

1995 MAASA Presidential Address

***E.T.*, Women's History, and the Problem of Elliot**

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When my youngest daughter was three, she took up a particularly extreme obsession with the movie *E.T.* She was obsessed in the special way that only three-year-olds can be obsessed. Children that age are living proof that our species comes hardwired for ritualistic behavior: the one bowl from which the cereal must be eaten; the one book that is acceptable as bedtime reading. (You may test this hypothesis yourself. Stop any ten parents of small children on a university campus and I would predict that nine of them will be able to recite “Goodnight Moon” verbatim).

But my daughter was three in the 1980s and technology had given rise to new rituals. By the age of three and a half, she had learned to brandish a remote control and hence applied her considerable obsessiveness to particular videos. We did the movie musical *Annie* for about a month, which is exactly 29 days too many to hear “The Sun Will Come Up Tomorrow”; then we did some animated feature about a baby dinosaur, which I remember only as a dreary reptilian version of *Bambi*. And then along came *E.T.* *E.T.*, as you surely recall, was Steven Spielberg’s classic tale of a boy and his alien. The boy, whose name was Elliot, finds and then shelters an extra-terrestrial who has been stranded on earth. It becomes Elliot’s mission to help *E.T.* go home, which of course he does because he’s the hero, though this is not accomplished before our alien has been snatched up by sinister government forces for research purposes. It soon became obvious to me that my

daughter's attachment to E.T. was rather extreme, even for a three-year-old. She played the movie, or pieces of it, so often that at some point I came to understand that she knew the script by heart. She carried around a little E.T. figurine—took it to preschool, ate with it, slept with it clutched in her hand.

And then it got worse. One morning she told me that she was pretty sure that she might find E.T. herself. The next day she told me that if she did, she had decided to tell me. (This was said in hushed tones; she had given a lot of thought to my trustworthiness—Elliot had not told his mother). And then, after about a week of concocting various scenarios for saving the E.T. she intended to find, she came down to breakfast one morning and announced that henceforth and forevermore, she was to be called Elliot. For the better part of two weeks, she refused to answer to any other name, and then, mercifully, it ended the way most things with three-year-olds end. She found something else to be obsessed about.

I was rather taken aback by all of this, but for a long time, I could not quite get hold of what exactly was so troubling. I can't say that I was worried about her "development." I certainly did not find it unreasonable that she asked to be called Elliot rather than by the name of the one girl character in *E.T.*, Elliot's little sister Gertie. Why would she want to imagine herself as Gertie? All Gertie got to do was to witness the adventure, not to actually have it. It was not Gertie who raced through the woods on her bike. It wasn't Gertie who rigged up the radio antenna so E.T. could call home; it wasn't Gertie who helped E.T. escape from the clutches of the government. E.T. never sat in the basket of Gertie's bike, which is to say that, unlike Elliot's, Gertie's bike never flew.

And there it finally was: in the stories we tell, the bikes of the Gerties of this world never do. I have on occasion talked with my students about this episode and asked them to imagine this script with a female hero. And invariably, they think for a bit, looked perplexed, squirm in their seats, and then finally say, "it doesn't quite work, does it?" A pause. And then someone will volunteer that maybe if the girl in question was a tomboy who wore a ball cap, then maybe she AND her best friend (who, on further reflection, everyone imagines as a slight boy with glasses) could have this adventure. My daughter was clearly on to something: if a little girl wants to be the protagonist, she had better be called Elliot.

My observation here is scarcely original. Among the many feminist scholars now probing the subject, Carolyn Heilbrun in particular has made some eloquently pointed remarks about the poverty of imagination that characterizes the stories told about women's lives. In her wonderful 1988 essay, *Writing a Woman's Life*, she notes that virtually all of the stories told about women reduce themselves to variations upon a single plot line: how a woman succeeded (or failed) in her one moment in the spotlight as the star of the courtship drama. It is "this part of a woman's life most constantly and vividly enacted in a myriad of representations," she writes. But once married, a woman's story becomes marginal to the stuff of vivid narrative: her story is over.¹

Certainly, film representations of women's lives stand as a proof-text to Heilbrun's point. But I do not intend here to launch into a feminist diatribe about

Hollywood or popular culture. (Though I confess to being sorely tempted. Another empirical study for your consideration: make a list of all the children's movies released last summer—for that matter, any kind of movie—and you tell me: how many do you count with a female protagonist?) But no matter how justified, that sort of diatribe is rather beside the point. The intractable issue remains: how do we tell a story if we cannot imagine it? And that issue has for me some rather messy implications for the writing of history, particularly the writing of women's history.

