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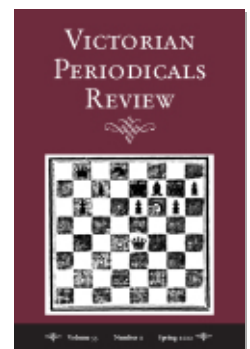
Eliza Orme and the *Women's Gazette and Weekly News* : Editing
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Leslie Howsam

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Eliza Orme and the *Women's Gazette* and *Weekly News*: Editing the Organ of a Fractious Federation, 1888–92

LESLIE HOWSAM

The *Women's Gazette and Weekly News* commenced in 1888 as the self-proclaimed organ of the Women's Liberal Federation (WLF) and ended, four years later, as one of two newspapers documenting an acrimonious split in that organization.¹ The schism featured political dirty tricks around accrediting new branches, the secretary being locked out of her office as money went astray, and the resignation of the organization's leadership—all faithfully, if not objectively, reported in the periodical. The copies that record those dramatic events, however, have hitherto been unknown to scholars, presumably because they survive not among the holdings of the British Library but in an American university's collection. As Maria DiCenzo, Michelle Tusan, Gemma Outen, and others have argued, short-lived advocacy periodicals like the *Women's Gazette* tend to be neglected in periodical studies. They often remain unexploited in broader historical research, especially when, as in this case, the ideas expressed were on the losing side of a Victorian debate. I argue, however, that such publications permit more nuanced scholarly interpretation of the complex movements they represent and record. They also enrich periodical studies through comparison both with better-known magazines and newspapers and with others, equally obscure, whose objectives are similar to their own. The *Women's Gazette*, for example, demonstrates that the personality of the editor could be just as crucial to the style and content of such a paper as that of a prominent novelist in a popular weekly. It contributes to the growing body of scholarship on periodicals directed to women readers that were not concerned with domesticity or fashion but rather functioned in the construction of some women's political identities.² Finally, a tight focus on the interaction of editor, organization, and newspaper opens a

new avenue of research in the study of nineteenth-century periodicals by interrogating the periodical's status as the organ of its related organization.

The *Women's Gazette* was founded to encourage and sustain the practical political work of women in Britain who supported the Liberal Party, the leadership of William Ewart Gladstone, and the cause of Home Rule for Ireland. Although most of the paper's readers were strongly in favour of women's suffrage, its editors and proprietors knew that Liberal women differed as to what official stance their federation should take on the issue. Many Liberals of both sexes, including Gladstone himself, were outright opposed. Even men and women who were mildly supportive or uncommitted were unwilling to see the question create friction or divert attention from competing issues. In response to these political uncertainties, it seemed sensible that the WLF, as well as the *Women's Gazette*, should remain officially neutral on the question of whether votes for women should be incorporated into Liberal Party policy. Once the suffrage movement began to develop inside the party, however, a vocal minority became impatient with the leadership's position and demanded full-throated support for their cause. In the end, the neutral faction could not persuade or outvote the so-called progressives and finally withdrew to form the Women's National Liberal Federation (WNLF). Party policy remained unchanged, but both factions were weaker as a result and the newspaper did not survive.³

The purpose of this article is to introduce the *Women's Gazette and Weekly News*, as both a subject and a source, to periodicals scholars and historians of women in late nineteenth-century Britain. As a subject, it offers the example of a publication conceived and conducted as adjunct to a political and social movement. As a source, the *Women's Gazette* reveals the nuances of the suffrage debates in the context of competing political objectives. It reproduces meeting minutes and records the details of public presentations, governance information, and accounts of activities that may not be preserved in any other archive or repository. News, features, letters, and advertisements include abundant material demonstrating how British women at this period learned to speak in public, organize a campaign, and engage in debate. Its pages also reveal fresh evidence for the life and career of Eliza Orme (1848–1937), integrating her work as editor and journalist, political organizer, and business manager into the narrative of a life better known for legal work and public policy.

Like most Victorian periodicals, the *Women's Gazette and Weekly News* has a convoluted history. Founded in Manchester, it soon moved to London. Initially edited by a male journalist with Liberal sympathies, it came under the control of a highly educated professional woman with political interests and ambitions. Begun as a weekly, it became a monthly without change of title. Proprietorship passed from the hands of its founding editor to a limited company whose shareholders were politically engaged. Its

status as organ of the Women's Liberal Federation, so proudly declared on the masthead, was later resolutely disclaimed. Although a substantial number of issues of the *Women's Gazette* are widely available in microfilm and digital form from the British Library's holdings, the crucial final issues survive, perhaps uniquely, in the Special Collections of the University of Oregon Library. These changes are detailed in the appendix.

Sydney Hallifax's Editorship (44 Issues, November 1888–August 1889)

The *Women's Gazette and Weekly News* was first published in Manchester on November 3, 1888. The founding editor and manager, Sydney Hallifax (1862–1905), was a young British journalist and ardent Home Rule Liberal who later stood for Parliament.⁴ Apart from his Gladstonian politics, Hallifax's motives for undertaking the *Women's Gazette* are not clear, nor is his relationship with the WLF and its leadership. He may have been acting alone or possibly for an anonymous proprietor. (Sir Charles Dilke was associated with some of the emerging leadership of the WLF, and a rumour that he owned the paper was vehemently denied in print.)⁵ Later, when the ownership changed, Hallifax stated that he had founded the paper "rather as a means of propaganda than for profit."⁶ His editorial opinions were primarily confined to Irish politics and elections. The affiliation with the WLF and local Women's Liberal Association (WLA) branches was not made explicit: announcements simply appeared without reference to authorization from the leadership.

