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## Maternal Economies in the Estranged Sisterhood of Edith Summers Kelley and Charlotte Perkins Gilman

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Edith Summers Kelley's *Weeds* resists recovery as stubbornly as its protagonist, Judith Pippinger Blackford, unsuccessfully resists her plight as a poverty-stricken housewife and mother. In 1972, Matthew Brucoli initiated a reprint of the nearly-lost novel. The new edition failed to find a sustained body of readers or critics and once again fell out of print. In her afterword to the 1996 reprint of the novel, Charlotte Margolis Goodman writes, "It is my hope that this new printing . . . will both secure an enduring place in literary history for *Weeds* and guarantee that it reaches a wider audience,"<sup>1</sup> Despite Goodman's hopes, during the last seventeen years only a handful of articles or book chapters have appeared about Edith Summers Kelley's 1923 novel and its tenant-farming protagonist, Judith Pippinger. Of these few articles, *Weeds* is a central text in only two of them, and Goodman herself contributed one of these. Most recently, Linda Komasky compares Kelley's Judith to Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier of *The Awakening*.<sup>2</sup> Allison Berg reads *Weeds* primarily through the framework of Margaret Sanger, the birth control movement, and eugenics discourse. In a later article, Goodman rereads Charlotte Perkins Gilman's famous short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), through the thematic and biographical connections she makes between the writing and lives of Gilman and Kelley. She sees similarities between *Weeds* and "The Yellow Wallpaper," noting that the intersection of the authors' lives through Upton Sinclair influenced their shared interests in gender roles, motherhood, compensation for work, and the status of would-be artists.

Following Goodman's lead, I suggest that reading Kelley alongside Gilman highlights a powerful correlation between the economic and "natural" conditions that

determine Judith's life as a young wife and mother in rural Kentucky during the World War I era. As others have discussed, in *Weeds* Kelley fictionalizes her own experiences as a tenant farmer in rural Kentucky. If, as Goodman suggests, Kelley and Gilman are literary sisters, then their divergent perspectives on motherhood and writing estrange them. In *Women and Economics*, Gilman romanticizes the working-class woman, arguing that the middle-class mother is the only woman who needs emancipation from her animal-like status as a domestic beast of burden in order to pursue her own life and living. While I do not claim that Kelley intentionally addresses Gilman's arguments, this essay argues that *Weeds* exposes the absurdity of Gilman's romanticized poor by depicting women whose very maternal and material circumstances animalize them. Communal housework, cooking, daycare and other shared "woman's work" may play out nicely in Gilman's middle-class fiction and in urban utopian communities like Helicon Hall, but, as Kelley compellingly illustrates with Judith Pippinger Blackford, such fantasies cannot alleviate the working-class pressures of eking a harsh existence out of resistant Kentucky soil. Moreover, this essay shows how Kelley's novel challenges the utopian-feminist rhetoric circulated by Gilman and other theorists from privileged backgrounds, reading *Weeds* through Gilman's *Women and Economics* to underscore the glaring inadequacies of a feminism that serves urban middle-class women but fails rural, poor women. Drawing on Margaret Fuller's and Fanny Fern's advocacy of feminine solidarity, I contend that a spirit of competition and a lack of cooperation among and between middle-class and lower-class women in *Weeds* prevent all the women from achieving social equality and economic autonomy.

As Goodman points out, no "direct evidence" shows that Kelley read any of Gilman's writings.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not she read Gilman's work, Gilman's ideas certainly circulated among the thinkers and writers of the East Coast; Kelley's own writing shows she was familiar with Gilman's platforms and activism. Kelley was Upton Sinclair's secretary during his administration of the short-lived experiment in cooperative living, Helicon Hall, which operated in New Jersey from 1905 to 1907. She had opportunity to hear Gilman speak at Helicon Hall about women's rights and social reform—in "Helicon Hall: An Experiment in Living" (1934), Kelley includes Gilman among the commune's "distinguished visitors"<sup>4</sup>—and while living there she practiced the type of communal living that Gilman advocated in so many of her writings and public lectures. Writing nearly thirty years after Helicon Hall burned down, Kelley notes that Sinclair began the commune because he "cherished the idea of a co-operative colony to simplify the routine details of living for people who wished to give themselves to other things than routine

detail, and especially for those among them who had little children to bring up.”<sup>5</sup> Berg reads “Helicon Hall: An Experiment in Living” as Kelley’s challenge to “traditional views of ‘natural’ motherhood, advocating communal child rearing.”<sup>6</sup> But as I show in this essay, this seemingly heartening experience at Helicon Hall is completely absent from the bleak picture Kelley gives us of Judith Pippinger Blackford’s life in *Weeds*. Instead of promoting cooperative parenting, “Helicon Hall: An Experiment in Living,” Kelley’s unpublished papers, and the novel, when read against the backdrop of her own struggles with motherhood and farming, suggest that avoiding motherhood altogether (as Hat Wolf does in *Weeds*) or having means enough to send one’s children to daycare (as the mothers do in “Helicon Hall: An Experiment in Living”) are perhaps the only ways a woman could hope to devote herself to “the higher things in life.”<sup>7</sup>

Rather than overtly advocating cooperative living, then, Kelley’s fond reflections on her stay at the colony underscore the gap between the idealism of the middle-class utopian experiment and the difficulties of trying to write while raising children at the poverty level: “the six months of Helicon Hall was six months of youth, of vivid new impressions, of loves and friendships, of hopes and dreams. . . . Each year they become more precious in the memory, those days when we were all young together.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Kelley wrote “Helicon Hall: An Experiment in Living” when her own children were grown, and the events of Kelley’s life between her time at Helicon Hall and these reminisces from 1934 may help us understand why she might look back and think that the Helicon Hall mothers were so fortunate. Several women writers lived at Helicon Hall, presumably producing more and better writing because of the cooperative housework and childcare. Kelley mentions one such mother-writer, Grace MacGowan Cooke. Cooke is perhaps best known for her 1910 novel, *The Power and the Glory*, about a young girl from Appalachia who supports her mother and siblings by working in the mills. Kelley describes how Cooke and her sister, Alice MacGowan, sat at the dinner table with Cooke’s two young daughters between them, noting that the two women “make their living by writing stories for magazines” while living at the commune and after they left.<sup>9</sup>

Apparently, though, eating dinner with her children was Cooke’s choice, because Kelley describes how mothers at the colony had the luxury of time away from their children:

I know that many will raise their hands in horror and call these Helicon Hall mothers unnatural creatures. A little unbiased observation, however, will convince anybody that even the most conventional and maternal of mothers likes to be able to eat her meals in peace and quiet and to have her social intercourse with other grown-ups undisturbed....