I gather that once upon a time, it was possible for a practicing historian to suppose that imagining stories was a problem left to fiction writers. Historians dealt only in the currency of hard fact, and facts, as the phrase went, spoke for themselves. But because narrative is the primary—not the only, but the primary—syntax that historians use to express their understandings, the facts spoke for themselves in narratives, and an uncannily familiar set of stories it was indeed. History was chock full of grown up Elliots: great men who had great adventures and who did great things. Variations were supplied by national idiosyncracies. American history, for example, tended to come off rather like one of those nineteenth century newspaper serials: reality marched forward in four year episodes—the age of whatever president followed by the age of the next one and so on and so forth, interrupted only by special editions devoted to cataclysm—a war here, a depression there—cataclysms which, it goes without saying, were confronted by stouthearted men.

Given this understanding of history, the phrase “women's history” was an oxymoron. In 1974, the sociologist Elizabeth Janeway put it quite succinctly:

. . . the scholarly historians who deride the idea of a special history of women are quite correct. Women have not been trend-setters, activists or protagonists in the drama of great events. If they turn up in the middle of some climactic scene, they are likely to have gotten there by the accident of marriage or, occasionally, of birth.²

Twenty years later, that sort of statement would get Professor Janeway hooted out of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians. But to be fair, I've seen her at that very conference, and I take it to mean that she has recanted. But to be even fairer, the truth is that it was not so much the case that Professor Janeway was wrong about women's history as it was that she had a fairly limited, albeit quite common, idea of history. That conventional notion, still held by a good many people and by all freshmen, is that history is made by the Elliots of this world. As for the Gerties—well, they are the female relatives of the Elliots. They witness the history; they do not make it.

Until recently, I confess that I secretly held a Whiggish version of that problem. Something on the order of: well, we used to think that about history and

some of us still do, but now at least some of us know better. All we have to do is to take seriously Carl Becker's very old definition of history as the memory of things said and done, and then we are at last free to write an almost infinite number of historical narratives, including a good many about women. And for three decades, the burgeoning field of women's history has done just that—offered up an amazing array of narratives about women. And golly, ain't progress great?

Well, sort of. Because what did not get left behind in the wake of all this progress is that problem about the limited range of the narrative lines we seem to be able to imagine about women. Allow me to cite one recent example. In her new book, *No Ordinary Time*, Doris Kearns Goodwin writes about the Roosevelt White House during World War II. If you have read the book, or seen excerpts from it, then you know what a delicious piece of political history it is. What is unique and admirable about Goodwin's treatment of the subject is that the White House she portrays is dominated by two extraordinary presences, by Franklin *and* by Eleanor. Her tale, in short, hinges upon one of the most extraordinary political partnerships of this or any other time. And herein lies the rub: Eleanor and Franklin shared a political marriage, but (to underscore the obvious), that marriage was built upon a famously troubled literal one. The challenge for any historian writing of these two is whether Eleanor's life can be imagined in terms other than the familiar "woman scorned" narrative. In her review of *No Ordinary Time*, Blanche Wiesen Cook concludes that on this point, Goodwin fails. "Too often," Cook writes, "she [Goodwin] presents Eleanor as merely a pestering thorn in the side of a brilliant politician."

When it comes to E.R., Goodwin has reified the Victorian scold: unattractive, unhappy, insecure. No wonder FDR turned to other women: He was married to Eleanor. All the traditional myths so easily fortified: Marital troubles are the woman's fault. As for Franklin's infidelities: 'The hidden springs of Eleanor's insecurity had disrupted her marriage from the very beginning.'

Cook concludes: "It is as if the last decades of scholarship by and about women, from Virginia Woolf to Carolyn Heilbrun, have taught us nothing about writing a woman's life."³

I fear that Cook is right: the story we imagine about a woman more often than not is the old one: did she marry well? If she did, the story is over. And if she did not, then our convenient narrative provides a readymade explanation for all her subsequent behavior: whatever she did, she did because she was disappointed in love.

What is the alternative to this prefabricated narrative? Historians of women—and Blanche Cook in her work on Eleanor Roosevelt is among them—have had to take seriously the ideas, the achievements of women as something

emanating from the woman herself, that is, they have had to assume that—available narratives to the contrary—women are motivated at times by something other than men. This presumed motivation has been most often labelled “the search for autonomy.”

