unrestrained by dogmas or societal standards motivated by disagreement by one's own reality has existed since the moment any type of organized society emerged. Strictly speaking, any position of defiance against order and commanded cultural, institutional, or physical laws, entails utopian thought.

In fact, a precise definition for utopia/utopianism has proved elusive. For the purpose of the present dissertation, the term utopia will be used in its broadest sense, although different definitions and debates over the term will be covered. Depending on its context and authors, utopia can refer to utopian thought or to, strictly speaking, utopian literature. Lyman Tower Sargent described in 1975 this terminological confusion between "utopian literature, utopian thought, and utopian communities" (1975, 137) by questioning previous definitions and assumptions, seeing that these terms were often used interchangeably and without precision.

Frank E. Manuel sees the distinction in utopias and utopian thought as a formal matter, the former being a "description, a dramatic narrative portrayal" and the latter based more on "exposition and argument" (Manuel qtd. in Sargent 1975, 139). This quote emphasises form and purpose as possible features that can be used to discern between utopian thought and utopia. Sargent goes a step further and establishes form as a relevant factor, yet one that poses difficulties for the narrowing of the definition. According to Sargent, the issue here is that "if a Utopia can take any form, we would have to include virtually all works of political philosophy, most suggestions for reform, and perhaps even all attempts at city planning" (Sargent 1975,139).

Certain definitions of the term consider purpose but elude form. One of the descriptions discussed by Sargent, in reference to the form of the utopian genre, is given by Darko Suvin in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre:*

> The verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis. (49)

Suvin refers here to utopian literature and sets certain requisites for a text to be considered as utopia. This is, in fact, a broadly accepted definition by science-fiction and utopian-literature academics as one of the most accurate and valid; yet Sargent believes that "to be made useful, it needs some further comment and exemplification which he does not sufficiently provide" (Sargent 1975, 141).

Likewise, Glenn Negley engages in the debate by stressing the need to take into consideration the unavoidable relationship between utopian literature and utopianism: "The determination of whether a particular work is 'utopian' is admittedly somewhat arbitrary; any attempt at a precise definition would surely do violence to the latitude of idealization and expression which is the very essence of utopian thought" (qtd. in Sargent 1975, 142). The limits between utopian thought and utopian literature will always be vague, but that lack of clarity is a constant reminder that one is part of the other. They permanently coexist as both an approach to a possible different reality and as a means of portraying the said approach.

1.2.   Utopia as a Literary Genre

Utopian thought can be displayed in various ways: political treatises advocating for reform — as is the case of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* (1762) or Karl Marx and Friederich Engels' *Communist Manifesto* (1848)—, actual communities that aspire to put utopianism into

practice or imagined narratives across various platforms such as motion pictures or literature. Johns believes that precisely "utopia resists classification because the very idea is so vast, spanning not only literary works but also experimental communities, political programmes and psychological proclivities" (176). As for literature, a whole narrative genre has developed around utopianism, which is predominantly referred to as utopian literature. As stated above, this genre is not actually inaugurated with More's *Utopia*, since it reaches back much further in time. One of the first recorded and penned cases of utopian literature would be exemplified by Plato's *Republic*, which does not entail the construction of a perfect society, but rather a political medicine treaty that can be applied to regimes and societies of the philosopher's time (circa 375 BC). Another foundational text for utopianism would be *City of God*, by St. Augustine, who fundamentally argued for a new version of immortality in an existent good place.

The criteria for a written narrative to be considered part of the utopian genre have been broadly discussed. These criteria are not by any means *conditio sine qua non*, but a collection of characteristics that many narratives of the utopian genre tend to recreate. As Fortunati has stated, "one of the major risks of the approach to utopia as a literary genre is becoming entrapped in a too-rigid and static conception of genre" (3).

Utopian narratives all engage with the prospective existence of an improved version of the society in which the author lives in or is writing from, which is generally approached in a highly descriptive manner. For Tower Sargent, the description "has to be there" (143) as for a narrative to be considered as inside the utopian narrative spectrum, placing this characteristic at the core of these narratives. Furthermore, Fortunati goes as far as to say that "the very nature and essence of utopia is descriptive" (4), following Tower Sargent's words. Likewise, Darko Suvin analyses the evolution of the definitions of utopia and finds a common and repetitive feature: a good number of them include the word "description" or imply that utopian narratives

are mainly descriptive. According to Suvin's words, this narrative form is close to the anatomy, as Northrop Frye would have it, in which dividing the topic (in this case, the utopian *locus*) and meticulously analysing each part is fundamental. This thorough description of such idealized societies become the narrative's backbone:

> Description is given priority over narration, that is, it literally eliminates narration: the plot, the action and the hero's adventures exist only before and after the utopian event, not in the course of it, because the place is characterised by the suspension of the action and of time. (Fortunati 4)

Each aspect of the utopian *locus* is described in depth, with all sorts of details. This procedure is enabled by the narrator, who scrutinises each aspect of the new society he or she is in. Such aspects often include institutions, traditions, hierarchy, and relationships between members of said structure, economy, warfare, and religion, to name a few, and the approach taken is almost anthropological or sociological, given the level of detail and analysis.

Along with the said descriptive factor, a further determining characteristic of utopian narratives is their relationship with reality. As Firpo claims, it is "precisely this aspect which most particularly characterised and distinguished the utopian text and set it apart from the political treatise, the legal code and the reform schemes" (qtd. in Fortunati 9). This fictionality pact allows for various advantages in this narrative form, serving, for instance, as a justification for the author to covertly criticise his or her community. That being the case, fiction is actually what connects the utopia with reality and what eventually provides the reader with the necessary keys to fully grasp the critique to his or her own society in the narrative. In fact, "utopias usually index [...] the wrongs, the lacks, the need experienced or recognized by authors of the past, then by reading this utopias we obtain a sense of history -as-experienced that statistics, or political documents cannot provide" (Kessler 3). As a result, and in connection with an alternative narrative genre, "satire is inevitably born, as conspicuous criticism of the

real society's flaws is part of the nature of the genre" (Vieira 8). As a matter of fact, in order to understand the criticism between the satirical aspects of utopia, the reader must connect at a certain level with the reality the author lives in, and "without such a return and feedback into the reader's normality there would be no function for utopias or other estranged genres" (Suvin 35). Therefore, satire takes on a social purpose in utopias. Anne K. Mellor has directly linked concrete utopian thinking —which would portray a "potentially realizable world" as opposed to abstract utopian thinking which does not "offer practical programs"— with the use of fictionality and satire. As she explains, satires "define a moral vision (...) that functions implicitly as a critique of present society" (242).

2. Feminist Utopias

2.1.   Feminist Thought as Utopia

In the previous sections this dissertation has focused on exploring the definitions and characteristics of utopia and utopian narratives, both in terms of utopianism and as a literary genre and tradition. This section narrows down the dissertation's scope in order to examine feminist utopias by exploring why and when they first proliferated and which narrative utopian tropes these narratives delve into. As stated above, utopian narratives must necessarily be anchored in the author's reality in order to successfully function as adequate critiques of a particular society which the reader may be able to identify as the object of the author's critique. In this sense, utopian narratives are both a form of escapism from the real world and a proposal to ameliorate reality and, therefore, they are normally produced in historical moments in which the world could definitely take a turn for the better.

In the case of women, "a social equality between the sexes [...] has never existed in the historical past" (Mellor 241), due to the existence of a "system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby 214) called patriarchy, which gives rise to an entire tradition of political and philosophical feminist thought. In fact, "no substantiated anthropological or archaeological evidence has been found to support the historical existence of a matriarchal society" (Mellor 241) therefore we are to think that, in Western society and given historical evidence, patriarchy has always dominated social and sexual relations, and state and cultural institutions (Walby 214). Many academics are of the opinion that patriarchy is "homologous in internal structure with capitalism", arguing that patriarchy is derived from this economic and political system. Nonetheless, "patriarchy both pre-dates and post-dates capitalism" (Walby 214-15) and it is by all means impossible to disclaim that "gender relations significantly changed with capitalism", as many Marxist

feminist theorists "consider that the two systems are so closely inter-related and symbiotic that they have become one" (Eisenstein qtd. in Walby 215).

Consequently, as Mellor concisely indicates, "feminist theory is inherently utopian", and Kessler goes on to state that "if we see feminism in the expression of holistic and communitarian values missing from the present order, then feminism itself is a type of Utopianism" (6). Likewise, Johns writes the following, alluding directly to utopian literature and feminism: "equality has never fully existed, so it must be imagined if it is to become a subject of conscious thought and discussion" (174).

As a result, "those seeking a viable model of a non-sexist society must therefore look into the future; their model must be constructed first as a utopia" (Mellor 243). Although Mellor here alludes to utopia and utopianism in a broad sense, her argument can also be applied to utopian literature, in the sense that feminist utopian narratives set a series of possibilities for the construction of a new society which eventually aim at achieving gender equality in social and political terms.

