

“Sound-Minded Women”: Eliza Orme and the Study and Practice of Law in Late-Victorian England

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ABSTRACT

Eliza Orme was the first woman in Britain to earn a degree in law, in 1888 — 34 years before women were called to the bar. Denied admission to the profession, she practiced law unofficially as a conveyancer and patent agent. She fought for women's suffrage and employment, served on Royal Commissions, was a prominent member of the Liberal party, and opposed protective labour legislation for women workers. Orme, an equal-rights feminist whose legal training and political views conditioned her belief that quiet competence would be recognized and valued, gradually became estranged from the contemporary women's movement.

RÉSUMÉ

En 1888, Eliza Orme a été la première femme au Royaume-Uni à obtenir un diplôme en droit, et cela 34 ans avant que les femmes ne soient inscrites au barreau. On lui a refusé l'admission à la profession, mais elle a pratiqué le droit sans autorisation officielle en dressant des actes translatifs de propriété et en agissant comme agente de brevets. Elle a lutté pour le suffrage féminin et l'embauche des femmes, a fait partie de commissions royales, a été une membre importante du parti libéral, et s'est opposée à la législation du travail pour la protection des travailleuses. Une féministe d'égalité des droits, Orme a été conditionnée par sa formation en droit et ses opinions politiques à croire que la compétence discrète serait reconnue et appréciée. Par conséquent, elle s'est détachée graduellement du mouvement féministe contemporain.

In May 1888, just over a century ago, Eliza Orme received her Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of London, the first woman to achieve this distinction. It was of dubious value to her livelihood, as there was no question of a woman being called to the bar or invited to join the Law Society. But Miss Orme was no sweet girl graduate. At thirty-nine, she was at the peak of a very active life in politics, literature and finance. Hers was an extraordinary career by the standards of the late nineteenth century: first British woman to earn a law degree, first woman conveyancer and patent agent, first senior investigator of a Royal Commission composed of women, and a founder of the Women's Liberal Association.

No diary, letters, or other personal papers of Eliza Orme have survived. Instead, information about her life and work may be found in a wide range of public and published sources: books and periodicals, census records and urban directories, and in following up connections with

other prominent people with whom she was associated. The Eliza Orme revealed by these sources was a prominent public figure and a prosperous spinster. As an occasional journalist and lecturer, she offered her acerbic views of contemporary events in a variety of forums. Listeners at her lectures said that “her voice was clear and resonant, and every where heard with ease,” and that she could be both sarcastic and touching. And Orme must have been a popular guest at the dinner-parties of the nineties: a well-off, opinionated, well-connected middle-aged woman of formidable competence. Such, at least, was George Gissing's impression when they were introduced by their publishers in 1894 and she smoked a cigar with the gentlemen. Beatrice and Sidney Webb's correspondence indicates that they found her to be a formidable political opponent, rating her as equal in importance to Millicent Garrett Fawcett. And George Bernard Shaw used her as a model when he created the character of a prosperous independent professional woman.¹

Her literary and political connections are only part of the evidence for Orme's importance, and a reminder that graduates in law often use their degree as the starting point for a public career outside of traditional legal practice. In the late-Victorian London society where she was so well known, her ideas about gender and social policy represented a distinct alternative to those of her colleagues in the contemporary women's movement. Her rigorous professional training in law and political theory was manifested in a *laissez-faire* approach to social questions, such as protective labour legislation for women workers, and an assumption that justice would prevail as soon as the wrongs of women were pointed out to legislators and policy makers. But as a woman proposing to enter the most masculine of professions, she experienced injustice and discrimination in her own life, and observed it in the lives of others. This juxtaposition of intellectual commitment with personal experience meant that she challenged many of the assumptions of her contemporaries in the movement for women's suffrage, education and employment opportunities.

Her own articulation of this difference of opinion was expressed in an article for *The Examiner* in 1874. Eliza Orme distinguished between "strong-minded" and "sound-minded" women: "We have often felt," she declared,

the want of a word to express the opposite of a weak-minded woman. "Strong-minded" unfortunately suggests a host of weaknesses of which a very typical one is that peculiar taste which a few women have for trying to dress like men. The women who have been driven into notoriety by the refusal of just and moderate recognition, and those who try to enliven the dullness of a purposeless life by being uselessly eccentric, are generally called strong-minded. Society has adopted the word to describe the abnormal result of its own over-restrictions. How, then, can we speak of women who can take a journey by railway without an escort, who can stand by a friend through a surgical operation, and who yet wear ordinary bonnets and carry medium-sized umbrellas? *The Saturday Review* gives us exactly the right expression when it speaks of "sound-minded women." The word explains itself.²

Despite her "first woman to" status in the very significant area of the academic study of law, and despite her literary and political career, Eliza Orme has been driven not into notoriety but into oblivion. By examining her life and work, along with her colleagues among the women law students, it is possible to compare their approach with those strong-minded women who were "driven into notoriety" (and subsequently into women's history) when they were refused "just and moderate recognition" in the pro-

fessions and at the ballot box. Orme preferred to be seen as a sound-minded woman, seeking equality without notoriety. An understanding of her ideas and of the way she lived her life permits us to consider her responses to the "abnormal results of [society's] over-restrictions" and to see how she and the others who studied and practiced law differed from their better-known sisters.

Orme was born on December 25, 1848, at her family's large comfortable home near Regent's Park in London. Her father was a distiller and her mother had been governess to Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Her aunt Emily was the wife of Coventry Patmore, and the original angel in the house.³ In addition to its angel, the house was full of artists and intellectuals. David Masson, the first professor of English literature at University College London, was a frequent visitor, who moved in after his marriage with the eldest daughter Rosaline. Masson introduced his friends Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill into the Orme household, where he wrote his biography of Milton in a "study looking out on the lime-trees." Julia Orme, the second daughter, married Henry Bastian, a physician and scientist who taught at University College London where Eliza was to study.⁴ Eliza Orme grew up in a cultured and comfortable home, among women as well as men who discussed science and politics, art and literature.

