The Lives of Mistresses and Maids: Editing Victorian Correspondence with Genealogy, Prosopography, and the TEI

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Abstract

In this paper, we explore the material conditions of scholarship and digital editorial work that make uncovering nineteenth-century women's lives possible in the twenty-first century. Taking our project, *Digital Dinah Craik*, a TEI-edition of the letters of the bestselling Victorian author, as a case study, we discuss research methods that combine digital scholarly editing with genealogy and prosopography. We argue that by combining research tools aimed at scholars, such as the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, with research tools aimed at a more general audience, such as *Ancestry.com* and the *British Newspaper Archive*, we can develop more creative and inclusive research methods and in turn, gain a fuller picture of women's and working-class lives.

It is much to be regretted that no lives of maids… are to be found in the Dictionary of National Biography.

– Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (1938)

Prosopography, a form of collective life writing that documents the characteristics of a group, has a long and gendered history. Developed as a historical research method in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, by scholars studying populations including Ancient Rome and seventeenth-century English Puritans [Verboven et al 2007, 42], much early prosopographical research focused on the lives of men. In the twenty-first century, we have inherited the legacy of this research; 85% of the entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*ODNB*), a Victorian project begun by Sir Leslie Stephen, are of notable men.[1] Yet, in the same historical period, prosopography has been a congenial form for documenting women's lives. As Alison Booth reminds us, in volume form, the collected lives of women have thrived since at least the second half of the nineteenth century, when the publication of volumes aimed at a general audience of (female) readers tripled and then quadrupled every decade, remaining a popular form to the present day [Booth 2004, 29]. Booth identifies *Collective Biographies of Women* from as far back as the Middle Ages and notes that "Catalogs of notable women have flourished in plain view for centuries, while generation after generation laments the absence of women from the past" [Booth 2004, 2–3]. On the one hand, then, women have been given short shrift in scholarly prosopographies such as the *ODNB*. On the other hand, prosopography is one genre in which the lives of women and other marginalized groups have often flourished, in part because the collective form does not require believing that any individual woman is important enough to merit full-length biographical treatment, but rather that women's history in general is important.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the gendered history of prosopography has become intertwined

with that of the digital humanities. Some of the most important early feminist digital humanities projects, including *The Orlando Project* [Brown et al 2006–2022a], *The Women Writers Project* [Flanders et al 1988–2022], and the *Collective Biographies of Women* [Booth 2013–2017], analyze and generate prosopographies centered around women, in part because digitization offers the promise of more space to represent women's writing and women's lives freed from the constraints of the codex form. Of course, all projects remain bound by other constraints, including time and funding, and as Julia Flanders et al remind us in their work on encoding proper names, we must ask ourselves honestly about the feasibility and utility of this markup [Flanders et al 1998, 287]. There is a tension, then, in prosopography, between a necessary selectivity about which figures to include given the restraints imposed by the prosopographical format, whether it is a short chapter in a collective biography or a predetermined set of fields in a database, and a desire for greater inclusivity, especially in terms of representing marginalized lives. Yet, as we argue here, it is also possible for the restraints of the prosopographical format to be generative.

In this paper, through a case study of a TEI edition of the letters of the popular Victorian novelist, Dinah Craik, we argue that the restraint imposed by the TEI template can lead us to a more inclusive prosopography, both in terms of the people included, and in the information-seeking methods we use to collect data on historical figures. Our project encodes and gives biographical detail not only for every person named in the letters, but also every person referenced but not necessarily named, many of whom are women referenced only as sisters, wives, and servants. TEI templates such as the one we use in *Digital Dinah Craik* may seem constraining; however, as as Jacqueline Wernimont argues in her writing on *The Orlando Project*, technologies such as *The Orlando Project*'s XML Document Type Definition (DTD) can be read as "generative" and "productive of a model of the text, but not the sole or authoritative model" [Wernimont 2013, para 13]. We follow Wernimont in arguing for the generative possibilities of mark up; in our case, the establishment of a TEI prosopographical template creates an imperative to fill every element and attribute, a departure from more selective standard editorial practice for nineteenth-century letters. We extend recent work in digital prosopography that explores the complex process of modelling people as data [Schwartz and Crompton 2016] [Hedley and Kooistra 2018] by demonstrating how we have combined scholarly tools such as the TEI with para-scholarly genealogical databases and recently digitized nineteenth-century newspapers and books to give the fullest account of each `<person>` entry possible. This approach is labor-intensive, and our project has relied heavily on the expertise and labor of student research assistants and librarians, as well as on external funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Given the work-intensive nature of our approach, a second goal of this paper is to highlight the affective labor of data collection, and the ingenuity involved in toggling back and forth between multiple sources to uncover data about nineteenth-century women who have left little trace. This type of research does not often receive the credit that other forms of scholarship do. Susan Brown argues that "activities of practical benefit to others" in the digital humanities, including "structuring, manipulating, transforming, or remediating data" can be defined as service labor in the digital humanities; this type of service labor, which often takes place in the library or is closely associated with librarianship, is feminized and less prestigious than other forms of scholarship [Brown 2018, para 9]. In writing about our method of data collection in detail, we respond to recent calls in feminist digital humanities to recognize the labor and material conditions involved in data collection. Elizabeth Losh and Wernimont use the acronym MEALS to signal their feminist emphasis on how the "material, embodied, affective, labor-intensive, and situated character of engagements with computation can operate experientially for users in shared spaces." [Losh et al 2018, 17]. Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein point out that when data products are released to the public, the workers who collected the data and processed them for use are rarely credited. D'Ignazio and Klein make a feminist argument for showing the work involved in the entire life cycle of the project [D'Ignazio and Klein 2020, ch. 7].[2] Midway through our project, we aim to document our data collection as a feminist practice.

