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## Representing the 1819 cohort in the *Dictionary of National Biography* Helen Kingstone (University of Glasgow)

How did the 1819 cohort look from the end of the century, as it began to be commemorated? A lot of what we think we know about this first Victorian cohort originates in the impressions left by its immediate successors. Those who wrote about it were faced with a challenge: how to evaluate the long-term significance of events and individuals within living memory. Historians who sought to present their material as part of a longer-span temporal narrative, therefore, tended to avoid writing about their own century. Instead, the material of contemporary history was dispersed into other genres. These included the ‘novel of the recent past’ – which I have written about elsewhere – and the biography.<sup>1</sup>

As Juliette Atkinson identifies, most Victorian biographies were about Victorian people.<sup>2</sup> This focus on recency applied not only to individual but also to collective biography, a sub-genre that Alison Booth has shown went through a boom in the period.<sup>3</sup> That collective form is perhaps particularly amenable to inclusion of recent lives, because the larger the number of individuals included in a commemorative list – whether in textual form or as a physical hall of fame – the more modest a claim is implicitly made for each. Collective biography can refrain from claiming that any specific individual is of unrivalled significance (a claim that courts controversy), merely proposing that each is worthy of remembrance.<sup>4</sup>

One collective biography that certainly did embrace recent lives, and was expansive in numbers though unevenly inclusive (e.g. in its representation of women), was the mammoth *Dictionary of National Biography* (63 volumes published 1885–1900 with a three-volume supplement published in 1901; hereafter *DNB*).<sup>5</sup> No-one could be included in its pages while still alive, but many of its subjects were only recently deceased, and still present in living memory. In fact, the *DNB* features a disproportionate number of nineteenth-century individuals. The 1901 supplement in particular was dominated by people – including Queen Victoria – who had died during the project’s publication. As editor Sidney Lee noted in his ‘Statistical Account’ of the *Dictionary*, 12,608 entries (a full 43% of the total) were on nineteenth-century

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<sup>1</sup> See Helen Kingstone, *Victorian Narratives of the Recent Past: Memory, History, Fiction* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Juliette Atkinson, *Victorian Biography Reconsidered: A Study of Nineteenth-Century ‘Hidden’ Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Alison Booth, *How to Make It as a Woman: Collective Biographical History from Victoria to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> On one Victorian hall of fame, Leeds’s Municipal Buildings (opened in 1884), see Kingstone, pp. 55–56. On the phenomenon more generally, see *Pantheons: Transformations of a Monumental Idea*, ed. by Richard Wrigley and Matthew Craske (Aldershot, Hampshire; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> See Gillian Fenwick, *Women and the Dictionary of National Biography: A Guide to DNB Volumes 1885-1985 and Missing Persons* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Scolar Press; Ashgate, 1994).

lives. As Amber Regis puts it, ‘recent and living memory loom largest’.<sup>6</sup> The form and structure of the *DNB* was significant in enabling this engagement with recency. While Victorian historians were nervous about compromising the longevity of their narratives by speculating on the significance or otherwise of recent events, the *DNB* was insured against a short shelf-life by being structured alphabetically rather than chronologically. Its structure meant that it did not attempt the singular narrative – making decisive statements on controversial recent events – that writers of contemporary history found so challenging. The innovation and freedom of this collective biography comes from nesting miniature narratives within a non-narrative form.