Both Rosaline and Eliza Orme, and one other sister, attended Bedford College for Women, one of the first two institutions for girls' higher education. This fact suggests that their parents must have felt a strong commitment to the education of daughters. The Orme girls' experience of education, unlike that of contemporary boys, was likely more intellectual than social. In those early days — the school had been founded as the Ladies' College, Bedford Square, in 1849 — there was little opportunity for collegiality. Margaret Tuke observes in her *History* that there was "no study, no common-room, no dining-room, no general meetingplace" and that in fact "the majority of students attended very few lectures in the course of the week."⁵

Eliza, aged twenty-two, came to University College London in 1871, the year when lecturers first addressed mixed audiences of men and women students, although women's degrees were not granted until 1878. She took awards and scholarships in Political Economy, Jurisprudence, and Roman Law. In 1880, she passed with honours the first of two examinations for the University of London Bachelor of Laws degree.⁶ She wrote later with affectionate respect about three of the professors, whose influence must have been strong: John Elliott Cairnes and Leonard

Courtney, the political economists, and W.A. Hunter, the barrister-politician.⁷ All these men were Liberals, enthusiastic proponents of *laissez-faire* ideas and Benthamite legal reform. And all were public supporters of women's suffrage and higher education.

Their student must have experienced intellectual challenge, but most likely in a difficult social environment, where her mere presence was a permanent public issue. Women were allowed in the lecture-room but excluded from the debating society and other social aspects of UCL student life. Orme's response was a drive to excel, to prove that a woman could function in each disputed setting, and then to request inclusion as a matter of equal rights. She consistently opposed discrimination, writing articles in *The Examiner* about the advisability of granting women's degrees when she was herself engaged in a program of study at an institution that was hesitating to grant them.⁸

A university degree, however, was only a minor hurdle in the way of women's ambition to practice law. Even with the LL.B. in hand, they would still be nowhere near to becoming lawyers, either barristers or solicitors. Women could not be called to the bar because they were refused admission to the Inns of Court. The fact that university courses and later degrees were open to women did not affect the requirements of the profession. Many barristers held the LL.B. in addition to their Inn of Court connection, but it was the latter that was indispensable and that excluded women until 1922. In legal as well as in popular periodicals, the notion of "Portias" appearing in court was ridiculed regularly. Women lawyers would seduce judge and jury with their charms, or be shocked by the impropriety of medical or sexual evidence, and in any case would exercise "feminine illogic." And solicitors, who had reformed their profession in 1825 by forming the Law Society, refused to admit women to this professional body until 1923. When the Law Society of Upper Canada admitted Clara Brett Martin as a student in 1892, the *Solicitor's Journal* expressed relief that in England, "We have not yet arrived at this advanced state of civilization."⁹

Typically, women who chose the legal professions encountered hostility, humiliation and discrimination. It was 1922, thirty-four years after Eliza Orme's graduation, before Ivy Williams was called to the English bar. The impetus for change was the Sex Disqualification Removal Act of 1919, which resulted from the social upheavals attendant on the first world war. The first woman lawyer in the British Empire was Clara Brett Martin, called to the Ontario bar in Canada in 1897. She too encountered serious difficulties, and like Eliza Orme found herself

working as a solicitor rather than in the courtroom, where she learned that her gender was apt to prejudice the cases of her clients. In the United States, women had begun to breach the state bars and the universities in 1869. Significantly, these early and arduous breakthroughs came in the western states, for the legal style of the eastern bar, based as it was on British practice, had given way to more pragmatic forms. No such atmosphere prevailed in the New England states and the Ivy League law schools, and still less in London and its Inns of Court.¹⁰

The existence of institutionalized discrimination only underlines the courage of those who organized themselves in campaigns to break down the barriers. In 1873, there was a petition to the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, one of the Inns of Court where men prepared to be called to the bar. Signed by "Maria G. Grey and others," in fact by ninety-two "ladies," this was a request for admission to lectures, which was rejected out of hand. Maria Grey was the founder of the Women's Educational Union, and was very much involved in the education of girls.¹¹ The evidence for this agitation is very scanty, but it was likely more of a political gesture on the part of educational reformers than a practical plan to begin the systematic study of law.

The same year, Eliza Orme was at Lincoln's Inn herself, apprenticing in the chambers of a sympathetic barrister, and considering the advisability, not of applying to attend lectures, but of asking to be admitted to the Inn's ranks of conveyancers. She described her experience, many years later, in an interview with a legal periodical.

Acting under the advice of John Stuart Mill, Professor [John] Westlake, and Mr. Leonard Courtney, ... I began reading in the chambers of Mr. Savill Vaizey ... [at Lincoln's Inn] my intention being to practise as a conveyancer. ... It was my idea to ask the Benchers of one of the Inns to admit me to the ranks of conveyancers under the Bar. Mr. Leonard Courtney, I think, suggested the idea to me. But private inquiries I made compelled me to realise that there was no chance of such an application being successful, and I went on quietly working without making any further effort to carry out my idea. Perhaps I ought to have been more persistent.¹²

Orme's mature advice, in 1904 at the age of fifty-five, to young women seeking admission to legal careers was that "a number of women, acting in concert, should apply to the Benchers for admission as conveyancers under the Bar." But in the harsher climate of twenty-five years earlier, she had acted alone. Unlike Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Sophia Jex Blake, in their campaign to be admit-

ted to the medical profession, she had apparently not gathered around herself a group of feminist supporters.¹³

When individual action failed, she settled for a respectable position of service to the profession that had rejected her. In the absence of private papers, it is impossible to evaluate what happened to make her decide to give up. All we know is that this person whose intellect, education, social background and political interests would have rated a seat in Parliament, a university chair, or the Bench had she been male, served instead as junior legal counsel for properly qualified principals. She told the *Law Journal*:

I "devilled" for about a dozen conveyancing counsel, who kept me busily employed on drafts they wanted done in a hurry, and for twenty-five years I found it both an interesting and profitable employment. ... I worked, of course, under the shadow of the counsel who sent me the work, and was quite free, therefore, from any interference by the Benchers.

This kind of injustice was being challenged by Orme's contemporaries in medicine and other fields. The inquiries of Garrett Anderson and Jex Blake into admission to the medical profession did not divert them into nursing. But law was more difficult. It lacked the appeal of medicine to images of "woman as healer;" there was no precedent of earlier participation like midwifery, and thus little impetus for a social movement of protest against exclusion.¹⁴ Eliza Orme's interests were in law and politics, not in medicine, and she pursued them within the constraints that existed. Orme used her office in Chancery Lane to earn a living, enjoy "interesting and profitable" work, and also as a stepping-stone to a quasi-political career.