2.2.   Traditional Utopias on Gender Equality

Despite the above-mentioned assertion that feminist thought is essentially utopian, some academics have argued that the traditional utopian tradition thoroughly lacks a female or feminist perspective. In a comprehensive study about the treatment of equality in utopia, *Women in Utopia*, Tower Sargent examines male authors' viewpoints "of the best or significantly better society, and along with these, their views of what roles and status women should have in a good society" (1973, 302) and how these authors "felt the life of their time could be improved" (1973, 302). After analysing a number of male-authored utopias in chronological order, from More's *Utopia* ("there is no equality here", 303; "Power there is manifestly patriarchal", Johns 186) up to Devine's *Day of Prosperity* (written in 1902), he

concludes that not only "most utopianists since 1850 argue for a clearly inferior role for women" (1973, 304):

> Most utopianists simply assume that sex roles, the status of women and the attitudes toward them, will remain the same in the future good society as they are in the present bad society. There are often various inventions to make woman's lot easier, but it remains essentially the same, excepting perhaps improved educational opportunities and the vote. And in many of the utopias concerned directly with changing that lot, a significant number of authors propose more rigidly defined sex roles and a lower, though seen as higher, status for women. (1973, 306)

Likewise, Alessa Johns argues that "such visions are distasteful. Women in particular have fared poorly in traditional blueprint utopias, where they have been forced to labour endlessly and bow to humourless patriarchs" (174). This is an argument shared by Kessler, who further compares male-authored utopias with female-authored ones:

> Much has been said and written about men's visions of eutopia; we know far less about women's. Women's dreams of a "good" society, a eutopia —not necessarily perfect, but simply "superior" to an author's experience— do have a different focus from men's[...] Women's utopias are more likely to include these matters [of public policy - be they political, economic or technological] primarily as they provide a *means to the social end* of fully developed human capacity in all people. Typically, women make issues of family, sexuality, and marriage more central than do men. (7)

With these references in mind, we can conclude that the writers' own reality has a great impact on how they comprehend their contemporary society and its problems, and, as a result, on how they construct a possible alternative that improves their quality of life. This certainly includes the writer's gender, since one's manifestation of their own gender seriously affects how a person moves through life, and their outlook on the burdens of society. On account of

that, the corpus of this dissertation will exclusively include narratives written by women, as the title announces: utopian narratives written *by women*, from their personal outlook on life, *for women*, indicating that feminist utopias want to conquer real gender equality and rights for women.

2.3. History and Characteristics of Feminist Utopias

The large history of utopian feminist writing, stemming directly from the inexistence of gender equality as seen above, commences in the late Middle Ages with *The Book of the City of Ladies* by Christine de Pizan (finished in 1405 in medieval France) and continues today. Johns discusses this long tradition and the reason of its proliferation, focusing in Britain and the United States:

Such trans-historical persistence does not imply any essential female psychology; instead, it suggests continuity in many feminists' reactions to socio-cultural arrangements in the Anglo-American world (and arguably in the West in general) that have remained deeply patriarchal despite significant political and economic changes over time. (175)

Johns goes as far as to indicate specific reasons as to "why the utopian imagination has been crucial for feminists even though classic works in the genre have treated women so poorly":

Given the limited political, economic and social clout of feminists, they have sought out cultural modes, especially artistic and literary representations, as the most eligible means of making a different future comprehensible to the largest possible audience. The utopian literary mode, so open to imaginative construction and unhindered theorizing, has therefore always appeared useful to feminist authors. […].

Consequently, third, veering from the traditional utopia has given feminists a socially viable course of discursive and ideological deviance. (175)

As mentioned, the writers' particular perception of reality has a great impact on how they comprehend their contemporary society and its problems, making utopian narratives a product of the historical moment in which they were penned. As a matter of fact, "the main waves of feminist utopian fiction arose in times of significant restructuring of women's social and political roles" (Pfaelzer 282). Alessa Johns traces an outline for a classification of utopian feminist narratives according to the historical moment in which they were produced, identifying four distinct literary and historical periods:

First, the late middle ages and beginning of the early modern period, when the *querelle des femmes*, the debate over women, encouraged Christine de Pizan to compose *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1404–5) and its sequel, *The Book of the Three Virtues* (1405); second, the "long eighteenth century", when increasing wealth due to colonialism and trade spurred debates about luxury and the meaning of the good life, as in Mary Astell's *Serious Proposal* (1694) and Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762); third, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when socialist ideas and the end of the Civil War in the United States brought about vast political shifts and women, along with freed slaves, sought suffrage and greater sway, lending impetus to Frances Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915); and fourth, the 1970s, when feminists wished to give shape to their needs and desires after the New Left failed adequately to press for women's rights, traceable in works such as Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974) and Marge Piercy'' *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976). (177)

Likewise, Pfaelzer elaborates on Johns classification, examining from a panoramic and historical viewpoint the connection of the rise of feminist utopias, this time with specific

struggles and aspirations of women at the time (unlike Johns, who undertakes a more general stance):

> Mary Griffith wrote *Three Hundred Years Hence* in 1836, in an era when women were leaving the farm or house to work in a mill. Mary E. Lane's *Mizora* (1881), and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Moving the Mountain* (1911) and *Herland* (1915) appeared during fervent activity for women's suffrage, the eight-hour day, women's educational reform, and contraception. Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and *The Dispossessed* (1974), and Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975) arose within the context of the contemporary struggles for equal pay, reproductive rights, wider access to both professional and non-traditional jobs, shared housework, childcare, and the removal of cultural stereotypes. (282)

Another classification made by Kessler is relevant for the purpose of this dissertation. It adds on to Johns' classification, taking 137 utopias included in her study on feminist utopias in the United States, "divided according to events in women's history, and rate of output":

> The first period parallels this volume — over eighty years from the first Utopia written by a woman, through the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments, to the ratification of Constitutional Amendment XIX, grating women suffrage to women in 1920 (29 feminist Utopias, or 49 per cent of the United States Utopias by women, 1836-1920). A second period, 1920-1960, includes the Depression and World War II (6 feminist woks, or 22 per cent of the period's output: no feminist works appeared during the 1950s). A third period, 1960-1983, includes the transitional decade of the 1960s, 4 of 9 works published having feminist values. The five-year span 1975-79 astonishes: of the 24 works published, 11 or 46 per cent achieve consensus over a wide range of feminist concerns, a contrast to earlier diversity of vision. During these five years more Utopias were written by United women than during any previous period. The average rate of output is one feminist Utopia every third year before

1920; one such work every fifth year, 1920-1970; and thereafter, one feminist Utopia every

10 months! (9)

As for specific characteristics of feminist utopias, Alessa Johns identifies a consistent

pattern in the tendency of feminist utopian writers to lean towards process-oriented utopias

instead of blueprint or classical utopias, as she argues that

it is not merely the product of what is called the first-, second- and third-wave feminism of

the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Instead, process-oriented utopianism

characterizes a large part of feminist utopian writing beginning in the late middle ages and

continuing to today – from Christine de Pizan to Sarah Scott to Ursula K. Le Guin – and it

appears emphatically in Enlightenment Britain: that is, before what is considered the

modern women's movement. (174)

The process model of utopia and its connection with feminism was firstly touched upon

by Erin McKenna, who offers a definition of process-oriented utopias claiming that "the main

focus [of process-oriented utopias] is on developing people capable of critical thought. The

process model is not so concerned with an end-state, but with developing the means of

continued, critical engagement between live creatures and their environment" (2001, 134).

Moreover, "the process model of utopia does not seek a specific arrangement of society, but a

critical, flexible, and open-minded citizenry. We can find this process model in action in many

contemporary feminist utopian novels" (2001, 135). This is an argument shared by Kessler,

who expounds that "where United States utopias by men stress as *ends* in themselves matters

of public policy […], women's are more likely to include these matters primarily as they

provide a *means to the end* of fully developed human capacity in all people" (7), stressing the

significance of development of critical thought in feminist utopias rather than the mere end

goal of a perfect society. Johns draws from this premise and recognises five features that

characterise process-oriented feminist utopias:

(1) Feminist utopias see education and intellectual development as central to the individual and to women's empowerment; (2) they embrace a view of human nature as malleable and social rather than determined, fallen and individualist; (3) they favour a gradualist approach to change, a cumulative approach to history and a shared approach to power; (4) they view the non-human natural world as dynamic rather than as an inert receiver of human impulses; and (5) they are usually pragmatic. (178)

The importance of education is often the "the fulcrum in feminists' works all the way into the twentieth century" (Johns 178). As mentioned previously, access to education is crucial for women in order to obtain liberation from the private, gender equality and assertion of their intellectual capability, which eventually contributes to social equality and the elimination of stereotypes. Education for women is pivotal as a means to create gender equality in a society; additionally, feminist utopianists are aware of its importance so as to show to readers the possibilities of giving women "access to knowledge that happens openly, avidly and regularly, and is seen to encompass all aspects of life" (Johns 182), especially during first-wave feminism which would coincide with the third literary and historical period Johns recognises: "When socialist ideas and the end of the Civil War in the United States brought about vast political shifts and women, along with freed slaves, sought suffrage and greater sway" (177). Actually, it was only around that chronological frame that women started to set foot in universities and colleges, with the subsequent entry in the job market and the realisation of the enormous change in women's lives it brought about.

Utopias reflect such desire for education establishing it as one of the main themes, and it can be portrayed in a variety of manners. Through educational institutions in the likes of schools, with specific subjects and schedules; through reading either provided bibliography or in groups; through informal conversations, "which can train girls in current affairs, language

and critical thinking" (Johns 180); or through example, providing a model of conduct that sets a certain standard of education (Johns 178-181).

