

Women 'Waking Up' and *Moving the Mountain*: The Feminist Eugenics of**Charlotte Perkins Gilman***By Susan Rensing*

The 1910s were a period of tremendous visibility of eugenic ideas throughout the United States, in large part because of Progressive Era enthusiasm for scientific solutions to social problems. Americans were concerned with how to improve the hereditary quality of the human race and eugenics was the science dedicated to pursuing that goal. Parallel to this expansion of eugenics in the public sphere was a revitalization of the women's movement that began to be called 'feminism.' Both eugenics and feminism were being constructed and expanded in the 1910s, and the interaction between the two ideologies is the focus of this paper. On the one hand, eugenicists attempted to use eugenics to shape the scope of feminism, and limit the roles of women to motherhood and breeding for racial betterment, what the British doctor and widely read science writer Caleb Saleeby termed "eugenic feminism."¹ On the other hand, "the foremost American female feminist" during this period, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, argued that the new age of women's equality would shape eugenics, not the other way around, and articulated a feminist eugenics that separated breeding from motherhood.² Feminist eugenics, as Gilman envisioned it, constrained the choices available to men by subverting their role as sexual selectors, taking away their economic power in marriage, and targeting the sexual double standard.

Eugenic Feminism

Warnings of “race-suicide” were commonplace throughout the Progressive Era, with eugenicists emphasizing the correlation between the “stupendous economic, educational, social, and political movement of women” and the “reduction of the birth rate.”³ Decrying the “ideals of our times,” one eugenicist claimed that the modern American woman was being led “to disregard to too great an extent social values, racial duties, and racial opportunities.”⁴ While begrudgingly accepting women’s enfranchisement and the importance of higher education for women, eugenicists focused on the restrictions that they believed eugenics placed on the women’s movement.

Eugenicists Paul Popenoe and Roswell Johnson, in their widely disseminated 1918 eugenics textbook, *Applied Eugenics*, addressed feminism in their chapter, “Eugenics and Some Specific Reforms.”⁵ While conceding the eugenic value of women’s political equality, both eugenicists were cautious about acknowledging women’s unconditional biological equality. As they defined it, equality only meant that “woman is as well adapted to her own particular kind of work as is man to his.” On this basis, they objected to feminism because “unfortunately, feminists show a tendency to go beyond this and to minimize differentiation in their claims of equality.”⁶ As an example of this wrongheaded feminist thinking, they cited “Ms. Charlotte Perkins Gilman” who “makes the logical application [from biological equality] by demanding that little girls’ hair be cut short and that they be prevented from playing with dolls in order that differences fostered in this way be reduced.”⁷ Popenoe and Johnson reached several conclusions about the social

reforms that feminists should advocate which would be both eugenically minded and beneficial to women. First, feminism should help to keep the number of “unfit” mothers to a minimum. Under the successes of feminism, those women without the maternal instinct “do not marry, and accordingly have few if any children to inherit their defects.”⁸ Second, feminism should advocate state sponsorship of motherhood, so long “as it is discriminatory and graded” according to the eugenic quality of the children.⁹ Lastly, “there is good ground for the feminist contention that women should be liberally educated” so long as that education is properly geared towards women’s role as a mother, in addition to her more general education.¹⁰ Popenoe and Johnson concluded their section on feminism by asserting that, above all, “the home must not be made a subordinate interest, as some feminists desire, but it must be made a much richer, deeper, more satisfying interest than it is too frequently at present.”¹¹ Eugenics, for them, constrained women’s choices, to focus on motherhood narrowly, and required that women accommodate themselves to having and raising children, rather than advancing any dramatic restructuring of society.

Eugenicists, then, saw the woman’s movement as something that would be proscribed by eugenics and saw feminism, as it was largely practiced, as dysgenic. As Caleb Saleeby articulated in *Woman and Womanhood*, a widely circulated popular science tract, “the very first thing the feminist movement must prove is that it is eugenic.”¹² Saleeby claimed that there were “varieties of feminism, making various demands for women which are utterly to be condemned because they not merely ignore eugenics, but are opposed to it, and would, if successful, be therefore ruinous to the race.”¹³

Saleeby then proposed as an alternative a “Eugenic Feminism” which would focus on women as mothers. Saleeby, Popenoe and Johnson all argued that eugenics defined women’s primary function as breeding, and therefore motherhood should be women’s sole focus.

