Addams and Gilman: The Foundations of Pragmatism, Feminism and Social Philosophy

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Abstract

Classical women pragmatists have been absent of both, the mainstream accounts of pragmatism and feminism. This mutual omission is striking since pragmatism and feminism share one very fundamental assumption: the recovery of experience. In this chapter, a proposal to overcome this situation is introduced by recovering the works of Addams and Gilman which would lend valuable elements for the creation of a robust theory of power, domination and oppression that is attractive for feminist theory as well as for social philosophy. First, the validation of women's experiences through Gilman's literary work and Addams's latest philosophical book on memory. Second, the questioning of the strong division of spaces and gender in Addams's "Hull house experiment" and in Gilman's utopian writings. The chapter emphasizes also their being part of a conversation of women of that time and therefore aims at contributing to the production of more inclusive models of the pragmatist conventional genealogy.

1. Challenging the official genealogies: the "pragmatist-feminist" enigma.

Right after the author's death in 1935, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* first appeared in print. The work makes the biographical, theoretical and social context of Gilman's work intelligible and helps us understand how much of her thoughts are due to the fruitful collaboration with other women of the progressive era. We find, for example, an entry about the Woman's Congresses she helped to organize in California at the beginning of the 20th century:

> [the Woman's congresses] brought together the foremost women of the state, showed what progress was being made, and introduced noted speakers from the east. Among these, as I have said, were Helen Campbell and Jane Addams. Also came Susan B. Anthony, that grand leader of the Equal Suffrage Movement. These all became friends of mine. Mrs. Campbell became like a mother to me, Miss Anthony wanted me as a suffrage worker, Miss Addams's championship was most valuable. (Gilman 1991, 174)

We also learn a couple of pages later, that Jane Addams invited Charlotte Perkins Gilman to spend time at Hull-House in Chicago. Once we know this, it is impossible to read Gilman's utopian novel *Herland* (1915), which is about a society ruled exclusively by women, without keeping Gilman's visit in mind.

This chapter offers a reflection on the reasons why a story as important as the friendship between Addams and Gilman and others like them, is missing from our conventional narratives about the foundations of the progressive era, the pragmatist social philosophy, and the women's movement. This gap has already been identified in Charlene Haddock Seigfried's crucial work *Pragmatism and Feminism. Reweaving the Social Fabric* (1996), where she attests to the absence of the women of the progressive era from the mainstream genealogies of both, pragmatism and feminism.

Should they be present in those genealogies? Are their contributions as relevant as the work of their contemporaries who do appear in the history books? According to examples given by Seigfried and others, they do deserve the credit. We learn, for instance, that the first doctoral dissertation on a feminist issue in the United States was written by a woman pragmatist in 1913. Her name was Jessie Taft (1882 – 1960), the title of her dissertation was *The Woman Movement from the Point of View of Social Consciousness* and her supervisor was George Herbert Mead, then professor at the University of Chicago (Seigfried 1996, 45). Jane Addams (1860 – 1935) is not merely the only woman philosopher to have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (in 1931); she remains the only philosopher at all to have received that honor. Indeed, she has been compared to Rosa Luxemburg and Dolores Ibárruri, known popularly as "la Pasionaria" (Mueller 2011, 95). Addams's talent was acknowledged by one of her friends and collaborators John Dewey, who declared that her piece "A Modern Lear" was one of the greatest things he had ever read both as to "its form and its ethical philosophy" (Westbrook 1991, 89). In addition, Anna Julia Cooper (1858 – 1954) earned her Ph.D. at the Sorbonne in France at the age of 66. She was also the mother of several adopted and foster children, which makes her achievement even more praiseworthy. Cooper's book *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South* can be considered a predecessor of contemporary theories of intersectionality (Whipps & Lake, 2016).

These are only a few mentions of the accomplishments of the women of the *progressive era* to justify the inclusion of them in our accounts of the foundations of American pragmatism. As suggested earlier, however, they are not only missing from this aspect of our history, they are also barely acknowledged in the mainstream timeline of feminist theory. Seigfried (1996, 20) noticed twenty-four years ago that Rosemarie Tong's introduction entitled *Feminist Thought,* which is regarded as the most important reference

book on the topic, recognizes eight classifications of feminism, but makes no mention of pragmatist feminism. The fourth edition, issued in 2016, includes seven chapters: liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist and socialist feminism, psychoanalytic and care-focused feminism, existentialist and postmodern feminism, women of color feminism, and ecofeminism. According to the editor, no substantial change was made with respect to the third edition, besides the grouping of psychoanalytic and care-focused feminism in one single chapter (Tong 2016, ix). Nor is pragmatism even listed in the index, though there are scattered mentions of former and current women pragmatists: Anna Julia Cooper (as the voice of African American/ Black women, once), Patricia Hill Collins (two pages address her discussion of the interdependent dimensions of oppression) and to Gilman's father's aunt Harriet Beecher Stowe (one quotation on women's rights).

