This article considers Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915) as an early literary argument for a “good Anthropocene”—a contemporary term that recognizes the enormous impact of human activity on the planet while urging reform, rather than withdrawal, as the means of remediation. By placing human activity quite literally in the background of her narrative, Gilman depicts a form of coevolutionary inhabitation in which humanity and the natural world are transformed by the same systemic, teleological methods. One result is a system of what I am calling “ambient labor,” in which economic activity is conceived in ecological terms and the environment itself is taken as the object of labor. Far from anomalous, this reading of *Herland* points to a broader relevance of American literary naturalism as a whole to theory in the Anthropocene, making visible the genre’s largely unnoticed consciousness of humanity’s planetary effects as a species.