The stated "programme" of the *Women's Gazette* defined the paper as "the organ of Liberal women's work and interest in the commonwealth," adding that "the most prominent question at the present time . . . is, of course, the government of Ireland, and many thousands of Englishwomen, filled with deep sympathy for the sorrows of that unhappy country, are anxious so to direct their efforts as to secure the greatest possible results for good."⁷ The anonymous editorial statement (probably by Hallifax) called for a feminine perspective on the Irish situation: "It is quite possible that a man and his wife visiting the distressed districts in Ireland would come back with precisely the same political views, but the illustrations they would quote in support of them would be different."⁸ The editorial went on to admit, "There is also a large group of political questions about which Liberals do not agree, and in which women are particularly interested"; a "fair example" was the political enfranchisement of women.⁹ These questions would be discussed in the gazette's columns with a "perfectly impartial opening" available to both sides.¹⁰

As the weekly periodical got underway, most of each sixteen-page (two-column) issue was taken up with Irish politics, trade unions for women, and elections (for school boards and poor law commissions). There were

also substantial reports of local WLA meetings throughout England and addresses to drawing-room meetings by prominent Liberal ladies. Only rarely did the paper include culinary or fashion advice, fiction, or poetry. Advertisements filled the first two pages and the back page. Curiously, there were two title pages: the outside masthead simply announced the title of the periodical and the date above a full page of advertisements, while the third page revealed a second masthead with the date, volume and issue numbers, and a subtitle proclaiming the *Women's Gazette and Weekly News* as the organ of the Women's Liberal Federation (figures 1 and 2).¹¹ This odd doubling suggests that the proprietor may have hoped to



Figure 1. First-page masthead, *Women's Gazette and Weekly News*, November 17, 1888. Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive. BL_00264_18881117_001_001.



Figure 2. Third-page masthead, *Women's Gazette and Weekly News*, November 17, 1888. Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive. BL_00264_18881117_015_003.

appeal to newsstand customers seeking information applicable to women's interests who might nevertheless be put off by an explicit connection to one particular political group.

After eight months, on July 27, 1889, the newspaper announced that a board of directors had established a limited liability company, the Women's Gazette Printing and Publishing Company Limited, Inc., under the Companies Act to purchase the copyright of the paper from Sydney Hallifax. The initial members were "seven ladies known for devotion to the Liberal cause, some of them possessing long experience of practical business."¹² While the *Women's Gazette* was to be run by its shareholders, it remained informally connected to the Women's Liberal Federation, and the announcement implored members to take out subscriptions or even to purchase shares. Shares cost one pound each, and a thousand were to be issued. Hallifax announced that he "ceased to be personally responsible for the editorial articles and the opinions expressed therein" and seems to have departed the scene without a backward glance.¹³ The company offices were transferred to the professional chambers occupied by the new editor, Eliza Orme, LLB, and her associates (figure 3). Beginning September 1, 1889, cheques for subscriptions were made out to Orme, letters to the editor were addressed "Dear Madam," and the coy nonbranded outside masthead disappeared.

Eliza Orme's Editorship (79 Issues, September 1889–March 1892)

Orme was a person of formidable talents and passionate convictions, not only about careers but also about suffrage for middle-class women, legal protection for labouring women, and Home Rule for Ireland. She studied law and political economy with some of the leading liberal thinkers of the period. Her commitment to the ideology, and probably also her family connections, translated into support for the political party. She joined the leadership of the WLF when it was founded in 1887 by Sophia Fry. There is no evidence that she was financially or otherwise connected with the management of the *Women's Gazette* from its foundation, although such involvement seems plausible. In any case, ten months later she entangled herself in its finances by setting up a limited company with herself as manager and editor (figure 4).

Orme's mother was a prominent suffragist and her father a successful businessman. In 1869, at the age of twenty, she was one of nine women who sat the first General Examination for Women at University College London.¹⁴ Two years later, John Stuart Mill was advocating that she be made secretary of the London National Society for Women's Suffrage, noting that she was "free from that feverish bustle" he associated with feminist politics.¹⁵ Orme's initial university training was in physics and chemistry,



Figure 3. Portrait of Eliza Orme, 1889. From the author's private collection.

THE
WOMEN'S GAZETTE

AND WEEKLY NEWS.

THE ORGAN OF THE WOMEN'S LIBERAL FEDERATION.

No. 45.—Vol. II.

LONDON, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1889.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

"THE WOMEN'S GAZETTE" PRINTING AND PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED.

Incorporated under the Companies' Acts, 1882 to 1886.

CAPITAL £5,000,

In 5,000 Shares of £1 each.

FIRST ISSUE OF 1,000 SHARES OF £1 EACH. PAYABLE IN FULL ON APPLICATION.

DIRECTORS.

Miss MONCK, 76, Eaton Terrace, S.W., *Chairman*.
 Mrs. THOMAS BAYLEY, Peverel House, Nottingham.
 Mrs. BRYANT, D.Sc., 2, Anson Road, London, N.
 Mrs. W. P. BYLES, Oakfield, Bradford.
 Hon. Mrs. HARDCASTLE, '54, Queen's Gate Terrace,
 London, S.W.

Lady HAWKINS, 5, Tilney Street, Park Lane, London, W.
 Miss HOLCROFT, 98, Lexham Gardens, London, S.W.
 Miss SHAW-LEFEVRE, 41, Seymour Street, London, W.
 Mrs. H. G. REID, Warley Hall, Birmingham.
 Countess TOLSTOY, 2, Great Cumberland Place,
 London, W.

SECRETARY.

GEORGE FRASER, Esq., 2, Tokenhouse Buildings, E.C.

EDITOR AND MANAGER.

(From Sept. 1st, 1889).
 Miss E. ORME.

N.B.—All applications for Shares or Prospectuses, and all communications relating to *The Women's Gazette* Printing and Publishing Company, should be addressed to the Secretary, 2, Tokenhouse Buildings, E.C.
 All communications relating to the *Gazette* should be addressed to the office of the *Gazette*, which, on and after Sept. 1st, 1889, will be 5, Dunes Inn, London, W.C.

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COLOURS EXQUISITE.

ASPINALL'S ENAMEL

FOR

HOME BEAUTIFYING,
 GARDEN PARTIES,
 LAWN ORNAMENTING,
 HOUSE DECORATING,
 CHURCH RENOVATING,
 For the YACHT, the
 BEACH, &c., &c.

Old Chairs and Tables can be made into lovely ornaments with this beautiful invention.

COLOUR CARDS POST FREE ON APPLICATION.



FAC-SIMILE OF TIN.

ENAMEL.

SURFACE LIKE PORCELAIN.

ASPINALL'S ENAMEL

Extract of Letter received at Peckham,
 on 22nd December last.