She opened her first set of chambers with a partner in late 1875. Mary Richardson had begun studying in the Faculty of Law at University College London the same year. The *Englishwoman's Review (EWR)*, journal of record for the contemporary women's movement, announced the event with pride: "The first step has been taken towards opening the second of the learned professions to women. ... We are told that although this step has been so recently taken, much business is already confided to their hands." Editor Jessie Boucherett, in her review of the year 1875, reflected that

there is nothing unfeminine in drawing conveyances, settlements, or wills, or even declarations, pleas, or rejoinders, and it is not probable that the same spirit of antagonism towards the efforts of women will be roused in the Legal, as has been shown in the sister learned profession. We may have our Portias yet at the English bar, and the thorough legal knowledge which

these ladies possess entitle [*sic*] them to full reliance, though it may be long before they acquire the right to add any legal initials to their names.

Eliza Orme and Mary Richardson must have been a competent and efficient partnership. They created a place for themselves in the largely masculine business world, somewhere between the assured professionalism of men lawyers and the personal-service stance of the increasing ranks of female clerks and typists. The partners advertised themselves as conveyancers and as patent agents. Conveyancing, or the paperwork involved in property transactions, was not then limited to persons qualified as solicitors. In Orme's words, she and Richardson "assist[ed] certain learned gentlemen in Lincoln's Inn in the preparation of wills, settlements, mortgages and other documents." Michael Birks observed in *Gentlemen of the Law* that the conveyancing business, by the late nineteenth century, had become more lucrative than earlier. It involved "the day-to-day management of legal business. ... In fact [the solicitor took care] of the legal formalities relating to business transactions generally." The "learned gentlemen" were presumably barristers and solicitors who sympathised with women's professional aspirations. The second branch of their practice, patent agency, required the ability to manage complex and precise documents. The 1883 Patent Act, significantly, had made patent registration a more complex process than earlier, but had not limited it by specialized qualifications.¹⁵ Both of these subordinate legal services were in demand and profitable.

The partners were also the first two women to be directors of a building society. These were important financial institutions concerned with mortgage lending. By 1875, according to urban historian H.J. Dyos: "The main business of the building societies now became the advance of money to house purchasers on the security of mortgages. At the same time, many societies began to make substantial advances to builders for the purpose of financing building operations themselves."¹⁶ As we shall see, Orme drew upon her financial expertise when she advised women about promoting their own financial independence.

Despite their successful entry into the realm of solicitors, it is important to remember that Orme and Richardson existed on the fringes of their chosen profession. The isolation that had marked their experience of education at school and at college persisted into their later careers. It was difficult to pursue an interest in politics, for example, when they were excluded from clubs, political parties and professional bodies. There were few institutions in late-Victorian London where a middle-class spinster could

become a public figure, or even meet her colleagues to develop networks of professional and political relationships.

In their individual efforts to establish careers in the legal profession, Orme and Richardson did not ignore the disabilities of other members of their sex. Both were involved in the London National Society for Women's Suffrage, and Orme was one of two joint Honourary Secretaries until 1873 and later served on the Executive Committee. She spoke often at meetings in favour of extending the parliamentary franchise to women. They both also sat on the Provisional Executive Committee of an association "to promote women's knowledge of law, and to consider the abilities and disabilities of women as to the practice of law in any of its branches." W.A. Hunter, their former professor of Roman Law, was among the members. When Ray Strachey wrote her history of the women's movement in 1928, *The Cause*, the advertisements for this committee were the only evidence she could find for female attempts to be lawyers, but as she said, "it made no headway at all."¹⁷

No headway at all, not directly. However, its members were establishing for themselves reputations for outspoken but reliable views on a wide range of subjects, including the ability of women to handle intellectual work. In *Longman's Magazine* in 1886, a Dr. Benjamin Richardson published a rather pompous article on how women, if they were to enter the professions, would not only be unfitted for their childbearing function, but would also be forced to adopt some alternative style of dress. Eliza Orme published "A Reply" in the next issue, asking readers in her practical way:

Why should it be more necessary for women to discard petticoats than for barristers to discard wigs? Petticoats are a slight incumbrance if the wearer desires to walk quickly, and are troublesome if she is out of doors in wet weather. Wigs are extremely irksome, and even unhealthy, when worn in a heated court of justice, and during the performance of highly intellectual work. If our judges and counsel are to be forgiven the little weakness of preferring fashion to comfort, the same leniency may be extended to self-supporting women of the educated classes.¹⁸

If Eliza Orme was not allowed to take on barristers in the courtroom, she was quite confident about mocking them in her journalism.

Orme's record in lectures and debates also suggests that she would have been articulate and effective in the court-

room or in Parliament. She spoke seven times in ten years to the Sunday Lecture Society, an institution that attracted scientists and politicians of note. The Society's program combined public education with a challenge to Sabbatarianism.¹⁹ On April 18, 1880, Eliza Orme spoke on "Free Trade in Education." According to a syllabus prepared by the Society, Orme articulated the principles of *laissez-faire* individualism, in the context of a manifesto of the National Union of Elementary Teachers demanding protection of their members from the competition of untrained amateurs.²⁰

She lectured in 1881 on the "Guardianship of Children," a subject she had encountered in her legal practice.²¹ Orme's 1882 lecture topic was "What shall we do with our criminal and neglected children?" The following year she spoke on "Religious liberty: Do we possess it in England?" The Bradlaugh debate over admission of an atheist to Parliament was a public issue, and her mentor W.A. Hunter was a supporter of Bradlaugh. In March 1886, in the teeth of Fabian and "new liberal" ideas about government intervention to solve social and economic problems, Orme lectured under the title "Are We Free? A Protest Against Over-legislation and State Socialism."