The *Digital Dinah Craik* project has been ongoing at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada, since January 2015 and now includes more than 400 letters published with Northeastern University's TEI Archive Publishing and Access Service (TAPAS), and an accompanying prosopography that offers an inclusive and standardized set of information on every person mentioned by name or by reference in Craik's letters. These encoded letters constitute the first phase of our project, in which we have focused on letters written by Craik and addressed to her publishers and other

acquaintances in artistic and literary fields.[3] Craik's letters are important not only because they shed light on the career of an important and well-connected author, but because of what they can tell us about the venues and types of publications and networks of connection that could sustain a nineteenth-century woman writer's career for upwards of forty years. Craik's career is remarkable not only for its success and length but for the literary sociability that sustained it, as she maintained relationships with writers, publishers and artists from her adolescent years to her death. Writing about digital editions of early modern correspondence, Camille Desenclos argues that one of the main aims of editing correspondence is "the (re)-constitution of networks"; through "links created first between the sender and the addressee and then between the different people mentioned within the letters, a social, commercial and even cultural network can be reconstructed" [Desenclos 2016, 188]. Craik's letters are a testament to the power of social networks in a woman writer's career, especially those centered around the home like that of Anna Maria and Samuel Carter Hall's literary salon. Ultimately, we plan to use our encoded letters and prosopography to analyze Craik's networks, but in this paper we focus on the methods we have developed to build an inclusive prosopography that helps our users glean meaning from component parts of the digital edition.

Our work builds on scholarship in feminist and queer digital prosopography which focuses on the complex processes of modeling people as data, rather than on a final statistical analysis of a completed prosopographical dataset.[4] In their prosopography for the *Yellow Nineties* project, Alison Hedley and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra explore what it means to build a prosopography, a form that tends to work by "flattening out differences and anomalies to create a typical subject," based on an understanding that identity is intersectional, "fluid and contingent" [Hedley and Kooistra 2018, para 3]. As Hedley and Kooistra note, the constraints of the TEI can guide prosopographical research while also affording flexibility in describing individual lives. They find that it is possible to "tailor the extensible markup language (XML)" of the TEI using elements such as `<addName>` to account for nineteenth-century figures such as William Sharp, who not only wrote under the pseudonym Fiona Macleod but also created a "social, legal, and textual network" as Macleod that allowed Sharp to live a second life with "a feminine literary persona" [Hedley and Kooistra 2018, 162].[5] Similarly, in the Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada Project, Michelle Schwartz and Constance Crompton create a TEI prosopography that seeks to document the complexity of gay and lesbian lives in Canada rather than to "reduce liberationists to a few statistical averages" [Schwartz and Crompton 2016, para 1]. Following these scholars, we argue for a more expansive and inclusive form of digital prosopography, both in terms of which historical figures merit inclusion in a prosopography, and in terms of our information-seeking methods for prosopographical research. In making this twofold argument for inclusive prosopography, we demonstrate a method of research that makes full use of digitized records and information retrieval sources now available to us, regardless of their perceived scholarly value.

While our focus in this paper is on developing an inclusive method for generating a TEI prosopography, much of the research on prosopography has focused on how scholars might make the best use of a completed prosopographical dataset, whether it is to support research questions about a historical group of people or to integrate a prosopography created using one technology with another one (for example, transforming a TEI prosopography to Linked Open Data). In collecting standardized biographical data on a large number of people, prosopography enables researchers to aggregate individual lives and make data-driven claims, for example, about the average life of a Roman slave or the relationship between Puritanism and a positive attitude toward science [Verboven et al 2007, 41–42]. Prosopography also has a long relationship with genealogy, which has been used to uncover individuals' ancestors and lineage, allowing scholars to make claims, for example, about the number of Roman officials from the same small network of families [Verboven et al 2007, 38–40]. The standardized, statistical nature of prosopography makes it a natural fit for computational research. Addressing concerns that prosopographical templates can decontextualize information about a person, presenting it as a straightforward fact, beginning in the 1990s scholars including John Bradley and Harold Short developed a factoid-based approach to prosopography, which uses relational technology to link person records to information about people in primary sources [Bradley and Short 2005] [Bradley and Short 2015]. This approach positions prosopography as a collection of situated "factoids" with potential tensions or contradictions, rather than as a standalone "'scholarly overview' of a person" [Bradley and Short 2005, 8]. Recent work has focused on how to make prosopographical data more widely discoverable online. The question of how to integrate prosopography with the semantic web has spurred scholars to explore ontologies such as CIDOC-CRM, FOAF, and SKOS [Bradley and Short 2015] [Brown and Simpson 2013] [Brown et al. 2019], and to work with TEI and MARC authority records with the goal of

making prosopographical data interoperable with library catalogues [Schwartz and Crompton 2016].

Our contribution to digital prosopography begins at the opposite end of the research process, with developing an inclusive research method for collecting prosopographical data that leverages a combination of scholarly tools and databases aimed at family historians. This method grows out of our project's user orientation, which has led us to prioritize actions that increase the availability of users' information interactions within our digital edition. Our use of genealogical databases does not focus on uncovering family networks, which are not currently part of our TEI tagset, but rather on researching obscure people, particularly women and the working classes, who would otherwise be lost to history. Prosopography is notoriously labor-intensive; a problem with prosopographical research has been that the sources needed to complete research on a group of people, for example, the social background of a group of geographically-diverse Oxford students in the 1950s, has been scattered across the United Kingdom [Verboven et al 2007, 52]. Discovery services developed over the last thirty years and aimed at family historians, such as *Ancestry* or *FindMyPast*, offer a solution to this problem by aggregating not only previously scattered parish baptismal, birth, death and census records, but also, more recently, data including asylum records, military records, and even dog registration records.[6]

Leveraging family history databases would seem to be a straightforward solution to some of the difficulties of prosopographical research, but scholars tend to be suspicious of resources aimed at family historians.[7] Tanya Evans writes that genealogists "have been dismissed by professional and academic historians... as 'misty-eyed and syrupy' and their findings and practices deemed irrelevant to the wider historical community" [Evans 2011, 49–51]. This suspicion operates at an institutional level; public libraries are much more likely to offer subscriptions to genealogical databases than university libraries. Marianne Van Remoortel notes that because these databases "primarily target amateur genealogists and do not count many universities among their subscribers, their potential remains largely untapped" [Van Remoortel 2016, 134]. This concern is part of a long tradition of suspicion in the academy toward those who do research without the training and credentials valued in the university. N. Katherine Hayles writes that "most professional fields in the humanities have their shadow fields," and that scholars "often regard such activity as a nuisance because it is not concerned with the questions the scholar regards as important or significant" [Hayles 2012, 36]. Following Hayles, we demonstrate that scholars would do well to incorporate the expertise and digital tools developed by and for those outside the academy.