This kind of maternalist feminism was amenable to more conservative women’s reformers like Anna Ellsworth Blount who asked, “What shall it profit us eugenically to have women delve into laboratories, or search the heavens, or rule the nations, if the world is to be peopled by scrub women and peasants?”¹⁴ Also, the rhetoric of feminism as dysgenic was a common chorus amongst anti-feminist tracts of the 1910s. For instance, John Martin’s *Feminism* complained in a section entitled “The Woman Movement and the Baby Crop” that “The woman’s movement is a movement towards progressive national deterioration and ultimate national suicide. Already the evidence is conclusive that the effects of Feminism upon the inalienable function and immemorial duty of woman—the bearing of children—are so appalling as to threaten the perpetuation of the best parts of the nation.”¹⁵ Similarly, Correa Walsh’s definitive anti-feminist tract, also titled *Feminism*, cited Charlotte Perkins Gilman as the most notable feminist who endangered society by ignoring the dictates of eugenic science.

Feminist eugenics

From a twenty-first century perspective, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) stands out as one of the foundational feminist theorists in the United States. This might seem

odd considering Gilman herself stated flatly near the end of her life, “I abominate being called a feminist.”¹⁶ However, decades earlier, she was willing to include her own work under the rubric of “Feminism” in a 1908 article of the same name. In its most general sense, Gilman defined feminism as “the development of human qualities and functions among women; in their entering upon social relationships instead of...restricted to the sexual and domestic.”¹⁷ This would explain Gilman’s own preference for the term “humanist,” or “feminist humanist,” in describing herself, since “feminist” drew attention only to woman’s sex and not to her humanity. Eight years later, she again set out to define feminism in its broadest sense as “the social awakening of the women of all the world.”¹⁸

Gilman has occupied a canonical position in feminist thought for the last forty years. The “rediscovery” of Gilman’s work is credited to Carl Degler, whose 1956 *American Quarterly* article, “Charlotte Perkins Gilman on the Theory and Practice of Feminism,” rescued Gilman from what he later called a “blackout in the history of ideas.”¹⁹ The reissuing of three of Gilman’s critical works (*Women and Economics* by Degler in 1966, *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Elaine Hedges in 1973, and *Herland* by Ann J. Lane in 1979) led to a “Gilman renaissance” that cast Gilman as a foremother in the genealogy of feminism.²⁰

As a result, Gilman has been the focus of recent scholarship that explores the ideological roots of first-wave feminism. In particular, a number of historians have sought to explicate the racial roots of Gilman’s feminism in connection with her faith in

social evolution and hierarchies of civilizations.²¹ Still, as Alys Eve Weinbaum pointed out in her review article on Gilman studies in 2001, “of the over 100 texts on Gilman written in the past decade,...only seven offered sustained analyses of Gilman’s race politics.”²²

This relatively recent historiographic trend critical of Gilman’s social Darwinism can be contrasted with other literature, especially in the history of science, which has focused on Gilman’s social Darwinism as an effective alternative to mainstream scientific thought concerning women.²³ Cynthia Russett portrays Gilman as a revolutionary who forged Darwinian evolution into a feminist weapon: “Thus she drew on sexual selection while exploiting to the full the awkward break in Darwin’s account of human beings, among whom the females were kept, and other mammals, among whom the females were free and independent.”²⁴ In this literature, Gilman’s work, in particular her landmark *Women and Economics*, is presented as offering a radically different answer to the “woman question” by using evolutionary science to argue for women’s rights.²⁵

In the past decade, scholars have begun to take a fresh look at Gilman in an attempt to move beyond the overly simplistic characterizations of her as either feminist trailblazer or racist theorizer. Most notably, Judith Allen’s intellectual biography, *The Feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* has set a new course for scholars to engage with the full complexity of Gilman’s feminism on its own historical terms.²⁶ Specifically with regard to eugenics, Gilman scholarship

has been hampered by confusion over her place within the eugenics movement during the Progressive Era.²⁷ This paper examines Gilman's attempts to reconcile eugenics and feminism during a period when eugenics took center stage in popular discussions of women, biology, and racial duties. Her vision of a feminist eugenics placed women as scientific experts in charge of engineering society's evolutionary progress, separated breeding from motherhood, and scrutinized the dysgenic behaviors and qualities of men.

Toward a Feminist Eugenics: Before and Beyond *Women and Economics*

In November of 1909, Gilman founded a monthly magazine, *The Forerunner*, explaining in verse that its purpose was "to tell the things we ought to know" and "to point the way we ought to go."²⁸ She was the sole author of the magazine's articles, poems, serialized novels, and book reviews. In the initial issue of *Forerunner*, Gilman devoted the first article to explicating her feminist eugenics. Appropriately titled "A Small God and a Large Goddess," it exalted female concerns for the good of racial progress over male preoccupation with sex. Contrasting the mature and wise goddess of motherhood with Cupid, the childish and simple god of love, Gilman argued that the former clearly takes precedence. Women, as mothers (Gilman, like Popenoe and Johnson, defined women in terms of their reproductive responsibilities), are "the main factor in securing to the race its due improvement."²⁹ As the "supreme officer[s] of the life process," women had a number of duties that are necessary for the advancement of the race:

Her first duty is to grow nobly for her mighty purpose. Her next is to select, with inexorable high standard, the fit assistant for her work. The third—to fitly bear,

bring forth, and nurse the child. Following these, last and highest of all, comes our great race-process of social parentage, which transmits to each new generation the gathered knowledge, the accumulated advantages of the past.³⁰

These duties outline the distinct phases of Gilman's feminist eugenics. It is important here to note that her eugenics is not strictly hereditarian; she proposes environmental reform both as a way of enhancing biological fitness and as a means of changing the future hereditary make-up of society. Thus, Gilman's feminist eugenics is both Neo-Lamarckian and "euthenic" as well as eugenic.³¹

Gilman's stark sketch of a feminist eugenic program serves as an anchor point for many of her apparently disparate social reforms. What is the common thread, the motivating principle behind Gilman's advocacy of women's dress reform, higher standards for food quality, women's physical fitness training, kitchenless houses, and social motherhood? All of these reforms are necessary steps towards Gilman's eugenically fit society that should and would be engineered by women. For Gilman, women were the sole proprietors of racial improvement because she subscribed to Lester Ward's "gynaecentric theory".³² This theory argued that the female is the race type for humans and as such females are responsible for any advancement of the species. For Gilman, women would advance the race not by transcending their traditional roles as wives and mothers, but by fully committing themselves to these roles and improving on them with the help of science, in particular the science of eugenics. Thus it would be incorrect to see the series of Gilman's reforms listed above as simply a program for female emancipation, as some historians have argued.³³ Instead, Gilman's reforms should be

evaluated in the light of Popenoe and Johnson's subsequent suggestions for feminist social reform; they are aimed at improving the race, ensuring fit motherhood, and strengthening and streamlining the home for maximum efficiency.

Gilman's first directive to eugenically minded women, "to grow nobly for her mighty purpose," manifests itself in her advocacy of physical fitness reform for women. Her earliest non-fiction publication was, in fact, dedicated to this purpose. In 1883, Gilman was in the midst of deep depression that would eventually lead to the collapse of her first marriage a few short years later. She felt trapped by the confines of institutionalized marriage and the sexuo-economic inequities that went with it, and understood that mental and physical health were vital. Gilman argued in "The Providence Ladies Gymnasium" that all women should regularly engage in physical exercise, particularly activities like weight training that ordinarily fell outside socially accepted norms.³⁴ This was necessary not only for women's own health but necessary in order to prevent racial degeneracy. The contemporary cultural expectations of women to refrain from physical exertion would lead (and was leading) to "a race of women who are physically weak enough to be handed about like invalids."³⁵ Gilman's Lamarckian evolutionary perspective required that women become physically fit in order to pass their strength on to their progeny. Similarly, women's dress reform was needed to halt the extreme and dysgenic sexual selection that men exerted on women's figures. Gilman was a staunch advocate of women's dress reform, flaunting her radical ideas by refusing to wear a corset.³⁶ Linking middle-class women's lack of physical fitness with her "burdensome clothes," Gilman desired less emphasis on prescribed feminine features because it

detracted from women's abilities to advance the race. Due to men's role as sexual selector, women were guarded from the effects of natural selection and only exposed to the extreme forces of sexual selection. The necessary step beyond dress and physical fitness reform that would help advance the race would be the return of women as sexual selectors, determining the "fit assistant for her work."

Gilman most explicitly addressed the harmful effects and remedies of the current sexo-economic relationship between men and women in her enormously popular work, *Women and Economics* (1898).³⁷ The overwhelming majority of scholarly attention has been focused on this one work. Gilman laid out for the reader three goals for her book in the preface. The first goal summed up her central thesis: women occupy an unequal position in society not because of any "inherent and ineradicable" biological deficiency, but because of "certain arbitrary conditions of our own adoption."³⁸ Gilman's second goal was to chart the course of human social evolution, in order to point the way towards future progress. Here she reminded her readers that even though social evolution naturally advances civilization, this advance "may be greatly quickened by our recognition and assistance."³⁹ Gilman's third and final goal has received much less attention and it is here where she asserts her vision of women's importance in society after they realize their impediments are not natural but social. Gilman hoped to "urge upon them [the thinking women of today] a new sense, not only of their social responsibility as individuals, but of their measureless racial importance as makers of men."⁴⁰ Optimistically, she had high hopes for women's success in this role, claiming in 1916 that while "It has taken Mother Nature long, long ages to turn fierce greedy hairy

ape-like beasts into such people as we are. It will take us but two or three close-linked generations to make human beings far more superior to us than we are to the apes.”⁴¹

The active call to feminine duty in both of these statements stand in strange contrast to her oft-quoted final sentence of *Women and Economics*: “When the mother of the race is free, we shall have a better world, by the easy right of birth and by the calm, slow, friendly forces of evolution.”⁴² The inevitable and inexorable language in this last sentence that extols the steady march of progress belies the active eugenic program that Gilman would advocate in her later work to engineer a better world.