Other institutions now open to women's political interest were the London School Board and local Borough Councils. Women began to be elected to the Board as soon as it was formed, in 1870; they worked to promote issues of interest to women and often had difficulty in getting their concerns addressed. Mary Richardson succeeded in being elected to the London School Board, where she served from 1879 to 1885. The editor of the *Englishwoman's Review* observed that "Miss Richardson's legal experience (for she is one of the ladies who successfully studied some branches of law) will probably be very useful to her in learning the duties of the School Board."²²

At some point after Mary Richardson left the office, in the mid-eighties, Orme entered into partnership with another law graduate, Reina Emily Lawrence. Lawrence also remained single, living with her parents in a Hampstead home not far from the Orme family. Like Mary Richardson, she was active in local politics. She promoted the reform of the public swimming baths and, in 1908, she was elected to the Hampstead Borough Council.²³ Like Eliza Orme, both Richardson and Lawrence built upon their law degrees to establish careers in public service.

But municipal councils were presumably not enough of a challenge for their ambitious partner. Eliza Orme's interests were centred on party politics at the national

level. In 1885, she was Honourary Secretary of a Women's Political League. The League's objects, she said, were "to rouse women to a more living interest in public affairs, to employ them as canvassers for parliamentary candidates, and to secure the election of capable women on the executive councils of political associations." The League had apparently confronted the question of women's suffrage, and decided to sidestep it. Orme said that the members would judge a parliamentary candidate "[on] the broad lines of party principle ... rather than by his devotion to any particular question touching the immediate interests of women, be it suffrage or any other." A more ardent suffragist objected to the League's priorities, and Orme retorted by asking, "What would be more likely to bring about a general recognition of women's full rights as citizens than the fact that they were both able and willing to work side by side with men in public affairs?"

For Eliza Orme, politics meant the Liberal Party, the party of her mentors Leonard Courtney and John Westlake, and the party of classical political economy, whose ideas she had been taught to embrace.²⁴ Orme was also involved in the newly formed Women's Liberal Federation, speaking in Chelsea in June 1886 on "How women can best assist the Liberal cause." When she was awarded the LL.B. by the University of London in May 1888, the degree appears to have established her status as a public figure and professional expert. The same month she gave a "valuable address" to the Women's Liberal Association for the Borough of Deptford. And, starting in November, she edited a newspaper, the *Women's Gazette and Weekly News*. The paper, announced the *EWR*, "has a direct political bias and aims at being the organ of the Women's Liberal Federation ... Its motto is 'Liberty, Justice, Humanity,'; and it promises to give its attention to all questions affecting the social well-being and political position of women." Meanwhile, she also shared her skills with others in a more direct way, holding classes in Debating and Public Speaking on Saturdays for ladies.²⁵

Orme got involved in another cause that many progressive Liberals espoused when she joined the Proportional Representation Society circa 1890, serving as their Honorary Secretary from her new office at Dane's Inn. Other Liberals interested in a reform of the system of parliamentary representation were her mentors John Westlake and Leonard Courtney, John Lubbock, Albert Grey and Thomas Hare.

Eliza Orme was a Liberal at a difficult and contentious time for the party, when it was being split into two factions by Gladstone's decision in 1886 to promote Home

Rule for Ireland. Some of the men with whom she had been most closely associated, notably Leonard Courtney, dissented from Gladstone's view and formed a Liberal Unionist party. In the Conservative government formed by the Marquess of Salisbury in the same year, Courtney was Chairman of Committees. The Liberal Unionists, under the leadership of the sixth Duke of Devonshire, held the balance of power in Salisbury's government and used their clout cautiously to influence the social questions that interested them.

One such question was the formation of a Royal Commission on Labour. There had been controversy about a major strike at the London docks. As a result, the Conservative government, with Liberal Unionist support, began to investigate working conditions in several industries. Apparently as an afterthought, it was decided in 1892 to investigate also the situation of working women, and Leonard Courtney was entrusted with selecting the appropriate Lady Assistant Commissioners. He chose Eliza Orme to head up a group of four women investigators, selecting her over Beatrice Potter, who was developing a reputation as an expert on women's work. But Potter, just about to marry Sidney Webb, was beginning to be identified as a socialist and supporter of cooperatives and trades unions.

By contrast, Orme's qualifications must have seemed ideal to Courtney.²⁶ He knew how she had handled her work as his student, and her tentative application to the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn. She was, moreover, a prominent member of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, an organization that attempted to open new areas of work to women, and to prevent closing any field by protective legislation. But she did not favour trade unionism. In a Sunday lecture in November 1888 on "Trades Unionism for Women: with reference to the recent strike of the match girls," she had discussed the July strike by employees of Bryant and May, which had received a great deal of sympathetic publicity, clearly stating her opposition to women's trade unions. Orme took the view that a trade union would really be better constituted as a benefit society. She began by assuming that married women of the working class did not work for wages unless they had to, and then only casually. In this situation,

it was stupid to make women's trade unions like men's, as stupid as it would be to give a horse a pair of shoes because human beings walked on two legs. We must recognise the difference and mould women's unions to suit their requirements. ... The common idea of a union was to form a powerful combination of workers

...[but] if women did not regard the trade in which they were engaged as the permanent work of their lives, the scheme must be modified. They ought to have the power of withdrawing the money they had paid in if they wished to leave the trade, just as they would be able to withdraw it from a Savings' Bank.²⁷

Whatever she might say about conditions of women's employment, there seemed to be little danger that Orme would advise her protégés to combine with the powerful labour movement. In her view, they did not need improved wages or working conditions, as much as an opportunity to amass some private capital.

The Royal Commission not only investigated the condition of working-class women, but also set a precedent for the employment of middle-class women in government service, not only in senior positions but as clerks. Its report has been described as "one of the most valuable, frequently cited, reports on women."²⁸ Orme worked with three sub-commissioners. Clara Collet had been a teacher and subsequently worked with Beatrice Potter as investigator for Charles Booth's study of *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Later, she became Labour Correspondent with the Board of Trade, where she worked tirelessly as chief investigator for women's industries. May Abraham was then secretary to Lady Dilke, President of the Women's Trade Union League. Abraham built upon her experience to become England's first woman factory inspector. The Scottish Commissioner Margaret Irwin later held the same position in her country, and wrote about employment and housing issues.²⁹

Orme's three particular topics were the conditions of work of barmaids and waitresses employed in hotels, restaurants, and public-houses; the condition of women in the nail, chain, and bolt making industries in the Black Country; and finally, women's work in Ireland. Her reports indicate a firm conviction that women should not be excluded from any workplace, no matter how unpleasant the surroundings.³⁰ This view was undoubtedly unpopular with many other women who were active in political and social work. There were many who were prepared to exclude women from very heavy work like blacksmithing, and from long hours such as those worked by barmaids, in order to protect their health.

