

## Ecofeminism and Gilman's *Herland*: A Gaardian Approach

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### ABSTRACT

*Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) is an eminent American philosopher, lecturer, social critic, and known for her feminist utopian novel, Herland (1998). The novel is analysed based on Greta Gaard's theory of ecofeminism that cites patriarchal religion, Darwin's human evolutionary development, and the metaphorical or ideological explanations as the sources of the separation of culture from nature that lead to the self/other dualism. This study is an attempt to reject the self/other, man/woman and culture/nature dualisms of patriarchal thought, and show how women and nature are liberated from oppression. Gaard has shown that the claim for the superiority, separation, and domination of the self is based on the difference between self and other, where all things associated with self are privileged, and all things described as other are devalued. Gaard uses this self/other dualism to explain the patriarchal domination pertaining the supposed relationship between women and nature, since both are configured as 'other' and are separated from self associated with men and culture. She explains that patriarchal thought emphasises the differentiation of 'self' from 'other' and the connection of women and nature to justify the domination of both women and nature. This study will explore how Gilman declines the root cause of dualisms of culture/nature and man/woman as lying in the social construction of patriarchal religion and Darwin's human evolutionary development through depicting a utopian maternal world. She undermines the paternal attitudes that are based on competition to possess and dominate both women and nature, and she makes the connections among men, women, and nature through education of the children in open fields to create the interconnections between nature and culture and denounce the oppression of these categories.*

*Keywords: dualisms; nature; culture; ecofeminism; separation*

### INTRODUCTION

Charlotte Perkins Gilman is one of the first English language utopian writers who “put the issue of gender and women's rights at the center of discussion” (Wegner 2005, p. 88). Her utopian fiction includes *A Woman's Utopia* (1907), *Herland* (1916), and the latter's sequel, *With Her in Ourland* (1916). *Herland*, originally serialised in *The Forerunner*, “a monthly magazine edited and entirely written by Gilman from 1909 to 1916, was first published in book form in 1979” (Gilman 1998, p. iii). Her reputation as a utopian writer is more conspicuous after the publication of *Herland* in which she uses a genre that “is female speculative fiction as a conglomeration of different genres of utopian, dystopian, grotesque, fantasy and so on” (Saber 2012, p. 764). Kessler argues that “utopias are guides rather than blueprints, Gilman expected her writing to guide readers [...] she advocated through the medium of her fiction numerous social changes, especially focused upon women and gender arrangements” (Kessler 1995, p. 2). Gilman's works are mostly didactic and elucidate her goal to approach a possible reform in the society that may change women's condition in the world.

*Herland* is narrated from the perspective of Vandyck Jennings who, along with his friends Terry Nicholson and Jeff Margrave, decides to take a trip to Herland, and discover the

secrets of this strange country rumored to be inhabited by women. The three men ponder over what a woman land would be like. When they arrive at Herland, they face three girls; Terry chases the girls and tries to seize them, but they escape. The three men find themselves surrounded by a multitude of women who march them toward a large building. They consider a plan of escape twice, but they are captured by women, who assign each man a tutor to educate them swiftly. Van and Jeff are enchanted by a peaceful, harmonious sisterhood, and beautiful utopian world of women, but Terry remains critical. Each man develops a love relationship with one of the three young girls whom they have seen upon their arrival: Van with Ellador, Jeff with Celis, and Terry with Alima. Despite the fact that women have no conception of what being a wife or being feminine entails, they agree to marry the men. Van's and Jeff's marriages are more successful, but Alima's refusal to meet Terry's expectations leads him to rape her and, consequently, be banished.

The present article will focus on Gaard's theory of ecofeminism and will apply it to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novel *Herland* and shows how Gilman overturns the self/other dualism of patriarchal religion, and how she makes connections among men, women, and nature in order to put an end to the oppression of these sets of oppositions.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ecofeminism is a theory that has evolved from various fields of feminist inquiry and activism: "peace movements, labor movements, women's health care, and the anti-nuclear, environmental, and animal liberation movements" (Gaard 1993, p. 1). Western culture's oppression of nature, women, and animals can be traced back to the construction of the dominant human male as a self, and Gaard suggests that "the logic of domination is rooted in the alienation and the myth of a separate self" (Gaard 2009, p. 327). The dualisms of self/other, according to Gaard and Gruen, "are manifested as culture/nature, man/woman, white/non-white, human/non-human animal [...] reason/emotion" (1993, p. 237). According to these dualisms, all things associated with the self, which is considered masculine, are valued, and all things, described as other, are devalued. Gaard and Gruen recount the sources of the separation of culture from nature that results in the oppression of women and nature. These sources are scientific revolution, patriarchal religion, human evolutionary development, and metaphorical or ideological assumptions of the separation of culture from nature. They express the sources that result in the separation of culture and men from nature, women, and animals. According to Gaard:

Ecofeminism studies the structure of oppressive systems, identifying three steps in the "logic of domination": first, alienation (the belief in a separate self identity, individualism, auto-no-my), then hierarchy (elevating the self based on its unique characteristic), and finally, domi-nation (justifying the subordination of others based on their inferiority and lack of the Self's unique characteristic). (Gaard 2009, p. 323)

The root of repressions is hierarchy, as Gaard puts it, and "ecofeminists tend to believe hierarchy takes place as a result of the self/other opposition" (Gaard 1993, p. 3). They consider masculinity as a 'self' that is separated from the 'other' (women, nature, and animal that are considered to be interconnected to each other). Feminists have also argued that "women's oppression in western culture is characterised by their association with emotion, the body, and nature" (Gaard 2001, p. 159). Western culture regards the linkage between women, nature, water, and animal to emphasise the inferiority and oppression of these categories. Most ecofeminists attest to the interrelationship between the exploitation of nature

and the degradation of women. They believe that the inferiority of women and nature is a discursive social construct, and in the dominant patriarchal cultures, as Gaard puts it, “reality is divided according to gender, and a higher value is placed on those attributes associated with masculinity, a construction that is called “hierarchical dualism”” (Gaard 1993, p. 18). In these cultures, they expose false hierarchical opposition between men and women associated with the earth or nature. They separate men from women and nature, and see the linkage between women and nature in order to dominate both women and nature. However, ecofeminists' attempt, according to Gaard, is to reject the self/other, man/woman and culture/nature dualisms of patriarchal thought and to liberate women and nature from oppression.

### DARWIN'S HUMAN EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT

Gaard and Gruen (1993, p. 237) suggest that “patriarchal domination is the result of human evolutionary development [...] an evolutionary shift occurred as the result of the emergence of hunting behavior in male hominids”. The hunter is always a strong man, and what distinguished man from nature was his destructive, competitive, and violent activity. Woman's small and weak body assigns her to “the realm of non-culture” (Gaard and Gruen 1993, p. 237), separated from man. According to his theory of natural selection, Darwin emphasises that “though in almost all species the female was the choice-maker, and the males competed among themselves, in human societies the privilege of choice-making had passed to the male, with deleterious effects” (Darwin 2008, p. xxiv). Furthermore in human societies, the men compete among themselves in order to possess women, “the most vigorous males, those which are best fitted for their places in nature, will leave most progeny” (Darwin 2008, p. xxiv). Darwin's representation of nature as female leads to the male-female distinction. He believes that the man is the ‘choice-maker’, and the men compete with each other to dominate both women and nature. At the beginning of the novel, when the three men reach Herland, Terry, “who was rich enough to do as he pleased” (*HL* pp. 1-2), thinks that he can seduce the women of Herland: “Terry, in his secret heart, had visions of a sort of sublimated summer resort—just Girls and Girls and Girls [...] Terry was popular among women even when there were other men around” (*HL* p. 6). Terry's is well liked by women, and is more successful than his friends to attract them, and “had pleasant dreams of what might happen” (*Ibid.*). Herland is an unknown country for the three men, but Terry confers humorously the name “Herland” to this strange country that indicates alienation and possession, the characteristic that seems odious to the women. Rudd hints that “Terry comes up with the name when the three leave the plane and set out to take possession of their new-found land. By making it “hers” he creates the possibility that it could become “his” ” (Rudd 2005, p. 474). Terry who has patriarchal presumptions thinks that women cannot organise their country well, and he thinks that they need a man to possess their land and rule it. He imagines that he has a better chance than his friends to become the king of Herland and conquer it, and he insists, “You'll see [...] I'll get solid with them all—and play one bunch against another. I'll get myself elected king in no time—whew! Solomon will have to take a back seat!” (*HL* p. 7).

Gilman pokes fun at Darwin's assumptions of natural selection and superiority of men by introducing strong and courageous female characters in Herland. The three men come from a patriarchal society that ascribes timidity, emotion, and weakness to femininity, and associates reason to masculinity. Despite the fact that the three men are strangers and newcomers for the women of Herland, they do not scare the three men. Van describes that