The inclusion of women pragmatists in feminist anthologies has been uneven. For instance, the *Fifty-One Key Feminist Thinkers*, which was compiled by Lori J. Marso for Routledge includes entries on Margaret Fuller (1810 – 1850), Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860 – 1935), but makes no mention of Jane Addams. This stands in contrast to the generous presence of women pragmatists and their predecessors in Mary Ellen Whaite's *The History of Women Philosophers* in four volumes, which also lists Lady Victoria Welby (1837 – 1912), Christine Ladd-Franklin (1847 – 1930) and Mary Whiton Caulkins (1863 – 1930) after Addams, Cooper, Fuller and Gilman. The *Blackwell Guide to Feminist Philosophy* edited in 2007 by Linda Martín Alcoff and Eva Feder Kittay, is one of the few examples to contain a chapter entitled "Pragmatism", this time written by Shannon Sullivan.

These works are raised here only to point out the fact that much has yet to be done. As historians, however, we want to understand the reasons for the omission of feminism by pragmatists and vice versa. I agree with Seigfried that these mutual omissions are striking since pragmatism and feminism share one very fundamental philosophical assumption: the recovery of experience. This fact is what motivates me to name it "the pragmatist-feminist enigma[1]. Their affinity should appear natural to us since "[p]ragmatist philosophy explores [the] tension between conceptualization and experience as problematic in ways that can contribute to the further development of feminist theory" (Seigfried 1996, 9). Pragmatism could have learned a great deal from feminism in this respect, for instance, from the standpoint theory or the critique of essentialism. Feminist

epistemologies underscore the relevance of the context and the practical ends of the inquiry as much as pragmatism does. And, pragmatism "argues for the inclusion of diverse communities of interest, particularly marginalized ones" (Seigfried 1996, 37).

Why then have Classical American pragmatists, who were working in close collaboration with these women, left their obvious marginalization out of the analysis? At this point, Seigfreid offers the following hypothesis:

> It seems that the women working most closely with the male pragmatists were more interested in disproving notions about the inferiority of women and improving women's actual situation than with designating the situation as oppressive or theorizing about the causes of women's problems in the culture and practice of misogyny. The male pragmatists cannot be blamed for not incorporating a theory of women's oppression into their writings if the women pragmatists who did incorporate women's issues into their analysis did not themselves develop a specifically feminist theory of oppression (Seigfreid 1996, 105)

To some extent, I agree with this statement, but I also have some reservations. I concur with Seigfried in trying to avoid the temptation to expect more than what was feasible at that time for those women. At that time, the concept of patriarchy, for instance, had not yet been linked theoretically to women's subjection as it later would be by radical feminist critics, who also developed non-naturalistic views on sex and gender (Tong 2016, 53)[2]. Also, at that time, those women might have decided strategically to focus on what could be changed or improved according to their social context, rather than on denouncing the social and systemic causes of their exclusion. It is also true that anyone who reflected more on women's oppression[3] would have had less to do with other pragmatists, though this might not apply, in my opinion to Jane Addams and Anna Julia Cooper, who did work closer to Dewey and Mead, and to W.E.B. Du Bois, respectively.

There are reasons to elaborate on Seigfreid's thesis on the causes of the enigma. In this chapter, I am going to defend a stronger variant of what she identified as one primary cause of the enigma, namely, that the women of the progressive era have remained marginal in the construction of both traditions of thought, pragmatism and feminism, is due to the fact that pragmatist social philosophy lacks a robust theory of power, domination, and oppression. Secondly, I argue that recovering the works of the classical women pragmatists would lend valuable elements for the creation of such a theory. I will

focus precisely on the subjects in which Addams and Gilman have a common interest, namely the validation of women's experiences and the questioning of gender roles and spaces. Thirdly, by recovering their insights on society, I argue that we can enrich our understanding of the genealogies that we have accepted uncritically and that we will therefore find ourselves in a better position to write a foundational narrative that does justice to the past and offers powerful tools to
present social challenges.