Feminist utopians see human nature as malleable and feasibly amended, and human beings as worthy of opportunities to change before the better. This could be connected with the nature of utopia to break away from defeatists visions of society: utopians inherently believe that change is possible, and that is how human nature and society are portrayed. As a result, "feminist utopias reveal a faith in behaviour modification, looking to stories, conversation, education and play to teach new habits, goals and values" (Johns 182-183). The origin of this tendency to meliorate or change human nature could emerge "from a model of childrearing, and it certainly may be influenced by women's longstanding roles as mothers and nurturers; yet, in feminist utopias this process happens socially, in communities and tribes, rather than strictly within nuclear families" (Johns 183). In fact, feminist utopias are in their great majority communitarian rather than individualistic: change is brought about by communal efforts. This theme also appears regularly in traditional utopias, but in them "the group does not attain the same level of intensity as it does in feminist ones, where not only comradeship but love, intimacy and spiritual connection characterize the ties between members" (Johns 184). Likewise, Kessler notes that "their [feminist utopias'] 'American Dream' is different — less ruggedly individualistic, more responsibly communitarian" (6).

Forced family or marital bonds are practically non-existent, with a "strong overall tendency to revise the 'family' into an egalitarian unit, not based on sex or blood ties alone, in which love – more than mere allegiance or family identification – inspires people and binds the community" (Johns 185). In fact, family and reproduction are two separated entities as the latter often occurs by parthenogenesis or methods different from heterosexual intercourse, and children are not a burden put on women in order to confine them, but rather brought up either by the family unit equally or by the community as a whole.

Adaptation and gradual change are also distinctives of feminist utopias, as "they avoid revolutionary shifts, build their societies piecemeal and adjust them little by little" (Johns 186), as opposed to a sudden revolutionary turnover typical of traditional utopias. Adaptability rather than rigid planning set apart feminist utopias from traditional ones as well; as Johns indicates, in feminist utopias "one improvement leads to another and one event to the next" (187), solving one issue after another without losing sight of their egalitarian principles. In other words, "change must happen gradually through time, a 'succession of instants', but a clear picture of events, discernible at a glance, must direct the forward movement" (189).

The relationship which feminism and ecologism share also permeates through utopias, as their common enemy is the established capitalist order and both see the possibility of changing towards a renovated, better society; in fact a whole utopian literary genre exists describing ecological utopian societies, describing new ways in which society and nature should interact in order to preserve natural resources and live in communion with the environment. Consequently, "the plant and animal world is generally represented not as a passive recipient of human endeavour, but as a powerful, dynamic, potentially dying or potentially deadly force that must be respected and that affects human actions even as human actions have an impact on it" (Johns 191).

Mellor offers a classification tending to how feminist utopias present alternatives to a sexist society. In her own words, "feminist writers have explored three paradigms of a gender-free society: an all-female society, a society of biological androgynes, and a genuinely egalitarian two-sex society" (243), yet after observing various feminist utopian texts, one more category may be appended: role-reversal feminist utopias, in which women take up the dominant position in which women may be traditionally found and men perform duties women usually do and therefore highlighting that women are capable of executing the exact same tasks as men, and the unusualness of beholding women in power.

3. First Wave Feminism in the United States: History and Criticism

This chapter examines further criteria for the choice of the corpus that will be analysed later on, taking intersectionality into consideration. For that very reason, before proceeding to examine the chronological outline of the time frame chosen for this dissertation (1848-1920), a number of debates surrounding the term "first wave feminism" especially in the United States will be addressed in pursuit of a more inclusive and intersectional prism.

The term "first-wave feminism" will be used in this dissertation in order to discuss utopian narratives written by women between 1848, the year in which the Seneca Falls Convention and the Declaration of Sentiments took place, and 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified.

3.1. History of First-Wave Feminism in the United States (1848-1920)

What follows is a brief chronological description of the events encompassed between the Seneca Falls Convention in July 1848 and the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in August of 1920, since those were significant events for the enfranchisement of women in the United States and gender equality in general.

The Seneca Falls Convention was "the first time so many Americans met in a public setting to discuss the radical idea of female equality" (McMillen 72) and it is identified as a landmark moment for feminism since it is "recognized as the beginning of the organized women's movement in the United States" (Dicker 29), which "formally initiated the struggle for women's equality and justice" (McMillen 71). Five women set to organise said convention: Lucretia Mott, prominent abolitionist activist; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, leading figure of abolitionist and suffragist movement; Martha Coffin Wright, Lucretia's sister; Mary Ann M'Clintock, and Jane Hunt, the host. At that spontaneous meeting, "the five probably chatted

about family and community happenings, but soon their conversation turned to a discussion of in justices against women" (McMillen 86).

A common discussion regarding women's situation turned into a serious proposition to fulfil Lucretia and Elizabeth's desire of holding a convention in order to formally discuss women's rights. This ambition originated after events at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London 1840, where Mott and Stanton, amongst other six women, were "outraged at the decision of the convention's organizers not to allow elected female delegates to sit with their male peers" (Dicker 29). As "Lucretia and Elizabeth shared similar reactions to the exclusion of female delegates in London and, more important, similar ideas about women's secondary status" (McMillen 76), they began an epistolary relationship in which they developed their ideas concerning women's rights, their own lives as wives and mothers, and their mutual admiration for the other.

Another significant aspect of the organization of the Seneca Falls Convention concerns the "wrongs women suffered and a list of resolutions demanding change" (McMillen 72) presented to the public, written in the *Declaration of Rights and Sentiments* written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton so as to provide a central point for the meeting. Taking Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* as a model, Elizabeth Cady Stanton proclaimed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men and women are created equal" (McMillen 71). The *Declaration* describes every injustice suffered by white, middle-class, married women in the United States at that time, which gives the contemporary reader a broad and panoramic view of first-wave feminist concerns. McMillen paraphrases Stanton herself as she lists one by one those concerns, asking men and the State for accountability for these injustices:

> Man denied woman access to the vote; forced her to submit to laws over which she had
> no voice; prevented her from being represented in elected bodies; enacted laws for
> marriage that made her "civilly dead"; removed a wife's rights to property and wages;

created divorce laws that caused her to lose guardianship of her children; forced a wife to promise to obey her husband; allowed the government to tax her property; prevented her access to the most lucrative professions such as law and medicine; paid her lower wages than a man received; denied her the opportunity to attend college; insisted on her subordinate role in the church; established a different set of moral codes for men and women; and claimed it was man's right to assign woman to a specific, domestic sphere. (91)

Although attaining voting rights for women is now seen as the primary concern of first wave feminists, this idea was much less developed, and even abhorred by both men and women in the Seneca Falls Convention. As seen above, women's suffrage was among the resolutions Stanton believed were of importance in order to debate them at the Convention, yet as she read the eleven Resolutions of the Declaration the ninth was the only one towards which the audience actively objected. Abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglas, along with Stanton, was who persuaded the audience of signing the Ninth Resolution "arguing that he could not claim the right of suffrage for himself if he would not allow women that same right" (McMillen 93). This disapproval of suffrage in the Seneca Falls Convention offers a notion of the diverse concerns of women on these first years of fighting for their rights, apart from suffrage.

During the decade after that first women's rights convention, and before the Civil War broke out in the United States in 1861, there was no permanent organization that coordinated and centralised the fight, but rather an expanding sea of small communities of women across the country who executed tasks of information, divulgation, campaigns. However, "despite the absence of organizational structure, however, the movement in its early years achieved some success in acting on resolutions articulated at Seneca Falls" (McMillen 105). The most relevant formal achievements of the movement during the decade previous to the outbreak of the Civil

War were related to Married Women's Property Acts across the country, the most prominent being the revision of the Married Women's Property Act of New York in 1860 (revision of the Act passed in April 1848), which included "allowing married women title to their own earnings" and "giving wives joint custody of their children (Dudden 58).

When the Civil War ended, both abolitionist and women's rights activists came together to form the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) so as to gain civil rights for both black people and women. After Congress began to discuss the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866, Stanton or Susan B. Anthony, among others, went split form the association. Elisabeth Stanton went as far as to make overtly racist claims in the AERA January 1869 meeting, such as indicating that American politicians "make their wives and mothers the political inferiors of unlettered and unwashed ditch-diggers, boot blacks, butchers, and barbers, fresh from the slave plantations of the South, and the effete civilizations of the Old World" (Stanton qtd. in Painter 51). This division originated two new women's suffrage organisations. On the one hand "Stanton, Anthony, some old abolitionists […], and many women new to the cause founded the all-female National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). The NWSA turned its back on black male suffrage and the issues of race and Reconstruction" (Painter 51). On the other hand, led by Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell, "supporters of black male suffrage and the Republican party in turn founded the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA)" (Painter 51). In 1878 the proposal for a women's suffrage amendment was taken to Congress, courtesy of Senator Aaron A. Sargent and commanded by Susan B. Anthony; this proposal would become the Nineteenth Amendment with no changes in its wording.

In 1890, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was founded as a merger of NWSA and AWSA after incessant and unsuccessful attempts to bring the two sides together. Racial tension was still at NAWSA's core (as had been in the AERA's split), as the leadership, "concerned about retaining the support of their white Southern members,

rejected the attempts of black women suffrage supporters to get a national position against segregation" (Rowbotham 41).