"Any other I have used I find runs into blisters, or cracks after it has been on two or three days."

REJECT POISONOUS IMITATIONS.

Sold everywhere, or can be procured direct from the Works, post free, in Tins, 6d., 1s. 6d., and 3s.
 Bath Enamel, 20s. per gallon, or in tins, post free, 1s. 6d. and 3s. 6d.

ASPINALL'S ENAMEL WORKS, LONDON, S.E.

Figure 4. Advertisement for the newly formed Women's Gazette Printing and Publishing Co., Ltd. *Women's Gazette and Weekly News*, September 7, 1889. Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive. BL_00264_18890907_001_001.

but in 1872 she embarked on the study of law. She believed that there was “work to be done in explaining to women their real position from the legal point of view” and that law “is a lucrative profession which ought to be open to women.”¹⁶ Virtually no one shared those aspirations; ambitious feminists sought women’s access to learned professions through medicine, not law. Nevertheless, by 1875 she had rented chambers in Chancery Lane with Mary Richardson, another law student, and they began offering their services as conveyancers and patent agents. These lower-level legal services were not as tightly restricted as others. For the more lucrative services that were restricted to credentialed barristers and solicitors, they had a different strategy: to work behind the scenes for those needing documents prepared and to charge a hefty fee for the service. (There was no point in waiting until they had completed their degrees because academic credentials were irrelevant to entry into the professions of barrister or solicitor. Women were excluded, systematically and relentlessly, and that policy continued for a further forty years until 1919.)¹⁷ Orme wrote leaders for the *Weekly Dispatch* and contributed occasional articles to periodicals, including the *Examiner*, the *Englishwoman’s Review*, and *Longman’s Magazine*.¹⁸ In May 1888, at the age of thirty-nine, she achieved a modest notoriety by becoming the first woman in Britain to earn a law degree. The first issue of the *Women’s Gazette and Weekly News* appeared six months later.

While there is no evidence available as to her financial investment in the new company (or as to what compensation she received for editorial duties), there is some evidence that Orme recruited colleagues, friends, and family members to take out advertisements.¹⁹ Her editorial statements, which normally appeared on the eighth page of the periodical, most often focused on Irish politics but sometimes discussed upcoming elections, women’s working conditions, or suffrage. She also replied to letters to the editor and occasionally wrote such letters herself, signing them E. O. One of these was eloquent on the disabilities of women as political workers. Their faults, in her view, included “an over anxiety to make the world perfect at once,” and she continued:

An Act of Parliament, saying that no food shall be sold that is not good and nourishing, no alcohol drunk by anyone, no wives beaten, no little children ill-used, no ugly advertisements posted, no tight stays worn, &c, &c, is what many of our workers would like to see passed. The slow method of educating the people to wish for a better state of things, followed by the Act of Parliament which merely puts on paper what is already in the air, is all too slow for the enthusiasts. The experienced statesmen who warn them that passing an Act is very different from enforcing it, are sneered at as lukewarm, or even accused of being in favour of the abuses sought to be prohibited.²⁰

Her critique was not about feminist objectives but rather about political strategy.

Before long, the federation's and, thus, the periodical's policy of neutrality came under attack. The more radical members, those less enmeshed with Gladstone and his supporters, believed the WLF should pressure the party leadership to make votes for women part of the Liberal platform. In 1890, Rosalind Howard, Countess of Carlisle (1845–1921), joined the executive committee and firmly rejected the notion that the WLF should serve as a loyal auxiliary of the Liberal Party. She also supported temperance, non-adulteration of food, and other causes dismissed as unrealistic or utopian by the sensible and pragmatic Miss Orme. The issues of the *Women's Gazette* for the first four months of 1890 are lost (absent from any recorded archival or library holdings), so the countess's name may have appeared earlier than May 17, 1890, but on that occasion she is reported speaking at the annual meeting of the WLF Council in London. "Her heart," she told the gathering, "was enflamed for women's suffrage."²¹ Unlike "Miss Orme, who has been supporting women's suffrage since 1866," Lady Carlisle added, she had only recently been "allowed to go on the platform."²² Carlisle and her allies insisted that, despite the importance of Irish questions, the Liberals must accept women's suffrage as party policy, and women workers must refuse to support individual candidates who failed to adopt the suffrage cause. She also began to organize; in the terminology of her opponents, she became adept at "wire-pulling."²³ Carlisle and others in the progressive faction encouraged local associations to appoint proxies for the London meetings of the WLF council, knowing that those votes were susceptible to systematic manipulation. Similar machinations resulted in the rapid formation of new local associations, each with a vote at the annual council meeting.²⁴

By June 15, 1891, the paper was reporting an open conflict between Orme and Carlisle: her ladyship had spoken in a meeting about the newspaper's "bias against bringing this object forward."²⁵ Orme replied: "The *Gazette* is the organ of the Federation, and it is my duty to edit it in accordance with the views of the majority of that Federation . . . Lady Carlisle said that if women's suffrage were made a necessary part of the programme of this Federation, I should write an editorial in favour of it. No, I should not be there to do it. I should not remain a member of a Federation which acted on an illiberal and exclusive policy."²⁶ And indeed, she was not there to do it; the periodical came to its end in November 1892. Orme and other moderate WLF members split off to form the Women's National Liberal Association (WNLA) while the rump of the WLF pursued its suffrage-now policy and eventually designated another newspaper, the *Woman's Herald*, as its new organ.²⁷

Before that happened, however, the *Women's Gazette* discontinued the weekly issue and in January 1891 began (without changing its title) to publish on a monthly basis. By June, the company was admitting to debt to the tune of three hundred pounds. They called on supporters to donate, subscribe, or purchase shares and also doubled the price to two pence per copy.²⁸ The change was meant to be temporary until WLF membership and *Women's Gazette* subscriptions increased. Orme (now described as editor and manager) and the company directors promised that articles would be longer than before, that well-known Liberal women would contribute, and that there would be a serial story in addition to reports of WLF and WLA activities.²⁹ Most of the promised changes in content were implemented, but the periodical also carried extensive coverage of the increasingly acrimonious relationships within the WLF executive committee. Sparking further outrage on the part of the moderate party, the so-called progressives had begun organizing "mushroom associations" (new WLA branches whose members the moderates described as having little experience or sophistication and whose leaders might be vulnerable to manipulation) and sponsoring them in sufficient numbers to sway votes in the parent WLF.³⁰