2. Recovering women's experiences for social philosophy.

Jane Addams was born on 6 September 1860, a few weeks after Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who was born on the 3rd of July. They also died in the same year: Addams died on 21 May 1935, while Gilman wrote the following before she ended her life on 17 August: "The one predominant duty is to find one's work and do it, and I have striven mightily at that" (Gilman 1991, 335). Being contemporaries, these women had much in common. Indeed, their paths crossed many times in many significant ways. Thanks to the *Jane Addams Papers Project*[4] we can look at the correspondence between them and discover a number of intriguing facts, for instance, that Charlotte Perkins Gilman volunteered to design the flag of the Woman's Peace Party.

In this section, their attempts to make women's experiences visible and relevant, especially those experiences that involve violence and suffering, are examined side by side. It is surprising, for example, how much Addams and Gilman achieved even though each had very fragile health. After finishing her first year at the Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia, Addams experienced terrible back pain, accompanied by fatigue, depression, and inability to concentrate (Knight 2005, 120). There is no record of her treatment at a hospital but it is quite probable that the therapy followed the guidelines of a popular book by the famous doctor S. Weir Mitchell *Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System, Especially in Women* from 1881. According to Louise W. Knight (2005, 120):

> The best treatment, [Mitchell] wrote, was four to six weeks of seclusion, rest, full feeding, massage, and electric shocks. Because Addams was in his care at the

> hospital for less than three weeks (she and her family left Philadelphia on March 22), she did not undergo the complete Mitchell regime. Still, she must have experienced the substance of it.

Addams's depression lasted for several years. After a time, she left medical school and travelled to Europe. If she overcame her condition, it was surely not thanks to Mitchell's cure. It seems that other women intellectuals were prescribed the same cure with catastrophic results: Edith Wharton, Alice James and Charlotte Perkins Gilman (García Dauder & Pérez Sedeño 2017, 154). Women under this treatment were supposed to return happily to her feminine roles since their lack of adjustment was probably the source of the neurasthenia they suffered[5].

Gilman did receive the "rest cure" after giving birth to her daughter Katherine, when she was diagnosed with "nervous prostration" (Gilman 1991, 90). Several doctors visited her and found no physical explanation for her condition. She described herself as being too weak to eat, paint, sew, listen or talk. She was unable to do anything but lie down and cry (Gilman 1991, 91). She was then sent to Philadelphia to Mitchell's hospital. The therapy did not start well; Mitchell told her scornfully that he had already had two women "of her blood", meaning probably Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe. In her memories, Gilman recalls (perhaps ironically) that the doctor was well versed in the two kinds of nervous prostration: "that of the business man exhausted from too much work, and the society woman exhausted from too much play" (Gilman 1991, 95). Gilman's final diagnosis said "hysteria" and the cure consisted of "live as domestic life as possible" (Gilman 1991, 96).

Not only did the cure not work, it aggravated Gilman's condition. It took her longer to recover but when she felt a bit better, she decided to write a short tale called "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), which is one of her most well-known texts. In it, she narrates her descent to the hell of insanity. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is now regarded as a classic piece of the American Gothic Literature, but it stands as an exception within Gilman's literary output. The tale is short and intense; the reader can feel the pain of a young woman doomed to spend her whole day staring at a yellow wallpaper. Her impotence and self-doubt are eloquently expressed in a passage often quoted in the secondary literature:

> If a physician of high standing, and one's husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing that matter with one but temporary depression — a slight hysterical tendency — what is one to do? […]
>
> So I take phosphates or phosphites – whichever it is, and tonics and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again. (Gilman, 2019, 180)

The following passage suggests a merging of two authority figures, the doctor and the husband, who also turns to be a doctor in the story, at the point at which the depressed young mother proves unable to stand up to him despite having her own sense of how she could eventually get better:

> He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excide fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So, I try.
>
> I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me. (Gilman 2019, 183)

Writing the story was probably part of the therapy that Gilman prescribed to herself, ignoring the one imposed by the eminent doctor. Her tale made an almost immediate impression. Gilman sent it first to Horace E. Scudder, editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, who refused to publish it[6]. Two years later, however she succeeded in getting the story published in *The New England Magazine* and William D. Howells included it in his anthology *The Great Modern American Stories* of 1920 (Lledó 2016).

The tale is interesting because it serves to validate other women's similar experiences of gender bias in psychotherapy. It is difficult to prove whether or not Mitchell read Gilman's tale, though this was, in fact, the real reason that she wrote it. Gilman never did find out for sure. Many years later, however, she got to know one of Mitchell's close friends, according to whom the doctor had changed his treatment of nervous prostration since reading the tale. Upon hearing this, Gilman added: "If that is a fact, I have not lived in vain" (Gilman 1991, 121).