At this point in time, women had won voting rights in Wyoming (1869), Utah (1870), Colorado (1893) and Idaho (1896). As a matter of fact, Edwards indicates that the underlying reasons of the surge of suffrage in these western states were not product of the desire to make women equal, but due to practical reasons such as attracting families and economic growth towards isolated areas (100). At the turn of the century, after a rough period known as the "doldrums" between 1896 and 1910, it became apparent that the suffrage movement had "very different ideological underpinnings that it had throughout the nineteenth century" (Dicker 45). After a decisive crisis caused by Paul, a young radical feminist that was heavily influenced by "contemporary British militant suffragists" (Ford 175), the lead of Carrie Chapman Catt in charge of the NAWSA which resumed in 1915 was key to the attainment of suffrage in 1920. According to Fowler and Johns, Catt's stratagem "came to be known as "the Winning Plan," a strategy that combined efforts at both the state and federal levels and that depended on a winning campaign in at least one southern state along with some midwestern states" (135). Catt's presidency did not liberate the NAWSA from racist tensions, that were sadly still at the core of the suffrage movement. On the one hand, her stratagems to win accolades in southern states were overtly racial so as to appeal to them. On the other, "when speaking in the North in places where blacks could vote, she did not hesitate to argue that giving white women suffrage would block the influence of ignorant African Americans" (Fowler and Johns 139).

The last victories towards woman suffrage were the product of incessant work carried out not only by NAWSA's activists, but women all over the country, who "penetrated every level of society: state, district, town, city, and village, and often even many precincts" (fowler and Johns 137). The House of Representatives passed in 1918 what is commonly called the Anthony amendment, yet one more year would have to pass until the Senate and the passed the

bill on June 4, 1919. Conclusively, "when Tennessee ratified the Anthony amendment in 1920, Catt's plan had indeed proven to be a winning one" (Fowler and Johns 140).

Although the chosen chronological framework coincides with suffragist events, mainly for the sake of simplification, women's lives were transformed in many other aspects during this period: a cultural and social change took place all over the country, encouraged by feminism. This new ideal of woman was called by many the "new woman", a term coined by Sarah Grand in 1894. Who was this "new woman"? To give an official definition, and according to the OED, it is a woman who is considered different from previous generations; especially one who challenges or rejects the traditional roles of wife, mother, or homemaker, and advocates independence for women and equality with men. Furthermore, "the 'new woman' was not just a home-grown phenomenon. Members of the many immigrant groups in the United States kept in touch with advanced ideas from their respective countries" (Rowbotham 37).

To deviate for an instance towards literature and drawing from an example given by Rowbotham, Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening* published in 1899 offers a clear description of the transformations women were experiencing at the turn of the century (36). The three main "awakenings" Edna undergoes are social, artistic, and sexual, which serves as a summarised description of women's newfound revival thanks to the rise of feminist unrest.

This change was largely brough about by the progressive recent admission of women to higher education, not only in women-only colleges but in both-sexes universities, which symbolised the acknowledgement that women were as intellectually capable as men. The opportunity to choose a career for oneself, therefore increasing the possibilities of entering an employment contract and have economic autonomy (due to the rising number of states granting women the legal right to have a separate economy) are the main explanations for the enormous

importance of this milestone. Dicker cares to summarise the advances made in the field of education for women up until approximately the turn of the century:

> The University of Iowa admitted omen in 1855 and the University of Wisconsin did the same in 1863. More institutions opened their doors to women after the wat: Boston University accepted females at is opening in 1869 and Cornell University did so in 1872. Women colleges emerged as well, providing female students with a single-sex environment in which to pursue advanced education. Vassar College was founded in 1861, followed by Smith in 1871 and Wellesley in 1875. (44)

Regarding the new sexual awakening, information and contraception were essential to give women power over their bodies, their motherhood, and their sexual relationships. Emma Goldman, prominent radical anarchist and feminist, instructed Margaret Sanger on the existence of contraceptives. Sanger was the first person to coin the term "birth control" in 1914 and with her pamphlet *Family Limitation* she aspired to spread awareness among women about the possibility of taking back control over their bodies, and enjoying sexual intercourse without worrying about pregnancy. As a matter of fact, "thanks to Sanger, organizations such as Planned Parenthood, which she founded, exist today" (Dicker 53).

All the Married Women Property Acts passed (already seventeen states in 1864) gave women economic independence, which had great impact on their actual ability to divorce and actually being able to make a living after leaving their husbands.

3.2.   Intersectional theory

As has been claimed before, the gender the author identifies with is relevant for the content of a utopia, as are other conditioning factors such as race, nationality, or class, attending to intersectional feminism principles. Black legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw was the first academic to use the term "intersectionality" in 1989, in order to refer to a theoretical framework

that "is used to pay attention not only to the ways that racism, sexism and, in other kinds of cases, other forms of discrimination overlap and create unique and distinct kinds of burdens for those women who are subject to both or more forms of discrimination" (Crenshaw 05:58-6:18). A pertinent example in the context of first wave feminism in the United States in order to understand how these aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create further oppressive structures is Sojourner Truth's famous speech *Ain't I a Woman*. As an African American woman born into slavery who later escaped, she delivered her spontaneous speech at the Women's Convention in Akron in 1851, asserting the exclusion of black women from feminism and the fight for enfranchisement at the time, insisting on both vectors of oppression, race and gender, intersecting, which white feminists had failed to consider. In fact, "the people present at the conference were worried that Truth would speak out against slavery and thus detract the event's focus on women's rights" (Dicker 32) and given this circumstance "when Sojourner Truth rose to speak, many white women urged that she be silenced, fearing that she would divert attention from women's suffrage to emancipation" (Crenshaw 153).

3.3.   Issues Surrounding the "Wave" Metaphor

That said, the debate amongst feminist academic circles around the usage of the metaphor of the wave cannot remain unexplored, as a means to set the precedent for disagreements between academics and between literary narratives. The idea that feminism must be one unvarying current of thought is categorically untrue, and the wave debate explored by, among others, Evans and Chamberlain perfectly exemplifies the internal debates of the movement, as these are "a necessary part of having an inclusive form of feminism" (12).

The history of United States feminism is frequently divided in what is commonly defined as "waves", a narrative coined by Marsha Lear that "was intended to distinguish US, UK and European women's liberation movements from the campaigns for women's suffrage"

(Gamble qtd in Evans and Chamberlain 2). Evans and Chamberlain have explored the complexity of this metaphor, since it "dominates narratives of feminism, despite regular questioning by feminists who are sceptical about what it signifies" (Henry qtd. in Evans and Chamberlain 1). However, dissenters of the use of the term "wave" account for the existence of a series of flaws inherent to the word:

> [The term "wave"] sets up generational barriers between feminists (Gillis & Munford, 2004); excludes feminists of colour (Springer, 2002); privileges western feminism (Hemmings, 2005); presents paradoxes of confusion when cross-wave themes and aims are combined (Graff, 2003); and creates both collective and individual crises of feminist subjectivities amongst those who do not identify clearly with a specific wave (Kinser, 2004). (2)

As seen above, Evans and Chamberlain look into the limitations of the terms and propose "a more reflexive and fluid use of the term wave, that privileges continuity, inclusivity and multiplicity" (2). Continuity is key to their argument, as "learning from the past to aid new and ongoing campaigns seems axiomatic" (2), and "feminists should resist the temptation to be drawn into defining how 'new' a wave is, or indeed to justify why a new wave should be necessary; instead the wave metaphor should be used to stress the underlying continuity of the feminist movement" (2). Evans and Chamberlain's position reinforces the idea of feminism as a diachronic event in history, not as a series of fragmented periods of time that have little to do with each other, since these focus on different concerns for women which are historically and socially variable . The overlapping of these periods is significant for the feminist movement, as "the intersection between the waves is an important site for rigorous and healthy debate; debates that are both conceptual and chronological" (3).

In this sense, the wave narrative tends to be rather non-inclusive, since it only takes into account the surface of the broad diversity of feminist movements and women's realities, which

must necessarily encompass not only gender but class, age, race and sexuality, among other relevant vectors. Therefore, in order to create more inclusivity, the feminist waves must be seen through the lens of intersectionality.

As a conclusion, for Evans and Chamberlain "the term wave acts as an umbrella under which a diverse range of feminists (women and men alike) can coalesce" and "the wave could be most useful when considered as a surface cohesion. It does not necessarily reflect the depths of difference or richness of individuality, but enables continuity, inclusivity and multiplicity" (6).

3.4.   First-Wave Feminism in the United States: Racism and Classism. Intersectional Perspective

The expression "first wave feminism" will be understood in this dissertation as an umbrella term for the feminist movement in the United States, which span between 1848 and 1920, coinciding with two essential events for the attainment of the vote for women: the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention and the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment that prohibited denying anyone the right to vote because of their gender.