“with no more terror [...] they [...] frankly, curiously stared at us” (*HL* p. 13). When the men try to stare back at them, the women burst into laughter and leave them. In order to attract Alima, Terry shakes the necklace, but “she seized it from him with her left, and dropped on the instant to the bough below” (*HL* p. 14). Alima who is a strong woman seizes the necklace from Terry, and he is surprised that Alima does not conform to traits of femininity based on the assumption of patriarchal culture. Terry comes from a country rooted in patriarchal domination that is the result of human evolutionary development that “women, animals, and nature are considered to the cultural activities of men and can be thought of as separate from them” (Gaard & Gruen 1993, p. 237). Terry considers women and nature as separate from man who can dominate both of them, but he is astonished that Alima’s reaction is different from his presuppositions. Terry puts down his glass and says, “Mother of Mike, boys—what Gorgeous Girls! To climb like that! to run like that! and afraid of nothing” (*HL* p. 15). The strong girls live in Herland that is free from patriarchal values that associate female body with weakness. Gilman also uses humor to challenge the presumed Darwin’s human evolutionary development and the idea of natural selection that emphasises male-female distinctions as well as the lower place of women in patriarchal societies. Upon the three men’s arrival at Herland, three young women are on the trees, and Van describes, “we started up the tree, separated into three swift-moving figures and fled upward” (*HL* p. 12). The women climb the tree, and they are watching men, who are on the lower position. Saber remarks that “the women are on the trees, on a higher position that implies an explicit critique of the hierarchy of man/woman” (Saber 2012, p.763).

When Terry explains that “the laws of nature require a struggle for existence, and that in the struggle the fittest survive, and the unfit perish,” (*HL* p. 53) he is explaining Darwin’s law of nature. According to Gaard and Gruen, “[in] this theory of human social evolution, woman’s body, which is smaller, weaker, and reproductive, prevents her from full participation in the hunt and thus relegates her to the realm of non-culture” (Gaard & Gruen 1993, p. 237). Terry argues for women’s inferiority, and says that “Mothers [...] would of course work for their children in the home; but the world’s work was different—that had to be done by men, and required the competitive element” (*HL* p. 52). Terry mentions that women are economically dependent on men, and he also talks about the economic pressure of the low class women and says that “among the poorest of all the women were driven into the labor market by necessity” (*HL* p. 53). But the low class women who do the most work get the least money, and in this way, women do not count in the market economy. Darwin’s theory of struggle for existence implies that the lower and the weaker women are, the poorer they are.

Darwin mentions that the problem of overpopulation of species is often solved by competition and war for the essential nutrients which people need to survive. Darwin uses the term ‘struggle for existence;’ according to Darwin, “hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the physical conditions of life” (Francis 2007, p. 142). The species increase in number, and the resources are unable to keep up with the the rising individual population. As a result, the various species fight together, and the stronger species would tend to be preserved and the weaker ones to be destroyed. Different groups of people compete for their survival and attempt to feed themselves in the face of food shortage, and Darwin acquiesces to this idea that natural disasters, poverty, disease, and death are also the ways of controlling population. Darwin explains that his theory about population is an important clue to understanding the action of natural selection and struggle for existence, but Gilman’s narrative appears to construct a fictive reality which inadvertently counters Darwin’s theory of ‘struggle for existence’ when the three women explain how they control population in *Herland*: “When a population multiplies by five every

thirty years it soon reaches the limits of a country [...] They very soon eliminated all the grazing cattle—sheep were the last to go” (*HL* p. 58). They design a system of optimization of agricultural production, and they improve their scheme of fertilization and work out a perfect scheme of refeeding the soil with all that come out of it. The narrator describes that “everything which came from the earth went back to it” (*HL* p. 67). Gilman introduces this new method of agriculture to supply food for the whole country, and the narrator describes that “neither did they start off on predatory excursions to get more land from somebody else, or to get more food from somebody else, to maintain their struggling mass” (*HL* p. 58). They do not get land from other countries in a war to provide more food for their people. This new way of agriculture in Herland mocks Darwin’s theory of ‘the struggle for existence’ as Van describes it, in their own country those who are stronger survive and eliminate the weak. The narrator maintains that they [Herlanders] did not solve their overpopulation by a “struggle for existence” (*HL* p. 58) which would result in surviving the fittest and eliminating the unfit. They solve their overpopulation through the new method of agriculture to avoid competition and fighting, and they restore serenity and peace in their country instead.

From an ecofeminist perspective, three factors are important in problem population: “reproductive control, socioeconomics, and particularly the social status of women” (Gaard and Gruen 1993, p. 244). They continue that women are responsible for overpopulating the world, and the unsafe method of birth control as IUD (intra-uterine device) is offered to the poorer women that this insecure method of birth control endangers their lives. Gaard and Gruen point to the negative implications of scientific control of female bodies and reproduction, and how population control perils women’s lives. They state that many scientific methods of population control are the causes of the sickness and death of women. But in *Herland* women are not in danger of death, and when the narrator asks Somel, “you surely do not destroy the unborn” (*HL* p. 59), she looks at the narrator with horror, and her eyes blaze, and she says in a hard whisper, ““Destroy the unborn—!” [...] “Do men do that in your country?”” (*HL* p. 59). The men try to conceal committing infanticide and other ways of controlling the population which lead to the death and sickness of women, and it seems unimportant to men who consider themselves separated from women. But in *Herland* Gilman introduces the new concept of motherhood and through this new meaning of motherhood, she develops the new way of population control.