When a Liberal government was elected in 1894, Orme's friends were even better able to assist her career. She was selected as the one female member of a Departmental Committee on Prison Conditions, chaired by Herbert Gladstone. The report of this Committee was a profoundly important document in contemporary and mod-

ern social policy. Christopher Harding writes that it "marked a crucial stage in the evolution of penal policy" in Britain; as a result of the report, "the prison system was in a position to be absorbed into a 'penal-welfare' structure, which was to become a dominant means of social control exercised by the state for the first three-quarters of the twentieth century."³¹

Orme published her views on prisons for a popular audience in an article for the prestigious *Fortnightly Review* three years later, when the report was coming before Parliament in the form of a Prison Bill. "The real fact," she argued, "is, that women, instead of being reformed by prison treatment, are dragged down by it, and that our system, planned carefully, with the best intentions, is really calculated to manufacture habitual criminals and drunkards." Orme's solicitude extended to the working conditions of the matrons and warders. Matrons, as professional women, needed status, respect and a reduction in stress. "If the warders are tired in body and mind they cannot exercise a good influence on the prisoners. Short hours, comfortable feeding and housing, and plenty of wholesome recreation, are the conditions most likely to attract and keep warders of the right sort with sunny tempers, bright hopeful spirits, and bubbling over with originality." She regarded many of the policies in effect in prisons as "examples of the hideous mistakes which may be made by kindly-disposed men if they turn a deaf ear to female criticism."³²

The Liberal government of W.E. Gladstone resigned in July of 1895 and the Conservatives were in for a long term of ten years. Perhaps it needs no more than this situation to explain Eliza Orme's disappearance from government service, since she was so clearly associated with the Liberal party. It seems ironic that Orme was cast by the Liberals as an expert on women's issues, since she had been trained and practiced in such unfeminine fields as jurisprudence, property law, and patent regulation.

Yet, it makes sense. Men like Leonard Courtney and Herbert Gladstone had access to a person who shared their ideology and assumptions, who had been trained to evaluate evidence objectively and be sceptical of polemic. Yet this person had a unique access, by her gender, to the increasingly troublesome female people who wanted employment protection for themselves and others, improved conditions for women in prison, and even influence in the Liberal party itself. Orme must have hoped to be accepted on equal terms by her male colleagues in politics and the profession. Instead, she was more like a

translator, carrying and explicating messages back and forth across the boundaries between the separate spheres.

But Orme's interests were never confined to the condition of women. She spoke to the Sunday Lecture Society on education, religious liberty and social policy. In 1897, she edited and introduced a book on Indian jurisprudence, *The Trial of Shama Charan Pal: An Illustration of Village Life in Bengal* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1897). The book presented "an insight ... invaluable to those who consider it a duty to know something of the way in which the millions of our fellow-subjects in India are being governed."

The same year, Orme wrote in reply to an article by the journalist Frances Low, called "How Poor Ladies Live," published in the *Nineteenth Century* for March 1897. Low had described harrowingly the plight of distressed elderly gentlewomen, which she blamed on the competition offered by "Girton girls" and others trained to be teachers. She proposed that employers and others contribute to a charitable fund to assist such women. Eliza Orme's opinionated, acerbic and brilliant riposte takes issue with each of Low's points, except the existence of the destitution. Orme starts by questioning the cost of maintaining an idle woman. "Surely the lowest sum to be of any use for the maintenance of an educated woman is £1,000. But for less than a third of that sum a girl can be trained in a ladies' college for a useful breadwinning employment, and for much less than that if she takes prizes or scholarships." Not that "the Girton girl must be a teacher"; she might learn typewriting: "A thoroughly good typewriter, with a tolerable knowledge of shorthand and the ordinary education of a college graduate, has no difficulty in earning an excellent income, often with very interesting surroundings."

In Orme's view, the problem is that working women of the middle class have no incentive to save money, because they expect to be taken care of by a husband. The remedy is to "make them provident." Instead of the charitable scheme (in Spencer's phrase, it would be "fostering the feebles"), she proposes an insurance scheme, "a women's benefit society ... with full acceptance of the peculiarities of women's economic position." Orme's ideal women would be "provident" if their savings could be banked in a financial institution like a building society against the probability of marriage. As we have seen, she advised a similar incentive to financial independence for working-class women who combined in a trades union.

Orme knew that property was power, which could be manipulated to a woman's advantage if she knew how, even in the confines of Victorian marriage. But how much better could she exercise that power as a well-paid spinster?

Let us suppose that [a young woman] enters some paying profession, and earns perhaps £500 a year. She spends her time in doing what her talents specially fit her for, and in this way is a direct benefit to those for whom she works. Her time being thus employed she pays others to make her bonnets, her dresses, and her other clothing, and, being well off, she pays well for good work. She has a house of her own with servants, one of whom is very probably a lady help or companion housekeeper, whose domestic tastes make the position pleasant as well as profitable. And very likely she helps a younger sister or niece to enter upon a life as useful and honourable as her own. The fallacy of supposing a woman keeps other women in employment by living economically on a small income instead of earning and spending a larger one has been so often exposed that an apology seems needed for repeating the argument.³³

This "Poor Ladies" article discussing women of Orme's own social class and marital status is the most compelling of her writings, and apparently the most autobiographical. She was then living in her own house, with her sister as housekeeper.³⁴ She had experience with building societies and probably employed "typewriters" in her conveancing business.

Her next book was a full-length biography whose subject was Lady Fry of Darlington, a married woman of the new aristocracy. Sophia Fry was a founder of the Women's Liberal Federation (WLF), apparently a paragon of Liberal womanhood, and her biography was praised in the *Athenaeum*: "The story is told concisely and effectively, and with commendable reticence about the domestic affairs (which do not concern outsiders) of 'one who had lived so much within her own home.'"³⁵ In the absence of an appropriate speaker at meetings of the Women's National Liberal Association (WNLA), it was recommended that "a book such as Miss Orme's *Life of Lady Fry* might be read while the members knitted."³⁶ This diversion of the Liberal ladies is also, however, a consummately skillful piece of political rhetoric, that urges WNLA members to put their Liberalism ahead of their involvement in the franchise struggle.