In this sense, the "Seneca Falls–to-suffrage story continues to frame popular histories, political discourse, documentary films, and synthetic studies of U.S. feminism and women's history" (Hewitt 15), but it is equally mandatory to revise this narrative so as to verify its intersectionality and transparency regarding race or class. As already seen, Evans and Chamberlain's research claims that the sole name "first wave" already has certain implications, and most probably the term only shows the surface of the deep and diverse history of this period of time:

Scholars of African American, immigrant, and working-class women have detailed the racist, nativist, and elitist tendencies of many white women suffragists. They have

highlighted the exclusion of poor, black, and immigrant women from the political organizations and the agendas of more well-to-do activists and their inclusion in community-based efforts, often alongside men, to advance their own economic, social, and political interests. (Griffith 16)

Commenting on the first point in time that is set as the "beginning" of feminism in America, the Seneca Falls Convention, Griffith claims that:

It appears as a critical moment when certain strains of woman's rights ideology and activism crystallized [...] it is not the birthplace for the movement as a whole. By widening our lens, we can highlight the political claims that women from diverse racial, national, class and regional backgrounds brought to the U.S. woman's rights movement. (21)

The question of race converged with the feminist movement right at the beginning. As an example, the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, an interracial organization established in 1833, was founded by Lucretia Mott, the Grimkés, and other Quakers along with local free black women active in the abolition cause, but , as Griffith explains, "white and black women shared leadership in the society and attempted, although not always successfully, to overcome the prejudices that divided the two communities" (20).

This organization, along with the formation of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in 1837, "served as a seedbed for many who combined interests in racial justice and woman's rights" (Griffith 20). Elisabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, co-authors of *History of Woman Suffrage*, recognized the importance of some of these pioneer activists. Yet, "while granting Wright, Mott, and the Grimkés [participants at the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women] the status of foremothers of the woman's rights movement, they effectively removed them as active participants by claiming 1848 as the moment of its conception and relegating all that came before to prehistory" (21).

Taking all this into consideration, Griffith also remarks the fundamental racial perspective present in the Seneca Falls Convention, in which "one of the largest contingents at the meeting—Quaker abolitionists [...]—had been enmeshed in several of the movements described above. Four of the five organizers of the convention [...] were part of this network of radical Friends [Quakers]" (25).

Whilst "for middle-class white women, movement victory ended battles that had begun over seventy years before" (Terborg-Penn 1), race and other circumstances altered the supposed enfranchisement of all women living in the United States. African American women were not granted full enfranchisement with the Nineteenth Amendment, and most would have to wait until passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 before returning to the polls, as Griffith argues:

> Millions of Asian and Mexican Americans in the West and American Indians across the country were denied suffrage until the 1940s, and some waited until the Voting Rights Act and its extension in 1970 addressed the bilingual needs of Spanish-speaking citizens. Puerto Rican and Filipina women, too, were denied voting rights when a judge advocate in the War Department [...] ruled that the Nineteenth Amendment did not apply in the nation's colonial possessions. (31)

All previous remarks regarding the Seneca Falls-to-suffrage narrative are due to be made in order to give grounds for the usage of said chronological frame since, as Griffith summarises, "the Seneca Falls convention and the Nineteenth Amendment are important parts of this story, but they form only a single thread in a variegated tapestry" (32).

4. Feminist Utopias in the United States (1848-1920): Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*.

4.1. Utopianism in the United States

Utopianism became prominent in the United States early in the nineteenth century, both in literary form, initiated by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards* (1888) and in the form of utopian communities inspired by this novel, based mainly on communal living and religious principles, although transcendentalist and free-love communities proliferated as well. The tradition of utopian literature in the United States, although significant, has not been thoroughly studied by academics, seemingly because despite certain remarkable texts by Mark Twain or Edward Bellamy, "the result is a body of literature which is a fascinating index to attitudes about cultural change and the ideal American civilization, plus a group of singularly dull, crude, and simplistic literary productions" (Roemer 228). Regardless of this lack of research in the academic realm, it is safe to affirm that utopian literature in the United States commonly engages with visions of a better country and an improved society.

As seen in a previous section, utopias tend to be written in times of profound discontent with the author's contemporary society. According to Johns', Pfaelzer's and Kessler's chronological classifications of feminist utopias, every period is closely associated with influential events regarding either an accomplishment in the realm of women's rights, or a period during which numerous social and economic difficulties arose.

First-wave feminism was a time of change and improvement for women in the United States: as mentioned above, they attained not only the right to vote (thus becoming active political subjects) but also gained privileges in the realm of high education, economic freedom, birth control, and freedom of choice over motherhood, to name a few. As a result, women turned to literature in order to portray and flaunt the virtues of their recently attainted rights, and this very fact actually showed evoke how far the United States was from real gender

equality, a call for attention towards more demands. Thanks to feminist achievements, the general impression that gender equality in social and political terms was possible encouraged authors such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman to write utopias in order to elaborate on feminist ideas and how they would play out in a possible fictional world.

4.2. An Analysis of *Herland* as a Process-oriented Utopian Feminist Novel.

This section delves into the formal and ideological strategies of feminist utopian narratives produced women writers in the United States during the period comprehended between 1848 and 1920. In this sense, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novel *Herland* (1915) will be the fundamental text utilised in this analysis and will be examined in terms of the classifications of types of feminist utopias according to Mellor, characteristics of process-oriented feminist utopias according to Johns, and the notion that the authors reality, in this case Gilman's, as a white woman, deeply conditions her writing. It is remarkable how, on the one hand, Gilman's feminist principles regarding economic freedom, right to decide over motherhood, and on the other hand, her eugenics beliefs, come together in this utopia.

American author Charlotte Perkins Gilman was a feminist activist, intellectual and writer born on July 3, 1860 in Connecticut, "twelve years after the first-ever women's rights convention […] and less than a year before the Civil War broke out" (Bolick 8). In her infancy she already showed parts of her unique and radical personality: she was a self-taught reader, sew her own clothes, refused to wear a corset and "at seventeen, she confided to her diary that she would never marry, because doing so would thwart her plans to better humanity" (Bolick 9). She entered adult life in the exact period when women began to have chances to fulfil professional and educational aspirations, and although her position as a woman in a patriarchal society shaped her experience in the world, she was nonetheless still part of the white upper-

middle class which defined her privileges in order to access traditionally male professional and educational spaces in comparison with immigrant or working-class women. As soon as she was eighteen, "she enrolled in classes at the Rhode Island School of Design and began earning money as a commercial artist" (Bolick 10). Just ten days after her first significant romantic relationship, with Martha Luther, she met Charles Walter Stetson, whom she would marry two years later in 1884 and she then gave birth to her first daughter Katharine. Charlotte "promptly succumbed to what eventually became history's most famous postpartum depression, lasting nearly three years" (Bolick 10): it was the inspiration for her renowned piece "The Yellow Wallpaper", which she would write in the summer of 1890 after refusing to follow her doctor's orders —"Live as a domestic life as possible, 'never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as I lived'" (Gilman qtd. in Bolick 10) —separating from her husband and finally taking up writing and publishing as an almost full-time job.

Gilman's life was thoroughly shaped by the feminist surge of the first wave in the United States, and she always took active part in the fight for women's rights. She had innovative views regarding sexuality, marriage or gender roles and participated in campaigns such as the "woman suffrage from the 1880s, the abolition of regulated prostitution from the 1890s onward, and legalized birth control in the 1920s and 1930s" (Allen 1). Being a writer, her literary contributions regarding feminist theory were numerous: *Women and Economics* (1898)*, Concerning Children* (1900)*, The Home: Its Work and Influence* (1903)*, Human Work* (1904)*, The Man-Made World; or, Our Androcentric Culture* (1911), as well as a remarkable monthly magazine, *The Forerunner* (1909-1916), for which she wrote editorials, critical articles, book reviews, essays, poems, stories, and six serialized novels. Her first non-fiction book regarding feminism was *Women and Economics*, which put her in the position of one of the leading female intellectuals at the time. Gilman's sociological and historical analysis of women's relationship to home and marriage lead her to the conclusion of the importance of

fighting for female economic independence, advocating for "professionalizing housework and for building communal living spaces with public kitchens so that women wouldn't be permanently stuck alone cooking and cleaning" (Bolick 15). Bolick perfectly summarizes Gilman's feminist convictions and further comments on how they were ahead of her time, as some of the issues she advocated for were to be present in second-, third- and even fourth-wave feminism:

> Her vision of a companionate marriage founded on economic equality between the sexes, and the need to free women from the burdens of housework, anticipated many of the issues later taken up by the movement0s second wave, from America's fights in the 1960's for equal employment and pay to Italy's Wages for Housework campaign. Likewise, her conviction that gender identity is fluid and not fixed forefront the third wave's understanding of a gender continuum. *The Forerunner* can be seen as a precursor to the riot grrrl practice of self-publishing zines. Her ingenious schemes for striking a balance between work and family— such as communal living and arrangements with public kitchens are echoed in the contemporary trend of "microhousing" and live-work spaces. Select concerns of the fourth wave, including the continued sexual predation of women in the workplace, can be traces back to Gilman; Her hoe that revolutionizing marriage would free wives from the conjugal obligation to serve their husbands' erotic needs— "sex slavery", as she called it— did happen, after a fashion, though as we've learned, male sexual entitlement remains pervasive across all industries, from the most ordinary roadside diner to the exclusive doubts of Hollywood. (18-9)

However progressive her views regarding women's rights may be, Gilman's beliefs on racial purity and eugenics seem today morally questionable, and although utterly unjustifiable, they ought to be interpreted in context in order to thoroughly understand the influence racism

had on her writings. Gilman's racist theories were based on "her tenacious nativism, which caused her to be wholly insensitive to the plight of immigrants and black Americans, and her belief that her birth right rendered her superior to members of other races and cultures" (Knight 160), as well as on "her simultaneous embrace of eugenics" (Bolick 17). The idea that interested her most about eugenics was "that some human populations are genetically superior to others, and that by playing to the strengths inherent to each race, poverty could be eradicated and society vastly improved" (Bolick 17), and in connection with her feminist theory, she saw this as a solution to "the scourges of sexually transmitted diseases […] and involuntary motherhood" (Bolick 17). Notable examples of her overtly racist formal writing are "Is America Too Hospitable?" (190) and "A Suggestion to the Negro Problem" (1923), in which she offers so-called solutions to the "waves of immigrants resettling in urban areas at the turn of the last century" (Bolick 17). Her racist beliefs brought about a decline on her reputation as an intellectual as well as a literary writer; consequently, second- and third-wave feminists "who struggled to make people see that the standard forms of discrimination —sexism, racism, classism— aren't distinct categorizations, but in fact overlap and interconnect, couldn't find a place for her within this new movement of intersectional feminism" (Bolick 18).