The colony did this for its mothers at the same time that it gave the children a wonderful time and a very desirable training.<sup>10</sup>

Helicon Hall as Kelley remembers it seemingly ran according to Gilman's ideal that women would perform only that work for which they were best suited, operating on Gilman's premise that "there is nothing in the achievements of human motherhood to prove that it is for the advantage of the race to have women give all their time to it. Giving all their time to it does not improve it either in quantity or quality. The woman who works is usually a better reproducer than the woman who does not."<sup>11</sup> And while Helicon Hall's primary mission was to give its members—particularly its mothers—opportunity to escape "routine detail" so as to perform the "higher" duties of life—that is, intellectual and artistic pursuits—the colony also divided everyday jobs among those members who had inclinations toward particular domestic tasks. Gilman notes that "even cleaning, rightly understood and practiced, is a useful, and therefore honorable, profession."<sup>12</sup> As Kelley describes it, some colony members excelled at childcare, so that "if you had little children you did not have to hire a nursemaid to mind them all day, but could have them taken care of in the nursery."<sup>13</sup> At least one other member, whom she calls "Miss W.," enjoyed "chambermaid work."<sup>14</sup> Kelley notes that the colonists preferred not to hire workers from employment agencies, but as no one enjoyed cooking well enough, and no one enjoyed each other's cooking style—not even the southern-fried chicken, hot biscuits, and candied sweet potatoes made by "Miss G."—they were "reduced" to hiring a "brawny-armed cook from an employment agency."<sup>15</sup>

The key point here is that the Helicon Hall members had the capital to make these decisions about who cooked, who cleaned, who cared for the children, and when to hire workers when no one wanted to perform a certain chore. They all had the "eight dollars a week" to contribute to the colony's operational budget, and they shared a common incentive: "Most of the colonists, especially the older ones with children, had entered into this undertaking very seriously with the idea of proving something to themselves and to the world."<sup>16</sup> What they most wanted to prove, according to Kelley's reminiscences, is that cooperative householding could provide the material support a mother needed to pursue intellectual and artistic endeavors. Until Helicon Hall burned to the ground in 1907, the colony seemed to provide such support for mother-writers such as Grace MacGowan Cooke. But by the time Kelley had her first child in 1911, the circumstances of her own life had become drastically different—and would become increasingly different—from the ephemeral artistic utopia at Helicon Hall.

Kelley's life after her brief months at the colony provided no such support for her writing. Goodman and Bruccoli<sup>17</sup> provide biographical sketches of Kelley, highlighting the similarities between Judith's struggles in *Weeds* and Kelley's stint as the wife of an unsuccessful tenant farmer in the tobacco fields of rural Kentucky. Yet even before these years of futile farming, letters from Kelley's first husband, Allan Updegraff, suggest Kelley had qualms about balancing motherhood and writing as soon as she had her first child in 1911.<sup>18</sup> Containing words such as "nature" and "brat" that would eventually become central to Kelley's ruminations in *Weeds* on mothers and children, Updegraff's letters reveal Kelley's difficult transition to motherhood that would inspire her construction of the novel's protagonist, Judith Pippinger. Kelley's attempts to balance mothering and writing only grew more complicated after her second marriage to C. Fred Kelley. She lived in Scott County with her second husband, Kelley, and her two children (from her first marriage) in a three-room shack from 1914–1915, a period she wrote about in an unpublished essay, "We Went Back to the Land."<sup>19</sup> After her third child was born during a second unsuccessful farming attempt in Newton, New Jersey, Kelley and her family moved to the Imperial Valley of California in 1920. They failed at farming a third time, so while Fred worked at a slaughterhouse to support the family, Edith "tended to the house and the three children, sewed the family's clothing, milked the cow, raised and canned vegetables, cooked, and during the hours when the children were in school, completed the manuscript of *Weeds*."<sup>20</sup>

In a letter to Harcourt Brace in February 1923 Kelley writes, "It has been a terrible task to write the book underneath the same roof with three irrepressible children who had nobody to care for them but me" (quoted in Goodman).<sup>21</sup> The very absence of a place like Helicon Hall in *Weeds* points to Judith's desperate need for such a place and explains Kelley's wistful reflections on the convenient child-care the mothers enjoyed there: "Of course the mothers visited their children as much as they liked and took them out of the group as much as they liked. . . . The children had their world and we had ours and the two went on side-by-side but not interfering with each other. How many and many a harassed mother has sighed in vain for just such an arrangement as that."<sup>22</sup> Berg suggests that Kelley's nostalgia for the mothers' support at Helicon Hall echoes the fact that her own life taught her that "female artistry was incompatible with traditional motherhood."<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Ammons notes that "Kelley, like a figure out of a story by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, watched poverty and the exhausting demands of motherhood eat away at her talent."<sup>24</sup> But the privileged protagonist of "The Yellow Wallpaper" could not even balance conventional motherhood with writing, and she had the financial support of a

doctor-husband, the practical help of a nanny and housekeeper, and the creative space of a room of her own. Kelley's fiction—published and unpublished—is full of “many and many a harassed mother” who not only reflects her life as a working-class wife, mother, and writer but also exposes the mismatch between urban feminism, utopian collectivism, and rural survival.

First published in 1898, Gilman's *Women and Economics* not only contains many of the ideas that brought Helicon Hall into being, but also builds on a nineteenth-century conceit comparing women to beasts of burden. Throughout the book, Gilman theorizes that “the sex-relation is also an economic relation”<sup>25</sup> and then goes on to complicate that simple yet stunning thesis. In her opening chapter, Gilman distinguishes between economic dependence and independence by comparing peasant women and horses:

The horse works, it is true; but what he gets to eat depends on the power and will of his master. His living comes through another. He is economically dependent. So with the hard-worked savage or peasant women. Their labor is the property of another: they work under another will; and what they receive depends not on their labor, but on the power and will of another. They are economically dependent. This is true of the human female both individually and collectively.<sup>26</sup>

Several lines of analysis can follow from this passage. Even though Gilman was a well-known socialist, most of her tract hypothesizes the conditions of the middle class, using the very rich or the very poor as mere foils for her myopic fixation on her own problem: the plight of middle-class, urban women.