Nine months into the new monthly regime, beginning September 15, 1891, the *Women's Gazette* announced that Orme was now publisher as well as editor and manager. The term "publisher" was ambiguous in this periodical from the beginning. The information column routinely stated that it was published at the address of its printer (see appendix). However, Halifax owned the copyright, publishing the paper first out of Manchester and then from London, and it was he who sold the copyright to the limited company in 1889. The WLF was never publisher or proprietor but merely a body that informally recognized the *Women's Gazette* as its organ. Perhaps this awkward status had to be clarified for members and readers, since the extent of federation control was in dispute between the WLF executive committee and the directors of the limited company, some of whom were the same people. As editor, Orme undertook to report verbatim on executive meetings but made no promises to give voice to her opponents on any other matter. Furthermore, local associations and individual shareholders would have the opportunity to criticize the management at the company's annual meeting.³¹ She had built a firewall between periodical and federation.

Orme's last issue as editor was that of March 7, 1892, but the announcement did not appear until the following issue. Events at the WLF headquarters that spring were turbulent. Local associations had applied for affiliation using "counterfeit" forms which had not been issued from the secretary's office; Lady Carlisle insisted these were insignificant, a simple bureaucratic matter, while her opponents identified the printed forms as "a

means of swamping the next Council meeting with so-called ‘Progressive’ votes.”³² Then the *Women’s Gazette* reported that, “just as [they were] going to press,” they had heard that two of Lady Carlisle’s colleagues had “taken possession of the offices at 23, Queen Anne’s Gate, locking themselves in and refusing admittance” to the secretary.³³

In the midst of this rancour, Orme found an opportunity—and perhaps an exit strategy. In February 1892 she had been appointed Senior Lady Assistant Commissioner to the Royal Commission on Labour, investigating women’s labour in several industries and overseeing the work of three colleagues.³⁴ The work began in April, and her departure from both the *Women’s Gazette* editorship and the WLF executive committee was announced on April 12, in the same issue that recorded the seizure of the WLF offices and the installation of a new editor and manager for the *Women’s Gazette*, Miss L. Brabrook.

Eliza Brabrook’s Editorship (7 Issues, April–November 1891)

Eliza Margaret Brabrook (ca. 1867–1927) was one of the nine daughters of Sir Edward Brabrook (1839–1930), a civil servant interested in the law of building societies. She was twenty-four years of age and living with her parents during the 1891 census, where her occupation is listed as “Sub Editor Author.”³⁵ She is almost certainly the person referred to in the *Women’s Gazette* and *Woman’s Herald* as Miss Brabrook, L. Brabrook, and sometimes L. M. Brabrook (with the initial L presumably serving as a nickname abbreviation for the name Eliza). Her editorial address is given in the *Women’s Gazette* as 16 Henrietta Street (the London address of the publisher Lawrence and Bullen, whose senior partner was the brother of Orme’s business partner and close friend Reina Emily Lawrence). Brabrook probably worked as subeditor at either or both the *Women’s Gazette* and Lawrence and Bullen. The name Brabrook has not been found in the *Women’s Gazette* before she became its editor, but she turns up occasionally in the *Woman’s Herald* in the later 1890s as a secretary of the new WNLF.³⁶

In Brabrook’s eight months of producing seven issues (September was missed), the *Women’s Gazette* continued to reproduce lengthy verbatim minutes of meetings, complete with disputes about counterfeit subscription forms, locked doors, and even misplaced funds. On May 10, 1892, the title page proclaimed the *Women’s Gazette* as “the organ of the Liberal Women, of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales”—no longer of the Women’s Liberal Federation—and the same issue recorded the resignation of seventeen leading members of that organization, including Eliza Orme. Tensions were particularly high because a women’s suffrage bill (sponsored by Sir Albert Rollitt) was before Parliament. Later issues returned to the

paper's original themes of local politics and concerns about Ireland, along with occasional fiction and poetry and a prize essay contest. They also continued to print letters to the editor and reports of meetings, where the quarrel continued to reverberate.

There is no question that the *Women's Gazette* ended with the twenty-sixth issue of its fifth volume (November 9, 1892), although that issue does not identify itself as the last. Brabrook and the directors of the Women's Gazette Co. Ltd. may have made this orderly termination an objective, since each of the earlier volumes had contained twenty-six issues. In any case, a letter dated December 31 to the *Woman's Herald* refers to the "now defunct" *Women's Gazette* and to a printed letter signed by Brabrook and "sent to former subscribers of that paper . . . an appeal to raise £200 to pay the debts of the paper so as to save the directors and their immediate friends."³⁷

Theorizing the Concept of a Periodical as Organ

As the self-proclaimed organ of the Women's Liberal Federation, the *Women's Gazette* manifested itself as a material artefact of political discourse. Political organizations may have owned or sponsored periodicals, or sometimes, as in this case, they merely tacitly accorded an independent one the right to represent them in print. Brian Harrison has written about the close relationships between British pressure groups and the press, and Maria DiCenzo has drawn attention to publication as a strategy of feminist social movements, while Gemma Outen refers to *Wings* and the *Woman's Signal* as "mouthpieces" of the temperance organizations for which they spoke.³⁸ Neither political historians nor periodicals scholars, however, seem to have theorized what it means for a publication to be someone's or something's organ. While the term often appears as an apparently unproblematic descriptor, I would argue that it carries the kind of cultural meaning that Victorian studies might usefully interrogate.³⁹ In any case, the question is inescapable with the *Women's Gazette* and the succeeding WLF organ, the *Woman's Herald*.

