Eliza Orme's Ambitions
Politics and the Law in Victorian London

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6. Journalism and Authorship

When I first set out to write about Orme's public life, I intended to include her journalism and other published writing along with the assignments, appointments and political commitments I discussed in Chapter 5. Rather to my surprise, the resulting chapter was too long and unwieldy. In any case, the notoriety that comes from journalism and authorship is different from the reputation that comes from political action and government service. As it turns out, Eliza Orme's journalism and authorship deserve a chapter of their own (and a bibliography as an appendix to this book). But like her practice of law and involvement in politics, they do not fit the standard and conventional categories.

It is well known, though not often remarked upon, that Victorians who are remembered for their writing generally concentrated on one genre or subject and they generally wrote pretty steadily, though not necessarily as their primary occupation. This holds especially when the material was journalism or essays rather than creative writing. Walter Bagehot wrote like that about politics, Harriet Martineau about economics, Frances Power Cobbe about philosophy; and each developed a reputation for discoursing on their specialty. Eliza Orme, however, did not have the luxury of journalistic specialization, and is consequently not remembered for her writing. Nevertheless, she had articles, essays, and books published on a wide variety of subjects, writing that appeared—sometimes signed and sometimes anonymously—when she had something to say and the opportunity to say it. If, back in 1984 when I first started my inquiries, printed reference works like the *British Library Catalogue* or *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* had not included citations to her publications, I would probably have given up right there. It was curiosity about the extraordinary range of her interests as revealed in print that kept me going.

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For me, thinking about Eliza Orme's editorship of one weekly newspaper and her leading articles for another, her occasional articles in the mainstream press, and her authorship of government reports and other publications is an aspect of my studies of the history of the book and periodical press in Victorian Britain. Since the mid-1980s, historians and literary scholars have demonstrated that the mid-to-late nineteenth century was a time when authorship as a profession, publishing and printing as businesses, and reading as the pursuit of knowledge and pleasure, all burgeoned and flourished. Taken together, our growing knowledge of all those processes, as they connect and intersect, has become the study of Victorian book history. In nineteenth-century Britain, for the first time in history, some great novelists and essayists were able to make a career out of writing. At the same time, thousands of other writers submitted millions of words to the publishers of newspapers, periodicals, and books, sometimes signing their work and sometimes anonymous. Many of them could support themselves by their pens, while others struggled. (Orme's acquaintance George Gissing wrote about that phenomenon in *New Grub Street*.) The writers were supported and facilitated in turn by a handful of innovative publishers who worked to nurture those authors, and to turn a healthy profit for their own businesses and those of printers, binders, booksellers and others. The beneficiaries of all this were Victorian readers, for whom print was a great deal cheaper and more accessible than it had been for their ancestors. Barmaids, textile workers, even metal workers at the forge, as well as artists and lawyers and intellectuals and politicians—people of all classes—were eager readers. Cynics will note that the press in those days had no competition from the broadcast media, even from the cinema, let alone the internet, but the fact remains that every generation has its own 'new media'. It goes without saying that from childhood Eliza Orme was a reader of books, newspapers, and journals, of poetry and prose, of everything from fiction to law reports. Like many intelligent and ambitious young readers, she may have harboured the ambition to express herself in print when the opportunity arose. And, knowing how well-connected she and her family always were, the fact that she was acquainted with a publisher in Henry Lawrence, as well as with an editor or two, will not come as a surprise.

Contributions to *The Examiner*, *Englishwoman's Review* and *Longman's* (and an Index)

As far as I know Orme's first published venture came at the age of 25, when she wrote a brief signed article in *The Examiner* about 'University Degrees for Women' (July 1874). Her own studies at University College were well underway, even beginning to generate prizes and recognition, and she had recently consulted with Helen Taylor about her professional prospects. Furthermore, the subject of degrees was under discussion in the universities and in parliament. Orme's very temperate and reasoned column triggered a response in the *Saturday Review* three months later that ridiculed the very notion of women preparing to serve as doctors, lawyers, or clergy. She hit back with two more *Examiner* pieces, first returning to the subject under the original title, and then a fresh article. This time signed with her initials, it is entitled 'Sound-Minded Women'. She begins with a rather laboured comparison of clichéd ideas as they appear in art criticism and in political discourse. 'Old associations will go a very long way in making things which are mediocre in themselves the means of enjoyment'. This sets her up for her comments on the lack of originality in the anonymous *Saturday Review* writer's remarks about women and university degrees; I quoted from the article in Chapter 1.