Like Gilman, Jane Addams did much to valorize the lives and experiences of those who were marginalized by society, especially poor people, migrants, and women. One of Addams's most valuable contributions is *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* (1916), a work written when she was a mature activist and philosopher. The starting point of her book is quite anecdotal: the story of the "Devil Baby", a rumor that spread so fast that during six weeks, people came to Hull House from every corner of Chicago demanding

to see an infant "with his cloven hoofs, his pointed ears and diminutive tail" (Addams 2002b, 7). Addams came to learn that different versions of the myth existed. Women of diverse backgrounds and nationalities told variations of the same story but with different morals: sometimes it was the child of an Italian girl married to an atheist; sometimes it involved the father of six daughters who had sworn he would rather have a devil baby than another girl in the family. In every version, however, the devil baby stood for the possibility of punishing quick-tempered husbands and fathers.

The relevance of the devil baby went beyond the fact that it belonged to the cultural heritage of the immigrant women of Chicago's suburbs. According to Addams, the story revealed that women needed to give the form of tales and metaphors to their experience in order to hand down some sort of "domestic instruction" to the next generations of women (Addams 2002b, 10). As Addams listened attentively to the conversations among women who had reported seeing the devil baby locally or back in their homeland, she became increasingly convinced that such stories were their only available means to employ the "charm of words" in opposition to "unthinkable brutality". This was something that probably many of them had in common; they need the myth as a form of symbolic resistance:

> Possibly the multitude of life's failures, the obscure victims of unspeakable wrong and brutality, have embodied their memories in a literature of their own, of which the story of the Devil Baby is a specimen, crude and ugly in form, as would be inevitable, but still bringing relief to the surcharged heart. (Addams 2002b, 19)

As we can see, Addams, far from condescending to the women's superstitions, tried to see the big picture and understand the function and use of memory itself. Memory was revealed as organic, dynamic, selective, interpretative, metaphorical and collective. To have memory is not merely to have the capacity to store past experiences and reproduce them in our mind as if our mind was a sort of screen. Selecting, reinterpreting, idealizing and connecting memories is vital to us as individuals and as members of a community. From this and other episodes Addams came into close contact with women that had suffered isolation, alienation or trauma[7], she concluded that:

> the two functions of Memory – first, its important role in interpreting and appeasing life for the individual, and second its activity as selective agency in social reorganization – were not mutually exclusive, and at moments seemed to support each other. (Addams 2002b, 5)

Moreover, Addams even suggested in her book that sometimes a memory that is too extreme may be impossible to integrate. It can also happen that when people who do not know one another find their memories unbearable, such experiences can act as catalysts for social protest and then challenge social conventions (Addams 2002b, 29). This is precisely what happened with the Woman's movement. Women's organizations, according to Addams, provide opportunities to release memories and emotions of women's oppression that have been stored up for centuries and to redirect those energies toward a better future.

3. Blurring the liberal public-private divide and questioning gender roles.

It is no surprise that Jane Addams called for women's cooperation. She was the instigator of a "social experiment" that lasted for almost forty years, Chicago's Hull House[8], and she was a member of many associations and movements such as the Woman's Party and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom[9]. Addams was accustomed to co-operating with women in all kinds of social endeavors. All these endeavors were quite impressive if we bear in mind that Addams and her companions had limited resources of their own and therefore had to survive on public help and private charity. Hull House is probably one of the most interesting and original projects by Addams, who originally conceived the plan in the spirit of a social experiment through which "young women who had been given over too exclusively to study, might restore a balance of activity along traditional lines and learn of life from life itself" (Addams 1960, 5)[10].

With the passage of years, Hull House engaged in an ongoing exchange with the surrounding neighborhood. It hosted clubs, a music school for children, a kindergarten, a nursery, a playground, theatre, art exhibitions, etc. The house opened the doors alike to locals, volunteers and residents. Some stayed for short periods like Charlotte Perkins Gilman; others come occasionally to visit or to lecture, like John Dewey and George Herbert Mead. Still other prominent residents included the socialists Beatrice and Sidney Webb, the anarchists Peter Kropotkin and Emma Goldman; the black leader W.E.B. Du Bois or the architect Frank Lloyd Wright. In 1925, twenty of its seventy residents had lived there for twenty years or more (V.V.A.A. 1989, 12)[11].