There is no evidence of any formal affiliation with the WLF when the *Women's Gazette* was founded. Halifax's newspaper was designated on the masthead as providing merely a "chronicle" of WLA activities, although its rather vague "programme" was "to be an organ of Liberal women's work and interest in the commonwealth."⁴⁰ But Orme's masthead declared it the official organ of the WLF, and her editorials spoke with confidence on behalf of its majority leadership until that group was undermined. From Orme's perspective, it was her "duty to edit [the newspaper] in accordance with the views of the majority of that Federation"; although her opponents

frequently asked for more coverage of their point of view, she fended them off by remarking that it was repetitive.⁴¹ Brabrook eventually declared that the *Women's Gazette* had become "the organ of the constitutional party" in the federation, when it no longer spoke for the organization as a whole.⁴² Throughout all this, the federation had no financial interest in the periodical, although individual members and some local associations subscribed or owned shares. Nevertheless, the relationship was beneficial to both sides. The *Women's Gazette* published the minutes of meetings, news, and events and made its columns available to WLF members for the discussion of issues both uncontentious and controversial. The WLF, for its part, provided not only a stream of content to fill the newspaper's columns but also a built-in list of potential subscribers. From the proprietors' and editors' perspective, a certain amount of political dissension was acceptable and even helped keep the enterprise afloat. As for readers, while some no doubt kept track of the shifting relationship between the federation and its organ, others might have remained oblivious, perhaps subscribing merely to support the party, for local news, or even merely for access to the advertisements.

After the schism, the *Woman's Herald* editor Christina S. Bremner initially stated that the *Woman's Herald* "is not the organ of any party. It is an independent Liberal paper for women, and it gives an independent support to any movement among Liberal women which is in harmony with its own principles."⁴³ However, when the newly elected executive committee of the WLF resolved that the *Woman's Herald* should indeed be its organ, the newspaper's managers acquiesced in this identification and immediately called for subscriptions, advertisements, notices, reports of meetings, and so forth. Once again there were advantages for both sides. Notices came with the disclaimer that "the [WLF Executive] Committee are not responsible for views expressed in other parts of the paper."⁴⁴ Nor were the *Woman's Herald's* finances, apparently, any more entangled with those of the WLF than those of its predecessor had been. The question arises: just what did the term "organ" mean to these people? And what did it mean to their contemporaries in political and press circles?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "organ," in this sense, as "a means or medium of communication, or of expression of opinion; *esp.* a periodical which serves as the mouthpiece of a particular political party, cause, movement, etc."⁴⁵ But political parties, causes, and movements are human and social, while media are material and commercial, and mouthpieces are metaphorical. In scholarship on the literary and cultural press, considerations of ownership and influence are paramount. It would be useful to extend the analysis to the complex relationships between political groups and their periodical mouthpieces, where the designation of "organ"

may be at arm's length, as in the case of the *Women's Gazette*, or more formal. Sometimes the designation is conferred posthumously by historians, rather than by contemporaries. Meanwhile, some organizations, especially scientific and scholarly ones, published periodicals as a routine and intrinsic part of their operations but did not refer to them as organs.

The metaphor is an unsatisfactory one when taken literally. An organ is a powerful instrument played by an individual musician for a congregation gathered to express shared values. This has happened since the ancient world at organized games, and in nineteenth-century Britain it happened in town halls as well as churches. In a liturgical setting, the organ's sounds fill the space and may enhance the choral efforts of hesitant voices. But neither organ nor organist can make a congregation sing in harmony, and in any case, amplification of other voices or instruments is not the instrument's purpose—its music fills in sounds and provides supporting chords.⁴⁶ Moving from musicological to biological metaphors, an organ is also an essential part of the human body; perhaps for some the usage evoked the periodical's indispensability to an organization's well-being and even survival. Finally, it is worth noting the resonance between the words "organ" and "organization." The latter term implies arrangement or imposing order. Societies and associations are bodies that impose a specific order on their members' shared convictions in the form of constitutions, bylaws, and activities. Many of them issue periodical publications, whether modest newsletters or ambitious journals, to reinforce that order by repeating the same message in different words and stories. But to casually designate those publications as organs is to obscure the complex relationships involved and even to imply that they are somehow set apart from the forces that affect other periodicals.

The status of the periodical-as-organ can be integrated with the major themes of contemporary theoretical studies of the periodical press, including questions of periodicity, place, and gender. Margaret Beetham's rich body of scholarship suggests: "The periodical, simultaneously proclaiming itself of the moment and of a series, structures both the present and the gaps between one number and the next."⁴⁷ Hallifax designed the *Women's Gazette* as a weekly and as a conveyer of news. He and his successors frequently urged local WLA branches to supply their reports in good time, a practice that allowed events to be announced in one issue and reported upon in the next. The weekly schedule conveyed its own sense of the urgency of women's work in Liberalism: the inspiring music played by the WLF's organ appeared to have been composed by its members. The transition to a monthly issue, presumably because of financial constraints, reduced the immediacy of the member-reader's experience. At another level, the passage and circularity of time can be detected in the rhythm of

the WLF's year as reported in its organ: the annual May meetings had to be announced, then recounted at length, often verbatim. This becomes more evident in the paper's last two years, as those meetings became the sites of contention. When it comes to place, the *Women's Gazette's* Manchester origins are intriguing and would repay further research, perhaps beginning with the printer Joseph Heywood or possibly with leading Manchester Liberals. But more broadly, what stands out is the tension between the London leadership of the WLF and its provincial membership. The newspaper's pages point to its geographical reach by means of the federated structure of associations. It was a national newspaper devoted in large part to local news but with a mission to convey international developments. At that level, the paper's politics demonstrate how the narrative of Ireland's wrongs was conveyed to Liberal supporters elsewhere, in detail designed to inspire reactions ranging from disgust to rage to action. With respect to gender, this self-proclaimed women's gazette and purveyor of news was not much like other periodicals for middle-class women. Rather than advise on how to secure an honest parlourmaid, for example, it published remarks by Orme on class cooperation. She tartly insisted that the "lady" members of local associations take into account the schedules, budgets, and preferences of working women members; a middle-class member must learn to work with others "before she can be of any real value as a politician."⁴⁸

The relationship with the WLF, and more broadly with political Liberalism, sets the *Women's Gazette* apart from many other periodicals. It is a matter of speculation as to who, if anyone, was backing Sydney Halifax to publish the paper during those first few months: perhaps Charles Dilke; perhaps Eliza Orme (with or without the support of like-minded people in her wide circle of political, legal, and cultural influencers); perhaps Sophia Fry and others in the nascent WLF; or perhaps some other community of feminist and Liberal supporters. Later, the new ownership structure and management were made explicit. But wherever the money came from, it was kept apart from the federation. As a federated alliance of like-minded local associations, the WLF had only limited ability to set policy and expend funds. Its executive council worked within a constitutional structure that was vulnerable to "wire-pulling," which meant having the leaders' power undermined by voters giving proxies to their adversaries or having the organization as a whole swamped by the formation of new "mushroom associations."⁴⁹ As long as the WLF leadership remained more or less united, the arm's-length relationship with its organ (and the proprietors) worked well for both sides. The finances were kept in separate accounts. Advertisements could be contracted and contributions solicited without troubling the councils of the organization. Copies sold on the newsstand were framed as news and miscellaneous information for

women, rather than as political opinion. The editor could address readers *ex officio* in one column while reporting in another about a speech made by Miss Orme, LLB, in her capacity as president of the Strand WLA.