People born in 1819 were both heavily represented in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and were extremely recent to it. So how did the *DNB* represent the 1819 cohort? Since the contemporary-history-writing within the *DNB* is dispersed across a long chronological array of lives and within an alphabetical structure, we only find it by reading a cross-section, against the grain. This article therefore examines the 1819 cohort’s entries via corpus linguistic analysis, whose quantitative and concordance techniques allow us to compare bodies of text whose size would otherwise be unwieldy, and which brings together parallel phrasings that otherwise might never be read in tandem. I used the software AntConc to compare a corpus of the *DNB* entries on the individuals born in 1819 with a reference corpus of the entries on more distant lives (those born pre-1800). This provided the essential common ‘denominator’ Christopher Warren has recently found lacking in many inferences made from entries in the *DNB* and its modern revival, the *Oxford DNB*.<sup>7</sup> Comparison of the two corpora generated a list of statistical ‘keywords’ that occur disproportionately often in the born-1819 entries in comparison to pre-1800 entries.<sup>8</sup> This article will focus on some of these (the terms ‘modern’ and ‘always’; the phrase ‘for the first time’; the placement of ‘sympathy’) in order to examine two aspects of the challenge of writing the 1819 cohort’s lives: how *DNB* contributors dealt with these subjects’ recency, and how they navigated the gender asymmetry inherent in the dictionary overall, but particularly visible in this cohort.<sup>9</sup> Of the 180 full entries on

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<sup>6</sup> Amber Regis, ‘Un/Making the Victorians: Literary Biography, 1880–1930’, in *A Companion to Literary Biography*, ed. by Richard Bradford (Oxford: Blackwell, 2018), pp. 63–86 (p. 76).

<sup>7</sup> Christopher N. Warren, ‘Historiography’s Two Voices: Data Infrastructure and History at Scale in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)’, *Journal of Cultural Analytics*, 2018, para. 7 <<https://doi.org/10.22148/16.028>>.

<sup>8</sup> The corpus comprises entries on individuals born in 1819 included in the original 63 volumes and the immediately subsequent three-volume 1901 supplement.

<sup>9</sup> The issues of recency apply not solely to those born in 1819 but to all nineteenth-century lives in the *DNB*; this analysis thus forms a pilot study for my ongoing analysis of recency in Victorian collective biography.

individuals born in 1819, only eight are of women.<sup>10</sup> The cohort is thus male-dominated in numerical terms (as is the *DNB* overall), but in textual volume it is dominated by Queen Victoria, whose 90,000-word entry comprises approximately a third of the words devoted to the entire cohort.

This article shifts attention away from the 1819 cohort's self-perception, and – like Martin Hewitt and Martin Myrone's contributions above – towards the ways that generations have been described and conceptualized in retrospect. The *DNB*'s ability to do so partly depends on its ideological function. Colin Bell (1974) argues that its selection process demonstrated elite hegemony, whereas David Amigoni suggests that the *DNB*'s content did not automatically 'reflect ... preconstituted elite power', but made 'a sophisticated *bid*' for it.<sup>11</sup> Debates continue among successive editors of the *Oxford DNB*.<sup>12</sup> This article examines the extent to which the *DNB* presented individuals born in 1819 as simply self-contained 'capsules' or as interlinked – or at least comparable – contemporaries of each other.

## Representing recent lives

The *DNB*'s two editors had divergent views on selection and inclusion – founding editor Leslie Stephen (in post 1882–1891) argued for the value of obscure lives, whereas his successor Sidney Lee (in post 1890–1912) insisted on prioritizing eminence in what he saw as a quantifiable meritocracy of inclusion – but they concurred on the question of tone.<sup>14</sup> Stephen asked contributors to write in a dry tone that conveyed the message 'No

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<sup>10</sup> These are, as described in the *DNB*: Julia Clare Byrne (author), Maria Louisa Charlesworth (author), Anna Maria Charretie (miniature and oil painter), Mary Ann Cross (novelist), Caroline Fox (diarist), Harriet Anne Scott (novelist), Anna Robena Thomson (pianist), Victoria (Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India). Three others have sub-entries within another subject: Frances Dalton Lacy (actress), Sophia Emma Oliver (landscape painter), Margaret Emily Shore (writer). Shore now has her own *ODNB* entry; Frances Dalton's birth date has been revised to 1814, reminding us how precarious were assertions of birthdates in this period. On Byrne, Cross [George Eliot], Fox and Victoria, see the Roundtable contributions by Mitchell, Livesey, Broughton and Marshall respectively.