In *Herland*, they place the first mother who bears a child after slaughter in the Temple of Maaia—their Goddess of Motherhood, and the narrator says, “as years passed, this wonder-woman bore child after child, five of them—all girls” (*HL* p. 48). Each daughter of Maaia bears five girls till the time that “there were left one hundred and fifty-five parthenogenetic women, founding a new race” (*HL* p. 48). Since they do not have any man, they bear child through parthenogenetic women, and when the population increases, they try to control it through introducing the new perception of motherhood. Gilman introduces the new conception of motherhood as Somel explains, “before a child comes to one of us there is a period of utter exaltation—the whole being is uplifted and filled with a concentrated desire for that child” (*HL* p. 60). Young women who do not have a child voluntarily defer it, but those young women who have a child try to engage in the most active work, and Somel describes that “[she] would solace her longing by the direct care and service of the babies we already had” (*HL* p. 60). The women in Herland control their desire and motivation to have children through thought and taking care of other children. For Herlanders, as the narrator describes, “the longed-for motherhood was not only a personal joy, but a nation’s hope [...] with the devoted love and care of all the surviving population, grew up as a holy sisterhood, their whole ardent youth looking forward to their great office” (*HL* p. 49).

Van refers to the definition of ‘mother’ according to patriarchal assumptions and says that “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” (*HL* pp. 58-9). According to patriarchy, mothers should bring up their children in private homes, and Terry supposes that “world work’s was different— that had to be done by men, and required the competitive element” (*HL* p. 52). In Herland, Gilman views motherhood as a collective task that is not located in private home, “with every effort made to protect and seclude them from a dangerous world, here [Herland] they grew up in a wide, friendly world” (*HL* p. 86). The women in Herland work cooperatively to bring up their children and improve their society. They start with a really high degree of social development, something like that of Ancient Egypt or Greece: “they developed this virgin birth capacity. Then, since the prosperity of their children depended on it, the fullest and subtlest coordination began to be practiced” (*HL* p. 57). They have the limitless feeling of sisterhood, and they all work together to bring up their children who are the focus of their thought.

The narrator describes that we have man’s life cycle and woman’s life cycle: “To the man there is growth, struggle, conquest, the establishment of his family, and as much further success in gain or ambition as he can achieve. To the woman, growth, the securing of a husband, the subordinate activities of family life” (*HL* p. 86). But in Herland there is only one cycle of life that “the child entered upon a broad open field of life, in which motherhood was the one great personal contribution to the national life, and all the rest the individual share in their common activities” (*HL* p. 86). They work for their children without the stimulus of competition, and Van mentions that “they were sisters, and as they grew, they grew together—not by competition, but by united action” (*HL* p.51). Through socialization of taking care of children, Gilman undermines Darwin’s theory that admits that women are passive creators, and social works are done by men through competition.

Gilman shows the difference between the purely maternal and the paternal attitudes of mind and undercuts the paternal attitudes that are based on competition to possess and dominate both women and nature. She represents a maternal world that is free from struggle, war, and competition. Herlanders have omitted competition and hierarchy that are the basic elements of Darwin’s theories and patriarchal society through showing a utopian society whose structure is based on the principle of sisterhood in that “all descended from one mother” (*HL* p. 49). All women venerate this mother figure, and since they think that the children come from one family, they do not need to carry a surname. Moadine describes, “[for the children of Herland] the finished product is not a private one”, (*HL* p. 64) and mothers do not give their children their family name, and they do not treat them as property. Somel delineates that “each one of us has our exact line of descent all the way back to our dear First Mother” (*HL* p. 64). They do not want their own children to bear their names. Van appreciates these women he observes that “they had had no wars. They had had no kings, and no priests, and no aristocracies” (*HL* p. 51), and Jeff also ventures to say that “they all had pink houses. The broad green fields and closely cultivated gardens (*HL* p. 15). All of them have similar houses in order to avoid discrimination. The women are bonding together to make important decisions, and they focus on hard work. They have omitted competition and war to achieve a democratic country.