In terms of the perennial question “what do editors do?,” operating the newspaper does not seem to have been a full-time occupation for any of them.⁵⁰ Halifax had irons in other fires. Orme had a business to run and was involved in the Home Rule Society as well as other causes and concerns. Brabrook had paid editorial responsibilities elsewhere, although her possible earlier subeditorship suggests that paid staff may have been junior members of the production team. For scholars undertaking more extensive investigations, it would be useful to know more about the day-to-day work of the newspaper and its financing and management at different stages. The private records of individual board members of the *Women’s Gazette Co. Ltd.* might provide one avenue of investigation. The mechanisms by which local association leaders communicated with the editors, and the degree to which the latter revised contributions, would also be worth exploring. As for the periodical’s wider reputation, the furore of spring 1892 did generate a few reports in other periodicals, but patient tracking in the digital record might well reveal further interactions with the mainstream press of the period.⁵¹

Further research will be necessary before the full cultural and political significance of the *Women’s Gazette* can be assessed. There are twenty-four (out of 130) missing issues to be accounted for. Almost all the surviving issues, however, retain their advertisements, and many of these repeat in succeeding issues over periods of many months. Here is another fertile area for study: a periodical with a fairly well-defined target market of serious-thinking middle-class women.

Coda: Reflections on Researching the *Women’s Gazette*

I became interested in the *Women’s Gazette* when I retired and returned to a long-standing interest in Eliza Orme (dating back to the 1980s). I had always thought of Orme in terms of her legal training and professional ambitions and did not take her role as a newspaper editor particularly seriously. When I sought out the microfilmed copies at Robarts Library at the University of Toronto around 2018, it was merely to trace Orme’s writings and her movements as she addressed WLA branches and other groups around the country. But even that incomplete collection (reproducing only the extant British Library volumes) revealed how central she was to the newspaper’s flourishing and survival, and it hinted at how important the newspaper was to Orme’s own self-identity. It suggested the hypothesis that perhaps she was primarily neither a lawyer nor a journalist, but an

aspiring politician. It was not unusual for men to begin a career by studying law and continue it by dabbling in journalism. Following that pattern, Orme moved into a leadership role in the federation, perhaps hoping to use the organization as a stepping stone to other opportunities within the party. Whether or not that line of research can be sustained, however, the newspaper she edited has become a valid subject in its own right.

James Mussell urges scholars to consider the ephemerality of periodicals, whether of individual issues, bound volumes, microform reproductions, or digital simulacra.⁵² With those considerations in mind, I hereby admit that I have never seen a print copy of the *Women's Gazette*, bound or unbound. *The Waterloo Directory* offers only one location, the British Library, although the Harvester microfilming program of the 1980s made the surviving British Library volumes widely available. But unlike more popular periodicals, this one had not initially been selected for transformation from film to digital form. (When I looked at the microfilm, it was the first time in decades that I had used that technology, but it was possible to scan individual pages and save them to a USB drive.) The microfilm edition conveyed its own authority, sense of completeness, and perhaps a geographical imperative, so it was some time before it occurred to me that the periodical might exist outside the British Library. Eventually a colleague suggested checking WorldCat, where the volume in Special Collections at the University of Oregon appears. I considered traveling to Eugene from Toronto and also negotiated briefly with a potential research assistant. After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in 2020, I approached the library again and arranged to purchase digital scans of the volume in its collection. That was transformative: rather than working against time in the library, or at one remove through the eyes of a paid researcher, I have unrestricted access to the pages of most of the newspaper's last three years. But this was a private purchase, not a project of the University of Oregon Libraries. Meanwhile, fifty-nine of the seventy-one issues at the British Library were digitized and made available through the British Newspaper Archive in 2019. However, the forty-seven issues at Eugene remain in what Patrick Leary calls the "offline penumbra," unavailable to researchers whose access is limited to materials that are available digitally and preferably at no cost.⁵³ It seems likely that the British Library received its copies through the legal deposit program, whereas the single volume at Eugene bears the stamp of the Women's Liberal Federation (see appendix). The provenance of these scarce materials, and their remediation in variously accessible forms, has become part of their narrative.

The *Women's Gazette and Weekly News* was an advocacy periodical with a short run. Its editors and many of its readers supported a view of women's suffrage and women's political work that is now difficult to

comprehend or justify and thus deeply uncongenial to modern readers. But for that very reason, it should form part of the corpus for research on the late 1880s and early 1890s, which was a tumultuous period in British and Irish politics generally and a key moment in the politics of women's suffrage and women's labour in particular. In this essay, I have concentrated on the lurid details of the split among women Liberals; it makes a compelling narrative, explains a good deal about the rise and eventual decline of the *Women's Gazette*, highlights the newspaper's role as the organ of the WLF, and draws on the newly discovered copies in the University of Oregon archives. But the day-by-day and week-by-week activities of that organization and its federated associations, as recorded in the newspaper's pages, might prove even more revealing. Scholarship on Victorian periodicals has developed methodologies to reconstruct and analyse the literary and cultural press and the mainstream news media. We should be putting those methods to use on papers like the *Women's Gazette* and *Woman's Herald*, where the contradictions within feminism and Liberalism were documented and the concept of the periodical-as-organ was tested.

