

Modernity and Domestic Space in the Feminist Utopias of Herland and Sultana's Dream

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Abstract : Scholarship exploring the development of the literary tradition of feminist utopias, especially in the sociopolitical context of Europe and North America, has been important and meaningful, but it is, in large part, still restricted to Euro-American texts. This paper will explore Charlotte Perkins Gilman's feminist utopia Herland (1915) with another feminist utopia written just a decade before, but in a widely different sociopolitical context: Bengali feminist writer Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's English short story Sultana's Dream (1905). The paper will argue that both texts, despite being written in such different cultural and historical contexts, utilize and subvert the public versus private/domestic sphere dichotomy and the restricted gender roles associated with each sphere in order to conceive of specific formulations of feminist modernities that reflect the sociopolitical contexts and feminist movements both writers were writing within. By bringing Gilman's Herland into conversation with Hossain's Sultana's Dream, the paper hopes to illuminate the new meanings that might emerge if the scholarship on Western feminist utopias was to open itself up to the feminist utopias written elsewhere.

Keywords : comparative literature, feminist utopias, modernity, South Asian literature, utopias

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