Prosopography is a central component of editing correspondence, but often historical persons mentioned in letters are researched with varying levels of detail depending upon their perceived historical significance. *Digital Dinah Craik* offers a case study that shows what a TEI prosopography might look like when a project's research practices disallow such selective value judgments. Three digital editions of nineteenth-century letters — *The Letters of Charlotte Mary Yonge* [Mitchell C. et al n. dat], *The Olive Schreiner Letters Online* [Stanley et al 2007–2012], and the TEI edition of the *Vincent Van Gogh Letters* [Jansen et al 1994–2009] — differ in the level of granularity with which they encode the correspondents and people mentioned in the letters. The *Vincent Van Gogh Letters* give full name dates of birth and death and occupation for all persons mentioned and typically no more (though there are separate written essays detailing Van Gogh's family). *The Charlotte Yonge Letters* give a full name, date of birth and death, a description including either occupation or relationship to Yonge, and a short biographical sentence for those named in the letters. *The Olive Schreiner Letters* write their prosopographical data in paragraphs, with differing levels of detail. For example, a Miss Battie is described as "a typist who Schreiner approached to type some of her manuscripts" about whom no further information is known [Stanley et al 2012a], while the actor Wilson Barrett is described in a full paragraph with suggestions for further reading [Stanley et al 2012b].

Our research practice takes our prosopography in a different direction than these editions of correspondence, in that we aim to fill out a template for historical people in the letters whether Craik mentions them by name or by reference. In the following section, we offer three case studies of the research methods used to uncover information about the lives of nineteenth-century women. We demonstrate how we disambiguated two of Craik's servants, referred to as "Mary" and "Little Mary" in the letters, uncovered a woman referred to only as Henry Blackett's sister, and connected a woman author referred to as Miss Blyth to her pseudonym, May Beverley. We enter into this level of detail with the dual goal of

providing an example of how we have combined scholarly and para-scholarly information resources to gather the most detail possible for every `<person>` entry, and the feminist aim of making the labor of the student research assistants who gathered this data visible.

Encoding Nineteenth-Century Women: Harriet Blackett, Mary Popham Blyth, Mary Bonnar, and Mary Chandler

Prosopography has an important role to play in our assessment of women's careers, since the networks of writers, artists, editors and publishers that supported a career like Craik's did not have the same public visibility as those of her male contemporaries. While many early digital humanities projects cast a wide net, considering the texts and lives of hundreds of women writers, focusing on one individual woman writers' connections has the potential to reveal a detailed, historically situated network of literary sociability. As Elisa Beshero-Bondar and Elizabeth Raisanen argue, while many digital humanities projects tend to consider women writers collectively, doing so may elide the historical specificity and idiosyncrasies of particular women writers; we can seek to redress this problem in part by launching projects devoted to single women writers, like Mary Russell Mitford, the subject of Beshero-Bondar and Raisanen's work [Beshero-Bondar and Raisanen 2017, 741]. As we will show, these egocentric networks have the potential to uncover detailed, situated, and inclusive historical networks in addition to building a prosopographical database that "alters one's attention to individuals, blurring historical or textual specificity" [Booth 2015, 103]. Although Craik remains the thread that connects all the people in our prosopography, the very work of building a prosopographical TEI file distributes our attention across communities.

12

The initial TEI structure for our prosopography, a separate file with a `<person>` template for every person named or mentioned in Craik's letters, was modelled after *Digital Mitford*, which takes on a similar level of granularity in prosopographical encoding [Beshero-Bondar 2013–2022]. Each `<person>` entry is assigned an `@xml:id` (we use "LastnameFirstname") then, we endeavour to also include a full `<persName>` (`<surname>` and `<forename>`), assigned `@sex`, date of `<birth>`, and date of `<death>`, as well as a short biographical `<note>`. Our project includes further sections for the census categories `<occupation>` and `<nationality>`. As an example, see the `<person>` entry for Craik's close friend, Minna Lovell (see Figure 1). At the time of writing, our personography contains 989 person entries focusing on historical people mentioned in the letters, with further entries for pets and fictional people. Digitized civil records such as historical census and probates have become essential to our practice of inclusive digital prosopography; we have also found that the genealogical databases through which we access these records can afford new areas of inquiry into our project's dataset.

13

```xml
<person xml:id="LovellMinna" sex="F">
    <persName>
        <surname>Lovell</surname>
        <forename>Maria</forename>
        <forename>Ann</forename>
        <addName>Marian</addName>
        <addName>Minna</addName>
        <addName>Min</addName>
    </persName>
    <birth when="1832-09-06"/>
    <death when="1822-04-29"/>
    <occupation>Gentlewoman</occupation>
    <nationality>English</nationality>
    <residence>
        <placeName ref="#Lynover">Lynover Cottage</placeName>
    </residence>
    <residence>
        <placeName ref="#MorningtonCrescent">7 Mornington Crescent</placeName>
    </residence>
    <note type="bio" resp="#FukushimaKailey"><persName>Minna Lovell</persName> was a friend of
        <persName ref="#DMC">Dinah</persName>'s who lived with her at <placeName ref="#Lynover">Lynover Cottage</placeName>.
        She was briefly engaged to <persName ref="#DMC">Dinah</persName>'s brother <persName ref="#MulockBen">Benjamin</persName>
        <date notBefore="1860" notAfter="1863" precision="high">from around 1860 to 1863</date>.<lb/>Shirley Foster, "Dinah Mulock
        Craik," Victorian Women's Fiction: Marriage, Freedom and the Individual (New York: Routledge, 2012), 50.</note>
</person>
```

Figure 1. Minna Lovell's `<person>` entry in the "Historical People" `<div>` of the "Craik Site Index"

Our adoption of a strict set of prosopographical tags has led us to diversify our data and develop more inclusive approaches to information seeking. Every time that a name is mentioned in a transcribed letter, we tag it with a `<persName>` and use a `@ref` attribute to point the element to `<person>` entry with an `@xml:id` in our prosopography.