University of Windsor

Appendix: Publication Details for the *Women's Gazette* and *Weekly News*

Publisher/Proprietor: (1) Probably Sydney Hallifax (see below), possibly with financial backing from unidentified sources: November 3, 1888–August 31, 1889, nos. 1–44. It was Hallifax who conducted negotiations with the subsequent proprietors. The printer John Heywood of Deansgate, Manchester, is named as publisher during Hallifax's editorship, but the final page of each issue states that it was "printed and published for the proprietors" by Heywood. Furthermore, later printers are referred to as publishers. (2) Women's Gazette Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., at the business address of the current editor/manager: September 1, 1889–November 9, 1892, nos. 45–130.

Editor/Manager: (1) Sydney Hallifax, first from Queen's Buildings, Ridgefield, Manchester (London Office, 11 Paternoster Buildings): November 3–December 22, 1888, nos. 1–8; then from 11 Paternoster Buildings, London: December 29, 1888–August 31, 1889, nos. 9–44. (2) Eliza Orme, 5 Dane's Inn, Strand, London: September 7, 1889–March 7, 1892, nos. 45–123. On September 15, 1891, Orme is explicitly named as publisher as well as editor and manager. (3) L. Brabrook, 16 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London: April 12–November 9, 1892, nos. 124–30. Ambiguities of control may be traced, to some extent, by the notification that cheques were payable to, successively, Hallifax, Orme, and Brabrook.

Frequency/Pagination: Weekly until November 15, 1890 (no. 107); monthly from December 15, 1890, to November 9, 1892 (nos. 108–30). Five volumes of twenty-six issues each: vol. 1, nos. 1–26; vol. 2, nos. 27–52; vol. 3, nos. 53–78; vol. 4, nos. 79–104; vol. 5, nos. 105–30. Normally sixteen pages, but there are some two-page supplements with roman numerals. Continuous pagination until November or December 1890, then each issue paginated 1–16. There is an index to volume 1.

Price: 1d.; increased to 2d. on November 15, 1890. Obtainable from W. H. Smith. Annual subscriptions for weekly: one copy, 6s. 6d.; two copies, 13s.; three copies, 19s. 6d.; four copies, £1 5s.; six copies, £1 15s. Annual subscriptions for monthly: 2s. 6d.

Printer: (1) John Heywood, Deansgate and Ridgefield, Manchester, and 11 Paternoster Buildings, London: November 3, 1888–August 31, 1889. (2) The Southern Publishing Co., Ltd., North Street, Brighton, and 62 Fleet Street, London EC: September 7, 1889–September 15, 1891. (3) Dorrington Bros, 18 Bear-alley, Farringdon Street, London EC: October 7, 1891–November 9, 1892.

Holdings: (1) British Library: reproduced on the Harvester Microfilm series *Social and Political Status of Women in Britain: Radical and Reforming Periodicals for and by Women, 1872–1927*; two bound volumes containing nos. 1–61 (November 3, 1888–December 28, 1889) and nos. 109–20 (January 15–December 12, 1891) but missing nos. 10 (January 5, 1889) and 44 (August 31, 1889); a third volume, apparently containing issues for 1890, has been missing from the British Library collection for many years. At the time of writing, nos. 1–61 were available online through the British Newspaper Archive. A preliminary issue at the beginning of the first volume bears the *Women's Gazette* masthead and the date of August 9, 1888, but the content is shipping news. Presumably, this was a mock-up or prospectus; printer John Heywood also owned the *Lancashire Merchant and Ship Canal News*. (2) Special Collections, University of Oregon Libraries: a single bound volume containing nos. 79–130 (May 5, 1890–November 9, 1892), but missing nos. 80 (May 12, 1890), 104 (October 25, 1890), 106 (November 8, 1890), 108 (December 15[?], 1890), and 127 (July 25[?], 1892). There was no September 1892 issue. A stamp in the Eugene volume (April 20, 1891, 10) indicates that it belonged to the Women's Liberal Federation, 23 Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster. The volume has a bookplate reading "In Memory of Jane Grant" (Grant's papers are at Eugene). In addition to the miscellaneous issues listed above, nos. 62–78 (weekly from January to April 1890) are not held in either collection.

NOTES

I acknowledge the generosity of my fellow scholars, all the way from the 2019 RSVP Conference in Brighton to a 2021 Twitter conversation on the subject of periodicals as organs. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, Patrick Leary, Stephan Pigeon, and the anonymous referees for *VPR* all critiqued earlier drafts of this article. Staff at the British Library provided information on the missing 1890 volume in their collection. It was Prof. Kooistra who suggested checking WorldCat, where the final issues of the *Women's Gazette* were hiding in plain sight. Beth Gaskell helped facilitate the addition of the title to the British Newspaper Archive.

1. I use the terms “newspaper” and “periodical” interchangeably in this article. The subtitle of the *Women's Gazette* was “A National Newspaper and Review. Devoted to the Social Well-Being and Political Education of Women, with a Chronicle of the work of the Women's Liberal Association”; however, the British Library volumes are catalogued as periodicals, not newspapers. The term “volume” may refer to: the editorial policy of designating each set of twenty-six issues as one of five volumes, the British Library's policy of binding issues together on an annual basis, or the single bound item in Special Collections at the University of Oregon containing volumes 4 and 5 as designated by the periodical's editors.
2. Tusan, *Women Making News*, 12–13; DiCenzo, Delap, and Ryan, *Feminist Media History*, 78–84. See also Dillane, “What Is a Periodical Editor?”; Easley, Gill, and Rodgers, *Women, Periodicals and Print Culture*; Gray, *Women in Journalism*; and Onslow, *Women of the Press*.
3. Walker, “Gender, Suffrage and Party,” 85–86.
4. In addition to his newspaper journalism, Halifax was the author of *How We Govern Ireland Today* (London: National Liberal Pamphlet, 1887), *John Mandeville, Martyr* (London and Manchester: Home Rule Union, 1888), and *Annals of a Doss House* (London: George Allen, 1900). In 1892 he stood unsuccessfully as the Liberal candidate in Faversham. Part of his career was spent in Australia, where his journalism included a signed article entitled “The Babble of Babylon” for the *West Australian* (June 4, 1898). Here he claimed to receive exclusive information from Sir Charles Dilke on diplomatic relationships between Australia and the Philippines.
5. “Aims and Ownership of the Women's Gazette,” 105. Dilke had retired temporarily from public life and Liberal politics two years earlier after becoming involved in a divorce scandal. See Howsam, “Legal Paperwork,” for evidence that Eliza Orme was consulted by Charles and/or Emilia Dilke at the time of the scandal. For more, see Israel, “French Vices,” although the author is mistaken in saying that Orme was editor of the *Women's Gazette* at that early stage.