Eliza Orme and Sophia Fry were among the dissident group that left the WLF and formed the Women's National Liberal Association. In Orme's words, "the great Liberal [women's] organization ... was not available for

the promotion of reforms about which Liberals are in disagreement, and which are in fact not part of an accepted party programme." While WLF women struggled to make the suffrage issue part of their party's program, WNLA members supported the Liberals in other ways — by canvassing at elections and organizing education and fund raising. In her article about the two competing organizations, Claire Hirshfield found that "the WNLA was linked with official liberalism, and especially with the great business component of the party." The wives of M.P.s, including Catharine Gladstone, were mostly associated with this faction. But it is important to recognize that individual WNLA members were not opposed to women's suffrage; for Eliza Orme and her colleagues, it was a question of priorities and strategies, and their interest in women's suffrage took its place among other social and constitutional policies.

Orme was fifty years old when she published *Lady Fry* in 1898. It is not clear when she retired from public work but, in her *Law Journal* interview in 1904, she looks back on twenty-five years of practice. However, she was to live until 1937 and age eighty-eight. This may be part of the explanation of why she has not been written into the record of the contemporary women's movement. By the time she died, Eliza Orme had been left behind by events, and there was no one to write or publish her obituary. But the accident of longevity is not the whole answer to the question about how she was significant, and why the first woman to be awarded a degree in law has been forgotten until now.

The answer lies in an understanding of the nature of late-nineteenth century feminism and the women's movement. Research on those tumultuous decades has been undertaken only in the last few years and, despite its great burgeoning, there is clearly much more to be done. Historians are discovering that analyses that divided the movement into pairs of opposing forces are beginning to break down. We used to speak of the "moderate" suffragists, led by Millicent Garrett Fawcett, as opposed to the "militants," led by the Pankhursts. But militancy was only a factor in the years between 1912 and 1914, and it was not associated with political radicalism.³⁷

A more compelling distinction is to contrast the "equal rights" or "humanistic" feminism of those who followed Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill in saying that women, as human beings, had the same rights as men, with "essentialist" or "maternal" feminism. This latter characterization refers to the many contemporary feminists who believed that women's claim to a wider public

role rested not on equality, but on their moral superiority. Women, they believed, were especially suited to nurture and counsel, not just in the home, but in the social realm and in national politics. This view has been upheld as a feminist strategy, a "manipulation" of the "fundamental values" of Victorian culture embodied in the ideology of separate spheres for males and for females. Philippa Levine has shown in *Victorian Feminism* how "the sentiment of moral superiority became the leading edge of many women's rights campaigns." She argues that an overemphasis upon the campaign for women's suffrage has obscured the strong tradition of protest in other areas.³⁸ Levine is correct but her chosen emphasis obscures, in its turn, the experience of women who rejected arguments for sexual difference and female superiority, and who believed passionately in the equality, both intellectually and morally, of women and men.³⁹ Indeed, Levine's emphasis obscures the experience of women like Eliza Orme and her colleagues among the students and practitioners of law.

Recent feminist historiography has also emphasized collectivities of women, banded together to struggle against a variety of injustices. An exemplary contribution to this work is *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* by Martha Vicinus. These women, however, are independent only of men and marriage. They might better be described as "interdependent women," living and working in community, deriving emotional and political support from the mutuality of their experiences. The communities include college women, nurses, settlement-house workers and members of religious sisterhoods. Similarly, although they were unlikely to live in community, the first women to become medical doctors and their supporters were part of a women's movement determined to justify greater participation by stressing differences, not similarities, between the genders. And the early factory inspectors preferred to protect women from working conditions that were acceptable as industrial norms for men.

The law graduates, by contrast, were determinedly individualistic and rigorously committed, as a consequence of their professional training, to an ideal of equality. They were more likely to believe in the acquired superiority of lawyers and of Liberals than in a concept of innate superiority associated with either gender. In their work on behalf of other women, and in their own lives, their attitude toward discrimination was either to ignore or circumvent it, or to ridicule it. I do not wish to argue that they were right to do this. No doubt their high-handedness led often to misery and frustration, and it may be another

reason for their historical obscurity. But they were not obscure in their own time, and they articulated an alternative, minority argument in the contemporary discourse about the proper role of women in society.

Sound-mindedness meant more than the size of a woman's umbrella. In the lives of women like Eliza Orme, it implied an attitude of independence within the contemporary politics of the feminist movement. Indeed, it did not imply opposition, but a fundamental aversion to the view that women's rights should be claimed on the basis of sexual difference. Orme regarded gender differences as social and economic, not biological and moral. She wanted women to wear petticoats into the law courts, and advised the blacksmith's forge as an alternative to the dressmaker's needle. There is no evidence in her writing that she accepted the idea of sexual difference as a basis for women's claims. On the other hand, nor did she seek to change the structural relations of gender in her own society. She never addressed questions of contraception or child care, and often ridiculed the idea of dress reform. A typical attitude was her hope that by saving a little money before marriage, women could avoid some of the disabilities of the subservience inherent in that institution.

These were empiricist, commonsensical views, based on a belief that women, married or single, could and should work in whatever field they chose. Orme's liberal attitudes failed to account for many of the restrictions that shaped other women's working lives. The freedom to work at a trade or profession would not help a woman enslaved by recurrent pregnancies, or the victim of violence. Orme's approach, moreover, assumed that most women would live out their adult lives in the domestic sphere, that it was a minority of middle-class professionals (mostly spinsters) and working-class providers (mostly married), who would claim the rights she championed. Nevertheless, in a world of ideas where both men and women, and both suffragists and "antis," invoked the language of separate spheres, her opinions represented an important alternative: gender equality achieved through education and work, without either violating the tenets of respectability or adhering to the restrictive assumptions of female moral superiority.