Kelley's novel, though socialist in tendency, treats with historical authenticity the apparent ambivalence that the tenant farmers would have had for the distant market economy. As Janet Galligani Casey suggests, *Weeds* can also be read as Kelley's response to the romanticization of rural country life that was nearly standardized by the 1908 Country Life Movement.<sup>27</sup> Although we see in *Weeds* characters who are indeed affected by the market system—the American Tobacco Company sets the prices for their crops—they are still in large part subsistence farmers for whom the market has somewhat remote consequences. Dwight Billings and Kathleen Blee use 1910 census data to describe the rural transition from a subsistence economy to a commercial, capitalist one. Though Billings and Blee study Beech Creek and not the Scott County of *Weeds*, readers can imagine similarities between the two Appalachian communities. Whatever prices their crops fetch, families in these areas, as we see in *Weeds*, still live hand-to-mouth as they struggle each day with the land for their food. In good years, higher prices for tobacco mean they

might have a new coat to wear while they work outside. In lean years, when paid lower prices for their crops, they still work outside, just without the new coat. Either way, the money from the capitalist system barely changes their daily lives, and the changes are always of degree, not of kind. Billings and Blee discuss these economic conditions in terms of opportunity and constraint: "Isolation permitted an independent [subsistence] economy to persist in the Appalachian mountains long after it had vanished elsewhere in the United States but the contradictions between low economic accumulation, rapid population increase, soil depletion, and land shortage produced great strain in the subsistence system."<sup>28</sup> The promise of opportunity offered by the distant capitalist mode of production becomes, in *Weeds*, but another layer of constraint over the landless tenant farmers who live within the still-feudal mode of production.

Unpacking Gilman's analogy between the horse and the peasant woman can also lead to a discussion of the animal imagery in both *Women and Economics* and *Weeds*, imagery that reflects the social and economic conditions that define Judith's life. These complicated conditions, both determined by the encroaching American market economy and, paradoxically, by the rural feudal system that kept the market at a distance, keep Judith working "under another will"<sup>29</sup> or more correctly, under the control of several other pressures.

The relation between animals and humans has a complicated status in Gilman's socio-economic world. At times, the animal world provides an example of relations between the sexes that she believes should be emulated: "Whereas," Gilman writes, "in other species of animals, male and female alike graze and browse, hunt and kill, climb, swim, dig, run, and fly for their livings, in our species the female does not seek her own living in the specific activities of our race, but is fed by the male."<sup>30</sup> Here Gilman instructs humans to act more like lesser animals, to allow women (mothers or not) to participate in modes of production that would make them economically independent. At other times in her treatise, as in the horse analogy, she urges humans to rise above their animal baseness. A woman performing domestic labor, whether in someone else's home for wages or in her own home (in her "proper sphere") so that her husband can produce wealth, is, in this regard, no different from the enslaved horse that is only an economic factor because of the labor it provides for its master. Further, according to the popular Victorian logic Gilman is critiquing, human mothers fare even worse than the domesticated horse because "the function of maternity unfits a woman for economic production, and therefore, it is right that she should be supported by her husband."<sup>31</sup> Even here, in a statement meant to eviscerate the popular logic of "separate spheres"



and the idea that motherhood necessarily removes a woman from public or economic life, Gilman betrays her own myopia. Apparently thinking only of middle-class, married mothers whose husbands' incomes can support the family, Gilman ignores the plight of poverty-stricken mothers whose domestic labor—in their own homes or in someone else's—is necessary for their families' survival.

For Gilman, keeping women tied to the "individual animal processes" of bearing young like so many bears, cats, or chickens is to keep women out of the civilizing processes that have allowed the "human race [to stand] highest in the scale of life so far," continuing the historical notion that all "human progress has been accomplished by men."<sup>32</sup> She sees progress and economics as inextricably linked; if peasant women, domestic laborers, and Victorian mothers are as enslaved as domesticated horses, then the only way to distinguish human from animal is to gain control of one's own economic production. Further, having time away from one's children is a necessary step in this process of women becoming economically independent. Women need to support themselves financially to be fully human, and can contribute to the progress of the race only when they are paid for doing work that is meaningful to society. Gilman comes full circle with her logic at this point, asserting that only when women achieve financial independence can they be good mothers. Otherwise, she writes, "the more absolutely woman is segregated to sex-functions only, cut off from all economic use and made wholly dependent on the sex-relation as a means of livelihood, the more pathological does her motherhood become."<sup>33</sup> Even if, in reality, her economic function is to do the family work at home so her husband can produce wealth, Gilman's theorized mother still *perceives* that she is cut off from economic use because of the undervaluing of that role and how it enables men's roles. Ultimately, for Gilman, mothers who are unable to provide for their own living are like barnyard animals at worst, owing their livelihood to the masters/husbands for whom they labor; at best, their motherhood (and, by virtue of Victorian mores, their very being) is atrophied and sickly because of their economic dependence.

Gilman distances human mothers from animals in *Women and Economics*, but Kelley conflates the two in her manuscripts and in *Weeds*. In "Classy Chicken," an unpublished and undated poem, Kelley writes four stanzas that personify a magnificent hen in a shed, describing her as if she were the most beautiful and powerful woman at a chic soirée. Wearing "beige silk from knee to ankle," and "black satin clad from neck to knee," the hen looks down on the lesser hens with a "haughty glance about her shed." The fourth stanza praises the hen's beauty in language that is oddly both erotic and eugenic, but in the fifth and final stanza the speaker reverses her tone and undercuts the reader's expectations:

Her svelte young body's supple grace,  
Her perfect poise and symmetry  
Exhale the attar fine of race,  
Of breeding and of pedigree.

And yet the lady leaves me cold,  
Albeit in song I bravely boost her.  
'T were different were I but a bold  
And black Minorca rooster.<sup>34</sup>

The final stanza can be read as a double entendre. Despite the eroticized descriptions of the hen (svelte, supple, attar), the hen "leaves [her] cold" because the speaker is a woman, not a rooster, and is therefore not attracted to the hen. Moreover, the speaker's reference to herself—inserting the "I" in the next to last line—invites the reader to interpret the entire poem as a personified metaphor. That is, the speaker's descriptions of the hen also describe a human woman who is objectified by society's expectations that she perform her femininity through prescribed manners of dress, grooming, and even breeding. The speaker's life would be "different" if she were a rooster—that is, a man—because she would have the power of choice that comes from being a thinking subject. As a woman, she is little more than a hen, an object of desire who is subject only to the rooster's longing. More importantly, "Classy Chicken" suggests that in the human "hen shed," women also see each other as potential objects for male desire and thus compete with each other for mates rather than stand in feminine solidarity, a concept I will return to in the closing pages of this essay.