The “search for autonomy” narrative is now a commonplace among the burgeoning literature of women’s history. It is not, however, without its own perils. Chief among them is that it forces its practitioners, or at least this practitioner, to write a long-dead woman’s life in the form of yet another prefabricated narrative written in a language that women are only now learning to speak. Am I, in other words, imagining for my historical subjects a narrative that they could not possibly have imagined for themselves? Goodness knows, my contemporaries and I have considerable difficulty imagining the shape of this narrative for ourselves. Just ask Thelma. Or Louise.

It is this house of mirrors in which I am wandering as I try to finish a manuscript. About three years ago, in the course of examining late nineteenth century materials on women in the professions, I became intrigued with the early history of home economics, thereby proving that opposites do attract. Temperamentally, I find the actual subject matter of home economics so unappealing that I am afraid I first simply supposed that the field was the product of a conspiracy: surely twelve guys with cigars and brandy sat down at a walnut conference table and somebody said, “Hey I know what let’s do: how about we let women into college and then invent *this* for them to major in.” There is actually a bit of truth in that theory; certainly universities found departments of home economics a convenient place to put women with doctorates in chemistry who might otherwise suppose that they should teach in, say, chemistry departments.

But, as I soon found out, the unavoidable complication to the conspiracy theory is that, without a doubt, it was women who “invented” home economics. It was women who argued for its inclusion in the university curriculum, indeed for its inclusion at every level of public education. This in turn tended to suggest a counter conspiracy: twelve women at somebody’s dining room table, drinking their tea, and someone says: “OK, ladies, here’s the sucker punch. Under cover of doing women’s work, we’ll launch ourselves into paid professional jobs.” And there is some truth in this version as well. Home economics shares with the rest of the nineteenth century women’s movement a genius for Trojan horse tactics: Hide inside the conservative arguments in order to breach the opposition’s defenses. Women should be physicians because women are much too delicate to have male ones. Women should vote because they will apply their refined moral sensibility to cleaning up society. And, women should be professional home economists because—of course—women’s place is in the home.

I find it necessary to tell you here that I am not so flippant as to suppose that the choice of this paradoxical tactic was particularly conscious; certainly, I do not see it as a conspiracy, knowing or otherwise. It should come as no particular surprise that, in imagining lives of achievement for themselves, these women

imagined achievement in a way still consistent with what was understood to be a woman's life. In doing so, these early home economists managed to escape the high fences around what a woman's life could be about. They did not, however, wander very far from the corral. And to carry this metaphor to its logically ridiculous conclusion, by staying close to home, they insured that the posse would not come after them.

And so that paradox became my starting point for this work on home economics. And, I should add, that starting point allowed me to write without wandering too far away either. The growing historical literature on the early history of women in the professions at the turn of this century is replete with versions of this paradox. And as luck would have it, a few of the early female professionals were acutely aware of the paradox and said so. In a Ph.D. dissertation written for George Herbert Mead, the social psychologist Jessie Taft wrote the following:

Women find themselves as a matter of hard fact in the equivocal position of being neither one thing nor the other, neither in the home nor out of it, neither wholly medieval nor wholly modern. The world to which women have been accustomed for centuries and to whose patterns their minds have been shaped is not for the most part the world of the modern man. His world is not only different, it is even hostile and antagonistic in many respects to the world of the woman; so much so that women who attempt to conform to both worlds, as many are compelled to do, find themselves face to face with conflicts so serious and apparently irreconcilable that satisfactory adjustment is often quite impossible on the part of the individual woman.⁴

I can say with as much confidence as any historian has the right to muster that home economics was nothing if not the attempt to reconcile the traditional world of women with the emerging industrial order—and in the process, to legitimate a place for at least some women in that new order.

That much at least gets me an introduction that I can live with. I can, with that convenient historical omniscience that comes from hindsight, chart the origins of home economics with some subtlety—and I can congratulate myself that I can dispense with the archly ironic tone with which I began in favor of an almost, but not quite, patronizing one. Here is what these women did. And yes, it is an ironically conservative set of achievements, but the limitations of what they did are perfectly understandable, given the given. What did you expect them to do—announce plans to take over Harvard?