It is not clear to me whether Orme was acquainted with the editor or the proprietor of *The Examiner*. It is possible. In any case, the next year, the same newspaper filled up a column with an unremarkable poem, 'Song' signed E.O. Those initials would not be enough to attribute the poem to Orme, but virtually the same poem appeared fifteen years later as 'Parted' in July 1890 in her own *Women's Gazette*, and that coincidence seems to me to clinch the matter. Artistically, it is not much of a poem, but it does remind me that the formidable debater and political strategist also wanted to make her emotional responses public, and she did not mind signing her verse with initials that would be identifiable to anyone who knew her.

In 1883 she wrote an obituary of the physician Matilda Chaplin Ayrton, one of the seven women who had struggled to open medical training at the University of Edinburgh. Orme and Ayrton were much of an age and must have been personally acquainted, through the Somerville Club if nowhere else. Orme remembered 'with a regret,

amounting almost to bitterness, how much energy ... was in her case frittered away in fighting against the barriers set up in bigotry and self-interest'. Eliza's praise for Matilda's 'many-sidedness' might be applied to herself, too: 'She was able to study science minutely and accurately without becoming too selfish to be a politician, or too dry to be a sociable companion'. This article appeared in the *Englishwoman's Review*, as did one on Jeanette Wilkinson in September 1886. Wilkinson was among 'the small band of women who are earnest liberal politicians at this time'.

Eliza's next major signed article appeared in *Longman's Magazine*, in December 1886. Again she was hitting back, this time at a medical doctor. Benjamin Ward Richardson had written an essay on 'Women's Work in Creation' for the October issue that year, arguing that women must decide whether to become a rival or a helpmeet to men. This, in his view, required choosing between being unfeminine, grotesque, and unhealthy (even 'becoming a third sex'), or revelling in beauty, womanliness, attractive clothes and good health. At the time, Orme was profitably established in her Southampton Buildings chambers, doing patent agency and other legal work, and still a student at University College undertaking a series of competitive examinations. Women's work was perhaps becoming her signature issue, although there might also have been some personal and emotional impetus for writing the piece. She first called upon history and political economy to remind Richardson's readers that working-class women had always worked. Turning to women's intellectual labour, which was manifesting itself in new ways in their time, she focused on three issues. The first was dress, which Richardson thought was going to have to change drastically. But 'why', Orme asked, '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'. Having thoroughly skewered the judges in her own field of expertise, she went on to compare the dark, tight, stiff-with-starch

clothing of medical doctors like Richardson with 'the pleasant summer costume of what is called the advanced woman'.

Her second point noted Richardson's concerns about female beauty, but instead of seeing a trend to ugliness, she looked for evidence of contentment, noting 'an exchange from an expression of unsatisfied wishes in the face of an untutored girl to that of happy complacency in that of one now well taught what she has a taste for'. As for the third and perhaps most serious concern of the medical man—that overwork in cramming for examinations might impair women for conceiving and bearing children—she briskly undermined it. Women working as teachers, nurses, or in business need good health as much as mothers; and men need good health as much as women. Rather than require girls to choose between marriage and a career, 'If they are blessed with a good constitution, they may earn an honest livelihood either as the heads of their husbands' households or as independent workers'. She closed by suggesting that medical men like Richardson were unsuited by their training and professional experience to address social or political problems: 'They regard all human beings as passive patients, who are to have their failings examined, diagnosed, and prescribed for. They forget that unruly patients will refuse the prescription'. Eliza Orme's rhetoric in this article was practical as always, liberal in the small-l sense of the word, and characteristically witty.

While her journalism for *The Examiner* and *Longman's* was going on, Orme pursued another writerly project, although this time it was a work of legal scholarship, not of confrontational prose. Back when she entered the chambers of Savill Vaizey in 1873, she told Helen Taylor that she was 'helping him with his book on marriage settlements'. In 1887 that work finally appeared in two volumes: *A Treatise on the Law of Settlements of Property, Made Upon Marriage and Other Occasions*. It included Vaizey's acknowledgement of the invaluable assistance of 'my really, if not conventionally, learned friend', Eliza Orme, not least with the sixty-nine-page index. I note that Vaizey could not quite bring himself to use the common phrase 'my learned friend', but rather had to draw attention to the unconventionality of her being both learned in the law and female at the same time.