<sup>11</sup> Colin Bell, 'Some Comments on the Use of Directories in Research on Elites, with Particular Reference to the Twentieth-Century Supplements of the Dictionary of National Biography', in *British Political Sociology Yearbook: Vol. 1 Elites in Western Democracy*, ed. by Ivor Crewe (London: Croom Helm, 1974), pp. 161–71; David Amigoni, 'Life Histories and the Cultural Politics of Historical Knowing: The Dictionary of National Biography and the Late Nineteenth-Century Political Field', in *Life and Work History Analyses: Qualitative and Quantitative Developments*, ed. by Shirley Dex (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 163.

<sup>12</sup> Current editor David Cannadine sees the *DNB* as a 'grandiosely-conceived ... monument', whereas former editors Lawrence Goldman and Brian Harrison suggest respectively that it was 'remarkably unideological' and aimed at "'capsule", as distinct from "tombstone", biography'. David Cannadine, 'British Worthies', *London Review of Books*, 3 December 1981, pp. 3–6 (p. 3); Lawrence Goldman, 'A Monument to the Victorian Age? Continuity and Discontinuity in the Dictionaries of National Biography 1882–2004', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 11.1 (2006), 111–32 (p. 112); Brian Harrison, "'A Slice of Their Lives": Editing the DNB, 188–1999', *English Historical Review*, cxix.484 (2004), 1179–1201 (pp. 1191–92).

<sup>14</sup> On inclusion, see Leslie Stephen, 'National Biography', *National Review*, 27.157 (1896), 51–65 (p. 59); Sidney Lee, 'National Biography', *Cornhill Magazine*, 26 (1896), 258–77 (pp. 269–70).

flowers by request’, thus firmly differentiating the entries from eulogies. Lee aimed for ‘a strictly judicial tone’ that would similarly ‘eschew sentiment’ and present as ‘unideological’ (in Goldman’s terms), as if written with the temporal detachment of hindsight.<sup>15</sup> However, among the 1819 lives this was not always put into practice, suggesting that it was not always possible to be dispassionate about recent lives.

Despite the editors’ aims for the dictionary overall, there is in fact no unified tone or style across the 180 entries on those born in 1819, partly because their sources, structures and priorities varied. For instance, astronomer John Couch Adams (who discovered the planet Neptune), mathematician and physicist Sir G. G. Stokes (discoverer of ultra-violet light) and civil engineer Joseph Bazalgette (who designed the London sewer system) each received substantial entries of over a thousand words, but these were structured on the men’s career achievements with minimal discussion of their personal lives. These entries thus did, as Lee advocated, ‘eschew sentiment’. By contrast, individuals who wrote their own memoirs often cast long shadows over their *DNB* entries. E. T. Cook’s entry on John Ruskin, for instance, relies heavily on Ruskin’s own nostalgic account of his childhood in *Praeterita* (1885-89). Theodore Martin’s 12,000-word entry on Prince Albert was adapted from Martin’s earlier *Life of the Prince Consort* (1874-80), which in turn had drawn on Victoria’s letters and journals, so the entry unsurprisingly waxes lyrical about Albert’s character and personal development. The cohort thus includes a strand of entries shaped by very personal, subjective and even self-justifying sources. These entries fall prey in some sense to the hagiography both editors aimed to avoid, and perpetuate the self-images of their subjects. This practice suggests that in the face of powerful pre-existing narratives, contributors were more willing to accept and transmit them (perhaps partly through time and source constraints), than to assert an illusory lofty hindsight or affective distance from their recent subjects.

Corpus linguistic analysis suggests that across the 1819 cohort overall, however, contributors sought to avoid speculating or eulogising. We can see this by comparing the keywords ‘modern’ and ‘always’, two terms that evoke hindsight.<sup>16</sup> We might expect that the adjective ‘modern’ would be used normatively to mean ‘up to date’, but we find that 34 (about a quarter) of occurrences refer specifically to Ruskin’s *Modern Painters* (1843–60), while most other instances occur in set phrases including ‘modern history’ and ‘modern

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<sup>15</sup> Noel Annan, *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p. 84; Sidney Lee, ‘Prefatory Note’, in *Dictionary of National Biography Supplement*, ed. by Sidney Lee, 3 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1901), I, v–viii (p. vii). Also quoted in Harrison, p. 1191.