Hull House proves interesting not only as an educational space, but also as a place of residence as well. The arrangement of the rooms encouraged gathering, cooperation and life in common, and was less likely to give a sense of privacy. It is well known that Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr were inspired by Toynbee Hall when they first entertained the idea of founding a social settlement in the United States. The correspondence between the young women indicates that they were quite quick to establish the principles that should govern such a place: teaching by example, an ethics of cooperation and non-resistance, egalitarian relations among all social classes (Knight 2005, 182-184). Addams's lifelong daily coexistence with other active women reformers and people of all classes and origins shaped her ideas on democratic social progress. Foremost among those ideas were "public housekeeping" and "lateral progress". The former concerned the private-public divide and was intended to be applied to the city government, while the latter captured Addams's attempt to expand the democratic ethos.

Although men were welcome, Hull House was a space ruled by female residents. For Hamington, Hull-House was a "feminist pragmatist utopia" (2009, 175). Recently, one of Addams's shortest pieces entitled "Women and Public Housekeeping" (published in 1910) gained some attention (Haslanger 2017). The piece appeared in the middle of Addams's intellectual development, between the pre-war period (in which *Democracy and Social Ethics* and *Newer Ideals of Peace* appeared, respectively in 1902 and 1906) and the aftermath of war (in which she published *Peace and Bread in Time of War* in 1922). The text is an attempt to defend the inclusion of women in the city government and it is written in a way that is consistent with Addams's earlier concerns, while also heralding some of the elements of her mature work. In this text, two models of city government are opposed: the militarist, which is based upon traditional "manly" virtues, and what Addams calls "public housekeeping", relying on traditional "feminine" skills. Both models rest ultimately on two different philosophical assumptions on human nature: the militarist model presupposes the bellicosity of human nature, while "public housekeeping" relies on the more primordial caring behavior of mothers of all species. Consequently, they assume different ways to organize local government. The militarist model must constrain "natural" aggressivity by repressive force and hierarchical authority. By contrast, public housekeeping entails dealing with communal life in a way that is analogous to life at home when it is governed by women, that is sympathetically and through the sharing of duties and responsibilities. It seems to me that Haslanger makes a good point here when

she says that Addams, in defending a sort of "public housekeeping", is not assuming an essentialist view of gender: these skills have been accumulated and developed historically by women, but anyone who wants to acquire them can do so by practicing them as women have done for centuries. This is also consistent with Addams's views on the "militarist" exclusion of immigrants of citizenship and the new internationalism then growing among the younger generations, which she presents forcefully in *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1906), rejecting what is part of an obsolete moral standard. Philosophical and political attempts to describe social progress in terms of struggle are too reductionistic, according to Addams (2008, 47), and cannot capture the fact that social evolution is the result of processes and constructive energies.

The new internationalism described here by Addams as "cosmic patriotism" aims to overcome our narrow patriotism. Democracy understood not as a set of abstract principles, but as the practice of a democratic spirit implies "a diversified human experience" (Addams 2002a, 7). This is echoed in another concept coined by Addams, "lateral progress", which she first suggested in *A Modern Lear* (1912) and later applied to a rich variety of social issues (Hamington 2009, 44-45). Her idea of progress being lateral went beyond the merely economic notions of distribution and welfare. I like to read Addams, perhaps, more radically than she intended. For her, lateral progress resulted from increasing the participation of marginalized collectives, like women and immigrants. But to me, in the spirit of Addams, it also means putting our vulnerable condition first and improving the lives of the most vulnerable among us.

The possibility of an alternative way to govern society by adopting care and reciprocity instead of hierarchy and aggression has been the chief subject of a series of feminist writings during the 19th and 20th centuries in the United States (Verna 2009, 127). Gilman belonged to a whole generation of women who used the utopian genre to undertake social experiments in which women do not play a subordinate role or, as in Gilman's example, live apart from men[12]. Like Addams, Gilman drew a sharp distinction between gender roles and characters quite early in *The Man-Made World; or, Our Androcentric Culture* (1911). There she drew a distinction between the sexes that can be appreciated in the way children play: "The basic feminine impulse is to gather, to put together, to construct; the basic masculine impulse to scatter, to disseminate, to destroy"[13]. However, treating this division as somehow essential would be misleading, according to Gilman, who suggested

at different points that social progress depended neither on feminine traits nor on masculine ones, but on human ones. Evolution would depend on how both were combined, whereas ignoring or dismissing feminine skills would result in cultural stagnation. When she wrote *The Man-Made World*, Gilman was familiar with the gynocentric theory developed by Lester F. Ward in *Pure Sociology*. The two had become friends in 1895 (Allen 2004, 64). Ward conceived of the evolution of human society as being the result of some major revolutions: from asexuality to sexuality; then from the superiority of women to a matriarchal society which has been replaced in the last centuries by the patriarchal rule (Deegan 1997, 32-33).