Focusing solely on Gilman’s *Women and Economics* leaves a rather inchoate conception of Gilman’s eugenic beliefs. Her characterization of women as the “makers of men” is merely suggestive and not substantive. This characterization of women is, after all, just the logical extension of her call for women to be reinstated as the ‘selectors’ in human sexual selection. However, it would be an oversimplification to suggest, as Gail Bederman does in a footnote, that “Gilman’s essential position on the question of eugenics” was to “return woman to the position of sexual selector, and all would be well for the race.”⁴³ Gilman was not advocating that women should (or even could) just ‘naturally’ resume the position of sexual selector that females possess in the animal world. Instead, two years later in *Concerning Children* (1900), Gilman laid out a plan for “unnatural” wives and mothers who would construct a system of social parentage.

In the chapter entitled, "Mothers, Unnatural and Natural," Gilman began by toying with the designators of "natural" and "unnatural" with respect to motherhood, arguing that "natural" can have two meanings, either "primitive, uncivilized, savage," or "suited to man's present character and conditions."⁴⁴ Gilman concluded that motherhood is "natural" in the first sense, and thus calls for an "unnatural" motherhood, for "it would be very unnatural for modern women to behave as was natural to primitive women."⁴⁵ Instead modern women should seek to improve their motherhood skills because "Motherhood is as open to criticism as any other human labour or animal function. Free study, honest criticism and suggestion, conscientious experiment in new lines,--by these we make progress. Why not apply study, criticism, and suggestion, and experiment to motherhood, and make some progress there?"⁴⁶ Gilman advocated a more scientific motherhood that was contingent upon a systematic motherhood education program. This extensive training in "child-culture" would certify that women were well acquainted with eugenics and understood how to raise a properly fit child.

Gilman tried to ease her readers into the idea of eugenics, arguing that her system of improving the human stock should not bring to mind "breeders of cattle." Gilman proposed two important ways in which eugenically informed mothers could contribute to improving the race. First was "the mother's modifying influence upon the race through selection, --that duty of wise choice of a superior father for her children, which is 'natural' enough to the lower animals, but which we agree to ignore in the bringing up of our young women. Careful and conscientious training to this end would have a great effect upon the race."⁴⁷ Second, Gilman argued mothers could contribute to race

progress by “improving the environment of our young children, both materially and psychically, by the intelligent co-ordinate action of mothers.”⁴⁸ She labeled this co-ordinate action “social parentage” and described it as a system in which certified professional mothers would assume not only responsibility for their own children, but all children.⁴⁹ Despite the gender-neutral designator of “social parent,” Gilman only referred to women filling this role. She assumed that all fit women would fulfill their reproductive obligation by having children, but only a select few would rise to the status of social parent instead of being “merely a mother.”⁵⁰ Gilman strongly emphasized “that maternal love does not necessarily include wisdom.”⁵¹ Thus it was vitally important for the progress of the race to cultivate the “unnatural mother, who is possessed of enough intelligence and knowledge to recognize her own deficiencies,” and thus “gladly intrusts [sic] her children to superior care for part of the time, and constantly learns by it herself.”⁵² Gilman’s feminist eugenics created a role for select women to be child-culture experts by engineering a societal structure with a hierarchy of fit parents. Gilman closed her book by discussing the eugenic benefits of her system over a eugenics that merely seeks to reduce the numbers of the unfit. In contrast to other eugenic programs that sought to deny social support for unfit parents and their children, Gilman argued that her eugenics, strengthened by the expertise of women, would instead improve the children of unfit parents by providing them with additional parents. Gilman continued that her eugenic system of social parentage would actually reduce the numbers of unfit more effectively than would other eugenic programs that are focused on increasing the reproduction of the fit. By relying on Spencer’s law that “reproduction is in inverse proportion to specialization,” Gilman aimed to increase the specialization of unfit

children through social parentage so as to decrease their reproduction.⁵³ Part of the goal of social parentage was to educate those who were born to unfit parents in order to “Improve the individual” and thereby “check this crude fecundity.”⁵⁴