<sup>16</sup> These terms occur respectively 81 and 121 times across the cohort, though those totals shrink to 78 and 75 without Queen Victoria’s entry.

languages'.<sup>17</sup> Since the term goes out of date so quickly, through its cautious use the contributors and editors minimized the risk of a short shelf-life for their monumental publication.

When using the term 'always', by contrast, contributors could not uniformly resist trying to steer the judgements of posterity: several entries use the predictive phrase 'will always be'. We read declarations that Caroline Fox's diary '*will always be* valued as a highly important illustration of the most characteristic thought of the Victorian era', that 'Bazalgette's name *will always be* coupled [with] the Thames embankment', and that Sir Alfred Baring Garrod's 'name *will always be* known in connection with [his] discovery' about gout.<sup>18</sup> These uses make claims about how individuals will be remembered in the future, and risk the kind of outmoded inapplicability that contributors resisted in relation to 'modern'.

Contributors turned more often to the relatively indisputable temporal indicator 'for the first time'. This phrase occurs 51 times across the cohort, a dominant 41 of which are in Lee's entry on Queen Victoria. This mammoth entry, which was also sold separately in book form, is structured around Victoria's growth and coming of age, so the repeated phrase helps to place the narrative within a *Bildungsroman* mode. Secondly, the phrase enables Lee to compare timeframes, highlighting occasions where Victoria did something 'for the first time since' her widowhood (four uses) or since the reigns of other monarchs (three uses). Thirdly, the phrase occasionally indicates an event taking place 'for the first time [ever]', such as the House of Commons being invited to Victoria's coronation service,<sup>19</sup> and the following scene:

In May [1855] the queen identified herself conspicuously with the national feeling by distributing with her own hands war medals to the returned soldiers on the Horse Guards' Parade (18 May). It was the queen's own suggestion, and it was *the first time* that the sovereign had performed such functions. 'The rough hand of the brave and

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<sup>17</sup> 'Up to date' is part of sense 3b of 'Modern, Adj. and n.', *OED Online*, 2018  
<<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/120618>> [accessed 9 January 2019].

<sup>18</sup> Richard Garnett, 'Fox, Caroline (1819–1871)', *Dictionary of National Biography*  
<<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10019>> [accessed 21 September 2018]; Thomas Hudson Beare, 'Bazalgette, Sir Joseph William (1819–1891)', *Dictionary of National Biography*  
<<https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780192683120.013.1787>> [accessed 21 September 2018]; Humphrey Davy Rolleston, 'Garrod, Sir Alfred Baring (1819–1907)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*  
<<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33337>> [accessed 21 September 2018]. Emphases mine.

<sup>19</sup> On this, see also John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 23.

honest private soldier came,' she said, 'for *the first time* in contact with that of their [his] sovereign and their [his] queen.'<sup>20</sup>

Where the phrase occurs elsewhere in the corpus, it almost universally refers to something happening 'for the first time' in that individual's life. The concern with unprecedented events (as opposed to new personal experiences) is distinctive to Lee's entry on Victoria. Despite avoiding the term itself, he asserts her modernity. It seems that the *DNB* was relatively dispassionate in its narration of people it considered minor; but when looming recent lives cast towering shadows, contributors could not resist championing their importance to posterity. This practice separated these individuals off from their generational milieu, viewing them instead as individual icons.