With respect to her literary production, "what she brought to the page remains unparalleled in American letters: a captivating mix of perspicacity, subversiveness and humor fueled by an admirable taste for experimentation (and an inexhaustible work ethic)" (Bolick 11), and it encompasses numerous short stories, poems, and dramas, and nine novels and novellas. Along with her most influential short story "The Yellow Wallpaper", *Herland*, a utopian science-fiction novel written in 1915, is widely regarded as one of her major works.

Herland appeared in 1915 as a novel in instalments published by Gilman in her own monthly publication *The Forerunner*, yet it did not reach a lot of readers due to the demise of the said magazine a year later. *Herland* is not Gilman's only utopian novel; its sequel *With Her*

in Ourland (1916) and other short stories show Gilman's interest in utopian literature and the opportunities it offered so as to portray her feminist demands and eugenic principles. It was not until 1979, when Pantheon Books selected the text for publication given the new *boom* of feminism in the United States, that *Herland* was both read and studied through the lens of both feminist, literary and utopian studies. In fact, "the republication of *Herland* was promoted as the recovery of "a lost feminist utopian novel", and the work quickly attracted attention from feminists in the growing women's studies movement" (Hill 253). Its writing and publication coincided with the start of Carrie Chapman Catt's presidency of NAWSA and her "Winning Plan" which would culminate in the enfranchisement of women in the United States in 1920, and the gradual achievements for women in the realms of higher education, workplace and professions, and in health care. Gilman —who was not unfamiliar with these events, as she actively participated in them— commented on every step the feminist movement took in *The Forerunner*, both with her opinion or elaborating on other women's theories, or giving lectures about these current women's rights issues all around the United States and Britain.

This novel will be analysed in terms of its utopian characteristics, namely the presence of in-depth descriptions of the imagined society, satire, and its relationship with the author's contemporary society. Johns' attributes of process-oriented feminist utopias will be of use in order to examine various aspects of the novel without losing sight of the historical conditions that surrounded Charlotte Perkins Gilman at the time of writing the novel, which encompassed first-wave feminist demands and the surge of race improvement beliefs.

The founding principle of this text is the existence of a plausible land inhabited solely by women, called *Herland* by its visitors (Herlanders never refer to their own country in their own language). It falls under one of the paradigms established by Mellor within gender-free societies: an all-female society. She defines *Herland* as "the first and still one of the few all-female Utopian visions to allow for the possibility of reintegration of men into a female world"

(247): Herlanders have a tangible intention of allowing visiting men to accommodate to their way of life, yet men's hypermasculinity and inability to really bow down to the customs of Herland get them expelled (except Jeff, who capitulates to Herland). The perspective from which the reader approaches this land is that of three men: Vandyck, Jeff and Terry, although the main narrator in only Vandyck. As Vandyck describes them:

> Terry was rich enough to do as he pleased. His great aim was exploration. He used to make all kinds of a row because there was nothing to explore now […]. We never could have done the thing without Terry. Jeff Margrave was born to be a poet, a botanist — or both— but his folks persuaded him to be a doctor instead. As for me [Vandyck], Sociology's my major. You have to back that up with a lot of other sciences, of course. I'm interested on them all. (4)

Gilman is already establishing a set of male stereotypes for both the narrator and his colleagues that will be progressively developed as the novel continues. Terry already shows signs of hypermasculinity or macho attitudes in this brief introduction, which according to psychological research by Mosher and Sirkin, encompasses "(a) calloused sex attitudes toward women, (b) violence as manly, and (c) danger as exciting" (150), three characteristics he holds: he rapes his companion (Gilman 142), which gets him expelled from Herland; he is constantly trying to create conflicts of all sorts, and his main ambition regarding Herland is the possibility that the expedition will pose a threat. The disbelief and anger Terry shows towards the possibility of a "civilized" country run only by women —"Nothing irritated Terry more than to have us assume that there were no men" (50)—probably fuelled by his hypermasculine traits and misogyny, is partially shared by Vandyck, yet rejected by Jeff who, as seen in the above cited passage, is capable of being more sensitive as his interests are poetry and nature. Mellor elaborates on the differences between these characters—

Two of these men, Terry and Vandyck, manifest upper-class patriarchal attitudes that now seem almost charming in their old-fashioned simplicity […]. These two aggressive male chauvinists are asked to leave Herland, but Jeff is permitted to stay because he has acknowledged the superiority of the women's nurturant, peaceful culture and has chosen to serve the mothers. (247)

An essential keystone of utopias —as seen on section 1.2— that is present in *Herland* is its highly descriptive nature. The book begins with a disclaimer from Vandyck, the first-person narrator, who declares the purpose of his following writing: "Descriptions aren't any good when it comes to women, and I never was good at descriptions anyhow. But it's got to be done somehow; the rest of the world needs to know about that country" (Gilman 1). Therefore, his intention is to describe what they saw and experienced in Herland for the world to see, and for the world to confirm the existence of Herland and the possibility of an alternative society. In order to offer a thorough description not only of the men's perception of Herland, but of the history and other intrinsic aspects of it, Gilman makes use of a common trope in traditional utopias: the narrator asks the inhabitants of the unknown land for a thorough explanation of their existence, as if the readers themselves were interceding in order to be given more background on Herland, in this case. The perfect excuse for this very thorough and detailed description of Herland's society, warfare, history, and economy is Van's sociological line of work: he is awfully interested in Herland from a social and scientific perspective, which allows Gilman to offer an in-depth explication of it: "I went in for the history part —I wanted to understand the genesis of this miracle of theirs" (60). Through Van's curiosity and Herlanders' objective to instruct foreigners on their lifestyle, the reader learns about Herland's past. Two thousand years before Van and the other men arrived there, whilst an armed conflict was taking place, in a *deus ex machina* fashion, a volcanic outburst and an earthquake separated current Herland from the mainland by a ridge: "they were walled in, and beneath that wall lay their

whole little army" (61). Subsequently, slaves and a few women were separated from the masters, and a slave revolt took place. After the male slaves killed all masters, they tried to seize control, "so the young women, instead of submitting, rose in sheer desperation and slew their brutal conquerors" (61): this is the moment when women realized that after the revolt, they would go back to their old patriarchal society where they were be inferior to men, and decided to change the course of history, benefitting from the revolutionary chaos caused by men. Rudd provides a rationale for *deus ex machina* device in Herland's history, and according to her:

> For Gilman it is important that her fictional world shares some common ground with our own, so the ancestors of the Herlanders lived in a familiar social structure: feudal, slave-owning, patriarchal, and in essence, Western. Having created this distant shared history, Gilman is then free to dispense with the men by burying most of them under the landslide and having the remaining few killed either in the ensuing slave revolt, or by the terrified but feisty women, who defend themselves against the threat of rape and ownership by their former slaves (women slaves here go unmentioned). (470)

Along with description, humour and consequent satire are present in *Herland* as well. The novel's viewpoint the readers corresponds male gaze, and, as such, utterly sceptical of the possibility that women can concoct a functioning society by themselves. Although profoundly misogynist, this situation of disbelief allows Gilman to introduce one of the characteristics that are central to utopias, and which defines her narrative style as well: humour, satire, and playfulness. Satire as an essential characteristic of utopian narratives has already been touched upon in section 1.2, and this "Utopian convention of explorers finding a hitherto undiscovered country in which life seems to be ideal in terms of the contentment and comfort of its citizens" (Rudd 469) is used mainly in traditional utopias, yet Gilman finds a way to make it work in the realm of feminist utopias. Humour is

> [Humour is] key to her method of pointing out the antinomies and irrationality of everyday patriarchal life. […] The Utopian novel complements *Women and Economics*, Gilman's serious critique of things as they are, with a shattering laughter that disregards and uproots the signposts of a patriarchal thought allegedly grounded in the bedrock of nature. (Peyser 1)

Of course, Gilman's humour will only be understood if the reader observes in a laughable manner how men's incredulity and sexist presumptions are overthrown, especially Terry's: "Terry, in his secret heart, had visions of a sort of sublimated summer resort —just Girls Girls and Girls […] Also we mustn't look for inventions and progress; it'll be awfully primitive […] Of course there are men, come on, let's find them" (9, 11,14). Therefore, Gilman builds a playful satire that functions as critique of her society in an attempt to both prove real men's beliefs to be wrong, and to bluntly ridicule misogynist mindsets. Unfortunately, many of the male assumptions ridiculed in *Herland* were held up years after the book was published: when the novel was republished in the 1970s feminist readers could perceive in the book a satirical critique of their own time which, in turn, also happened with third- and fourth- wave feminists, which comes as an indication of the persistence of gender inequality.