In contrasting the representatives of a paternal society that is based on dualisms of culture/nature and man/woman to possess and dominate both women and nature, Gilman shows a maternal world that is free from the paternal attitudes to leap into egalitarian nation. Based on patriarchal assumptions, men’s work is recorded as income generating, but women do unpaid work such as “carrying water, collecting firewood, weeding, and hoeing, bearing children, preparing food [which] take place in the private sector or home” (Gaard & Gruen

1993, p. 240). Gilman criticises Darwin's theory of 'Natural Selection' or 'the Survival of the Fittest' which implies that "those who survive are the 'fit', the 'superior' examples" (Darwin 2008, p. 19). She marks that "we are the only animal species in which the female depends on the male for food, the only animal species in which the sex-relation is also an economic relation" (Gilman 1898, p. 5). According to Darwin's theory, women are economically and socially dependent on men, but in *Herland* Gilman introduces a society that is organised by women free from men and the negative element of competition. To undo the logic of domination and the myth of the separate self, according to Gaard, literature "require[s] narratives of connection, community, and interdependence among humans, animals, and the natural world" (Gaard 2008, p. 15). Gilman eliminates war and competitions, presumably the signifiers of men's values, in *Herland* to achieve a world with a presence of "diverse human-animal-nature communities and participatory democracy" (Gaard 2008, p. 15). Their solution to every problem is "the conscious effort to make it better" (*HL* p. 65), and they observe the value of 'improvement' that is not based on Darwin's notion of improvement, "that 'improvement' will be the outcome of the process he names 'natural selection' (Darwin 2008, p. 19). Herlanders devote their time towards raising their children and nurturing the best kind of people through education. They give special training to intellectuals who show tendency to observe, discriminate, and suggest. The narrator describes that "[they] spend their time in the most careful study of one or another branch of work, with a view to its further improvement" (*HL* p. 65). In each generation they reach some new mind to detect faults and show the need of alterations, and the inventors apply their unique faculty and offer their best suggestions to solve the problems of their country. The country based on the maternal attitude of mind, according to Gaard, "[favors] inclusion over exclusion, participation over competition, inducement over domination, identification over isolation" (Gaard 2008, p. 17).

Van states that "[Herlander's] child-literature was a wonderful thing" (*HL* p.86). He continues that they have spent years to acquaint with their smooth, delicate, simple literature with which "they had bent that great art to the service of the child mind" (*HL* p.86). But Terry who is fascinated with competition, stirring romance, wild adventure finds their books dull, and he says that "Pretty punk literature [...] of course one expects to begin on child-stories, but I would like something more interesting now" (*HL* p. 38). Since there is no man in *Herland*, there is no sign or picture of them in the books, and the adventure and wilderness, the signs of men's values, do not exist in their literature. Van explains that "they had the same gradation of simple repetitive verse and story that we are familiar with, and the most exquisite, imaginative tales [...] not only simple and unflinching in appeal to the child-mind, but TRUE, true to the living world about them" (*HL* p. 88). Herlanders have omitted competition and adventure in their literature to build the connections of friendship and reciprocity between children, animals, and nature. According to Gaard, "an ecofeminist perspective on children's environmental literature might look for ways that these narratives provide an antidote to the logic of domination" (Gaard 2009, p. 327). Gilman introduces the environment children [that] are closer to—nature—and believes that they are not educated in schools, as Van says, "it was all education but no schooling" (*HL* p. 91). Subakir and Abdul Hamid hint to the school environment, "where children receive their earliest education about society, norms, culture and the world around them" (Subakir *et al.* 2012, p. 53), and they continue that "school institutions play a vital part in socialization and in the molding of the ideologies in the students' minds [...] the children unconsciously internalise what they see in the textbooks [...] appropriate qualities for what is masculine and what is feminine" (Subakir *et al.* 2012, pp. 54-55). In the Western culture, children are educated in schools to inculcate gender discrimination and the superiority of culture over nature. But in *Herland*, children are

not educated in school to show that “children might be most nobly born, and reared in an environment calculated to allow the richest, freest growth, they had deliberately remodeled and improved the whole state” (*HL* p.87). They are educated in open fields to explore the interconnections between nature and culture.

The contrast between the maternal society and paternal society is expanded when the three men and the women of Herland start to discuss how they provide food for their people. The men are talking about exploitation of animals, and the women are amazed when they hear about exploitation of animals. Jeff explains that “we keep cattle for their milk, as well as for their meat [...] Cow's milk is a staple article of diet. There is a great milk industry—to collect and distribute it” (*HL* p. 41). The women are astonished when they hear about the exploitation of cows. Van explains that “they heard it out, looking very white, and presently begged to be excused” (*HL* p. 41). Herlanders do not exploit animals, and they provide a close relationship between their children, nature, and animals which is, according to Gaard, “an image of a connected (not alienated) self-identity by showing us children’s natural empathy with animals, along with a strategy for their collective action that succeeds in saving animals from becoming meat for human consumption” (Gaard 2008, p. 18). Herlanders have improved “their agriculture to the highest point” (*HL* p. 67) to increase food supply, and Gaard also offers vegetarian diet to refrain from industrialised animal food production, and to save animals from oppression.