As do many of Kelley's unpublished poems and stories—with such titles as "The Weaker Vessel," "Of Husbands," and "The Death in the Farm House"—"Classy Chicken" echoes the tropes of material and natural entrapment she puts to work in *Weeds*. Kelley uses animal imagery throughout the novel to describe the double bind in which "nature" has Judith trapped. Kelley animalizes Judith from the very beginning of the novel, when Judith's likeness to animals is a sign of her lively and carefree temperament. As the youngest child in the Pippinger family she "was a lithe, active, slim little creature, monkey-like in the agility with which she could climb trees and shin up poles and vault over fences. Her bare, brown toes took hold like fingers. There was something wild and evasive about her swift, sinuous little body, alive with quick, unexpected movements, like those of a young animal."<sup>35</sup> As a toddler, Judith "did not creep on her knees, but went on all fours like a little bear," and soon mastering this gait she follows her father around the yard, "sticking close to his heels like a small dog" (15) Even when Kelley is

not describing Judith in animal terms, she writes of a closeness between Judith and the animal world that intimates an extra-human communion with the natural world. Judith “was absorbed in all the small life that fluttered and darted and hopped and crawled about the farm” (16), and she repeatedly intervenes in the natural order by rescuing and nurturing anything from minnows to kittens. All such rescues are “foredoomed to failure” (17), in part because the “laws of nature” are “distressingly harsh and cruel”: “the big fishes eat the little ones. . . . [In] all the bird and animal and insect world the strong prey continually upon the weak” (21). Moreover, the other reason that Judith cannot keep these small animals alive foreshadows the central conflict that drives the novel: “the mother feeling” was “an instinct which rarely showed itself in her” (18). Judith is certainly constrained by socio-economics, but she is nearly undone by motherhood, a compulsory role for which she feels ill-equipped and disinclined.

The animal world also initiates Judith’s sexual awareness, so that the narrative always naturalizes her acceptance of and pleasure in her own sexuality. But just as Judith’s communion with the more pleasurable aspects of the farm’s fauna is contrasted with her desire to usurp the natural order that consumes and kills those creatures, her sexuality is complicatedly entwined with her loathing for working inside the house and an equal love for working outside, and ultimately foreshadows the ways Judith’s pleasure in sex leads to her entrapment in motherhood. Unlike her sisters, twins Luella and Lizzie May, who have a “natural zest for housekeeping” (55), Judith is not good at housekeeping, so “because she was not lazy and took a deep interest in the farm animals, she made herself useful by taking over most of the out-of-door chores” (56). She continues to prefer and even thrive on outside work throughout the novel, and her position outside the house provides her first lesson in sex education. “Living so intimately in the life of the barnyard,” as Judith does as a girl, “the mysteries of sex were not mysteries at all to her, but matters of routine. . . . She knew all about the ways of roosters with hens. . . . These things interested her, but not more so than other barnyard activities” (56). Though not described here as an animal, Judith’s awareness of herself comes through her special understanding of the animal world. These barnyard encounters shape her worldview, and “if she could have put into words what she vaguely felt, she would have said that the language of the barnyard was an expression of something that was real, vital, and fluid, that it was of natural and spontaneous growth, that it turned with its surroundings, that it was a part of the life that offered itself to her. The prim niceness of the twins . . . was for her a deadening negation of life” (57). For the young Judith, domesticity equals death, and the natural, out-of-doors world promises her pleasure and the satisfaction of hard work.

In keeping with her awakening, Judith's first sexual experiences take place outside. Jerry Blackford begins courting Judith by meeting her out in the cow pasture, and they consummate their courtship "in a little grove of second growth maples and beeches," where "a surge of desire swept over him and he took her in his arms and kissed her passionately on the lips. She kissed him back with answering passion. . . . It was all easy after that for Jerry. It was a speedy, simple, natural courting, like the coming together of two young wild things in the woods" (101–102). As Goodman suggests, for young people in Scott County, sex is perhaps "the chief anodyne for the monotony of everyday existence."<sup>36</sup> As their intimacy continues and grows, Judith makes fun of Jerry by comparing him to the animal world, for the pride he takes in their sexual relationship, joking that "'all male critters is the same'" and that he looks "'jes like a Tom turkey with its head a-swellin' up with blood'" (103). For a short while Kelley allows readers to hope that Judith will indeed escape from domesticity and the "curse of the soil" (88), as during their year-long engagement they avoid "the physical results of the sweet intimacy that they enjoyed" (103). Even when Judith eventually does become pregnant in the first year of their marriage, she enjoys sex more than ever once she gets past the sickness of her first trimester, and her sexuality is still synonymous with the natural world: "as Judith stretched and laughed and enjoyed the rain and the sun and ate heartily and loved Jerry more than she had ever loved him before and felt herself overflowing with physical well-being and spiritual content, she knew the joy of reacting to perhaps the most powerful stimulant in life, the elixir of sharp contrast" (149).

Sex is indeed "the elixir of sharp contrast" for Judith. Even after she begins to have children, Kelley carefully depicts the "natural" bind that constricts Judith. She plainly enjoys having sex, as we can see in the passage quoted above. She is pleasurable excited rather than embarrassed or outraged when Bob Crupper flirts with her (164), and later, when Bob kisses her before he leaves to fight in World War I, she "felt herself melting into his arms as he kissed her on the mouth long and passionately" (256), knowing she was kissing him back just as passionately. When the two evangelists come to Scott County, Judith gladly participates in the seduction that leads to her affair with the more handsome of the two men. Like Jerry and Judith's courtship, their rendezvous take place outside, eroticized through nature metaphors:

He would meet her on the edges of the pasture slopes where the blackberries grew and help her fill her tin bucket with the large, juicy berries. Here in the embrace of the sun the earth swooned with midsummer heat. Bees drowsed over the patches of steeplebush. Here and there stately stalks of ironweed lifted their great crowns of royal purple. The scent

of flowering milkweed distilled out into the hot sunshine was heavy and sweet.... She thrilled to the feeling of newness, of life born again, that stirs through a summer dawn. (276)

During their affair, Judith is hyper-conscious of her body, and Kelley likens her to the lone, lush, red bloom on a scraggly rosebush near her house that is broken by hens and calves and dying from drought (273). After their affair ends with the blackberry season, Judith finds herself pregnant by the preacher, just as the heavy summer blooms are pollinated by the drowsy bees.

If Kelley works to show Judith's sexuality as natural, then, in the moments of childbirth, nature betrays Judith's body, enslaving it to the constant demands of involuntary motherhood. As before, Kelley depicts Judith's conflicted relation to nature, which suggests that the very term "nature" is something of an equivocation. Once Judith becomes a mother, the imagery that characterized her as part of the natural flora and fauna of her world changes from mostly optimistic to mostly pessimistic. In "Billy's Birth," the scene that editors cut from the first edition of *Weeds* because of its horrific, honest depiction of childbirth, we see Judith evolve from a happily carefree creature into a snarling, howling beast who is barely human. As she labors through contraction after contraction she "pace[s] up and down the kitchen floor like a wild tigress newly caged," and her sobs of pain become a "strangely unhuman shriek, a savage, elemental, appalling sound" (338). Jerry listens through the night at Judith's "deep-toned, guttural, growling sound that ended in a snarl. It was not like that of an ordinary dog; but more as Jerry imagined some wild, doglike creature, inhabitant of lonely waste country, might growl and snarl over its prey." As he goes in to check on Judith, he sees not his wife, but a creature with vacant eyes and teeth bared in a snarl that resembles an "angry wolf" (343-344). As Kelley comments on the scene, "Nature that from her childhood had led kindly and blandly through pleasant paths . . . had at last betrayed her, treacherously beguiling her into this desolate region" (344). Judith's motherhood changes the trajectory of her life, and in turn, of the novel. As Paula Rabinowitz discusses in *Labor and Desire*, "Heterosexuality and maternity alter the body (and so the discourse) of the working-class woman more profoundly than labor or hunger."<sup>37</sup> As Donna Campbell asserts, Judith's maternity metamorphoses her body into a "laboring machine" that represents "a stripping away of humanity that implicitly marks women with the vestiges of a primal force not entirely covered by the pious fiction of maternal instinct."<sup>38</sup> Laboring to deliver and care for her children turns Judith into a beast of burden barely more human than Gilman's domesticated horse.