14

We do the same with a `<rs>` or "referencing string" when people who are mentioned but not named (e.g. "his wife"). Then, no matter how minor the reference, we try to complete each element in our template. In order to research people like Craik's fellow lodger, whose forename may have been either May or Marian and whose surname may have been either James or Anderson, we turn to genealogical sources such as *FamilySearch.com* and *Ancestry.com*, which digitize census data, birth and death certificates, marriage certificates, and probates, among other records. These primary sources can help us to provide the full names, life ranges, nationalities, occupations, and often the residences for many of the unknown people from Craik's letters. Usually, knowing the few facts provided in a census report such as full name, occupation, and nationality, helps us to reformulate our previous searches. Having more robust search terms helps us to find more information about otherwise unknown lives in newspaper databases such as the *British Newspaper Archive* and in optical character recognition (OCR) generated transcripts of nineteenth-century *Google Books*.

The structure of our TEI prosopography protocols discourages and even disallows our instinctive value judgments about who counts in a collective biography. For example, Craik's two servants, whom she calls "Mary" and "Little Mary" exemplify the working-class women's lives that, as Virginia Woolf notes, were excluded from the original *DNB*, yet both merit `<person>` entries in our project's prosopography. Because we knew relatively little about the two Marys, and because Craik omits both women's surnames in her letters, we used the names that Craik used to refer to them as their @xml:id values. Then, we turned to genealogical databases seeking information that would help us to populate the elements in our TEI tagset. Internal evidence from Craik's letters assured us that we could disambiguate between the two Marys by tracing the residents of Craik's household through mid-century census records. Craik writes about both servants in a letter to her brother in 1860, in which she details a "domestic revolution" in her home:

15

> On Wednesday night or rather Thursday morng [morning] came the grand domestic crash – found out unfortunate Mary in drinking – stealing – lying. – I had taken the baby, – & nearly clothed her & it too – these 4 months – got her nursed thro' her bad illness – &c. &c. – All no good – she is thoroughly depraved. Your instinct was right & my pity wrong. – I got her out of the house as soon as I could. & little Mary came up at an hour's notice. A great blessing. [Craik 1860a]

16

In the census of 1861 — one year after this dramatic story of alcoholism and unwed pregnancy — the Craik household at Wildwood in Hampstead lists two servants: Mary Chandler, age 23, and Mary Bonnar, age 13 [Census 1861b]. We verified our assumption that the younger Mary was "Little Mary" by looking into Craik's servants beyond the year 1861. Mary Bonnar stayed with Craik for the next decade and is listed as a servant at Dinah and George Craik's residence, the Corner House, in 1871 [Census 1871]. We filled in the rest of Mary Chandler's and Mary Bonnar's `<person>` entries using the records available to us through genealogical databases. Craik was known in her career for writing about the relationships between gentlewomen and their female servants, in her novel, *Mistress and Maid* [Craik 1863] and essays *A Woman's Thoughts about Women* [Craik 1858]. Her letters, and accompanying prosopography, give us a glimpse into the sometimes dramatic lives of the servants with whom Craik was on such intimate terms.

17

Our practice of encoding unnamed people in Craik's letters with a referencing string, a `@type` attribute with the value "person," and a `@ref` attribute propels our research team to seek out all the obscure, singular mentions of people that one might choose to leave out of a codex edition or even another digital edition. Moreover, our use of this tag has revealed new information needs, as it populates our prosopography with marginal figures and has catalyzed our move toward para-scholarly information resources. Overall, we have found that the `<rs>` tag prompts us to politicise our prosopographical research as we create space in our prosopography for the frequently unnamed wives, daughters, and sisters whose private labor supported public-oriented men. For example, in the letter cited above, Craik writes that Thomas Hughes — author of *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857)—and his wife would be joining her for early tea [Craik 1860a]. At the mention of "his wife," we created an `@xml:id` with a placeholder value "MrsHughes." Recently digitized birth certificates, death certificates, and census material helped us to create a full prosopographical entry for Anne Frances Hughes, including an updated `xml:id`, and one which occupies equal space to the account of her husband's life.

18

```
<person xml:id="HughesFrances" sex="F">
    <persName>
        <surname type="married">Hughes</surname>
        <surname type="maiden">Ford</surname>
        <forename>Anne</forename>
        <forename>Frances</forename>
        <forename>Fanny</forename>
    </persName>
    <birth when="1826-03-22"/>
    <death when="1910-11-21"/>
    <occupation>Gentlewoman</occupation>
    <nationality>English</nationality>
    <note type="bio" resp="#FukushimaKailey"><persName>Frances Hughes</persName> was married
        to the English writer, <persName ref="#HughesThomas">Thomas Hughes</persName>, whom
        <persName ref="#DMC">Dinah</persName> knew through <persName ref="#MacmillanAlexander">
            Alexander Macmillan</persName>.
    </note>
</person>
```

Figure 2. Anne Frances Hughes's `<person>` entry in the "Historical People" `<div>` of the "Craik Site Index"

Our workflow for the `<rs>` tag often leads to complex prosopographical research requiring a greater diversity of genealogical and other information resources. In October 1860, Craik wrote to her brother Benjamin Mulock that her friend and publisher Henry Blackett was in the midst of familial troubles.