In Herland, children engage in games that are educational, and they have eliminated competition from children’s games as the narrator explains that “they had games [...] but we found them rather uninteresting at first. It was like two people playing solitaire to see who would get it first; more like a race or—a competitive examination, than a real game with some fight in it” (*HL* p. 28). The games, and children’s literature, are planned in the way to feed the children’s minds and to educate them well; “they [their children] knew Peace, Beauty, Order, Safety, Love, Wisdom, Justice, Patience, and Plenty” (*HL* pp. 85-6). The children grow up in an environment that meets their needs as Tıkız and Çubukçu (2014, p.175) hint that “the children in Herland are provided with surroundings in which they can develop themselves [...] Herlanders attach great importance to concrete experiences so that those experiences could lead to active experimentation of the children in their community”. Gaard believes that social and environmental problems are interconnected, and in order to solve the problem of alienation and separation from nature, our children need the resilience that “can only be found through a connected self-identity: a connection with and a joy in nature, and a connection across cultures” (2009, p. 332). Gilman’s aim is to develop a democratic planetary civilization that eliminates Darwin’s theory of “struggle for existence” that is based on competition and domination. The men find “the advance of democracy and the increase of wealth” (*HL* p.124) in Herland, and Jeff says that “they [Herlanders] have peace and plenty, wealth and beauty, goodness and intellect” (*HL*. p. 68).

#### PATRIARCHAL RELIGION AND METAPHORICAL / IDEOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

Patriarchal religion and metaphorical or ideological explanations are the other sources of separation of culture from nature. In patriarchy, according to Gaard, “the systemic devaluation of the “feminine principle” has been a fundamental basis of domination” (Gaard 1993, p. 17). Gilman represents three male characters whose perspectives about women are different from each other: “Jeff, with his gentle romantic old-fashioned notions of women as clinging vines” (*HL* p. 18). Jeff idealises women in the best Southern style, and he is very



sentimental, but Terry devalues women and divides them into two groups: “those he wanted and those he didn't; Desirable and Undesirable was his demarcation” (HL p. 18). Jeff's ideas and Terry's are far from Van, the narrator, who sometimes makes peace between them. Van holds a middle ground when Jeff and Terry dispute over the position of women in the society, and he says that “I [...] used to argue learnedly about the physiological limitations of the sex” (HL p. 8). Van is not biased and he indicates that “we were not in the least "advanced" on the woman question, any of us” (HL p. 8). Through portraying three men with different perspectives, Gilman celebrates diversity of voices and rejects all forms of domination. She challenges the male rational culture and, according to Gaard, “rejects the structure of dualism and acknowledges both women and men as equal parts of culture and nature” (Gaard 1997, p. 118).

Before the three men reach Herland, as Van describes, “we had expected a dull submissive monotony” (HL p. 69). According to their culture that devalues whatever is associated with women and nature, the three men expect “what we called "feminine vanity"—"frills and furbelows," [...] we had expected hysteria, and found a standard of health and vigor, a calmness of temper” (HL p. 69). The three men's perspectives about women are traditional, and they expect that the characteristics of the women in Herland are similar to the women of their own countries. Terry who is more biased than the other men says that “we all know women can't organise—that they scrap like anything—are frightfully jealous” (HL p. 49). Terry is a sample of the self who is very proud of being a man, and he makes a distinction between man and woman and believes in the superiority of the male sex over the female one.

Van describes that “our one chance was friendliness—a civilised attitude on both sides” (HL p. 18). Although the women of Herland treat them friendly, Van explains that “he [Terry] pulled his revolver, and fired upward” (HL p. 20). The women of Herland try to instruct the three men, but Terry who is trained in a patriarchal society does not comprehend the women's kindness and scares them by shooting. Van explains that “each of us was seized by five women, each holding arm or leg or head; we were lifted like children” (HL p. 20). The three men struggle to escape, but the women hold them securely. They educate the three men swiftly and Van hints to the name of their special tutors, “mine was named Somel, Jeff's Zava, and Terry's Moadine” (HL p. 29). Gilman shows the difference between men's and women's perspectives, and Gaard refers to Nancy Chodorow's and Carol Gilligan's studies who suggest that “a sense of self as separate is more common in men, while an interconnected sense of self is more common in women” (Gaard 1993, p. 2). The men think that the superiority of men over both women and nature is natural, and see each side of the dualism as exclusive rather than inclusive. But Herland is the country that is organised by women who reject any exclusion, and they do their best to educate and tame these three men.