Commonly, utopias have been commonly considered a kind of intellectual recreation or evasion of reality. In my opinion, however, Ruth Levitas has convincingly demonstrated that "utopianism in the sense of visualizing, hoping for, and working for a better world is an enduring and essential element of human aspiration and political culture" (Levitas, 2010, xiii). *Herland* (1915) is part of a utopian trilogy that started with *Moving the Mountain* (1911)[14] and was followed by *With Her in Ourland* (1916). *Herland*, however, has been much more widely read and received than the other two. In its conception, *Herland* responds to the classical model of literary utopias. It introduces the life of a remote civilization that has no contact with our world, in this case, a "land of women – no men – babies, but all girls. No place for men – dangerous. Some had gone to see – none had come back" (Gilman 2019, 7). This land is supposed to be located near the Amazon river, which is probably no coincidence; Gilman was likely paying tribute to the Amazons. Oddly enough, another woman who had written *The Book of the City of the Ladies* (1405), exactly five centuries earlier, had also described the Amazons, the kingdom of women:

> And thus, as you can hear, this kingdom of women, founded and powerfully upheld, lasted more than eight hundred years, and you can see from the various epochs given in charts in different history books how much time elapsed from their founding until after the conquest of Alexander the Great, who conquered the world, during which the kingdom and dominion of the Amazons apparently still existed. […] Therefore, if you wish to take the occasion to synchronize different historical accounts and calculate the periods and epochs, you will find this kingdom and dominion of women lasted for quite a long time, and you will be able to note that, in all the dominions which

> have existed in the world and which have lasted as long, one will not find more notable princes in greater numbers nor as many people who accomplished such noteworthy deeds than among the queens and ladies of this kingdom (Pisan 1982, 51).[15]

In contrast to Amazons, the inhabitants of Herland had ceased to make war. This was possible mainly because of a topographical "good fortune"; Herland is surrounded by mountains and difficult to reach. This feature is quite common in modern utopias, beginning with the first to bear the name, *Utopia,* written by Thomas More in 1516[16]. In *Herland,* this privileged geographical situation is accompanied by a collective decision: "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." (Gilman 2019, 66). Many examples of this literary genre feature, utopias have a dialectical structure: an unknown, better civilization exists in the future, in the past, or in a remote land, and it is presented as the exact opposite of the present unjust, corrupted society (Levitas 2010; Peyser 1992). In *Herland*, this is introduced through the reflections of the main character, Vandyck Jennings, as he grows familiar with life in Herland. He is one of three male explorers who reach Herland and he is a sociologist, which is again no coincidence because it grants a kind of "neutral position" in the description of Herland.

The dialectical structure becomes increasingly sharper right up to the sixth chapter of the novel, entitled "Comparisons are odious" by which the progressive character of Herland becomes even clearer. "Herlanders" are all devoted to child-rearing, all are mothers, even though only a few of them give birth[17]. This idea of cooperative and democratic motherhood is quite interesting, and it is linked with the educational goal of citizenship (Gilman 2019, 118). It is surely related to Gilman's own experience of isolation as a young mother fictionalized in *The Yellow Wallpaper.* But it also recalls another fundamental experience in her earlier life, precisely her short stay at Hull House. The educational ideas of Herland remind Vandyck Jennings of those of the kindergarten and the material "devised by Signora Montessori" (Gilman 2018, 116). "Herlanders" encouraged girls to play; they are always devising games and recovering games of the past. This coincides with the kind of training provided to schoolteachers at Hull House and Addams's involvement in the Playground Movement[18]. The most significant reminder of Hull House, however, is how the space is conceived: "Everything was beauty, order, perfect

cleanness, and the pleasantest sense of home over it all" (Gilman 2019, 22). Gilman's utopia might be an incarnation of Addams's "public housekeeping" or, at least, a literary account of a quite similar idea[19].