> Mr. Blackett was here last night – & told me his woes. His sister has fallen into "a low way" – & he fears he must put her in an Asylum – but means to take her to live with him first, & try what he can do. – He has terrible health himself, poor man – He is a worthy sort. I wouldn't leave him. [Craik 1860d]

When encoding this passage, we used a `<persName>` tag on the name Henry Blackett and pointed it toward a `<person>` entry in the Craik Site Index with the `@xml:id` value, "BlackettHenry." We encoded the words "His sister" with a `<rs>` referencing string and a `@type` attribute with the value "person." This tag pointed toward a draft `<person>` entry with the `@xml:id` value "MissBlackett." Information about the lives of historical men, even those who made a major impact on the publishing industry, can also sometimes be scarce. Henry Blackett — one of the founding members of the London-based publishing firm Hurst and Blackett — does not have an entry in the *ODNB*, but his status as one of the most well-established publishers in the era enabled us to piece together his biographical details from a combination of census records, writers' biographies, and monographs on Victorian publishing.[8]

```
<person xml:id="BlackettHenry" sex="M">
    <persName>
        <surname>Blackett</surname>
        <forename>Henry</forename>
    </persName>
    <birth when="1825-05-26"/>
    <death when="1871-03-07"/>
    <occupation>Publisher</occupation>
    <nationality>English</nationality>
    <note type="bio" resp="#FukushimaKailey"><persName>Henry Blackett</persName> was one of
        the proprietors of the publishing firm <orgName ref="#HurstBlackett">Hurst &amp; Blackett</orgName>.
        He and <persName ref="#DMC">Dinah</persName> were personal and
        professional acquaintances.</note>
</person>
```

Figure 3. Henry Blackett's `<person>` entry in the "Historical People" `<div>` of the "Craik Site Index"

Figure 3: Henry Blackett's `<person>` entry in the "Historical People" `<div>` of the "Craik Site Index"

Scholarly sources offer scarce details about Henry Blackett's family and personal life; as such, our research into his sister's life depended upon the robust research affordances of para-scholarly information retrieval services. To begin filling out the `<person>` entry for his sister, we located Henry Blackett's early census records on *Ancestry.com*. In this case, we used information from the Craik Site Index, but we find that low-barrier digital sources such as *Wikipedia* often

provide enough information to begin an effective search on genealogical platforms. Using Henry Blackett's birth and death dates and his place of birth, we searched British census records, focusing on the first two decades of his life, when he might have lived with his parents and siblings. The census for 1851 shows a 25-year-old Henry Blackett living at 16 Bedford Row, Islington, Middlesex with his widowed mother Martha, his three younger sisters, two visitors (his future wife and mother-in-law), and two servants. This step narrowed our search to one among three Blackett sisters: Martha (b. 23 August 1822), Harriet (b. 2 March 1829), or Catherine (b. 30 June 1831) (Census 1851). It also helped build a basic TEI template and stub entries for the Blacketts, which could help us to verify that all of our future searches pertained to the same Blackett family. Next, we searched for Henry Blackett's household data around the time that Craik was writing about his sister's declining mental health. In April 1861, less than six months after Craik composed her letter, Henry Blackett lived at Westside, Ealing, Middlesex with his wife Ellen, his five children, and his sister, Harriet [Census 1861a]. In this census report, Harriet was not listed as a visitor, but as a resident of Henry Blackett's household.

The governmental records aggregated by genealogical databases provided us with adequate information to build a prosopographical record for Harriet Blackett, an otherwise obscure figure in British literary history. However, we were ultimately unable to provide a precise date of death of Harriet Blackett. In March 1864, she married a man named Joseph James and adopted the much more common name "Harriet James." Without a middle name on record, we have been unable to discern between the many Harriet Jameses in the Church of England Burial Records and the Civil Registration Death Indexes. Harriet James's name does not appear in any digitized probates. A search into recently digitized Victorian asylum records did not yield results at the time of writing, but may in the future as more of these records are digitized as part of the "Lunacy Patient Admission Registers" on *Ancestry* and other platforms. To accommodate this gap in our research, we included the attribute `@notBefore="1881-04-03"` to indicate that Harriet (Blackett) James was still alive at the time of the 1881 census.

```
<person xml:id="BlackettHarriet" sex="F">
  <persName>
    <surname type="married">James</surname>
    <surname type="maiden">Blackett</surname>
    <forename>Harriet</forename>
  </persName>
  <birth when="1829-03-02"/>
  <death notBefore="1881-04-03"/>
  <occupation>Gentlewoman</occupation>
  <nationality>English</nationality>
  <note type="bio" resp="#FukushimaKailey">
    <persName>Harriet</persName> was the younger sister of the publisher <persName ref="#BlackettHenry">Henry Blackett</persName>
    and the middle child of <orgName>the Blackett family</orgName>. She lived with <rs type="person" ref="#BlackettHenry">her
      brother</rs> and <orgName>his family</orgName> for some time when she was suffering from unspecified mental health issues.
  </note>
</person>
```

Figure 4. Screenshot of Harriet Blackett's `<person>` entry in the "Historical People" `<div>` of the "Craik Site Index"

Our prosopographical template affords a flexible way of encoding the multiple name changes that marked some nineteenth century women's lives. A final example illustrates the complexities that enter prosopographical research when an author uses a variety of names — including a maiden name, married name, and pen name — throughout her lifetime. In four letters that Craik wrote to the publisher Alexander Macmillan in 1860, she makes passing reference to a young writer named Miss Blyth, who was attempting to publish one of her novels with Macmillan and Company. These four letters, housed in the Berg collection at the New York Public Library, were all composed when Craik was working as a publisher's reader for Macmillan and Company. As such, Craik's letters to Macmillan detail her opinions on the promise and publishability of the work under review. Craik's opinion of the young writer was generally favourable. She writes:

> There's a wonderful deal in this Miss Blyth. – I don't like strongly to advise for this tale – and yet I should be sorry for you to miss it. – I wonder if when done she will submit to a solid hard criticism & condensation It might be made a very very nice book – if gone over again. I am sure. – [Craik 1860c]

After revision, Craik declares the novel "satisfactory" and concludes that "the strong clear hand with which she has

24

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corrected and re-ended it – shows me more than ever how good a writer she will become. – " [Craik 1860e].