The increasing specialization of women was a direct consequence of feminism. It was not only parenting that would be transformed by this trend towards specialization, but also the entire home environment. Gilman explicitly developed these ideas in *Home: Its Work and Influence* (1903), although she began to form them in *Women and Economics*. *Home* advocated a complete restructuring of the domestic environment. Gilman argued that kitchenless houses were the inevitable consequence of increased specialization in cooking skills, as were more highly processed and sanitary food products. Unskilled mothers and wives could no longer be trusted to cook, clean, and shop for their family. Instead, Gilman envisioned increasing layers of trained female experts who would replace the unskilled labor. For her, social motherhood extended beyond caring for children and quickly spread to caring for and supervising all unspecialized individuals, including unskilled mothers, men, and less ‘civilized’ races. The societal consequences of Gilman’s feminist eugenics can most clearly be seen in her utopian novel, *Moving the Mountain*.

Women wake up: *Moving the Mountain*

In 1910, Gilman serialized a utopian novel in *Forerunner* entitled *Moving the Mountain*. It was what she later referred to as a “short distance utopia” meaning that it took place

only thirty years in the future and in a familiar setting, the United States.⁵⁵ It is unfortunate that not much historical attention has been paid to *Moving the Mountain*, Gilman's first utopian novel. Minna Doskow, in her compilation of Gilman's utopian novels, dismisses *Moving the Mountain* as less interesting, less dramatic, and less satirical than *Herland*.⁵⁶ The premise of the novel is to illustrate the answer to the "feminism question," namely what would happen when women wake up and are recognized as humans on an equal par with men. How would society be structured and operate differently? Gilman answered these questions with her feminist eugenics program.

Many of the reforms present in this future society are already familiar from Gilman's earlier work. Kitchenless houses and pure food abound now that women have specialized their labor. Hallie, the young niece of the narrator, is a key administrative official in the National Food Bureau that coordinates food distribution, processing, and preparation. Nellie, Hallie's mother, is the president of a co-educational college. In *Moving the Mountain*, there still exists a division of labor based on sex, "Men do almost all the violent plain work—digging and hewing and hammering; women, as a class, prefer the administrative and constructive kinds [of labor]."⁵⁷ In addition to specializing the home and food production, women are also responsible for specializing motherhood. Gilman postulated that "there had arisen a...far more efficient motherhood...and [women] built up a new science of Humaniculture; that no woman was allowed to care for her children without proof of capacity."⁵⁸ While Gilman would not deny women the right to reproduce, she envisioned that "if they want to take care of

them, they must show a diploma.”⁵⁹ Certified expert mothers headed the Department of Child Culture which was funded by the government to ensure proper child development and mother certification. Social motherhood was not limited to children however, as *Moving the Mountain* shows. Women’s increased specialization and expert authority in Gilman’s utopia quickly was applied to adults as well as children, again with women improving the race in ways that only they could.

Gilman’s feminist eugenics extended beyond children and mothers in *Moving the Mountain* to include the eugenic cultivation of men, particularly immigrants. As the characters of *Moving the Mountain* tell the history of the past thirty years, they explain how they solved the “immigration problem”:

We refuse no one. We have discovered as many ways of utilizing human waste as we used to have for the waste products of coal tar...What we have now is Compulsory Socialization [where] no immigrant is turned loose on the community till he or she is up to a certain standard, and the children we educate.⁶⁰

Gilman’s solution to the immigration problem relied on women to apply their expertise in humaniculture to improving the race. Her “compulsory socialization” for immigrants was similar to her “solution to the Negro problem” that she proposed in 1908 in *The American Journal of Sociology*. Here she suggested that the only clear solution to ensuring racial advancement is to “Let each sovereign state carefully organize in every county and township an enlisted body of all Negroes below a certain grade of citizenship.”⁶¹ Social motherhood, for Gilman, was all encompassing as a system of racial advancement necessarily designed and maintained by women, the race-type.

As it pertained to the male sex, Gilman's feminist eugenics had much more dramatic and rapid effects than social motherhood could produce. This was due to women's role as sexual selectors. Again, *Moving the Mountain* illustrates the social changes induced by women's rise to social consciousness. Through sexual selection, women have greatly improved the male sex, eliminating hereditary disease, prostitution, smoking, and liquor.⁶² Of these, hereditary disease was clearly the most significant as Gilman explained how women need to be taught eugenics in order to fulfill their duty as "makers of men":

Health—physical purity—was made a practical ideal. The young women learned the proportion of men with syphilis and gonorrhoea and decided that it was wrong to marry them. That was enough. They passed laws in every State requiring a clean bill of health with every marriage license. Diseased men had to die bachelors—that's all ...disease is registered against him at the Department of Eugenics—physicians are required to send in lists; any girl can find out.⁶³

