as equal participants in a dynamic and creative community. A brief sketch of this development follows:

A) Dependency as sickness.

Perhaps the most harrowing account of woman’s symbolic confinement is narrated in the novella, The Yellow Wallpaper (1899), a story (partly autobiographical) about the psychological deterioration of a middle-class wife/mother. The metaphor of entrapment is presented in the heroine’s obsession with the bedroom wallpaper which gradually becomes entangled with her reality. To Gilman, the stultifying atmosphere of the Victorian home leads to the destruction of family life. In place of genuine care and affection, the spontaneous expression of interconnection gives way to robot-like exchange between persons living under the same roof.

B) Independence as health.

Gilman’s relentless critique of the home, a view that Americans idolized an unhealthy arrangement based upon the fastidious division and separation of social roles, appears in all her works. Reitering the frailties of the “sexuo-economic function”, which claimed woman as wife-mother and man as breadwinner and sole support, this ingenuous writer pointed to the myth of natural skills and proclivities. The wife-mother is seen as one who frets over satisfying the whims of husband and child, without the knowledge or experience to choose wisely. A life involved with the gratification of others cannot result in self-satisfaction or personal accomplishment. John Kenneth Galbraith’s recent remarks about woman as “crypto-servant” (Economics & the Public Purpose, 1973) echo Gilman’s concern about consumerism as a life-role. Only with education and the opportunity to participate as a creative member of society, through meaningful work, will women prove the value of social sharing of work/home roles.

C) Collaboration as social good.

Among the visions of Gilman are city condominiums where men, women and children interact with spontaneity and support. Parenting of the young was seen to be as much a professional function as medicine and law. The home would be “kitchenless”, and all food preparation and enjoyment would be shared by the community. In Herland (1915), a utopian fantasy where sisters live in warm and tender relationship, Gilman forecasts a time when the social objectives of peace and love will be a reality. Perhaps her projection is not to be in the third century, but the cooperative and energetic association of equals is emerging today.