Creating a prosopographical entry for Miss Blyth proved challenging: with nothing but a common British surname to begin our research, we had to amalgamate data from a mix of scholarly and para-scholarly information resources before we could initiate a query in genealogical databases. Because Craik mentions Miss Blyth with proper names throughout the Berg letters, we encoded all instances with the `<persName>` tag and created an `@xml:id` for "MissBlyth" in our Craik Site Index. We added a `@ref` attribute to the original `<persName>` tags and pointed them to the `@xml:id`. Open-source digitization projects such as *Google Books* and the *Internet Archive* were essential for initiating a prosopographical record for Miss Blyth. Instead of working with the sparse biographical information and common surname that we had on hand, we started a search profile by uncovering the manuscript she was working on with Macmillan and Company in 1860. Craik's letters reveal that Miss Blyth's manuscript was entitled *Aunt Jessie* [Craik 1860c] and included characters named Herbert, Mabel, Millicent, and Jackson [Craik 1860b]. Two characters named "M & J" were engaged in courtship [Craik 1860b]. Craik's reflections on Miss Blyth and her manuscript gave us further insight into the subject matter. On *Aunt Jessie*, Craik writes that "the Crimea life is as fresh & natural-like as if she had seen it – she must have got it from nature, secondhand: as I got from Ben – " [Craik 1860c]. Furthermore, Craik's first response to *Aunt Jessie* was "it garred me greet" [Craik 1860c] — a Scottish colloquialism which roughly means "compelled me greatly" [Gar, vol 2]. The latter of these two details puzzled us: Macmillan was Scottish, and Craik might have been dipping into colloquialisms as a form of amicability, but, it was also possible that either the writer or the content of *Aunt Jessie* was Scottish. With these details in mind, we began our search for titles similar to *Aunt Jessie* that were published in the latter portion of 1860 — hoping, of course, that Macmillan heeded Craik's advice to publish the tale.

To create a prosopographical entry for an unknown writer like Miss Blyth, we had to adopt an inclusive and iterative research process, combining fragments from public and academic information resources including *Google Books*, the *Internet Archive*, newspaper, scholarly, and eventually, genealogical databases. Just as we expected, searches in *The Orlando Project* and elsewhere retrieved many writers named Blyth, including Estelle Blyth, Myrna Blyth, E. H. Blyth, and Sophie Veitch, "a Scotswoman" and sensation novelist "who lived the early part of her life abroad," wrote travel books in the 1860s, and sometimes used the pseudonym "J. A. St John Blythe" [Brown et al 2006–2022a]. Eventually, we found a novel on *Google Books* called *The Moor Cottage*, published by Macmillan and Company in 1861 [Beverley 1861]. By conducting free text searches in this novel, we found a main character named Aunt Jessie with secondary characters named Herbert, Mabel, Millicent, and Jackson. We verified that this novel featured the Crimean War, and found that the plot included a romance that confirmed Craik's comments praising the "lovemaking between Millicent & Jackson" [Craik 1860c]. *The Moor Cottage* was authored by a writer named May Beverley; yet, our prosopography entry in progress indicated that this person might have shared an identity with Miss Blyth. While researching May Beverley, we found that she published books for young readers between 1859 and 1871, including *Little Estella and Other Fairy Tales* with Macmillan in 1859. We had trouble connecting this author with the name Blyth until we found an 1874 advertisement for May Beverley's *The City of the Plain, and other Tales* edited by Reverend E. H. Blyth, Hammersmith [Hayes 1874].

As our example of Miss Blyth demonstrates, an openness toward combining diverse scholarly and para-scholarly information resources can afford more inclusive representations of marginalized figures in prosopographical research. After learning the name of May Beverley's one-time editor Reverend E. H. Blyth, we learned that Blyth had a sister who shared his literary inclinations. Mary Popham Blyth is listed in the personography of Troy J. Bassett's *At the Circulating Library: A Database of Victorian Fiction 1837–1901* [Basset 2018a]. She was born in Beverley, Yorkshire [Basset 2018b]. May Beverley, then, was a pseudonym that combined a diminutive of Mary Blyth's forename with her place of birth. As we researched her career, we learned that Mary Popham Blyth wrote under both her given name, her initials M. P. B., and her pseudonym from the years 1859 to 1871. She was also an amateur artist whose works appeared in the India Office Library [Archer 1969, 133]. After connecting the pseudonym to the author mentioned in the letter, we were able to fill in the tags required by our TEI prosopography. The profile on Troy J. Bassett's *At the Circulating Library* catalyzed our `<person>` entry for the `xml:id` Miss Blyth, but we verified the information with sources such as *Ancestry.com*, *Familysearch.com*, *Google Books*, and the *Internet Archive*. Census records helped us correct her birth

year from 1831 to 1841, while also adding key information such as `<occupation>` and `<nationality>`. Our `<note>` was populated with information from Craik's letters and includes biographical information that centres around her relationship to Craik.

```xml
<person xml:id="MissBlyth" sex="F">
   <persName>
      <surname>Blyth</surname>
      <forename>Mary</forename>
      <forename>Popham</forename>
      <addName type="pseudonym">May Beverley</addName>
   </persName>
   <birth when="1831"/>
   <death when="1915"/>
   <occupation>Writer</occupation>
   <occupation>Artist</occupation>
   <nationality>English</nationality>
   <note type="bio" resp="#ParkerJanice">
      <persName>Miss Blyth</persName> was a writer who primarily produced literature for young people. <persName ref="#DMC"
         >Dinah</persName> read and reviewed her works when she was working as a publisher's reader for <title
         corresp="#MacmillansMagazine">Macmillan's Magazine</title>, ca. <date when="1860" precision="high">1860</date>.
      Her pseudonym <persName>May Beverley</persName> is a diminutive of <persName>Mary Blyth</persName>'s forename and
      her place of birth  (<placeName>Beverley</placeName>, <placeName>Yorkshire</placeName>).</note>
</person>
```