Leaders for the *Weekly Dispatch*

All the writing and indexing work I have described so far was signed or acknowledged. But there is evidence that Orme, writing anonymously, was one of the very few women working in the 'influential and highly-paid branch of newspaper work' known as leader-writing. A leader was a brief unsigned editorial opinion piece, composed in the 'voice' of the newspaper as a whole (in this case the *Weekly Dispatch*) on the news of the day. I have looked at the newspaper online, but because the leaders were anonymous and authoritative, I cannot tell whether she wrote the weekly commentaries on the minutiae of Liberal and Home Rule politics, the 'Women's Chit Chat' columns (themselves written from quite a serious viewpoint), or something else. Nor have I been able to ascertain exactly when this was going on, but it seems to have been in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the time of her life when she was busiest with her quasi-legal practice, with the politics of women's Liberalism, and perhaps even with the Royal Commission, because that was the time when the editor was one of her mentors. The *Weekly Dispatch* was a long-established Sunday paper with a radical bent, although by the 1880s it was cultivating a more sedate, middle-class readership and by the 1890s was reaching about 180,000 readers each week (according to *the Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*). It had a number of editors in those years; one of them was W.A. Hunter, whose term of service was about 1887 to 1892. It seems to me that offering Eliza Orme a lucrative and influential platform for the expression of her strong opinions about Home Rule, women's rights, and other contemporary issues would not have been the first (or the last) thing that William Hunter, barrister and M.P., might have done to help his former student.

Because these leaders were anonymous, and no record appears to have survived conveniently attributing particular pieces to specific authors, I have not been able to confirm or expand on this information, which comes from an offhand remark in an 1891 *Monthly Packet* article on women in journalism by Fanny L. Green. As Green observed:

> Leader-writing is one of the most influential and highly-paid branches of newspaper work, but up to the present women have had but very small share in it. Probably there are very few of their number who possess the thorough training in history, philosophy, economics and politics, the mature judgment, and the power of clear, concise and forcible expression

> that made Harriet Martineau's work in this direction so valuable and successful. ... Miss Power Cobbe has written leaders for the *Echo*, and Miss Orme has performed the same service for the *Weekly Dispatch*. Leader writing however, from the nature of things, cannot be entrusted to any one whose opinion does not carry weight with it. The leader writer is in no sense a tyro in letters.

Orme was no tyro (that is, novice) when it came to law and politics, and she had been an occasional contributor to the press for some years before her leader-writing for the *Weekly Dispatch*. But what is remarkable about this particular activity among her many professional and voluntary gigs is that Orme's leader-writing does not appear anywhere else in the evidence I have found about her legal and political work, or in her letters to Samuel Alexander. Of course it may not be true, although Green sounds like she knows what she is talking about and she was right about Martineau and Cobbe. If it is true, it merits further research, and will eventually have to be integrated into the narrative of Eliza Orme's life. For now, it can stand as an example of the many activities that left no trace—or in this case only a bare trace—in a long, full, and productive public life.

The *Women's Gazette* and the Royal Commission

Orme became editor of the *Women's Gazette and Weekly News* in 1889. Here, perhaps alongside her *Weekly Dispatch* leaders, she wrote regular editorials on the issues of the day. As with the other newspaper, I cannot attribute any of these anonymous 'leaders' to her authorship with confidence, but certainly many of them bear the unmistakable tang of her voice. Commenting on someone else's article about journalism as a profession for women, in November 1889, the leading article remarked:

> The mischief in many worthy women aspirants is that they are imperfectly equipped for the task. Every woman who can write a letter thinks she can write a paragraph, if not an article, but ten to one her grammar is unsound and her facts incomplete. Journalism needs as full a technical training as any other business or profession. When women realize that, they will find that a new world is open to them.

Somewhere along the line, Eliza Orme had acquired the necessary technical training. Other *Women's Gazette* leaders discussed Irish politics,

or dress reform, or tried to educate other Liberal women not only about how to organize their peers, but about how not to antagonize the (male) party leadership.