In Herland, any division of public and private makes no sense, as there is no sexual division of work and social roles. There is a short piece of conversation between Terry, who represents the archetypical and arrogant "macho" and two girls, Somel and Zava. Terry says grandly "We do not allow our women to work. Women are loved – idolized – honoured – kept in the home to care for the children" (Gilman 2019, 67). And Somel replies wistfully "What is 'the home'?", which makes evident that such concepts have no place in Herland. With no sexual division, Herlanders do not understand concepts as romantic love and marriage, which precipitates the novel's tragic ending. It is quite surprising, that Gilman's characters seem to be not interested in sexuality before the strangers came to their country. The "asexuality" of the Herlanders has been quite often underlined in the secondary literature, as if Gilman had missed the chance to consider love between women and think beyond binarism. For me, the novel's most innovative element lies in the way that it addresses masculinity. The women of Herland are depicted as quite homogeneous, whereas the male characters develop in quite divergent directions. Jeff, who is enthusiastic about the existence of Herland from the very beginning, easily adapts to being what we would now call "feminist ally". Vandyck Jenning, the "neutral one", reflects on the inherited stereotypes on the feminine and is the one who evolves the most. Then, there is Terry, who embodies the ancestral misogyny of the patriarchal culture and who cannot relate to these free and independent women and therefore is unable to love them: "These were women one had to love 'up', very high up, instead of down. They were no pets. They were no servants. They were not timid, inexperienced, weak" (Gilman 2019, 152).

4. Opening new paths of reflection.

"Herlanders" announced a new type of femininity, which was intended to grow side by side with a new type of masculinity, one that was not afraid of sharing the world on equal terms with any other person regardless of gender. Surely Addams and Gilman were daughters of their time and could not envision all the problems women would face one

century later (see Sullivan's critique of Dewey and Addams on race, ch. ??)[20]. But their contributions to pragmatism and feminism were original enough to warrant inclusion in the historical records.

To pragmatist social philosophy, Addams and Gilman and other women pragmatists do have original thoughts on women's experiences and oppression that may prove attractive for feminism. As shown earlier, Gilman highlighted the gender bias in the scientific approach to mental health issues, giving voice to a whole generation of women who suffered from post-partum depression. Addams, on her part, paid attention to our ways of transmitting and constructing memory from an intergenerational perspective. She uncovered the metaphorical, non-linear and selective character of memory itself. Through their efforts, Addams and Gilman both showed by example how the oppressed have managed to communicate their experience in genres other than the conventional abstract philosophical dissertation.

Addams and Gilman also gave powerful indications for new avenues of reflection to help reaching a future stage of emancipation. Public housekeeping, Hull House, and Herland: each offers a different model for questioning gender roles and division of spaces based on the cooperation among women. The two women also made early progress on many of the subjects that have been a matter of concern for subsequent waves of feminism. Addams's concept of lateral progress, with its aspiration to be inclusive, would prove to be quite close to the theoretical developments of cultural feminism at the end of the 20th century. Gilman's critique of our androcentric culture would find an echo in socialist feminism, and her addressing of its internal conflicts through the characters of the three male explorers might remind us of today's debate around new masculinities. Moreover, their mutual influence, the fact that they were part of a conversation that included many other women, might be useful for any genealogy that tries to reconstruct the life of ideas not as a private property of prominent individuals but as a common good.

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[1] Luckily, today we can find expressions of "pragmatist feminism" (Whipps & Lake 2016) and "feminist-pragmatism" (Fischer 2020). My impression is that they differ perhaps in their starting point, but not much in their theoretical and practical goals. In an entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* the following definition appears: "Pragmatist feminism is a developing field of philosophy that emerged in the 1990s as a new approach to feminist philosophy. It utilizes and integrates core concepts of pragmatism, including its emphasis on pluralism, lived experience and public philosophy, with feminist theory and practice in order to engage in social issues" (Whipps & Lake 2016). By contrast, the entry in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* starts with the assertion that "Feminist-Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition, which draws upon the insights of both feminist and pragmatist theory of practice. It is fundamentally concerned with enlarging philosophical thought through activism and lived experience, and assumes feminist and pragmatist ideas to be mutually beneficial for liberatory causes." (Fischer 2020). Whether they aim at a feminist redefinition of pragmatism or at a pragmatist redefinition of feminism, they converge at crucial points, such as the re-appropriation of the methods and insights of classical pragmatists.

[2] I will argue that Gilman and Addams are precisely exceptions among the first wave feminists.

[3] According to Seigfried (1996, 234-235), all of Gilman's major works focused on women's liberation.