While Gilman's *Women and Economics* may too often romanticize the peasant woman and focus too myopically on the middle-class woman, there are moments in

*Women and Economics* when Gilman's line of vision broadens and she can see the plight of working-class women:

The poor man's wife has far too much of other work to do to spend all her time waiting on her children. The rich man's wife could do it, but does not, partly because she hires some one to do it for her, and partly because she, too, has other duties to occupy her time. Only in isolated cases do we find a mother deputing all other service to others, and concentrating her energies on feeding, clothing, washing, dressing, and, as far as may be, educating her own child. When such cases are found, it remains to be shown that the child so reared is proportionately benefited by this unremittent devotion of its mother.<sup>39</sup>

Gilman notices that the "the poor man's wife has far too much of other work to do" to give her undivided attention to her children and recognizes, as we have seen, that a peasant woman is not much more than a beast of burden. Indeed, as Kelley shows by example in the character of Judith, the poor woman is enslaved by her husband, by nature (her body and the land), by her children, by the feudal system, and by the market system.

Kelley offers her own version of what life is like for women in rural Kentucky, a depiction that not only contradicts Gilman's ideas about "poor women," but shows how relentlessly and completely women are contracted in service to their children:

For Judith Blackford and the rest of the women in the solitude of their isolated shanties life moved on as stagnantly as usual. . . For them there was no such thing as change. . . Families must be fed after some fashion or other and dishes washed three times a day, three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. Babies must be fed and washed and dressed and "changed" and rocked when they cried and watched and kept out of mischief and danger. The endless wrangles among older children must be arbitrated in some way or other, if only by cuffing the ears of both contestants; and the equally endless complaints stilled by threats, promises, whatever lies a harassed mother could invent to quiet the fretful clamor of discontented childhood. Fires must be lighted and kept going as long as needed for cooking, no matter how great the heat. Cows must be milked and cream skimmed and butter churned. Hens must be fed and eggs gathered and the filth shoveled out of henhouses. Diapers must be washed, and grimy little drawers and rompers and stiff overalls and sweaty work shirts and grease-bespattered dresses and kitchen aprons and filthy, sour-smelling towels and socks stinking with the putridity of unwashed feet and all the other articles that go to make up a farm woman's family wash. Floors must be swept and scrubbed and stoves cleaned and a never ending war of dust, grease, stable manure, flies, spiders, rats, mice, ants, and all other breeders of filth that are continually at work in country households. These activities . . . made up the life of the women, a life

that was virtually the same every day of the year, except when their help was needed in the field to set tobacco or shuck corn, or when fruit canning, hog killing, or house cleaning crowded the routine. (194–5)

Contrary to Gilman's notions that the poor woman finds relief from her mothering duties through her other household chores, Kelley argues with inexorable detail that working-class women are utterly consumed by the task of caring for their children while simultaneously going about the daily struggle for survival. Kelley constantly uses the language of bondage to describe Judith's motherhood, and being her children's slave (159) is actually the lesser of two evils when the children's demands become vampiric (208). Far from Gilman's naïve assumptions about the poor woman, then, is Kelley's portrayal of Judith. Though doubly determined by layered economic systems—the emergent market system in conjunction with the persistent feudal structure—Judith is most wholly “enslaved not by capitalists but by her own body” and by the offspring of that body.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps drawn as a foil for Judith, or perhaps as the embodiment of Kelley's and Judith's dreams of relief from child-rearing, Harriet “Hat” Wolf stands outside the maternal prison. From this position, Hat is the only female character that even closely exemplifies Gilman's theories for freeing women from subservience to men; there is still considerable distance between the life of Hat Wolf and the middle-class mother whom Gilman's theories serve. Most importantly, and most mysteriously, Hat remains childless throughout the novel, despite her presumably consummated marriage to her husband, Luke, and her affair with Judith's husband, Jerry. Hat stands as a possessor of knowledge and a link to modernity. Despite being a tenant-farming wife like Judith, Hat is an avid reader, subscribing to magazines like *The Farm-Wife's Friend* and mail-order catalogues like the *Sears-Roebuck*. These publications not only contain short poems, serial romances and the latest fashions and household items, but also “how-to” columns proffering advice on every topic from “how to remain always a mystery to your husband” to “how to treat a cow with a caked udder” (131). Hat's status as a reader also exemplifies the class paradox of the ladies' magazine movement. As Nicole Tonkovich discusses, magazines like *Godey's Lady's Book* sought to maintain a “social hierarchy by classifying women according to their race, location, and genealogical entitlement.”<sup>41</sup> But as we see in the character of Hat, “ladies” were not the only women reading ladies' magazines, which “offered a wide social spectrum of women a chance to learn and imitate the codes of dress, possessions, comportment, and speech thought to be unique to ladies but able to be imitated by upwardly mobile and ambitious women and girls.”<sup>42</sup> Perhaps veiled within some how-to column was encoded information on birth control, for, unless she

is simply unable to conceive, Hat has managed to control her reproduction. B.W. Capo discusses the possibility of Hat's secret knowledge of birth control, citing a passage from a 1933 issue of *McCall's* magazine that includes encoded information about birth control.<sup>43</sup> Though this dates ten years later than Kelley's novel, it might be assumed that such veiled information was included in publications that would have been available to women for consumption and imitation during the WWI era.

Indeed, it is Hat who initially recognizes Judith's first pregnancy in an encrypted conversation that insinuates Hat knows even more than she is telling:

"You hain't got no disease, Judy, no more'n this here goose has a disease. You got a young un in yer insides. That's what's wrong with ye. You was kinda lucky it didn't come sooner."

With the last remark, Hat shot a swift, sharp glance at her visitor.