Gilman has equally harsh words for criminals and sexual deviants, who by implication she assumes to be men. Describing the steps her utopian society took to curb hereditary disease, she wrote:

Our first step...was to check the birth of defectives and degenerates. Certain classes of criminals and perverts were rendered incapable of reproducing their kind. In the matter of those diseases most injurious to the young, very stringent measures were taken. It was made a felony to infect wife and child knowingly. Physicians were obliged to report all cases of disease, and young girls were clearly taught the consequences of marriage with infected persons.⁶⁴

The eugenic improvement of men is swift and efficient in Gilman's utopia now that women are the sexual selectors. Gilman's feminist eugenics positions women as selectors on not just an individual mating level, but on a national, racial, and cultural scale. Women, now that they have "woken up" have assumed social control over every aspect of human life, environment, and reproduction. For Gilman, this eugenically utopian vision was the logical outgrowth of the success of feminism.

Conclusion

Gilman's writings on feminist eugenics grew out of her interests in the societal consequences of feminism, that is, what would (and should) happen when women "wake up." Feminist eugenics, as she articulated it, was a eugenics that constrained mostly men's, not women's choices. Gilman utilized the rhetorical appeal of maternalism and expanded it to the concept of "social parentage." She acknowledged that in order to be eugenic, 'fit' women needed to reproduce, but Gilman was the first to point out that they did not need to raise their own children. Thus, Gilman separated breeding from motherhood, allowing for women to pursue careers and leave family life if they desired. In addition, Gilman expanded upon the ideology of eugenics driven by female sexual selection, and laid out more clearly than any that came before her how this system might actually work in practice. However, it is also clear that she shared many of the same assumptions about class, race, and nationality as her Progressive Era contemporaries. While from a modern perspective her vision seems more dystopian

than utopian, Gilman was successful in merging feminism with eugenics in a way that did not restrict women merely to reproductive vessels for the next generation.

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Notes

¹ Caleb Williams Saleeby, *Woman and Womanhood* (New York: M. Kennerley, 1911), 7.

² Correa Moylan Walsh, *Feminism* (New York: Sturgis & Walton, 1917), 74. This anti-feminist tract singled out Gilman repeatedly as the most pernicious of the new "feminists."

³ Anonymous editorial [most likely Popenoe or Charles Davenport], "The Woman Movement and Eugenics," *The American Breeders Magazine* 2 (1911): 226.

⁴ Anonymous, "The Woman Movement and Eugenics," 226.

⁵ Paul Popenoe and Roswell Johnson, *Applied Eugenics* (New York: Macmillan, 1918): 378-384. In the second addition of *Applied Eugenics* (which came after the suffrage amendment), this section was extensively revised, 2nd edition (1933): 319-324.

⁶ Popenoe and Johnson, *Applied Eugenics*, 378.

⁷ Popenoe and Johnson, *Applied Eugenics*, 378.

⁸ Popenoe and Johnson, *Applied Eugenics*, 379.

⁹ Popenoe and Johnson, *Applied Eugenics*, 381.

¹⁰ Popenoe and Johnson, *Applied Eugenics*, 383.

¹¹ Popenoe and Johnson, *Applied Eugenics*, 384.

¹² Saleeby, *Woman and Womanhood*, 6.

¹³ Saleeby, *Woman and Womanhood*, 7.

¹⁴ A. E. Blount, *Woman and the Larger Citizenship: 12 volume illustrated series for the Woman's Citizens Library, a systematic course of reading in preparation for the larger citizenship, The Civics Society, Hull House, Chicago, 1914* (Chicago: The Civics society, 1913-14), 2905. For more on maternalism in this period, see Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

¹⁵ John Martin, *Feminism* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1916), 122.

¹⁶ Gilman to Grace Channing Stetson, August 21, 1929, quoted in Larry Ceplair, ed., *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Nonfiction Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 8.

¹⁷ Gilman, "Feminism," unpublished manuscript in Larry Ceplair, ed., *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Nonfiction Reader*, "Feminism," 183. For a fuller discussion of "feminism" and its meaning among activists

at the turn of the century and beyond, see Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 11-50.

¹⁸ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "What is Feminism?" *Boston Sunday Herald*, September 3, 1916, quoted in Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 14.

¹⁹ Carl Degler, "Charlotte Perkins Gilman on the Theory and Practice of Feminism," *American Quarterly* 8 (Spring 1956): 21-39. Degler, "Introduction" to *Women and Economics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), i.