[4] The Digital Edition of Jane Addams Papers is available at http://janeaddams.ramapo.edu/digital-edition/. The project is sustained by the Ramapo College in New Jersey.

[5] It might be interesting at that point to notice that Mitchell himself "opposed woman's suffrage and had grave doubts about women's colleges. He expressed his strong opinions about women of independent spirit in his novels by presenting them either as repellent characters or as women who became submissive to their husbands once married." (Lefkowitz Horowitz 2010, 128). I think the shocking way that Gilman ends her tale may be an act of a not so subtle revenge against Mitchell.

[6] Gilman received this answer by Mr. Scudder: "I could not forgive myself if I made others as miserable as I have made myself!" (Gilman 1991, 119). Short after publication of the tale, a protest against Gilman signed by "M.D." was sent to the Boston *Transcript* with the following lines: "The story can hardly, it would seem, give pleasure to any reader, and to many whose lives have been through the dearest ties by this dread disease, it must bring the keenest pain. To others, whose lives have become a struggle against an heredity of mental derangement, such literature contains deadly peril. Should such stories be allowed to pass without severest censure?" (Gilman 1991, 120).

[7] Addams reported on the contradiction that many mothers experienced during WWI between the national duty and their duty as carers and nurturers of the sons who had died in the front.

[8] Hull House, founded by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr in 1889, has been called a "sociology laboratory" (Menand 2001, 306) or an "incubator for social programs" (Hamington 2009, 3), among other things.

[9] Addams was the co-founder and first president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Agnew 2017, 5).

[10] The decision to open the settlement in Halsted Street was quite courageous. The district's directory listed "nine churches and 250 saloons" (Menand 2001, 308).

[11] "Residents were all ages. They came from a variety of places including the neighborhood, and were representatives of many nationalities, as well as diverse social and religious beliefs. They were single, widowed, or divorced; some married while at Hull-House; others brought wives and children to experience settlement life. There were artists, musicians, actors, ministers, lawyers, doctors, journalists, teachers, government and civic workers, as well as young men and women searching for careers. Most had a college degree, though that was not a requirement. As a group, they were creative, intelligent, self-motivated, and they had a desire to contribute their talents and skills to benefit their fellow man." (UIC 1989, 12).

[12] Verna (2009, 136) reconstructs the intellectual debate in which Gilman's ideas on motherhood reflect the influence of the suffragettes Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and Lucretia Mott (1793 – 1880), who sought to overcome the too narrow idea of "republican motherhood" posed by Mary Wollstonecraft in her *Vindication* (1792).

[13] Quoted from Project Gutenberg, in chapter VI: http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3015

[14] The first utopian novel by Gilman is influenced by another utopian bestseller of the period, *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy (1888). An additional important influence was *Gulliver's travels* (1726). According to Charlotte Rich (2004, 155-157), Gilman's *Herland* is closely related to *Angel's Island* by Inez Haynes Gillmore, a friend of Gilman through The Heterodoxy Club in Greenwich Village.

[15] Recently Pilar Godayol (2012) has written about the similarities between de Pizan's and Gilman's utopias. It is still unclear to me whether Gilman had read de Pizan's work. But it is quite clear that Amazon's kingdom has served as an inspiration for feminine power for millenniums.

[16] In More's *Utopia,* the country turned out to be an island thanks to a quite sophisticated technical trick by which Utopus, the founder "[a]fter winning the victory at his first assault, he had a channel cut fifteen miles

wide where the land joined the continent, and thus caused the sea to flow around the country." (Moore 1988, 42). The fact that Utopia was an island granted a better defense against their potential enemies, and kept the country isolated from contact with other civilizations, ensuring that Utopia's way of life endured for centuries.

[17] See also Bolick (2015) about the scope of motherhood in Herland.

[18] Alice H. Putnam introduced Gustav Froebel's *Kindergarten* Philosophy at Hull House between 1894 and 1901. Addams left scattered notes on the importance of play as well as a major work entitled *A Plea for More Play, More Pay and More Education for Our Factory Girls and Boys* (1914). Another resident, Mary McDowell had published *Recreation as a Fundamental Element of Democracy* in the previous year, 1913.

[19] I follow Deegan's suggestion that Hull House served as the model for the natives at Herland (Deegan 1997, 23).

[20] Eugenics is one of the most polemic points of *Herland.* I believe that Gilman's attitude towards the race problem might have been ambiguous. I think that Deegan is right in stating that Gilman's Darwinism is a strategic one, for she uses Darwinist concepts to justify the situation of women (Deegan 1997, 31).