Eliza Orme would be dismayed to know that she was being represented to posterity in terms of her gender. She thought of herself as an educated person, an authoritative expert, prepared to give her opinion on subjects ranging from Home Rule in Ireland to jurisprudence in India. Even her views on women's work and education were offered as if from a distance, as if the restrictions of contemporary society did not apply to Eliza Orme. Two ele-

ments in her life story may be identified as explanations of this attitude. She believed in individualist liberalism, and she studied law. Orme's commitment to political economy shows up in everything she wrote. Even when she came to criticize Herbert Spencer for his views on women, she still accepted his doctrine that the individual should not be controlled by the State.⁴⁰ Other women absorbed a belief in political economy from their reading and from conversation. Few studied it systematically at the feet of a Leonard Courtney or a John Westlake. Even fewer had the opportunity to reinforce their theoretical ideas with practical training and experience in the English justice system. The assumptions about objectivity, justice, and equality implicit in a legal education were the ideas with which Eliza Orme's mind was formed. She used them to achieve dramatic successes in university and, later, in professional and public life.

Although Orme modelled her career choices after those of people in the mainstream of her culture, that is of men, she never escaped her gender. At college, she heard the same lectures, and was influenced by the same ideas, as the male students of her generation. But she did not share the informal part of their political education, the common-room and club life where alliances were made. On two Royal Commissions she was a token woman, required to investigate conditions at the fringes of the larger issues, factories and prisons as experienced by male workers, male inmates, and male warders. But she was also isolated from the women's movement for suffrage, education and employment, the very group whose aims she shared and whose early ambitions she was fulfilling. By the 1890s, that movement had begun to define itself in opposition to the masculine world of career and politics that Eliza Orme sought to enter. Indeed, she found herself doubly excluded; the gender politics of the women's movement were uncongenial to her intellectual approach, and she achieved only limited involvement in her chosen profession, in conditions that must have been experienced not only as demeaning, but also as extraordinarily restrictive.

NOTES

1. *Women's Gazette and Weekly News*, 10 November 1888, p. 31. For Gissing, see Pierre Coustillas (ed.), *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978, p. 353. On their relationship, see my article "George Gissing and Eliza Orme: One of the busiest women living," in preparation. For the Webbs, see Norman MacKenzie (ed.), *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Vol. 1. Apprenticeships 1873-1892*, Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 342, 375-76. For Shaw, see Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw Vol. 1. The Search for Love 1856-1898*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1988, p. 295. The character was Vivie Warren, the cigar-smoking actuary daughter in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893).

2. Eliza Orme, "Sound-Minded Women," *The Examiner*, 1 August 1874, pp. 820-21.
3. Information on the household is from census returns: 1851, 1861, 1871 and 1881. W. Robertson Nicoll and T.J. Wise (eds.), *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1896, p. 377. For the Patmore-Orme connection, see Basil Champneys, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, London, 1900, and William E. Fredeman (ed.), *The P.R.B. Journal. William Michael Rosetti's Diary of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood 1849-1853*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 85.
4. Flora Masson, "David Masson," *University of Edinburgh Journal*, 3, 1929-30, pp. 17-18. See also Jo McMurtry, *English Language, English Literature: The Creation of an Academic Discipline*, London: Archon, 1985. Henry Charlton Bastian (1837-1915), M.A., M.D., F.R.S., was Professor of Pathological Anatomy and of Clinical Medicine in University College London.
5. Margaret J. Tuke, *A History of Bedford College for Women 1849-1937*, London: Oxford University Press, 1939, pp. 282, 278-79.
6. *Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions*, January 1873, p. 94. Hereafter cited as *EWR*. University College London, *Calendar*. For women's education at London, see also H. Hale Bellot, *University College London 1826-1926*, London: University of London Press, 1929, Chapter 10. For women's higher education, see also Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920*, London: Virago, 1985, Chapter 4, and Joan Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*, London: Croom Helm, 1980.
7. For Cairnes and Courtney, see Orme's *Law Journal* interview. For Orme's *DNB* contribution on Hunter, see Gillian Fenwick, *The Contributor's Index to the Dictionary of National Biography 1885-1901*, Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1989.
8. Eliza Orme, "University Degrees for Women," *Examiner*, 16 May 1874, p. 508, and 4 July 1874, pp. 707-08. See also "Sound-Minded Women," cited above.
9. Constance B. Backhouse, "'To Open the Way for Others of my Sex': Clara Brett Martin's Career as Canada's First Woman Lawyer," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 1, 1985, p. 21.
10. For an anecdotal account of women's legal careers in the twentieth century, see Elsie M. Lang, *British Women in the Twentieth Century*, London: T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., 1929, chapter 6, "Women and the Legal Profession." For Canada, see Backhouse, cited above, and D.F. Coyle, "Women in the Legal Profession in Canada," *Women Lawyers Journal* 38, summer 1952, pp. 14-17. For the United States, see Karen Berger Morello, *The Invisible Bar: The Women Lawyer in America*, New York: Random House, 1986, p. 39.
11. Helena Kennedy, "Woman at the Bar," in Robert Hazell (ed.), *The Bar on Trial*, London: Quartet Books, 1978, p. 148. See also Ronald Roxburgh (ed.), *The Records of the Hom. Soc. of Lincoln's Inn: The Black Books Vol. V. 1845-1914*, London: Lincoln's Inn, 1968. The Library of Lincoln's Inn does not have the petition, nor is the event discussed in a biographical study of Maria Grey and her sister, *Liberators of the Female Mind*, by Edward W. Ellsworth, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979. The Law Society also rejected approaches in the 1870s. Michael Birks reports in *Gentlemen of the Law*, London: Stevens and Sons, 1960, p. 276, that "In England the first application to the Law Society on behalf of a woman candidate appears to have been made in 1876 and was refused on grounds of sex."
12. Orme, aged 54 in 1903, was interviewed about her views on women's work in law in *The Law Journal*, 12 December 1903, p. 620. The context for the article was the application by a woman to one of the Inns of Court, Bertha Cave's approach (duly rejected) to Gray's Inn. The journal "invited an expression of opinion from Miss Orme, than whom no woman in England is better qualified to speak on the subject from the woman's point of view." The article was reported in the *EWR*, 15 January 1904, pp. 49-51. At the time of Cave's application and Orme's interview, Ivy Williams, who would be the first Englishwoman called to the bar, in 1922, was graduating from Oxford and declaring her intention to fight in Parliament if necessary for her right to join another Inn of Court, the Inner Temple.
13. Anderson obtained a Paris M.D. in 1870; Jex Blake studied in New York under Elizabeth Blackwell. She founded the London School of Medicine for Women in 1874, and the examining and licensing of women as medical doctors was legalized in 1876.
14. Barbara Caine, "Feminism, Suffrage and the Nineteenth-Century Women's Movement," *Women's Studies International Forum* 5 no. 6, 1982, p. 546. See also Ray Strachey, "The Cause." *A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, London: G. Bell & Sons, 1928, p. 229.
15. *EWR*, November 1875, pp. 510, 533-34; *EWR*, 15 January 1904, pp. 49-51; Birks, 3, p. 229; *EWR*, November 1875, p. 510. The 1883 *Royal Blue Book* lists the partners as conveyancers; *City of London Street Directories* from 1874 to 1889 call them patent agents. For the Patent Act, see Klaus Boehm, *The British Patent System*, Vol. 1, *Administration*, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 30.
16. *EWR*, August 1887. H.J. Dyos, "The Speculative Builders and Developers of Victorian London," in David Cannadine and David Reeder (eds.), *Exploring the Urban Past: Essays in Urban History by H.J. Dyos*, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 168.
17. *EWR*, January 1873, pp. 35-37. Her co-secretary was Mrs. William Burbury. *EWR*, March and July 1878; April 1879; Strachey, p. 229.
18. Eliza Orme, "Women's Work in Creation: A Reply," *Longman's Magazine* 9, December 1886, p. 151; [Sir] Benjamin Ward Richardson, "Women's Work in Creation," *Longman's Magazine* 8, October 1886, pp. 604-19.
19. See *Sunday Lecture Society, Proceedings from 1869 to 1889 and Selections of Lectures*, 3rd (1879), 4th (1886), and 5th (1888).
20. *The Times*, 31 March 1880, p. 9. Orme belonged to the Teachers' Training and Registration Society. She spoke at their annual meeting at the Society of Arts, 17 March 1885 (*EWR*, 15 April 1885, p. 176).
21. *Law Journal*, supra.
22. *EWR*, 15 December 1879, p. 563. Annmarie Turnbull, "'So extremely like parliament': The work of the women members of the London School Board, 1870-1904," in London Feminist History Group, *The Sexual Dynamics of History*, London: Pluto Press, 1973, pp. 120-33. Richardson retired from the London School Board and the law practice in the mid-eighties, apparently suffering from ill health.
23. *EWR*, 15 January 1908. See Patricia Hollis, "Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space," in *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914*, Jane Rendall (ed.), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.
24. For women in Liberal party politics, see, among others, Roger Fulford, *Votes for Women*, London: Faber, 1957; Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain*, London: Croom Helm, 1978; Constance Rover, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain 1866-1914*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967; and Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987.
25. *EWR*, 15 November 1888; 15 February 1889.
26. For Courtney's choice of Orme, see MacKenzie (ed.), p. 342.
27. *EWR*, 15 December 1888.
28. Margaret Barrow, *Women 1870-1928: A Select Guide to Printed and Archival Sources in the United Kingdom*, New York: Mansell, 1981, p. 108. For women clerks, see *The Times*, 12 November 1894, p. 10.
29. For Collet, see Ruth M. Adams, "George Gissing and Clara Collet," *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 11, June 1956, pp. 72-77, and Pierre Coustillas, "Gissing's Correspondence with Clara Collet, M.A., Social Investigator and Reformer," *Gissing Newsletter* 15 no. 1, January 1979, pp. 27-34. For Abraham, see Violet Markham, *May Tennant: A Portrait*, London: Falcon Press, 1949. For Irwin, see *Who Was Who*.
30. Royal Commission on Labour, *The Employment of Women, Reports by Miss Eliza Orme [et al]* (Lady Assistant Commissioners), on the Conditions of Work in Various Industries in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, London: HMSO, 1893. For the Black Coun-