Orme's next major writerly effort consisted of the several reports of the Royal Commission on Labour, coming out over a few months in 1892–93. She was sole author of the reports on barmaids and on the metal industries of the Black Country, collaborated with her colleagues on several of the others, and acted as supervising editor on the junior women's reports.

Because of the work of the Royal Commission, Eliza had to decline a prestigious invitation that came with the opportunity for international travel. She was invited to attend a Congress on Jurisprudence and Law Reform in Chicago. Having just finished traipsing all over England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland to interview barmaids and iron workers, however, and now engaged in writing and editing the reports, not to mention the invitation coming late, all she could spare the time for was to send a report on 'The Legal Status of Women in England'. Published in the *Albany Law Journal* on the 19th of August, 1893, the paper addressed the question of women serving as lawyers. She explained the technicalities of barristers and solicitors and how the profession itself and the institution of Parliament, respectively, acted as impenetrable barriers. Without identifying herself as one of the individuals in question, she added:

> Two women have been for some years practicing conveyance but without legal qualifications. They have drawn up wills and simple agreements, which under the English law may be prepared by persons not qualified as barristers or solicitors. Other conveyancing, such as drafting deeds, they have done for qualified practitioners, who have used the work in accordance with the maxim '*qui facit per alium, facit per se*'.

This legal term translates as 'The acts of an agent are the acts of a principle', while the legal convention permitted the in-demand barrister to be in two places at once, his own chambers and also Orme's.

Late in 1893, after the Royal Commission reports were published, circulated, and publicized, Eliza Orme returned to those chambers, now in Henrietta Street. Her political work resumed, but now with the new Women's National Liberal Association, not its rival Women's Liberal Federation. (If she did any writing for the WNLA 'Quarterly Leaflets', I

have not yet been able to track it down.) The scandals of 1892 were now in the past, and the *Women's Gazette* had ceased publication. In the summer of 1894 came the opportunity of the committee on prison conditions, and later that year her meeting with George Gissing. Through the mid-nineties, the name of 'Miss Orme' appeared frequently in the national and local press—as a lecturer, or in reference to her reports on women's work in industry, or her leadership at a political meeting. There were also two major publications in 1897, on wildly diverging topics.

A Trial in India, a Literary Labour of Love, and More

Lawrence and Bullen, the company co-owned by Reina's brother Henry (and where Eliza Brabrook may have worked as a subeditor), published in 1897 a book on the subject of jurisprudence in India: *The Trial of Shama Charan Pal: An Illustration of Village Life in Bengal. With an Introduction by Miss Orme, LL.B.* It is the transcript of a courtroom trial, highlighting the skills of Manomohan Ghose as counsel for the defence. Orme framed her six-page introductory essay as being '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 subject of law reform for Britain's colonial possessions in South Asia was then in turmoil. In addition, she noted, a recent novel was presenting 'biased and sensational pictures', as were the 'inaccurate and unverified accounts of Anglo-Indians returned to this country after years of official drill'. In her view, the report of a trial was 'obviously' the best way to get at the truth. It does not strike me as all that obvious, but what I do notice is that nine years earlier, a similar book had appeared from a different publisher. This time the introduction had been by Orme's law professor, mentor and (perhaps) editor/employer, William Hunter. It was *The Trial of Muluk Chand for the Murder of his Own Child: A Romance of Criminal Administration in Bengal. With an Introduction by W. A. Hun*ter (1888, T. Fisher Unwin). The two books have been taken seriously, most notably in a scholarly article on the legal structures of colonial India by Vinay Lal. For my purposes, though, the question is not about the courts of Bengal, but rather about how Eliza Orme came to turn away from writing about issues with respect to women and work (not to mention re-establishing a precarious legal practice) to address a wholly new

subject. Did the opportunity come from the publisher Henry Lawrence, the professor William Hunter, or from the lawyer Manomohan Ghose?

Ghose (1844–1896) was the first practicing barrister who was indigenous to the Indian subcontinent. He studied law in London and was called to the English bar in 1866, then returned to India to practice criminal law. He was known for being a proponent of women's higher education. As I speculated in Chapter 4, it is more likely that he and Orme met later. One documented encounter occurred when he returned to England in 1896 and she was in the audience while he debated the necessity of an independent judiciary in India. But Ghose had studied with Hunter, so the connection could have come from the professor, or from the publisher who wanted to build on the success of Hunter's book and knew that Eliza Orme had the brains and political savvy to address a question in a field unknown to her. I simply do not know. When I first learned about the book, I had exciting fantasies that Eliza Orme had travelled to India, perhaps had a whole life there quite separate from her existence in England. I do not think that anymore. It is much more likely that Ghose did the travelling, from the colonial outpost to the legal metropole. But I do think it possible that he and Eliza were friends as well as colleagues. He died the same year her book was published, and that factor may or may not have been significant.