Having dispensed with the origins of home economics with (it is to be hoped) some delicacy, I can take a harder line in the second part of this manuscript. I can point out that the “home” that these women idealized and incorporated into all

levels of home economics education is so riddled with white, middle-class assumptions that, had the concept of middle-class hegemony not already existed, I would have had to invent it. And I can and will furnish example after example of the many ways in which the protagonists of this narrative were utterly blind or indifferent—and frequently, openly contemptuous—of those women whose race or class or ethnicity differed from their own. I can point to an early article in their professional journal in which a home economist claimed that what was wrong with Southern homes was that the servants were blacks who only knew how to cook greasy food. I can cite the attack on spicy condiments as the root of bad health and inefficient work habits among the immigrants. Better yet, I can note the frequent comment among home economists that the poor were poor because they spent too large a proportion of their meager incomes on food. I can mention the home economics children’s club that taught its ten-year-old immigrant members how to make small models of tastefully furnished homes so that, as one home economist explained, they would understand proper standards should they ever be able to afford them. This list could go on and on. Indeed, I’m afraid that the task of annotating the prevalence of middle-class biases is rather like shooting fish in a barrel.

And, I can write about the conviction of early home economists that their employment by industry would safeguard the American consumer (read: the American housewife), and then I can chart the rapid declension by which they became shills for American consumerism. And then finally, I can top the whole thing off with what is to me a rather mournful commentary on the ways in which the escape hatch that the home economists devised for themselves had the consequence of more fully trapping their contemporaries in the locked box of a woman’s life. The ultimate goal, they said, was to write a “true science of the home,” by which they seemed to mean the application of industrial method to the household. While their contemporaries in other parts of the women’s movement defined the world as a large home, they defined the home as a tiny factory. And in thinking of their sisters as that factory’s unpaid workforce of one, they held that the dreary drudgery of so many women’s lives would be relieved by the application of “sound method.” Cleaning the floors would transcend the mundane if the laborer was also the manager who had made a time-motion study of the task and if the laborer was also the administrator who had convinced the investor (that is, her husband) to make a capital outlay for a Hoover vacuum cleaner. With that, the *reductio ad absurdum* of home economics becomes complete.

And with that, I once thought, I should be able to wrap up this little project of mine, what my family and friends now refer to as the “Home Ec Psychos from Hell” project. But at the risk of what may be in fact simply an unpardonable solipsism (or just a neurotic resistance to getting it done), I haven’t been able to get over the idea that something is still missing. My analysis fits quite conventionally into the current body of historiography; my abstractions also dovetail

quite nicely with current literature with just enough of a twist to satisfy myself that I have done something that counts as original. And yet, I keep thinking about my daughter's attempt to imagine a story in which she is the hero. Somewhere in all of this, there still remain the actual women, who lived actual lives—not bloodless abstractions of ones—and who were imagining something for themselves when they invented this field. And I find myself back where I began, asking: What on earth did they have in mind here? What story were they telling themselves? Shouldn't I at least try to imagine a narrative based on what they were imagining as the point of their endeavors? And how exactly do I do that—imagine what they were imagining?

One actual life in particular is central and unavoidable and still elusive to me. And that is the life of the woman who is normally credited with the founding of modern home economics. Ellen Swallow Richards is routinely acknowledged in the histories of this time period. She rates what I refer to as the “obligatory paragraph” in virtually all of the new historical literature pertaining to the women professionals at the beginning of the century. The obligatory paragraph usually goes something like this:

Ellen Swallow Richards was an early graduate of Vassar College. She went on to become the first woman to earn a degree of any kind from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she subsequently spent her entire career. Early on, she became interested in the application of modern science to the problems of everyday life, particularly the problems of the household. In 1899, she organized the Lake Placid Conferences on Home Economics which became in 1909 the American Home Economics Association. She served as the association's first president, an office she held until shortly before her death in 1911.

End of paragraph. The fact that that is all that is usually said about her is as good an indication as any that historians of women have tended to view her life's work as a rather dubious achievement. I of course must necessarily flesh out that paragraph, to explain at least the “how” of that achievement, whatever I think of its consequences.

I therefore have set out to fill in the details of Ellen Richards' life, to ground the abstractions of my analysis in her narrative, or rather, my construction of it. Much of the evidence of her life is missing. (The historian's inevitable lament—much of it always is). But enough remains here and there to piece together a story of this life. Or rather, as I have discovered, many stories.