- try report, see Royal Commission on Labour, "Minutes of Evidence Group A," *Sessional Papers, 1892*, Vol. 2, pp. 569-75.
31. Christopher Harding, "'The Inevitable End of a Discredited System'? The Origins of the Gladstone Committee Report on Prisons, 1895," *The Historical Journal* 31, no. 3, 1988, pp. 592, 608. For the report, see Prisons Committee, *Minutes of Evidence taken by the Departmental Committee on Prisons*, London: HMSO, 1895. Orme's original reports are in British Library Manuscript Department, Add. Mss. 46091, Viscount Gladstone Papers, Vol. cvii.
 32. Eliza Orme, "Our Female Criminals," *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 69 o.s., May 1898, pp. 790-96.
 33. Eliza Orme, "How Poor Ladies Live: A Reply," *Nineteenth Century* 242, April 1897, pp. 613-19.
 34. In 1892, the year of the labour commission, both her parents died. Soon afterwards Eliza and Beatrice Orme moved to a house in south London.
 35. Eliza Orme, *Lady Fry of Darlington*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898; *Athenaeum*, 21 May 1898, p. 660.
 36. Claire Hirshfield, "Liberal Women's Organizations and the War Against the Boers, 1899-1902," *Albion* 14, 1982, p. 33.
 37. Sandra Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain 1900-1918*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 4. Holton's work highlights the activities of the democratic suffragists who, unlike Eliza Orme, wanted reform to bring about universal adult suffrage.
 38. Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900*, London: Hutchinson, 1987, p. 13. See also Les Garner, *Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty: Feminist Ideas in the Women's Suffrage Movement 1900-1918*, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984.
 39. The equal rights tradition in feminism has been discussed by Olive Banks, in her useful analysis of the three contributory strains in British and American feminism, which the ideology of equal rights shares with "maternal feminism" and with the evangelical tradition. *Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement*, Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981.
 40. Eliza Orme, "Women's Work," p. 155.

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Two Postcards

I

All that emptiness, stones cast at her
Piling up, until she stood
In the cairn of her silence.

Always scared of words
She wanted to be a rock
Not a tourist, not

Practice *coitus interruptus*.
Then the poison.
She became a pillar

II

In the stone heap, wedged in.
Her mother says: destiny's verdict
Her sister: a moment of despair

A neighbour: egotism
She couldn't cope. For her friend
It was a heroic act.

At Finistère, *finis terrae*
The world's end: one menhir
Face to the moon smiles.

Liliane Welch
Sackville, New Brunswick