Orme's second 1897 publication, an article in the mainstream journal *Nineteenth Century*, returned to a familiar subject. She defended the interests of unmarried women seeking professional careers. Once again, this was a response to something that annoyed her. A few months earlier, Frances H. Low had written in the same periodical about 'How Poor Ladies Live'. Orme had no dispute with Low about the sufferings of unmarried women who lacked adequate incomes, but she disagreed strongly about how their situation came about and how it might be cured. Low thought that the fathers of such women should continue to bear responsibility for their support. Orme estimated that it would take £1000 to provide for such a daughter in that way. 'But for less than a third of that sum a girl can be trained in a ladies' college for a useful breadwinning employment'. Nor must 'the Girton girl' be a teacher: 'At this moment highly educated women, bred in gentle homes, and retaining the affection and approval of their relatives, are working as milliners, dressmakers, clerks, bookkeepers, auditors, overseers in

work-rooms, housekeepers, nurses, and in various other capacities in which, fifty years ago, they could not have employed themselves without loss of social status'. She also cogently pointed out that 'earners of money are spenders of money'. A professional woman, perforce, purchased the labour of milliners and dressmakers, servants, and a housekeeper. She might also help a younger sister or niece to get a start in life. Unlike Low, Orme understood that many women were 'improvident' about preparing themselves for independence because they expected to be married. To her, the remedy was obvious: 'The increased employment of women encouraged by college training, and by the taking up of paid work by ladies in a good position, tends to make the life of an unmarried woman so interesting that she will be less likely to regard marriage as the only goal'.

The year 1898 brought another article, and another book. 'Our Female Criminals' was published in another prestigious periodical, the *Fortnightly Review*. This time Eliza Orme was not responding to someone else, but taking advantage of her own experience and expertise to present her views to a much wider public than had access to the official report. And as she mentioned, 'the most important and far-reaching [of the recommendations] had been quietly ignored'. This was a chance to give them a fresh airing, and perhaps to put them before the eyes of a different set of decision-makers.

The book, however, was apparently a labour of love, or of homage. During the early years of the Women's Liberal Federation, Orme had worked closely with its founder, Sophia Fry. The two women were on the same side in the disputes over women's suffrage as Liberal Party policy, in strong opposition to the Countess of Carlisle. Lady Fry died in March 1897, and in May Orme wrote a brief account of her life for the *British Weekly*. A year later the book-length memoir appeared, published by Hodder and Stoughton. The introduction states that 'this slight sketch … has been undertaken at the request of some of those who worked under her guidance in one or more of the public objects she had at heart'. The *Times* review commended 'the reticence and simplicity of Miss Orme's method' and observed that she had created an 'engaging but not too intimate picture'. When Liberal ladies gathered for their meetings, the advice was that 'a book such as Miss Orme's *Life of Lady Fry* might be read while the members knitted'.

I must admit I have never been able to get very excited about this particular work of Eliza Orme's. Like *The Trial of Shama Charan Pal*, it does not fit with her other publications. However, this one does not fit with her ideas either, apart from supporting the broad project of involving women in the work of Liberal politics. Perhaps she held her nose, as they say, believing the project required a tone that undermined her usual one of independence and self-reliance. It is pious, saccharine, and often seems to contradict the very things in which she ardently believed. ('Without denying the enormous strides made during the last fifty years in the education of girls, it may well be asked whether too great a sacrifice has not been made in giving up almost entirely the influences of home'.) Fry was the opposite of Orme's type of woman: married to a wealthy man; engaged in good causes. Her demeanour was domestic and reclusive, even while she was hard at work organizing other women in support of her male cronies in the Liberal Party. According to Orme's book, Fry's project had begun with Gladstone's Midlothian campaign and subsequent election in 1880 when many women (and men) came to understand that 'philanthropy and politics are inseparable'. In that election, Sophia's husband Theodore Fry was a successful candidate for Parliament. Six years later she founded the Women's Liberal Federation as an auxiliary to the party, to organize the labours of Liberal women. Whatever her personal diffidence, Sophia Fry was obviously a formidable organizer, and Eliza Orme (again, obviously) respected that. Beyond that, I simply do not know enough to hazard a guess as to why she wrote that particular book.