Not only misogynist views are satirised, but also the United States as a country. Whenever Van, Jeff and Terry begin to explain the wonders of their culture and society, in an attempt to flaunt it in comparison with Herland's culture and society, this eventually backfires, leading to an almost humorous situation where they end up exposing their country's flaws, instead of its successes. In turn, a Herlander will compare and give a solution to those flaws, evidencing how improved Herland's society is in comparison with the United States. This constant comparison is crucial for the writing of utopia, as it illustrates the differences between the real world and the imagined one, showing readers the possibilities that lie in building an ameliorated society, one in which gender equality is a reality and not only an aspiration.

Moving on to Johns' process-oriented feminist utopias and their common features, introduced in section 2.4, *Herland* will be examined from those perspectives and a few additional themes will be studied as well, such as racism and eugenics. Close attention will be paid to education, human nature and relationships between inhabitants, approach to change and tradition, and relationship with the non-human world.

As explained in previous sections, in process-oriented feminist utopias the centrality of education is an essential theme. In Herland, education is the absolute cornerstone for the improvement of their community, as Van explains: "They recognized that however the children differed at birth, the real growth lay later—through education" (66), and it is actually "stressed that in the utopia education is "our highest art", the source of citizens' "real growth" (Gilman qtd. in Johns 181).

Herlanders began learning about the world from scratch, since none of the first women in Herland were actually educated. When Van and his companions arrive, Herlanders have a vast knowledge in anthropology —"they had inferred (marvelously keen on inference and deduction their minds were!) the existence and development of civilization in other places, much as we infer it on other planets", (70)— astronomy —"they had a fair working knowledge—that is a very old science; and with it, a surprising range and facility in mathematics" (70)— and physiology. Moreover, "they had worked out a chemistry, a botany, a physics, with all the blends where a science touches an art, or merges into an industry, to such fullness of knowledge as made us feel like schoolchildren" (70). Apart from and in-depth study of social and natural sciences, Herlanders show interest in learning about the outside world, and inquire Van, Jeff, and Terry about their society: how women live there, their economic and political system, and demographic data, to name a few, in order to incorporate the suitable particularities onto their own society, in an effort to educate themselves and improve. In comparison, the narrator admits how Herlanders' general knowledge of the world is far

superior to theirs (or to the general mundane society), acknowledging that "we [common land inhabitants] boast a good deal of our "high level of general intelligence" and our "compulsory public education," but in proportion to their opportunities they were far better educated than our people" (71).

Johns identifies four different ways of portraying education in process-oriented feminist utopias: institutions, reading, conversation and by example. As can be seen in the process of educating Van, Jeff and Terry, in Herland's case learning was carried out both by lectures — "Herlanders attend lectures as a public benefit" (Johns 181)— books —"The books we had to study were evidently a school-book, one in which children learn to read" (32)— and conversation: "[…] we were being educated swiftly. Our special tutors rose rapidly in our esteem. They seemed of rather finer quality than the guards, though all were on terms of easy friendliness. Mine was named Somel, Jeff's Zava, and Terry's Moadine" (37).

Education and the notion of human nature as malleable are closely connected in *Herland,* as it is not only directed towards the inhabitants of the land. In *Herland,* Gilman offers a portrayal of how she "did not think that there was anything inherently wrong with human nature, but she believed it had been kept back by the wrong conditions and ideas" (McKenna 2013, 131), therefore presenting the possibility of redemption or improvement through education, giving men the material conditions to change. When the group of men arrive, Herlanders' first urge is to teach them about their language, history and way of life with the aspiration that they either become better men that can integrate into Herland's community, or that they can bring back to common land the notion of a better society. Therefore, *Herland* reveals "a faith in behaviour modification, looking to stories, conversation, education and play to teach new habits, goals and values" (Johns 182-3). Johns further suggests that, due to it being a separatist all-female society, *Herland* may differ from this general characteristic, since the separation from men may suggest that "men are irremediably power- hungry or violent and

will insist on the reinstatement of patriarchal forms of dominance if allowed admittance". However, "Jeff and Van in *Herland* […] offer alternative versions of masculinity and sexuality and imply the possibility of new, egalitarian forms of interaction between the sexes" (183). They are the token of humans beings as worthy of opportunities to change for the better.

This possible amendment of human nature in *Herland* happens communally: one of the absolute cornerstones of their society are community, cooperation, and peace (Bolick 17). Likewise, Rudd believes that "in Herland she [Gilman] presents a community of women who think of themselves as an entire unit and work for the common good, but that good is indisputably and unashamedly human" (472). In the book, the narrator "describes how the inhabitants "thought in terms of the community"; "all the surrendering devotion our [American] women have put into their private families, these women put into their country and race. All the loyalty and service men expect of wives, they gave, not singly to men, but collectively to one another"" (Gilman qtd. in Johns 185). As for the absence of a hierarchy and complete communal living and bonds, Van writes: "You see, they had had no wars. They had had no kings, and no priests, and no aristocracies. They were sisters, and as they grew, they grew together—not by competition, but by united action" (66), expressing that change happens only with organized, collective efforts. When the group of men first encounter the Herlanders, they already demonstrate how in Herland strength is number, and unit amongst Herlanders makes them better. At the sight of the foreigners, they form an impenetrable barrier with their bodies instead of using violence, providing a vivid image of the importance of collectiveness and peacefulness in Herland:

> And then, turning a corner, we came into a broad paved space and saw before us a band
> of women standing close together in even order, evidently waiting for us. We stopped
> a moment and looked back. The street behind was closed by another band, marching
> steadily, shoulder to shoulder. We went on—there seemed no other way to go—and

presently found ourselves quite surrounded by this close-massed multitude, women, all of them. (22-3)

For Herland to continue existing, Herlanders' nature has adapted in order to be able to bear children without heterosexual relationships, by means of parthenogenesis. This lack of men in the process of both reproduction and motherhood reflects Gilman's belief that "women and men should be free to exploit their individual talents to the full, whatever they were, believing that the greatest damage people suffered ensued from thwarted abilities, particularly through enforced domesticity" (Rudd 472) or in summary, seeing how women often missed out on following their aspirations on account of motherhood and childrearing and therefore, freedom of choice over their bodies had to become a reality. And so it became a central theme of this utopia, in order to show how women could be happier, better, and healthier if bearing children and having sexual intercourse were a choice, and not an obligation. Parthenogenesis occurred in a rather miraculous manner in Herland:

> For five or ten years they worked together, growing stronger and wiser and more and more mutually attached, and then the miracle happened—one of these young women bore a child. Of course they all thought there must be a man somewhere, but none was found. Then they decided it must be a direct gift from the gods, and placed the proud mother in the Temple of Maaia—their Goddess of Motherhood—under strict watch. And there, as years passed, this wonder-woman bore child after child, five of them—all girls. (62)

After this miracle, those five other babies, all female ("Daughters of Maaia, Children of the Temple, Mothers of the Future", 62), began bearing again, as miraculously as their mother, giving birth to five children each:

> Presently there were twenty-five New Women, Mothers in their own right, and the whole spirit of the country changed from mourning and mere courageous resignation

to proud joy. The older women, those who remembered men, died off; the youngest of all the first lot of course died too, after a while, and by that time there were left one hundred and fifty-five parthenogenetic women, founding a new race. (63)

All those children are raised in Herland not by the woman who bears them, but by the community as a whole. Gilman "does this without challenging the notion of maternal love; the mother–daughter bond is evidently strong, but the potential for frustration is removed. At the same time Gilman eliminates the possessiveness that she sees as underpinning many mother–child relations", which allows for the liberation of women from the obligation of solely being mothers, finally having a window of opportunity to pursue their aspirations apart from motherhood, even though motherly love still exists: "mother-love with them was not a brute passion, a mere "instinct", a wholly personal feeling; it was — a Religion" (75). Although the responsibility of raising children is lifted from the individual, it falls onto the community: each child is sacred for Herlanders, and the whole population works towards the prosperity of those children upon which the future of Herland depends. In comparison with common land motherhood, Van states the following:

> We are used to seeing what we call "a mother" completely wrapped up in her own pink bundle of fascinating babyhood, and taking but the faintest theoretic interest in anybody else's bundle, to say nothing of the common needs of *all* the bundles. But these women were working all together at the grandest of tasks—they were Making People—and they made them well. (75)

Although Herland's origin story —a slave revolt— might seem abrupt instead of gradual as most process-oriented feminist utopias are, it actually does not follow said traditional pattern of sudden revolutionary change, as Johns suggests. It was only when men aspired to establish the same patriarchal hierarchy that women realized that they had to seize power violently in order to see any changes in their reality in order to avoid an absolutist

political power, but rather a horizontal, shared power society. Johns indicates how "Gilman explains the evolving history of the Herlanders: 'their time-sense was not limited to the hopes and ambitions of an individual life'. The mindset is long-term and geared to social adjustments" (Gilman qtd. in Johns 186). In fact, laws in Herland are revised every twenty years, in an attempt to specifically adapt to new realities and to the necessities of their inhabitants, as opposed to common land, where laws are stable and rigid regardless of needs of citizens. Therefore, "to respond effectively a decentralized, quasi-anarchistic form of government often emerges. Non-hierarchical decision-making characterizes the small communities that dominate feminist utopian writing" (Johns 187), as happens in *Herland*:

> We have systems of law that go back thousands and thousands of years—just as you do, no doubt," he finished politely. "Oh no," Moadine told him. "We have no laws over a hundred years old, and most of them are under twenty." (69)

This rejection of tradition and the aspiration of shaping society according to its citizens' call mirrors Gilman's opposition to static lifestyle and settling down with a given way of life without second-guessing it. As a feminist, Gilman portrayed first-wave feminist beliefs, according to which the political life and laws in the United States were outdated and did not conform to women's needs and reality. Women were already accepted in higher education and were broadly knowledgeable in the scope of politics (although the mere fact of being citizens of the United Stated should suffice in order to be given the right to vote), yet the static political realm refused to accept this reality and enfranchise women at once.

