

made by those ladies.”<sup>80</sup> It was there, at one of these rendezvous of feminine confidences in the late 1870s, that young Alice overheard the account of the brutal gang rape of Eliza R. Snow. “There was a saint—a Prophetess, a Poet, an intellectual, seized by brutal mobbers—used by those eight demons and left not dead, but worse. The horror, the anguish, despair, hopelessness of the innocent victim was dwelt upon. What [*sic*] future was here for such a one?”<sup>81</sup> Horne’s language reveals the tensions and fears embedded in a culture that was hyper-focused on the sexual purity of unmarried women. “All the aspirations of a saintly virgin—that maiden of purity—had met martyrdom!” In this case, according to Horne, the rape left its victim not only emotionally scarred but also permanently affected physically:

The Prophet heard and had compassion. This Saint, whose lofty ideals, whose person had been crucified, was yet to become the corner of female work. To her, no child could be born and yet she would be a Mother in Israel. One to whom all eyes should turn, to whom all ears would listen to her sing (in tongues) the praises of Zion. She was promised honor above all women, save only Emma, but her marriage to the Prophet would be only for heaven.<sup>82</sup>

It is clear that Alice Merrill Horne inferred that Eliza R. Snow would never be able to bear children because of a rape committed against her. Snow’s infertility, in this particular memory construction, became a visible, tangible reminder of the violence against women in Missouri, but it also gave her the status of martyr.

The case of Eliza R. Snow invites us to think about the gendered ways that traumatic memories are transmitted for women. Barring more public and outward forms of remembering, women turned to private and subtle means of communicating their loss. Poetry, as an appropriate nineteenth-century venue for female expression, also provided an unconventional format for memory transmission and allowed women subtle and cloaked revelations of private emotions and experiences. Already a published poet by 1838, Eliza R. Snow, like most Mormon writers and diarists, went through the Missouri trials with a silent pen, and she provided no direct written testimony of any act of sexual violence committed against her in Missouri. Snow’s poetry allowed her to direct her deep and unrelenting rage at the “peace-destroying mob,” with ambiguous accusations, while still capturing the general tenor of violence against women. In October 1838, she declared with indignation,

’Twas Autumn: Summer’s melting breath was gone,  
And winter’s gelid blast was stealing on.  
To meet its dread approach, with anxious care  
The houseless Saints were struggling to prepare.  
When round about a desp’rate mob arose,