Judith belatedly notices that Hat's strange glance is full of meaning, and feels "disgusted at an indefinable something in Hat's attitude" (147). When Judith protests that even a calving cow isn't as sick as she's been feeling, Hat pronounces:

"Wimmin has troubles caows don't never even dream on. You'll find that out afore you're married long," said Hat darkly. From this cryptic prophecy she launched into a description of the pregnant state and went into the subject in all its ramifications. She did not tell Judith how it came that she who had never had a child knew so many intimate details regarding the symptoms of pregnancy. That after all was her own affair. (148)

In language that is once again zoomorphic, Hat's lecture and odd body language hint at the possibility that while Judith's pregnancy-free months of sexual activity were just luck, her own state of childlessness is a direct result of her knowledge on the subject, and thereby, her control of her own body. Perhaps picking up on Kelley's comparison between Judith's and animals' bodies, a reader wrote to Kelley: "And this 'maternal myth'! Dieu! I am glad YOU see through this flimsy lie. The AVERAGE woman is good for little else, besides being an incubator. The exceptional woman is rarely, if ever, maternal. Any COW can give birth."<sup>44</sup>

Hat's apparent knowledge of birth control, her rejection of the "maternal myth," is not her only link to modernity. Among the female characters in *Weeds*, Hat alone is deeply attracted to the idea of acquiring her own money. In Judith's younger days, she briefly works as a housekeeper and enjoys spending her wages on cloth to make dresses for herself and her sisters. But in her married life, money means little to Judith. She



works the tobacco farm when she can get out of the house *because* it gets her out of the house and back to the natural world she loves; money has little effect on Judith's daily life, even when the American Tobacco Company changes the crop prices in seemingly random see-saw ways. For Hat, on the other hand, having her own money is a way to assert her independence and modernity. "The minds of Hat and Luke dwelt largely upon the subject of money" (151), and Hat complains to Judith that she never sees the profits from the crops Luke sells at market, crops she works equally hard to raise. "Here all this summer I worked like a dawg," Hat says, "An then along about Christmas Luke'll haul the terbaccer off to Lexington an' sell it an' put the money in his pocket an' I won't never see a dollar of it. An' if I even want a few cents to buy me calico for a sun-bonnet, I gotta most go daown on my knees an' beg for it. I work jes as hard in the crop as he does" (144-45). Tired of being a beast of burden, a domesticated horse, Hat works to avoid the snares that keep other women in bondage. Kelley's depiction of Hat's insistence on *any* pay for equal work echoes Gilman's call for women to be economically independent.

Hat's state of affairs, though, still differs markedly from the scenarios Gilman envisions for the emancipation of women. By novel's end, Hat has achieved a measure of economic independence, a status Gilman hopes all women can attain. She buoyantly shares with Judith her "triumphant news that she now [has] a bank account of her own" by selling a bay mare that she asserts was "her rightful property" and depositing the money in her own name. Judith envies Hat, not so much for her new-found financial freedom to buy fabric and other material goods, but because Hat is "especially well satisfied with life and with herself" (307). Hat purchases her economic independence, however, at a cost that Gilman, at least in *Women and Economics*, would not necessarily advocate: Hat's monetary autonomy is bought with her childlessness.

Gilman qualifies her participation in Margaret Sanger's birth control crusade; she sees cooperation, not contraception, as the human race's means to continue the progress of civilization. In Gilman's middle-class milieu, women can overcome the dilemma of being defined by their sex relations, not by abandoning their roles as wives and mothers, but by coming together to help one another find and perform the work they are "most fit" for. She carefully defines her terms of cooperative living, however. She is not simply calling for women to pitch in and help each other by sharing meals or babysitting duties. On the contrary, Gilman imagines a highly specialized "trained professional service" where some women are domestic experts so that other women can be "business women, professional women, scientific, artistic, literary women", all by virtue of their natural tendencies.<sup>45</sup> Gilman's grandiose dreams for implementing this vision can be

read in comparison to the previously quoted passage from *Weeds* about the isolated life of Judith and other rural women:

If there should be built and opened in any of our large cities today a commodious and well-served apartment house for professional women with families, it would be filled at once. The apartments would be without kitchens; but there would be a kitchen belonging to the house from which meals could be served to the families in their rooms or in a common dining-room, as preferred. It would be a home where the cleaning was done by efficient workers, not hired separately by the families, but engaged by the manager of the establishment; and a roof-garden, day nursery, and kindergarten, under well-trained professional nurses and teachers, would insure proper care of the children. The demand for such provision is increasing daily, and must soon be met, not by a boarding-house or a lodging-house, a hotel, a restaurant, or any makeshift patching together of these; but by a permanent provision for the needs of women and children, of family privacy with collective advantage.<sup>46</sup>

As I noted earlier, Gilman's ideals here outlined did come to fruition in Sinclair's New Jersey settlement, Helicon Hall. Kelley lived there briefly, but in the years between 1907 when Helicon Hall burned down and 1923 when Kelley wrote *Weeds*, she and her husband also suffered the abject poverty of tenant farming in Kentucky, throwing into sharp relief the distance between the urban middle-class and the rural working-class. However Kelley was influenced by her days at Helicon Hall, there was evidently no place, not even in her imagination, for communal living in rural America.

But this observation raises the question: why wouldn't something like Gilman's cooperative apartment complex work for the women in Scott County, Kentucky? Kelley depicts several instances in the novel when the community comes together to help in times of need. Aunt Mary Blackford, Jerry's mother, keeps the household going when Judith is laboring to deliver her first child. She occasionally comes to babysit the children, as does Judith's sister, Luella, when Jerry needs Judith's help in the fields or with tobacco stripping. Late in the novel, Aunt Selina babysits so Jerry and Judith can harvest blackberries. When Lizzie May's husband, Dan, dies on his way home from the tobacco market, several women do her household chores when they are visiting to comfort her and the children. And in *Weeds* it is not just the women who notice when someone in the community has a need; Jabez Moorhouse invites his neighbors to feast on roast mutton (albeit from a stolen ewe) during a particularly scarce winter. Since a culture of helpfulness is already shared in Scott County, why does Kelley stress Judith's isolation rather than this potential for cooperation?