²⁰ Degler, *Women and Economics*, vi-xxxv. Ann J. Lane, "Introduction" to *Herland* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), v-xxiv. Elaine R. Hedges, "Afterword" to *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Old Westbury, New York: Feminist Press, 1973), 37-63. Hedges was the first to compile *Herland* into book format from its serialization in *Forerunner*. Alys Eve Weinbaum, "Writing Feminist Genealogy: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Racial Nationalism, and the Reproduction of Maternalist Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 271-302. Weinbaum argues that the feminist genealogy that is uncritically constructed around Gilman ignores the foundational racism of Gilman's feminism.

²¹ Gail Bederman, "'Not to Sex-But to Race!' Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Civilized Anglo-Saxon Womanhood, and the Return of the Primitive Rapist," in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 121-169. Louise Newman, "Eliminating Sex Distinction from Civilization: The Feminist Theories of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Mary Roberts Smith Coolidge," in *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 132-157. Lisa Ganobcsik-Williams, "The Intellectualism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Evolutionary Perspective on Race, Ethnicity, and Class," in *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Optimist Reformer*, Jill Rudd and Val Gough eds., (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 16-44. Mariana Valverde, "'When the Mother of the Race is Free': Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First Wave Feminism," in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, ed. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 3-26. Susan S. Lanser, "Feminist Criticism, 'The Yellow Wallpaper,' and the Politics of Color in America," in *Feminist Studies* 24 (Fall 1989): 415-41. Bernice L. Hausman, "Sex before Gender: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Evolutionary Paradigm of Utopia," *Feminist Studies* 24 (Fall 1998): 489-510. Tracy Fessenden, "Race, Religions, and the New Woman in America: The Case of Charlotte Perkins Gilman," *Furman Studies* 37 (June 1995): 15-28. Brian Lloyd, "Feminism, Utopian and Scientific: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Prison of the Familiar," *American Studies* 39 (Spring 1998): 93-114. Weinbaum, "Writing Feminist Genealogy."

²² Weinbaum, "Writing Feminist Genealogy," 297, footnote 4.

²³ In the history of science, "social Darwinism" is a contested phrase. By using this term, I only mean that Charlotte Perkins Gilman applied evolutionary claims onto society and attempted to draw conclusions from these. By writing social with a lower case "s", I mean to distinguish it from "Social Darwinism" which was the use of Darwinian rhetoric to legitimate laissez-faire economics, among other things.

²⁴ Cynthia Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 13.

²⁵ Lois Magner, "Darwinism and the Woman Question: The Evolving Views of Charlotte Perkins Gilman" in *Critical Essays on Charlotte Perkins Gilman*. Ed. Joanne B. Karpinski (New York: G. K. Hall, 1992), 115-128. Sally Gregory Kohlstedt and Mark R. Jorgensen, "'The irrepressible woman question': Women's Responses to Evolutionary Ideology," in *Disseminating Darwinism: The Role of Place, Race, Religion and Gender*. Ronald L. Numbers and John Stenhouse, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 267-293. Rosaleen Love, "Darwinism and Feminism: The 'Woman Question' in the Life and Work of Olive Schreiner and Charlotte Perkins Gilman," in *The Wider Domain of Evolutionary Thought*, David Oldroyd, ed., (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1983), 113-132. Maureen L. Egan, "Evolutionary Theory in the Social Philosophy of Charlotte Perkins Gilman," *Hypatia* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 102-119.

²⁶ Judith Allen, *The Feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Sexualities, Histories, and Progressivism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

²⁷ Mike Hawkins states in his *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought*, "Thus, Gilman became an opponent of eugenics," p. 264. Wendy Kline assesses Gilman's eugenic leanings and motivations in, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to*

the Baby Boom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 8, 11-13, 19. See also Dana Seittler, "Unnatural selections: Mothers, Eugenic Feminism, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Regeneration Narratives," *American Quarterly* 55 (March 2003): 61-88 and Li-Wen Chang, "Economics, Evolution, and Feminism in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Utopian Fiction," *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 39, no 4 (2010): 319-48.

²⁸ *Forerunner* 1, no. 1 (November 1909): back of front cover (no page number).

²⁹ *Forerunner* 1, no. 1 (November 1909): 2. Gilman clearly equates women with mothers throughout her writings; the two categories are the same for her, although she wants to create a new category of unnatural motherhood that not all women would qualify as. It also should be pointed out that Gilman's use of the word "race" is to be taken as an ambiguous category that most often refers to humanity in general. But as recent historiography of feminism points out, the very ambiguity of the term served both inclusive and exclusive rhetorical purposes.

³⁰ *Forerunner* 1, no. 1 (November 1909): 2.

³¹ The term "euthenics" was proposed by Ellen Swallow Richards (founder of home economics) to denote the science of creating better environments to enhance societal progress, but this term never really caught on. With the exception of Richards, euthenics was subsumed under the rubric of eugenics since Lamarckian inheritance was not fully discredited until about 1920 in the United States.