6. "Women's Gazette and the Women's Liberal Federation," 453.
7. "Our Programme," 8.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. In some periodicals, such an external title page might be called a wrapper, but in this case the contiguous leaf (pages 15 and 16 of each issue) normally contained textual material on the recto.
12. The names were Lady (Henriette) Hayter, Mrs. Thomas Bayley, Mrs. (Sophie) Bryant, D.Sc., Miss (Reina) Lawrence, Miss Emily Shaw Lefevre, Mrs. H. G. Reid (of Birmingham), and Countess Tolstoy. The final board removed the name of Reina Lawrence (Orme's law partner) and added those of Mrs. W. P. (Sarah Ann) Byles and Emilia Monck.
13. "Women's Gazette Company," 8.
14. Howsam, "Orme, Eliza"; Howsam, "Legal Paperwork," 109.
15. Mill to G. C. Robertson, June 1, 1871, in Mill, *Later Letters*, 1823–24.
16. Orme to Helen Taylor, December 7, 1872, quoted in Howsam, "Legal Paperwork," 110.
17. Mossman, *First Women Lawyers*, 114–16.
18. Green, "Journalism as a Profession," 501.
19. The Nineteenth-Century Building Society, of which Orme was a director, advertised regularly from November 30, 1889. Orme's former law office partner Mary Richardson later became a business owner and advertised "The Stores, Bedford Park" on the *Women's Gazette* front page. On February 14, 1891, there appeared an advert in the *Women's Gazette* offering to provide "home and education to delicate girl for winter or longer, near Falmouth, seaside. Daughter, high Cambridge certificates. Moderate terms. Apply Editor, *Women's Gazette*" (2). Orme's sister Olivia Fox lived in Falmouth and had two daughters.
20. Orme [E. O.], "Ethics of Public Life," 919.
21. "Women's Liberal Federation: Annual Meeting of the Council," 1284.
22. Ibid. See also Fahey, "Howard [née Stanley], Rosalind Frances."
23. Orme, "Letter to the Editor," 1533.
24. "Women's Liberal Federation Correspondence: Proxy Delegates," August 16, 1890; "Women's Liberal Federation Correspondence: Proxy Delegates," August 30, 1890; "Women's Liberal Federation Correspondence: Proxy Delegates," October 4, 1890; "Women's Liberal Federation: Report of the Executive, Thursday Oct. 16," November 1, 1890.
25. "Annual Council Meeting," 6.
26. Ibid., 7.
27. "Women's Liberal Federation," June 25, 1892, 11. Formerly the *Women's Penny Paper* (1888–90), the *Woman's Herald* (1891–93) came under new editorship (Christine S. Bremner) with the departure of founding editor

- Henrietta Müller (who styled herself Helena B. Temple) in April 1892, about the same time as the schism in the WLF. See Van Remoortel, "International Feminism."
28. Gregory, "Our Paper," 14.
 29. "To Our Shareholders and Subscribers," 1705.
 30. Editorial, August 15, 1891, 9.
 31. Editorial, September 15, 1891, 8.
 32. Editorial, April 12, 1892, 9.
 33. Ibid.
 34. Ibid., 8. Orme's reports covered barmaids and waitresses; women working in the nail-, chain- and bolt-making industries in the Midlands; and women's work in Ireland.
 35. 1891 England, Wales & Scotland Census, County of Kent, Parish of Lewisham, enumeration district 5, RG 12, 520, f. 139 p. 29, schedule 188.
 36. Brabrook's name does not appear as author in legal deposit library catalogues or in standard periodical databases. Research in census, birth, and death records produces the following information: Eliza Margaret Brabrook (ca. 1867–January 13, 1927); daughter of Sir Edward and Eliza Emma (Withers) Brabrook; married 1901 to Joseph Robert Carter, stockbroker, with whom she had two children. See Johnson, "Brabrook, Sir Edward William." Orme herself was on the board of the Nineteenth-Century Building Society, so she may have known Sir Edward through professional connections.
 37. Slack, "Dissentient Women's Association," 9.
 38. Harrison, "Press and Pressure Group"; DiCenzo, Delap, and Ryan, *Feminist Media History*, 76–84; Outen, "Wings and the Woman's Signal," 555.
 39. Contemporaries in a wide range of periodical contexts used the term, apparently comfortable that their readers would know what it meant. Matthew Arnold said that various quarterlies were the organs of their respective parties (*Essays in Criticism*, 22–23). Thomas Cooper remarked that without the *Northern Star*, the Chartists "had no organ for the exposure of wrongs" (*Life of Thomas Cooper*, 171). And the *Germ* was described on its title page as the organ of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.
 40. "Our Programme," 8.
 41. Orme, "Clear Issue," i; "Annual Council Meeting," 7.
 42. "Shall We Join the Dissentients?," 6. This editorial statement refers to "the circular signed officially by Miss Brabrook, the editor of the late *Women's Gazette*," which includes this declaration. See note 37 for another reference to Brabrook's circular.
 43. "Women's Liberal Federation Notes," 17.
 44. "Women's Liberal Federation," May 14, 1892, 17; "Women's Liberal Federation," June 25, 1892, 11.

45. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “organ, n.1,” <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132421>.
46. See Baker, *Organ*, 23–66. I am grateful to Stephan Pigeon for information on the history of organ music.
47. Beetham, “Time,” 327.
48. Orme, “How to Secure an Effective Union,” 37.
49. Editorial, August 15, 1891, 9.
50. Finkelstein and Patten, “Editing *Blackwood’s*.”
51. “Group of Liberal Dames,” ii.
52. Mussell, “Repetition,” 343–45.
53. Leary, “Googling the Victorians,” 82–83.

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