I began quite conventionally, charting the course of her documented struggles and achievements. This narrative starred Brave Ellen (call her Elliot) trying to make her way in a man's world. There is much that fits, or would fit, if her name

really were Elliot, into a rather conventional male narrative of the self-made man sort. Ellen Swallow was born of Puritan stock, the only child of a farmer of the lower middling sort. When she was sixteen, her father sold the farm and became the proprietor of a village store, primarily so his daughter could be educated in a nearby seminary. She taught school for a while and then at twenty-three suffered one of those “mysterious” bouts of depression that Jane Addams would later make famous. By the age of twenty-seven, she had managed to save enough money to join the great experiment in women’s collegiate education newly opened at Vassar. There she studied with Maria Mitchell, the great woman astronomer whom Matthew Vassar had installed in his shiny new observatory. After graduation, her plans to teach in South America were disrupted by revolution. She cast about for an alternative that would accommodate her love of science and eventually applied for apprenticeships at Boston apothecaries with the hope of learning commercial chemistry. The presumably startled proprietors turned her down, but sympathetically suggested that she apply for admission to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a rather amazing piece of advice to offer a woman in 1870. As it turned out, MIT did admit her in 1871 and waived her tuition. She thought that they were offering her a scholarship; they were actually nimbly avoiding the necessity of listing her as a student and offending the trustees.

She persisted at MIT, learning chemical analysis and sewing on buttons for her male peers. She stayed on in the school’s chemical laboratories as an assistant after she earned a bachelor’s degree, but she earned most of her living in private consulting. Thirteen years after she had arrived, MIT finally awarded her with an instructorship. And mercifully (for me), during those years she married Robert Richards, the head of mining engineering at MIT, and I am thus spared the trouble of having to circumvent the achievement-in-place-of-failure-in-romance scenario.⁵

But, I asked myself, didn’t she notice her position as stepchild in the Institute? I found at last a revealing letter, published long after her death. To a college friend, she wrote the following in 1889, at almost exactly the midpoint of her career:

My life has in no way been what I had planned. I was [thwarted] at my first wish, to go to South America on leaving College. I did not want to come to Boston to study but no other place opened and I came. My father’s death that first year checked all my plans and I gave up all thought or wish for myself and only follow where the path is made plain. I might have made a name and fame for myself.

I have helped five men to positions they would not have held without me, but I am content. That is after all the secret, to be content with things as they are and if we feel that each step we have taken is under guidance we must be content whatever the result⁶

When I found this quotation, I thought that here at last I had discovered some sign of a woman's tale. Certainly, I did not believe her phrase, "I am content." Indeed, over the last two decades of her life, there is a relentless, almost manic quality to her activity that seems to testify to a restless and unsatisfied ambition. In those last twenty years, Ellen Richards became particularly adept at the use of women's organizations as a substitute for the institutional bases that men automatically had for their careers. She was, as one of her eulogists put it, "an opportunist," following "whatever line of a dozen good ones was most open at the moment."⁷ And she clearly parlayed that organizational leadership into a groundswell of support for her new science of home economics.

I was well on my way to finishing this story of ambition—and who is to say that a woman's life cannot be about ambition?—when a significant complication arose. I found abundant evidence that, not only did she attempt to ignore the significance of her sex in charting her career, she apparently loathed women who did not—women who made gender a public issue. She was a lifelong anti-suffragist who believed, as she put it once, that women already had "more rights and duties than they are fitted to perform."⁸ In letters to Mary Hinman Abel, her closest colleague, she railed at the idiocy of "those women—Julia Ward Howe and her ilk." During the organization of the Chicago World's Fair, she refused to serve on the Board of Lady Managers and she eventually refused to have her display—a model nutritional kitchen—placed in the Woman's Building. In a book written late in her life, she dismissed the work of amateur social housekeepers, pointing to them as dispensers of "sentimental charity," adding that if no one paid attention to them, it was because they did not know anything. The only Woman Question, she concluded, was the Question of women and ability, by which she meant scientific knowledge. When women had some, they could take their place in the world.⁹

Not surprisingly, a parallel narrative began to form in my imagination. It took the form of an Ellen Richards as Horatio Alger-cum-token woman story—the tale of a woman who insists that her success is testament enough that there is no such thing as gender discrimination. I confess that I find it a disheartening tale, not least because the success she so jealously guarded was so grudgingly acknowledged by MIT. When she died, she was still an instructor and she paid for her own lab assistant. If there ever was a case of unrequited loyalty, this is it. Her beloved Institute refused to grant her a graduate degree for the thesis in chemistry she had written. They let Vassar grant it; her doctorate was an honorary one, from Smith.

But the original question remained: where exactly does the story of this life hook up again with the profession she invented? During those last twenty years—even while she privately mocked the women's movement and women's clubs—she lectured before literally hundreds of women's groups; she attended hundreds of meetings of women's organizations. She organized scores of women's reform

activities and she wrote a dozen books addressed to women, urging them to find their place in the world by making of housework their profession. Is this dementia of some sort? Well, I don't think so—I don't much like her, but I do not therefore have to conclude that she was crazy.