Figure 5. Screenshot of Mary Popham Blyth's `<person>` entry in the "Historical People" `<div>` of the "Craik Site Index"

Our research does not always yield such certainty over the identity of a person, and we find that it is important to be able to encode for levels of certainty in identifying prosopographical subjects. Publishing was often a family business in the nineteenth century, and in the case of Craik's first publishers, Chapman and Hall, we are not always certain whether letters addressed to "Mr. Chapman" were meant to reach Edward Chapman, founder of the firm, or his cousin, Frederic Chapman, who took on major responsibilities at the firm following Hall's death in 1847 [Patten 2004]. In these cases, we make use of the TEI's certainty attribute (`@cert`) with a "low," "medium" or "high" attribute value to qualify the degrees of certainty in interpretative encoding. For example, in a letter that Craik wrote between the 6th and 7th of December 1855, she recounts the contents of her recent mail to her brother, Ben. Craik writes that she received "a box of good things from an Aunt of the Pmalderites a nice old lady who promised me shortbread & I don't know what & sent a box-full" [Craik 1855]. Based on what we already know about Craik's social networks, we inferred that "the Pmalderites" was a reference to the family of Craik's friend Allan Park Paton — a Scottish writer and editor whom Craik often visited at his dwelling, Pmalder Cottage, in Greenock. However, the letter did not produce adequate leads to follow up on our suspicions. Like most genealogical research, our prosopographical research can be an endless back-and-forth process of consulting multiple digital platforms and analogue materials, and unfortunately, it does not always yield successful results.

Our difficulties in identifying historic people are further compounded by working with unclear handwritten manuscript materials. Proper names can be challenging to work with; place and person names are among the most difficult words for a twenty-first century researcher to read accurately. Whereas the original recipient of the letter was embedded in the same social network as the letter writer, the twenty-first century reader must rely on a knowledge of the sender's handwriting and its peculiarities as well as a general sense of common surnames in nineteenth-century England to make an educated guess as to what the proper name might be. There has been research into proper names using prosopography; omnastics has, for example, identified common slave names in ancient Rome [Verboven et al 2007, 37–38]. Our research problem again begins with developing the prosopography in the first place rather than analyzing a completed dataset, and with paleography rather than omnastics. Put simply, how should a researcher develop a `<person>` entry for a name they cannot read? Again, a wide search encompassing a range of sources can help. While it was not at first apparent to us whether a person who appeared to be Craik's neighbor was named "Miss Wilkinson" or "Miss Wilkensen" or something else altogether; genealogical records reveal that a Sarah Wilkinson was a neighbor of Craik's, and newspaper articles surrounding Craik's adoption of a daughter and neighbor Miss Wilkinson's involvement confirm the reading. As the example of Miss Wilkinson shows, addresses, a key component of correspondence, can clarify a person's identity when all else fails.

Recognizing the importance of mobility and propinquity in Craik's career led us to change our initial template and adopt a `<residence>` tag in our TEI prosopography. The `<residence>` tag is useful in terms of clarifying both identity and

31

32

33

temporal location: it can clarify both the identity of those referred to in a letter and the date of the letter. Because nineteenth-century census information was collected door-to-door, address information for historical subjects is also available in genealogical databases. In combination with datable w3c attributes `@from` and `@to` or `@notBefore` and `@notAfter`, we have begun to use the `<residence>` tag to track the addresses of Craik's closest friends, colleagues, and collaborators. Developing a list of Craik's residences and the timeframe that she lived there as part of her prosopographical entry helps us to narrow down dates for letters with no dateline; frequently, her letters will include an address so that the recipient would know where to write back, but a partial dateline that is missing the year or is absent altogether, since the recipient would have presumably known what year it was. We have also included residences for Craik's close friends and associates, since it is not uncommon for her to write a letter from a friend's residence, or to refer within a letter to a friend by residence or street name. When a letter is addressed from 1 Doune Terrace, we can infer that Craik was visiting the publisher Robert Chambers in Edinburgh when it was written. Sometimes, as in the case of the reference to the Pmalderites, Craik will refer to a family by their residence. For example, on Christmas Eve in 1886, Craik records in her diary "Went to Eden Cottage to see the family collection of babies — a very sweet sight — to the delight of grandparents — parents — uncles & aunts." The residence tag in our prosopography allows us to quickly determine that the Miers family, close friends and neighbors of Craik's with connections to Brazil, lived at Eden Cottage. The addition of the `<residence>` tag, which disambiguates dates and people, is thus especially useful for new members of the project as it creates an accessible internal reference. It has also provided the basis for further research into geolocating Victorian residences in order to explore the role of propinquity — frequent, unplanned interaction due to physical proximity — in women writers's careers.

Not all proper names have proven tractable to these research methods. Although the structure of our TEI prosopography drives us to completion, there are cases when we cannot complete an entry, and the TEI is flexible enough to allow for these instances. In some cases, entries remain incomplete because of our workflow: it may be practical to research an obscure person at a later date and instead focus on completing a transcription of a long letter. A lack of information may also prevent completion. Sometimes, searching a genealogical database with nothing but the fact that someone with the surname "Linos" helped Craik to organize a small glee club around the year 1862 is not enough to work with. In such cases, we create and use stub entries, which may be as simple as whichever part of a name is mentioned in a letter (first names in case of servants or intimate friends, last names in case of middle-class friends, acquaintances and professional connections), plus an `@xml:id` and gender attribute. If more information arises, these stub entries can be fleshed out at a later date. Nevertheless, the number of lives we have been able to uncover by using all sources available to us, regardless of their perceived scholarly value, has been illuminating.