I suppose it is not quite impossible that Eliza had modified her views by the late 1890s, perhaps chastened by the experiences of the Royal Commission on Labour and the Committee on Prisons. No doubt they both involved numerous frustrations and humiliations. Not much had changed since the mid-1860s when Eliza had first written about 'sound-minded women' and the virtues of a university education and an independent career. Maybe she was burnt out. I do not really think so: her interview with the *Law Journal* was still to come on 12 December 1903, when she stoutly said 'perhaps I ought to have been more persistent' in the matter of trying to force her way into the Law Society and the ranks of solicitors. And an invitation to write the book—in the way that it had to be written—from Lady Fry's family and their mutual friends would have been difficult to refuse.

National Biography

Orme's next (and, as far as I know, last) appearance in print also took the form of biography. She wrote accounts of three lives for the 1901 supplementary volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. All of these men had died in 1898; the *DNB* editors had presumably commissioned Miss Orme for the task, having deemed them worthy of being memorialized. The men in question were William Alexander Hunter (1844–1898, lawyer), Samuel Plimsoll (1824–1898, 'the Sailors' Friend'), and Thomas Bayley Potter (1817–1898, politician). She seems only to have known Hunter personally, and indeed her sources for that essay were limited to 'private information', whereas such information was supplemented in Plimsoll's case by a couple of books and in Potter's by Hansard and 'personal knowledge'. Although she speaks formally, with a rigid correctness about all these men, as was the standard of the *DNB* and the custom of the period, her warmth for Hunter is discernible. When she wrote 'In 1875 … he admitted women to his class in Roman law, and extended to them the same privilege when he afterwards became professor of jurisprudence' she must have remembered venturing into those masculine spaces herself and recalled Hunter's kindness to her, to Mary Ellen Richardson and Reina Lawrence, perhaps even to her sister Beatrice. She also mentions 'his intimate acquaintance with natives from India who had passed through his hands as law students', thinking again of Manomohan Ghose. Her other two subjects were perhaps better known than Hunter: Plimsoll's name is memorialized in the 'plimsoll line' painted on ships to ensure their safety at sea when carrying heavy loads, while Potter was a prominent MP and founder of a political society called the Cobden Club. Finally, all these three men had one more thing in common: they were ardent, active, Liberals in the same 'radical' tradition as Eliza Orme. And unlike most women contributors to the *DNB* she wrote not about other women, but about men.

I want to stress that most of the publications I have discussed here, and listed in the appendix, are signed with Eliza Orme's name. The exceptions are two or three pieces in *The Examiner* signed with her initials, some letters to the editor in the *Women's Gazette* where she wanted, presumably, to veil her own editorial identity, and the unknown number of leaders in the *Weekly Dispatch*. But I cannot list or discuss whatever

articles or essays she may have written that I cannot find because they are unsigned. It is certainly possible that she wrote anonymously for one or more periodicals. Anonymity was the editorial policy of several journals and reviews, although that was changing by the late nineteenth century. And it is worth remembering, too, that her 'authorship' of complex legal documents under the names of male barristers was also, perforce, anonymous, however well-remunerated.

What did she *not* write about? Almost entirely absent from this account of Eliza Orme's contributions to written culture is anything about the law as a profession, still less about the experience of navigating a path to success at its quasi-professional fringes. She did, however, write about how the laws of marriage, of labour, and of property affected women in general, and much of her journalism is infused with the knowledge and assumptions that legal study had supplied. Also absent is any direct comment on her personal life, even when she wrote about someone she knew well (as with Sophia Fry and William Hunter) or about her own experience (as with prison policy or her writings on women's work and independence). Throughout her career as a minor public figure and an occasional journalist, she seems to have been careful to avoid the direct gaze of the reading public on her own life, her own mind and body. The more I have come to learn about her life, her interests, her values, her passions, the better I can understand the motives behind her published writing. But she remains elusive: who was Eliza Orme, and whose was she? What happened to her after that public gaze on her person and experience was removed?