Gilman shows the different attitudes of maternal and paternal nations when the three men attempt to escape from Herland. In contrast with the men's biased view that they will be in an exclusive relationship with the women of Herland, the women think about an inclusive relationship between the three men and themselves. The men think about their superiority over women, but the women consider the presence of the three men as an opportunity for development. When Herlanders hear the whir of the men's biplane, as Van describes, “they had instantly accepted it as proof of the high development” (HL p. 54). They welcome eagerly the three male visitors to their land. Although the women treat them friendly, Terry persuades his friends to escape. Since they do not find any rope, they had to, as the narrator says, “piece it out from our bedding, rugs, and garments” (HL p. 30). They destroy everything to provide the tools which they need to escape, as the narrator describes, “we worked hard and fast at our task of destruction.” (HL p. 31). The narrator describes that “he

[Terry] had been foresighted enough to mark the very spot, only a scratch of stone on stone” (*HL* p. 31). Through doing their best to escape, they destroy nature and everything. Despite their attempts to escape, they were captured by the women. Van explains that we expected to be punished, but no punishment happened to us. The women treat the men as “truants only” (*HL* p. 37) and when they return to Herland, Van explains that “the damage we had done was quite ignored” (*HL* pp. 37-8).

The women do not feel superior over the men when they capture them and, surprisingly, treat them politely, as Van says, “seeming to have no worse feeling than a mild triumph as of winning some simple game; and even that they politely suppressed” (*HL* p. 37). Van explains that at first we had feared a harsh punishment, but they were pleasant enough that we had enjoyed our trip. They offer them the opportunity to see their country, and Van describes that “I could appreciate perfect roads [...] the shade of endless lines of trees; the ribbon of flowers that unrolled beneath them; and the rich comfortable country that stretched off and away, full of varied charm” (*HL* p. 37). Men always think about their superiority and exclusion and try to escape, but women try to educate them, treat them friendly, and think about inclusive relationship. Gilman presents a novel that is organised by women who omit any domination and exploitation and according to Gaard, “an understanding of feminism as striving to end all systems of oppression, a pluralistic structure, and an inclusive and contextual framework that values and emphasises humans in relationships, [and] denies abstract individualism” (Gaard 1993, p. 2).

The narrator hints that “the religion they had to begin with was much like that of old Greece—a number of gods and goddesses; but they lost all interest in deities of war and plunder” (*HL* p. 51). Their religion is maternal and values men and women equally, and Gaard and Gruen hint that “in the goddess religions, both the earth and women’s fertility were seen as sacred. There was no gender hierarchy, and divinity was seen as immanent” (Gaard and Gruen 1993, p. 237). With the emergence of patriarchal religions, people worshiped God who had created the universe, and since nature and women were seen as God’s creation, their meanings were reversed. Patriarchal religion has elevated the role of men above women which indicates the domination of man over nature and woman. Gaard marks that “in Euro-American cultures, the association between women and nature and the devaluation of both together exemplify one manifestation of environmental sexism” (Gaard 2001, p. 161). Jacobs states that “[social] movements have used terms such as racism and sexism to label discriminatory beliefs and practices” (Jacobs 2007, p. 2). Gaard uses the terms to show that the patriarchal religion is based on the discrimination between men and women, and refers to the inseparable positions of women, animals, and nature in the Western culture. According to her, “ecofeminists make connections among not just sexism, speciesism, and the oppression of nature but also other forms of social injustice—racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, and colonialism—as part of the western culture’s assault on nature” (Gaard 2009, p. 323). However, in *Herland*, Gilman presents a utopia that returns to the maternal religion to elevate the role of women and nature, and suggests the form of justice in social relations that reinforces equality, democracy, and peace. Van says that “the story of the Virgin birth naturally did not astonish her [Ellador], but she was greatly puzzled by the Sacrifice, and still more by the Devil, and the theory of Damnation” (*HL* pp. 93-4). Their religion is not based on punishment, and the narrator explains that “their religion was based [...] on] the full perception of evolution, showed the principle of growth and the beauty of wise culture” (*HL* p. 87).