³² Lester Ward, "Our Better Halves," *Forum* 6 (November 1888): 266-75 and also in *Pure Sociology* (New York: Macmillan, 1903). For more on Ward's influence on Gilman's thinking, see Cynthia Davis, "His and Herland: Charlotte Perkins Gilman 'Re-Presents' Lester F. Ward," in *Evolution and Eugenics in American Literature and Culture, 1880-1940: Essays on Ideological Conflict and Complexity*. Edited by Cuddy, Lois A. and Claire M. Roche. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2003.

³³ Lois Magner's work on Gilman is only one example of this assumption that misdiagnoses the motivation behind Gilman's social reforms.

³⁴ Gilman, "The Providence Ladies Gymnasium," *Providence Journal* 8 no. 2 (May 23, 1883). See also Jane Lancaster, "'I could easily have been an Acrobat': Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Providence Ladies' Sanitary Gymnasium 1881-1884" *ATQ* 8:1 (1994):33-52 and Patricia Vertinsky, "Feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Pursuit of Health and Physical Fitness as a Strategy for Emancipation" *Journal of Sport History* 16:1 (1989): 5-26.

³⁵ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Man Made World; or, Our Androcentric Culture* (New York: Charlton Co., 1911), 55.

³⁶ Gilman lectured throughout the west coast in the late 1880s through the 1890s on dress reform. She also published numerous articles in *Woman's Journal* and *Pacific Rural Press* during this period on the subject.

³⁷ *Women and Economics* went through nine editions by 1920. It was translated into Dutch, Italian, German, and Russian and reviewed in twenty-five different periodicals within a year of its publication. For more information on the popularity of *Women and Economics*, see *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Bibliography* by Gary Scharnhorst, (Scarecrow Author Bibliographies, No. 71, 1985).

³⁸ Gilman, *Women and Economics*, xxxix.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Gilman, "Assisted Evolution," *Forerunner* 7 (January 1916): 5.

⁴² Gilman, "Assisted Evolution," 340. Sentence preceding this is, "Where our progress hitherto has been warped and hindered by the retarding of surviving rudimentary forces, it will flow on smoothly and rapidly when both men and women stand equal in economic relation."

⁴³ Bederman, Gail, *Manliness and Civilization*, 272, footnote 118.

⁴⁴ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Concerning Children* (Boston: Small, Maynard, & Co., 1900), 257. A number of Gilman's articles in *Forerunner* provide further evidence of the argument she develops in *Concerning Children*: "Prize Children" *Forerunner* 1 (May 1910): 10-11. "Genius, Maternal and Domestic" 1 (June 1910), 10-12, and July, 1910): 5-7. "The New Motherhood" 1 (December 1910): 17-18. "The New Mothers of a New World," 4 (June 1913): 145-149.

⁴⁵ Gilman, *Concerning Children*, 261. It is not the point that I am making here, but it is obvious how Gilman is measuring the progress of women against her racist hierarchies of civilization. Gilman's comment shortly preceding this one (same page) would also support this claim, "The 'nature' of

motherhood is to provide what is best for the child; and the multiplied services and facilities of our socially developed lives are as natural to us as our smooth white skins, once 'naturally' brown and shaggy."

⁴⁶ Gilman, *Concerning Children*, 261.

⁴⁷ Gilman, *Concerning Children*, 263-264.

⁴⁸ Gilman, *Concerning Children*, 263-264.

⁴⁹ Gilman, *Concerning Children*, 277.

⁵⁰ Gilman, *Concerning Children*, 265.

⁵¹ Gilman, *Concerning Children*, 266.

⁵² Gilman, *Concerning Children*, 274.

⁵³ Gilman, *Concerning Children*, 296-298.

⁵⁴ Gilman, *Concerning Children*, 298.

⁵⁵ Gilman, *Moving the Mountain*, preface.

⁵⁶ Minna Doskow, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Utopian Novels: Moving the Mountain, Herland, and With Her in Ourland* (Madison, N. J.: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), 20. All subsequent citations are from this volume.

⁵⁷ Gilman, *Moving the Mountain*, 74.

⁵⁸ Gilman, *Moving the Mountain*, 76.

⁵⁹ Gilman, *Moving the Mountain*, 76.

⁶⁰ *Forerunner 2* (1911): 79-80.

⁶¹ Gilman, "A Solution to the Negro Problem" *American Journal of Sociology* 14 (July 1908): 78-85, in Ceplair, ed., *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Non-fiction Reader*, 176.

⁶² *Forerunner 2* (1911): 140-141.

⁶³ *Forerunner 2* (1911): 138.

⁶⁴ *Forerunner 2* (1911): 165.