Conclusion: Communities of Practice

Current digital research methods are shifting the boundaries around whose labor, methods, expertise, and tools can be included in definitions of scholarship. In our work on *Digital Dinah Craik*, we embrace this shift as we develop an inclusive and situated practice of digital prosopography designed to aid the users of our digital edition in their engagements with Craik's encoded correspondence. Combining the scholarly editorial practices set out by the TEI with genealogical databases and other para-scholarly resources has led us to a research methodology that takes full advantage of the digital resources that are available to us at this historical moment. Inclusivity is at the helm of our research practice; it drives our methods for populating the TEI prosopography with marginalized lives from Craik's correspondence, and it propels us toward diverse research methods for completing our TEI tagsets. Our research team uses and acknowledges our debt to a range of scholarly and para-scholarly information resources for prosopography, many of which have been designed for researchers who work outside of the institutional structures of the university, and in the "shadow fields" of the academy [Hayles 2012, 36]. Genealogical databases such as *Ancestry* and *FamilySearch* and mass digitization projects like *Google Books*, the *Internet Archive*, and the *British Newspaper Archive* have long served the information needs of public researchers, both hobbyists and professionals. Originally, these para-scholarly resources fulfilled our project's needs where traditional scholarly databases have fallen short, and they have gradually become paramount to the success of our prosopographical method. In short, where in the past many of these lives would have been glossed over in edited letters, the combination of the TEI and genealogical resources allows us to pause and expand our understanding of Craik's networks to include women like Harriet Blackett, Mary Popham Blyth,

Mary Bonnar, and Mary Chandler. It is our hope that our prosopography, which traces the lives of everyone mentioned in one author's correspondence, serves to shed some light on lives that often go unremarked.

36

To conclude, we would also like to suggest that a more inclusive research process has the potential to build a wider community of practice. Our work on the *Digital Dinah Craik* prosopography has led our project team to open our research communities as well as our research practices. Our approach, method, and practice of digital prosopography developed from sustained interactions among project members with a variety of community research experiences. Our project is situated in a traditional academic setting, with work taking place in the university library before the COVID-19 pandemic. It began as a collaboration among academic researchers (one professor with a small team of graduate and undergraduate students), and it has been shaped by lessons learned among genealogy collectives at the local public library. Over time, academic librarians, including Christie Hurrell and Ingrid Reiche, public library staff, especially Janice Parker, and local genealogists, including Alyson Bennett, have contributed to *Digital Dinah Craik*, often importing techniques and sources from their own communities of practice. Our use of genealogical databases in particular draws on the expertise of those with a background working in the public library system. We would suggest that one larger outcome of utilizing a diverse range of scholarly and para-scholarly sources is the ability to build a more diverse community of practice that incorporates knowledge and expertise from outside of the academy.

Acknowledgments

Notes

[1] As of March 2019, using the advanced search function available in the online edition, we find 6,974 notable women to the 54,011 notable men. If we limit our search to the long nineteenth century (1789 to 1914), women fare marginally better, making up 14% (rather than 13%) of notable people (4,698 women and 30,135 men). Other scholars have noticed this issue and the *ODNB* is working to rectify the situation. See Alison Booth, "Fighting for Lives in the *ODNB*," for an overview of the problem of the lack of representation of women and the working classes at the time of the launch of the online *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* in 2004. Mari Takayanagi's introduction to the August 2018 update to the *ODNB*, includes a focus on women and parliament after 1918.

[2] D'Ignazio and Klein focus on the exploitation of a "global underclass," often of BIPOC women, involved in data collection across the globe [D'Ignazio and Klein 2020]. While we are mindful that student research assistants at a North American university are comparatively privileged, within the hierarchy of the university we aspire to highlight their labor.

[3] Archives across the United States and the United Kingdom hold over 1000 of Craik's letters and 14 years of diaries: most importantly the Mulock Family Papers at the University of California at Los Angeles, the Dinah Maria Mulock Craik collection in the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and the Morris L. Parrish Collection of Victorian novelists at Princeton University. These collections include previously unpublished correspondence to Victorian luminaries including Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Oscar Wilde, as well as personal correspondence to her brother in the Crimea and her father in the Staffordshire Insane Asylum.

[4] Recent work on the concepts of mark up and race further underscores the point that data is never neutral. For example, Jessica Marie Johnson offers black digital practice as a positive alternative to the digitization of eighteenth and nineteenth century records of slavery which threaten to replicate the violence of the slave ship register [Johnson 2018, 57]. Working at the intersection of Black studies and the digital humanities, Kim Gallon has argued that technology, including mark-up can expose the social construction of race [Gallon 2016, 42]. In *Numbered Lives*, Jacqueline Wernimont reminds us that quantum media, which she defines as media that "count, quantify, or enumerate," are not neutral or universal, but have historically been formulated with white, Christian men in mind [Wernimont 2019, 1, 31].

[5] Since the publication of this article, the *Yellow Nineties Personography* has moved from the TEI to linked open data. See [Hedley 2017], "From TEI to Linked Open Data: Crossing the Stile." The TEI has also recently added the element `<persona>`, for use when an individual such as Macleod / Sharp has multiple identities.

[6] Dog registration records can prove unexpectedly useful. Census records were not taken in Ireland until 1900, fifty years after they began in the UK. However, we were able to track the residences of Craik's daughter Dorothy through dog licenses, which began in 1865 and have been digitized on *Ancestry*.

[7] Print sources continue to carry more cultural prestige than their digital surrogates or born-digital sources, which may increase scholars' reluctance to acknowledge their use. As Blaney and Siefring write, "many scholars still prefer to cite the print version of a work, even when they have only seen a digital surrogate" in part because of the "perceived prestige" of print sources over digital [Blaney and Siefring 2017, para 1].

[8] Blackett's professional endeavors are documented in sources including as John Sutherland's *Victorian Novelists and Their Publishers* [Sutherland 1976] and *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* [Sutherland 1988] and he often appears in biographies of writers who worked with Hurst and Blackett. We pieced together his biographical details from print and digital books on platforms such as *Google Books*, *HaithiTrust*, and the *Internet Archive*.

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