Marilyn Holt, writing about rural women in Kansas during the 1910s, observes that rural families during the WWI era did in fact operate on a system of cooperative household labor. Whereas Gilman and Sinclair promoted cooperation *between* urban families, however, Holt found that rural families were “based on a cooperative outlook in which all members were supposed to work for farm and family survival.”<sup>47</sup> In this model, the husband and wife worked cooperatively *within* the nuclear family, understanding “the conception of family as corporation. The domestic economy movement did not claim that it would result in an equal partnership between men and women, but it did promise to make women more able managers and larger economic contributors.”<sup>48</sup> Contextualizing her argument within the Country Life Movement that worked to keep Americans on farms to boost the country’s agricultural production, Holt’s work suggests there may have been a disconnect between lived experience in rural areas and the depiction of rural life in popular media. For example, she cites a 1915 issue of *Farmer’s Wife* magazine that asked readers “if rural women were really nothing more than ‘beasts of burden.’” Although she argues that “more emphatic and representative responses were women who saw themselves as partners” with their husbands in the business of running their farms, Holt notes that “a small number responded in the affirmative. They had few material conveniences to lighten their work, almost no leisure time, and little male support.”<sup>49</sup> Using a reader-response poll printed in a popular magazine may not give the most accurate depiction of life in rural areas. After all, the responses were surely culled and edited by an editor with a publication agenda, perhaps even an agenda influenced by the Country Life movement and the urban romanticization of rural life.

Kelley’s and Judith’s lives certainly reflect the “small number” of rural women who felt like isolated beasts of burden. Perhaps Kelley’s own isolation as a tenant farmer contributed to her depiction of rural life in *Weeds*. Perhaps there was too much time, space, and reality between the days of Helicon Hall and those of the Kentucky shanty for her to imagine such communal possibilities in a place like Scott County. Practical circumstances would not seem to permit such living arrangements. Geography alone is enough to keep people isolated from each other. Kelley highlights the spatial distance between people and places throughout the novel. She describes Scott County as a circle, within which the Pippinger family moved at “a radius of some eight or ten miles about the farm that formed their entire world” (8). Several miles separate them from friends, the county store, and the school. The tenant farmers could live on a plot that consisted of forty-seven acres of fields (6), so that one’s nearest neighbors could still be nearly a mile away. There are no roads in Scott County, though they are beginning to be built by the second half of the novel.

Despite the geographical distance that separates the characters, they do come together in times of need. Lizzie May seems “most fit” to care for children, so why couldn’t she, whom “motherhood had improved” (214), move in with Judith’s family after her husband dies, allowing both women to do the work they are most fit for? More questions surface as answers to this question: if Lizzie May is focused on the children and Judith is in the fields or drawing, who would clean the house or cook the meals? Where would Judith practice her artistic pursuits when they live in a three-room shanty? Could Judith’s art turn into a profession; that is, would there be any market for her drawings in rural Scott County? And how could two families (with only one adult male worker, Jerry) live in such a small dwelling, off nearly-barren land, when one family can barely subsist in that manner? Billings and Blee note that, in the “patriarchal moral economy” of mid-nineteenth- to early-nineteenth-century Kentucky, any reciprocity in economic production among kin occurred in “cooperative labor among adult males.”<sup>50</sup> Women, on the other hand, apparently labored alone as “producers of home manufactured goods.”<sup>51</sup> Early in the novel, Judith’s “spinster” sister, Luella, and her mother-in-law, Aunt Mary, come to babysit so Judith can work outside, but as the novel progresses, for no given reason, they quit coming to help. Living together may not necessarily improve the economic conditions of the Blackford family, and having an extra mouth (Aunt Mary’s) to feed might actually make it more difficult. If it were commonplace, or at least possible, as Gilman would have us believe, for extended families to live together in the city, we know that, contrary to myth, they rarely did so in the country. Billings and Blee found that, in 1910s Appalachia, “household extension was relatively uncommon.” When extended families did share a household, sharing “was not a strategy to allow farming families to pursue opportunities in an emerging market economy; instead, it was a response to scarcity based in long-standing bonds of kinship and family solidarity.”<sup>52</sup> And this is what we see in *Weeds*. The characters come together when circumstances are especially desperate, but otherwise each family is consumed with the business of living off an inhospitable and often-unyielding land.

With Billings’ and Blee’s reference to family solidarity we can now return to the concept of feminine solidarity. As Kelley so cleverly suggests with her hen-house metaphor in “Classy Chicken,” competition among and between women from middle and lower classes may also be what keeps the women in *Weeds* from the kind of sustained cooperation that would improve their lives. Gilman spends much energy in *Women and Economics* arguing for cooperative householding where individual women perform only the duties for which they are most fit. But Gilman also acknowledges that women spend too much energy competing with one another, blaming this phenomenon on her convic-

tion that "the sex-relation is also an economic relation." Since "the females compete in ornament, and the males select," and "since women are viewed wholly as creatures of sex even by one another," Gilman argues that the sex/economic relation pre-conditions women to be suspicious of and competitive with each other as they vie for the primary means of livelihood: a mate.<sup>53</sup>

Margaret Fuller and Fanny Fern similarly discuss nineteenth-century gender roles as a condition that shapes both cooperative and competitive relationships among women. While Fuller asserts, "I believe that, at present, women are the best helpers of one another,"<sup>54</sup> she also acknowledges that competition among women causes particular problems for lower-class women as they try to emulate the middle class. After her visit to the female inmates at Sing Sing Prison, Fuller concluded that middle-class women share a social responsibility for poverty-stricken women's well-being, and that flaunting wealth through personal ornamentation can lead to vice among poor women, who will steal or resort to prostitution to get such objects that would help them compete in the marriage market.<sup>55</sup> Fanny Fern makes a similar argument in several of her newspaper articles, including "Whose Fault Is It?" After describing a New York City slum and its inhabitants, Fern notes that "there must be horrible blame somewhere for such a state of things on this beautiful island," and wonders what would happen if "the money spent on corporation-dinners, on Fourth of July fireworks, and on public balls, where rivers of champagne are worse than wasted, were laid aside for the cleanliness and purification of these terrible localities which slay more victims than the [Civil] war is doing, and whom nobody thinks of numbering."<sup>56</sup> In other articles, such as "Praise From a Woman" and "Amiable Creatures," Fern, like Fuller, implies that such blame lies at the feet of middle- and upper-class women who are too caught up in petty competitions over material trappings to realize how their conspicuous consumption (to use Thorstein Veblen's phrase<sup>57</sup>) affects the poor women who watch their performances of wealth and social position. Both Fuller and Fern argue for a cooperation among women that reaches across class division and improves the lives of both the middle-class and those in poverty.

In *Weeds*, this undercurrent of competition keeps women from helping each other in a way that will truly change the conditions of their lives, and Judith always looks upon other women's seemingly better circumstances as if across an unbridgeable gap. The women of Scott County may come together in times of trauma or major life events such as deaths and births, but, for instance, Hat never tells Judith her birth control secrets. Near the novel's end, when Hat shares her "triumphant news" that she finally has her own bank account, Judith observes that this "childless woman" is "especially well satisfied

with life and with herself" (307). Perhaps Hat's position as an avid reader of middle-class publications has taught her to protect instead of share the "secrets" of being the kind of modern woman the magazines promote. As a young teenager, Judith goes to work at her Aunt Eppie's large house. Perhaps the wealthiest woman in the county, with "carpets enough to keep the whole house thoroughly padded for at least a quarter century" (64) and a pantry overflowing with the canned fruits of her garden (76), Aunt Eppie is also "niggardly and penurious" (64). She views her relative wealth as a divine reward for her good stewardship and sees the poor tenant farmers as a "thankless an' shiftless" lot who reap what they sow (82). When she condescends to feed her neighbors, she does so to fuel her own sense of piety and imperiousness and to reinforce their position as inferiors. "An air of condescension, too, as from one who confers a favor" (154) characterizes Aunt Maggie's help during Judith's first labor and delivery as she "self-righteously" advises Judith on everything from pregnancy and childbirth to sewing to cooking (156).