Herlanders live in absolute tune with the land they inhabit; they feel as if they must cherish it since it is only due to nature that they survived after being separated from the mainland. Already in the early twentieth century, Gilman anticipated the environmental catastrophe whose consequences are witnessed in the twenty-first century: the over-exploitation of non-human animals in the meat industry, and the subjugation they undergo in order to feed an

overpopulated Earth. One of Gilman's concerns was the parallelism between animals being kept in captivity, silenced and without the opportunity to live freely, and women who were confined in the home, silenced and captive as well. As a result, there are no domesticated non-human animals in Herland, yet the main reason is not the urge to cease the exploitation of animals, but a practical one: "They took up too much room— we need our land to feed our people" (53). Cattle does not exist anymore in Herland, and the only domesticated animals are cats, which are not "kept" as mere pets: they are "our friends, and helpers, too. You can see how intelligent and affectionate they are" (56), they have ceased hunting birds and most importantly: they are all female, just like Herlanders. Male cats are segregated and "live quite happily in walled gardens and the houses of their friends" (57), and they get together for the mating season once a year. Although the principal motive for Herlanders not to eat meat is not entirely anti-speciecist, they are indeed repulsed by the idea of common land's intensive animal farming, judging from Somel, Zava and Moadine's reaction when Jeff describes it for them:

> It took some time to make clear to those three sweet-faced women the process which robs the cow of her calf, and the calf of its true food; and the talk led us into a further discussion of the meat business. They heard it out, looking very white, and presently begged to be excused. (54)

As a result, they do not consume meat or milk from any non-human animal, and their main source of provisions are trees. Herlanders' relationship with nature is fairly equal, yet complex. The first thing Jeff, Van and Terry are struck by when overflying Herland for the first time are the well-tended forests; when they take a first close look to trees, they realize every single one of them is fruit-bearing of nut-bearing (17-8), the outcome of human control as we learn later in the novel.

The issue of human-controlled nature directly relates to a crucial issue that overshadows both Gilman as an author and *Herland* in particular: the question of eugenics and its connection

with Gilman's racist views. In order to analyse *Herland* judiciously both Gilman's and first-wave feminism must be contextualised in the foundations of intersectionality. As seen in section 3.4, first-wave feminism is wildly criticized for its exclusion of racialized and working-class women, whom white, middle class women disregarded with respect to fighting for their enfranchisement, education, and economic freedom. Gilman herself was part of this white classist feminism at the time, and, as stated above, she definitely did not hide her racist views in her essays, lectures, or novels. Race-exclusionary views in first-wave feminism explained in previous sections must be considered in order to thoroughly contextualize the following analysis of racism and eugenics in *Herland*.

The constant shadow of racism in *Herland*, sometimes even overt, is a framework sustained in Malthusian principles and eugenics. Due to overpopulation in Herland, its inhabitants begin to self-restrain from having more children, which is directly connected with the "quality" of those children. In chapter six of the novel, Van starts to mimic, almost in a ventriloquist manner, Gilman's thoughts about the overpopulation in the United States and its "Negro problem", yet projected onto the case of Herland: "there soon came a time when they were confronted with the problem of "the pressure of population" in an acute form. There was really crowding, and with it, unavoidably, a decline in standards" (74). He then goes on to explain the possible solutions Herlanders pondered so as to save themselves from starvation: either a Darwinist approach through the survival of the fittest, which is disregarded due to the impossibility of attaining peace or improving quality of people this way; or plain expansion, in order to search for more food supplies or land. The selected result, after a non-hierarchical assembly amongst all Herlanders, was limiting the number of babies each woman can bear: only one, and exclusively if she significantly felt the urge of motherhood:

When a woman chose to be a mother, she allowed the child-longing to grow within her till it worked its natural miracle. When she did not so choose she put the whole thing out of her mind, and fed her heart with the other babies. (77)

In consequence, their answer to overpopulation is, in other words, women's freedom to decide whether to bear children or not, which was one of the cornerstones of first-wave feminism at the time. Yet, progressive as this solution may seem, advocating for women's rights to choose over their bodies functions as a Trojan horse for Gilman's eugenic aspirations of improving the human race.

After restricting the quantity of population, Herlanders embarked on the quest of polishing their inhabitants (78). Herlanders create a race that recalls Gilman's example of a perfect society: pure (as opposed to multiracial), white, "wise, sweet, strong" (79) women. Gilman blatantly shows praise towards the Aryan appearance and intolerance towards racialised women in numerous parts of the novel. Herlanders are white, fitting Gilman's model, as explained by Van: "these people were of Aryan stock, and were once in contact with the best civilization of the old world. They were "white", but somewhat darker than our northern races because of their constant exposure to sun and air" (60). It is particularly significant the use of the word "best" here, directly associated with whiteness and the immediate explanation of Herlanders' slightly darker complexion, almost as a justification for their skin colour. Racial purity, another of Gilman's preoccupations, is portrayed in the novel by referring to Herlanders as "pure stock of two thousand uninterrupted years" (131). Another specific mention to skin colour appears in relation to Terry's urge of having sexual intercourse with her to-be-spouse Alima, although it is utterly prohibited in Herland. In this context, he hums a song, probably inspired by Kipling's poem *The Ladies*:

I've taken my fun where I found it.

I've rogued and I've ranged in my time, and

The things that I learned from the yellow and black,

They 'ave helped me a 'eap with the white. (141)

"Yellow" and "black" make reference here to skin colour, namely Asian and Black women, as Terry, through Kipling's words, implies that having sex with racialised women is a mere rehearsal for sexual intercourse "white" women, as if racialised women were discardable. Despite Herlanders already white and "pure" according to Gilman's standards, the final intention in Herland is to "breed out, if possible, the lowest types" (89), with the justification of overpopulation and women's choice regarding motherhood. This is accomplished both by convincing "lowest types" to renounce motherhood and by the most powerful tool in Herland, apart from motherhood: education, which is "entrusted only to the most fit" (90). This way Gilman discards unsuitable individuals both by suggesting controlled breeding and by addressing the issue, departing from the belief that human nature is malleable.

Conclusion

This dissertation has aimed to prove how utopias draw from reality in order to create and imagine possibilities of a better society, and more importantly, how feminist thought is especially prone to build utopias, since real gender equality has never existed. Although my initial intention was to here examine different utopian narratives to critically approach feminist demands in feminist utopias, *Herland* alone happened to be a multifaceted and complex text, and for the purpose and length of this dissertation the examination of more than one text could have been too vast a research.

By means of the analysis of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, a parallelism has been established between first-wave feminist demands in the United States and Gilman's representation of such issues in her novel. Firstly, satire, a common characteristic of utopia, is used to ridicule male misogynistic ideas and the United States as a failed society, as Gilman's convictions were that those aspects were issues to be meliorated in society.

Regarding specific first-wave feminist demands, Gilman gives voice in *Herland* to chosen motherhood as a way for women to accomplish their aspirations, and gives prominence to education as an element of empowerment for women, while simultaneously rejecting tradition in order to give women political power. Criticism to the United States is present throughout the whole novel, exposing its flaws as a society and explaining how Herlanders have improved those defects in their own.

One of the most significant findings was realising that an intersectional feminist perspective was necessary in order to carry out a critical and honest research. After mindfully examining the United States social reality and closely studying *Herland* and Gilman's life, it became obvious that, in addition to gender, race and class were of utmost importance for the purpose of examining reality's connection with fiction in United States utopias. Given this circumstance, an explanation of the theory of intersectionality was included so as to apply this

perspective to first-wave feminism and also to the novel itself, while also unearthing its flaws regarding racism. Apart from intersectional feminism, ecofeminism as a critical tool was also relevant in the analysis of *Herland*, seeing Gilman as a prophetic writer regarding ecological consequences of global warming and animal exploitation. Nowadays, ecofeminism has become a remarkably important field within gender studies, and utopian literature certainly reflects said growing concern regarding the environment. Illustrating this trend, in the 1970s feminist utopian novels ecological redemption was a ubiquitous theme, such as a number of Le Guin's novels or *The Female Man* (1975) by Johanna Russ.

This dissertation has hinted at, but by no means explored due to its limited scope, a number of interesting topics for future research, such as how 1970s feminist utopias draw inspiration not only from their reality in order to criticise it. In addition to this, feminist writers often tend to build a genealogy of utopian writers over time, thus establishing a fruitful dialogue and interaction which would also be worth exploring in the future.

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