What on earth did she have in mind? It finally occurred to me that her work might speak its own narrative. (This was an humbling revelation: wouldn't I have looked here first if her name really was Elliot?) A sideways clue resides in a passage that turns up hundreds of times in her writing: the home as it existed, she wrote again and again, was an evolutionary backwater, a drag on progress. She constantly insisted that the home had to be re-established on the same scientific and economic principles that had been used in industry. Though MIT never quite owned her presence, she dreamed the blueprinted dream of the perfect engineer: society as the big machine, spewing out progress, the *house* as its fundamental unit (as Richards herself once put it), humans reduced to their necessary role as cogs. And what did this say about this woman's life? In one of the oddest comments upon her death, her close colleague Mary Hinman Abel, spoke of the power of her personality and included the following curious detail:

The effect produced by her lectures was increased by her personality—it was not to be explained or defined—even those not interested in the subject felt it. As one woman said, 'I've never thought of those things, and a week after the lecture *I couldn't remember what she had said*, but the effect remained. It stirred me up to be more efficient.'¹⁰

"Efficiency" was Ellen Richards' favorite word. The seduction of "efficiency" is that it does not have to be about anything in particular. It is a means that can effortlessly become an end, motion for the sake of motion. And dare I suggest it? For a woman's life, it can also be a stunning solution to the problem of imagining one's story. In an historical moment that Carolyn Heilbrun has called a "storyless time" for women, Ellen Richards and her new science offered a way to escape the burden of having to imagine a story at all.

It is surely churlish of me to wish for a less anti-narrative narrative. But I do. I will even go so far as to confess my fondness for an alternative that, alas, has no relevance to this manuscript. I finally remembered what it was that my three-year-old became obsessed about when she finally gave up E.T. She had instinctively found a more congenial story, one in which she could imagine being called by her own name. It was another tale about an alien, but this time told from the point of view of the alien. In *Oz*, Dorothy goes on a great quest, and the absolutely realistic detail embedded in this fantasy is this: a girl on a great quest must necessarily do so in an alien world.

I keep thinking that women of Ellen Richards' day might have done better to read the *Oz* books. As the luck of coincidental chronology would have it,

Dorothy first visited Oz in 1899, the year that Ellen Richards founded the Lake Placid Conferences, the predecessor to the American Home Economics Association. We all know that Dorothy left Oz and returned to Kansas, murmuring all the while, “there’s no place like home.” But unlike the home economists, Dorothy did not stay put. One decade and five Oz books later, in *The Emerald City of Oz*, a Kansas bank is about to foreclose on Uncle Henry’s farm; Auntie Em indicates that Dorothy will have to go to work as a domestic servant.¹¹ Enough of that—Dorothy escapes the home economists and the conventional narrative for good: she seeks and finds permanent asylum in the alien terrain of Oz, and there she is at last free to imagine an altogether different story for herself.

Notes

1. Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman’s Life* (New York, 1988). The passage quoted is from page 21.
2. Elizabeth Janeway, *Between Myth and Morning: Women Awakening* (New York, 1974), 17.
3. Blanche Wiesen Cook, Review of *No Ordinary Time*, reprinted in *Manhattan Mercury*, October 23, 1994, p. D2.
4. Jessie Taft, *The Woman Movement from the Point of View of Social Consciousness* (Chicago, 1915), ix.
5. The standard biography of Richards remains the one written a year after her death. See Caroline Hunt’s *The Life of Ellen H. Richards* (Boston, 1912). To write the biography, Hunt evidently collected a large number of letters that Richards had written to friends and associates. They remained in Hunt’s possession and after her death suffered the proverbial fate of “the letters in the lost trunk.”
6. Letter to “Nettie” (Mrs. Robert Barnard), March 1889, quoted in “Recollections of Ellen H. Richards,” *Journal of Home Economics* 23 (December, 1931), 1125.
7. Mary Hinman Abel, “Mrs. Richards and the Home Economics Movement,” *Journal of Home Economics* 3 (October, 1911), 345.
8. Hunt, *The Life of Ellen Richards*, 288.
9. Ellen H. Richards, *Euthenics: The Science of Controllable Environment* (Boston, 1910), 149.
10. Abel, “Mrs. Richards and Home Economics,” 348. The emphasis is mine.
11. There were forty Oz books altogether. For a witty tour of them, see Gore Vidal’s essay, “The Oz Books,” in his *United States: Essays 1952-1992* (New York, 1993).