When the men travel to Herland, the women of Herland think that “this may be a chance to re-establish a bi-sexual state for our people” (*HL* p. 75). These wise women are not afraid of the three men, and they analyse the three men through taming and training. Van

describes that “tamed and trained to a degree they considered safe, we were at last brought out to see the country, to know the people” (*HL* p. 61). Van who is a good friend of the three tutors, decides to marry Ellodor whom he loves. Jeff also marries Celis, and Van describes that “her heart lifted with that tide of race-motherhood which was their supreme passion, could with ineffable joy and pride announce that she was to be a mother” (*HL* p. 119). Since they had watched the miracle of virgin birth, as the narrator describes, “they greeted this new miracle of union” (*HL* p. 119). Jeff and Celis’s child is the sign of unity of man and woman for them and they warmly welcome this unity.

Van describes that he and Jeff who were not very popular among girls in their own country could accept culture of Herlanders, and when Van and Jeff compare their maternal religion and culture with theirs, they could appreciate the women’s culture. We could have a good relationship with our wives despite the distinctions between our cultures and theirs. Van describes that “there was growing in our minds, at least in Jeff’s and mine, a keen appreciation of the advantages of this strange country and its management. Terry remained critical” (*HL* p. 65). Van and Jeff are gentle, as Gaard says, “we have seen some men become caring, gentle, and nondominating” (Gaard 1993, p. 23). Van describes that “Jeff was a tender soul” (*HL* p. 6), and “Jeff was getting on excellent terms with his tutor, and even his guards, and so was I. It interested me profoundly to note and study the subtle difference between these women and other women, and try to account for them” (*HL* p. 26). Jeff and Van are not biased and they are interested in comparing the women of Herland with the women of their country, and learning the differences between them.

But Terry who was popular among girls in his country could not accord himself with the Herlanders, and the narrator describes that “his intense masculinity seemed only fit complement to their intense femininity. But here he was all out of drawing” (*HL* p. 63). In the patriarchal religion, Terry’s violence and anger are seen as normal masculine behaviors, but in Herland, his behaviors seem to be abnormal. Van describes that “at home we had measured him with other men, and though we knew his failings, he was by no means an unusual type” (*HL* p. 63). Terry is typical of a separate self who experiences separation and alienation in Herland. Since he tries to impose the patriarchal religion in Herland, he marries Alima, whom he loves, but he is punished for his misconduct toward Alima. Van describes that “Terry put in practice his pet conviction that a woman loves to be mastered, and by sheer brute force, in all the pride and passion of his intense masculinity, he tried to master this woman” (*HL* p. 113). Terry attacks Alima and tries to rape her, but three strong women thwart his rage. The narrator describes that “Terry was [...] known as unsafe, convicted of what was to them an unpardonable sin” (*HL* p. 114). Terry is punished for disturbing the peace in Herland: they ask him to leave Herland so that peace can be restored to their country. As Gaard observes, “domination of others—whether in the form of rape, slavery, animal experimentation, colonialism, clear-cutting, or damming—has been called “power over” and is part of the violent and oppressive framework that feminists reject” (Gaard 2001, pp. 167-8). Terry’s insistence on possession and domination of Alima and his failure to recognise connections leads to his violence and separation that is rejected by Herlanders who claim that “with our best endeavors this country will support about so many people, with the standard of peace, comfort, health, beauty, and progress we demand” (*HL* p. 58).

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, according to Gaard's theory of ecofeminism, patriarchal religion, Darwin's human evolutionary development, and the metaphorical or ideological explanations are seen as the sources of the separation of culture from nature that leads to the self/other dualism in patriarchy. In order to uproot the presumed self/other, man/woman and culture/nature dualisms of patriarchy that are based on the domination of the separate self, Gilman envisions a country that is organised by women, free from the competition, violence, and war that are encouraged by a paternal attitude. Herlanders' religion is maternal, and they view nature as sacred, and value men and women equally in contrast to the patriarchal religion that elevates the role of men above women and nature, and adjusts the domination of man over them. Through education and socialization of taking care of children, Gilman undermines Darwin who believes that women are passive creators, and social works are done by men through competition. Darwin's theory of natural selection and the notion of improvement are based on the idea that women are biologically weaker than men and those who are stronger struggle to survive. Gilman introduces an environment where children are closer to nature, and undercuts the distinction between nature and culture. Through improving their agriculture to the highest point, Herlanders solve the problem of overpopulation, hence rejecting Darwin who mentions that the problem of overpopulation of species is often solved by competition and war for the essential nutrients which people need for survival. She shows a utopia organised by women that supports their people with the standard of peace, comfort, and progress to refuse any exploitation of women, nature, and animals. They also try to educate and tame the three men, Jeff and Van, who are samples of gentle and non dominating people, but Terry who is a sample of a separate self is banished. Based on Gaard's theory of ecofeminism, Herland is a country based on a form of justice in social relations that "honors the interdependence of diverse humans with each other, other animal species, and the earth" (Gaard 2001, p. 159).

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