When as a young girl she had time to read, Judith notices that books are always about rich people while the poor people who read them are still stuck in the same dull places (120). As an adult she notices photos in the newspaper of the "smug" "society people" even though she is "only mildly stirred by all these pictures of strange people in strange walks of life that she would never tread" (301). And when Lizzie Mae gushes about her new life as an "urban American," living in town with her second husband, Judith is "a bit bewildered" by the details of her sister's middle-class, urban life (325–326). The material circumstances that apparently improved the lives of Hat, Maggie, Eppie, and Lizzie Mae remain out of Judith's reach, but, more importantly, so does the knowledge that would allow Judith to make different choices about her own life. Perhaps because there is simply not enough capital to go around, the women in *Weeds* help each other when times are especially desperate but do not share with each other the skills or strategies necessary to make real and lasting changes in one another's lives. As Gilman notes in *Women and Economics*, it seems that in a "lack of adjustment between the individual and the social interest lies our economic trouble."<sup>58</sup> The women in *Weeds*, as newcomers to the capitalist system, hoard knowledge and resources—both economic and reproductive—that would benefit all the women of Scott County. Gilman's social theories for the emancipation of all mothers break down in the face of the abject spiritual, physical, and financial poverty suffered by the artist-woman Kelley depicts in *Weeds*. Fuller's and Fern's calls for inter-class reform among women do not echo in the hollers of Scott County. For Kelley, women like Judith Pipping are still "working under another will," enslaved and animalized by their reproductive bodies, the capitalist economy, a patriarchal society, and a female culture that competes far more than it cooperates.

**Notes**

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3. Goodman, "Paper Mates: The Sisterhood of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Edith Summers Kelley," in *The Mixed Legacy of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, eds. Catherine J. Golden and Joanna Schneider Zangrando (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 160–71; 162.
4. Edith Summers Kelley, "Helicon Hall: An Experiment in Living," 1934, Kelley Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern University Illinois Carbondale, 12.
5. *Ibid.*, 2.
6. Allison Berg, "Hard Labor: Edith Summers Kelley's *Weeds* and the Language of Eugenics," in *Mothering the Race: Women's Narratives on Reproduction, 1890–1930* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2002), 78–102; 90.
7. Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 2.
8. *Ibid.*, 15–6.
9. *Ibid.*, 4.
10. *Ibid.*, 10–1.
11. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* [1898] (New York: Dover, 1998), 94.
12. *Ibid.*, 121.
13. Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 8.
14. *Ibid.*, 7.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 7, 9.
17. Matthew G. Bruccolli, afterword to *Weeds* by Edith Summers Kelley (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 291–298.
18. Allan Updegraff, Letters to Edith Summers Kelley, Kelley Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
19. Goodman, afterword to *Weeds*, 356–7.
20. *Ibid.*, 359.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 11.
23. Berg, "Hard Labor," 91.
24. Elizabeth Ammons, "Slow Starvation: Hunger and Hatred in Anzia Yezierska, Ellen Glasgow, and Edith Summers Kelley," in *Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn into the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 161–182; 161.
25. Gilman, *Women and Economics*, 3.

26. *Ibid.*, 4.
27. Janet Galligani Casey, "Agrarian Landscapes, the Depression, and Women's Progressive Fiction" in *The Novel and the American Left: Critical Essays on Depression-Era Fiction*, ed. Casey (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 96–117.
28. Dwight B. Billings and Kathleen M. Blee, "Family Strategies in a Subsistence Economy: Beech Creek, Kentucky, 1850–1942," *Sociological Perspectives: Critical Theory* 33.1 (Spring 1990): 63–88; 80.
29. Gilman, *Women and Economics*, 4.
30. *Ibid.*, 9–10.
31. *Ibid.*, 9.
32. *Ibid.*, 19, 38.
33. *Ibid.*, 90.
34. Edith Summers Kelley, "Classy Chicken," no date, Kelley Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern University Illinois Carbondale.
35. Kelley, *Weeds* [1923] (New York: Feminist Press, 1996), 12. Hereafter page numbers cited parenthetically.
36. Charlotte Margolis Goodman, "Widening Perspectives, Narrowing Possibilities: The Trapped Woman in Edith Summers Kelley's *Weeds*," in *Regionalism and the Female Imagination*, ed. Emily Toth (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1985), 93–106; 96.
37. Paula Rabinowitz, *Labor and Desire: Women's Revolutionary Fiction in Depression America* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 1991), 99.
38. Donna Campbell, "'Where are the ladies?' Wharton, Glasgow, and American Women Naturalists," *Studies in American Naturalism* 1.1–2 (Summer–Winter 2006): 152–69; 165.
39. Gilman, *Women and Economics*, 94.
40. Berg, "Hard Labor," 94.
41. Nicole Tonkovich, *Domesticity with a Difference: The Nonfiction of Catharine Beecher, Sarah J. Hale, Fanny Fern, and Margaret Fuller* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 60.
42. *Ibid.*
43. B.W. Capo, "Can This Woman Be Saved? Birth Control and Marriage in Modern American Literature," *Modern Language Studies* 34.1–2 (Spring–Autumn 2004): 28–41
44. Louise Lofilte, Letter to Edith Summers Kelley, Kelley Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern University Illinois Carbondale.
45. Gilman, *Women and Economics*, 119,120.
46. *Ibid.*, 119.
47. Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman, 1890–1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 195.
48. *Ibid.*, 196.
49. *Ibid.*, 197.
50. Dwight B. Billings and Kathleen M. Blee, *The Road to Poverty: The Making of Wealth and Hardship in Appalachia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 160.



51. *Ibid.*, 169.
52. Billings and Blee, "Family Strategies," 83.
53. Gilman, *Women and Economics*, 3, 28, 45..
54. Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* [1843], ed. Larry J. Reynolds (New York: Norton, 1998), 101.
55. *Ibid.*, 86.
56. Fanny Fern, *Ruth Hall and Other Writings*, ed. Joyce W. Warren (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 328.
57. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* [1899] (New York: Dover Thrift, 1994).
58. Gilman, *Women and Economics*, 52.