### **Contemporaneity and gender asymmetry in the 1819 cohort**

Any potential to find evidence of generational identity in the *DNB*'s narratives is hampered by two of its foundational principles: first, its insistently individual-based structure (something the *Oxford DNB* is trying to mitigate with group biographies), and second, its criteria for inclusion, which were ultimately focused on achievement in a public sphere.<sup>21</sup> As Goldman puts it, this 'underestimated women's contributions within the context of marriage and the family', and resulted in a notable gender asymmetry.<sup>22</sup> The 1819 cohort's *DNB* entries are replete with the term 'contemporary/ies' (26 uses), cross-referencing to other entries via such phrases as 'his contemporary at Cambridge' (the friendship between fellow-1819 births Charles Kingsley and the chemist Charles Mansfield) and 'his contemporaries at Christchurch' (Ruskin's classmates depicted in *Praeterita*). George, Duke of Cambridge is described as marking a golden jubilee of his army service in the same year as the Queen's, and (though neither entry references the other) both Kingsley and William Thomson acted as chaplains to their exact contemporary Victoria.<sup>23</sup> However, these primarily relate to male contemporaries, since as noted above, the *DNB* has entries on 172 men and only eight women born in 1819 (and Queen Victoria's entry is twelve times the length of the other seven combined). How are these individuals' achievements presented in relation to their gender,

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<sup>20</sup> Sidney Lee, 'Victoria, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India (1819–1901)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 1901 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780192683120.013.36652>> [accessed 12 September 2018]. Emphasis mine.

<sup>21</sup> On group biographies, see Harrison, p. 1185.

<sup>22</sup> Goldman, p. 122.

<sup>23</sup> Ernest Marsh Lloyd, 'George William Frederick Charles, Second Duke of Cambridge, Earl of Tipperary and Baron Culloden(1819–1904)', *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1912 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33372>> [accessed 21 September 2018].

and what can we learn from Victoria's entry in particular that might cast light on how the DNB views generational contemporaneity?

It had long been the case that 'the "Lives of Great Men" set the standard for life-writing', and *DNB* entries are structured by expectations about what (male) lives should contain.<sup>24</sup> It was common practice across the *DNB* that a man's marriage was not incorporated into the overall chronological order, but added after the account of his death. This is particularly clear in the life of 1819 birth Edmund Parkes:

Parkes died on 15 March 1876, [...] and [...] was buried by the side of his wife at Solihull, near Birmingham. In 1850 he married Mary Jane Chattock of Solihull. She died, after severe suffering, in 1873, without issue.<sup>25</sup>

Here the non-diachronic order of events is exacerbated by the lack of any pluperfect signpost such as 'he had married' or 'she had predeceased him'. This presents the marriages of most men in the sample (with the significant exception of Prince Albert) as something separate from and even irrelevant to their careers. The mention in Indian administrator William Muir's entry that his wife Elizabeth Huntly 'was identified with her husband in all his undertakings' (as well as bearing 15 children) is notable for its rarity.<sup>26</sup>

By contrast, in entries on women born in 1819, their careers are portrayed as inextricable from their domestic situations. We see this both in the structure – their marriages come in correct chronological order – and the language used. They receive praise for engaging in ostensibly masculine spheres, but that praise is often undermined. The Quaker diarist Caroline Fox (also discussed in Trev Broughton's Roundtable contribution) is described as having 'from her earliest years ... displayed great intelligence and refinement of mind'. Later in her entry, however, she is a 'gentle, spiritual, and at the same time intellectual and accomplished woman', where 'at the same time' positions gentleness and intelligence as opposites whose compatibility cannot be assumed.<sup>27</sup>

The same pattern is visible in Leslie Stephen's entry on Mary Ann Cross, née Evans (George Eliot). The entry's sources include John Cross's *The Life of George Eliot* (1885),

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<sup>24</sup> Gina Luria Walker, 'Introduction', in *The Invention of Female Biography*, ed. by Gina Luria Walker, Chawton Studies in Scholarly Editing (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 2–21 (p. 5).

<sup>25</sup> William Wilfred Webb, 'Parkes, Edmund Alexander (1819–1876)', *Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/odnb/9780192683120.001.0001/odnb-9780192683120-e-21352>> [accessed 26 September 2018]. In Mark Harrison's *ODNB* article, this is rephrased to 'He died on 15 March 1876 ... and was buried on 21 March at Solihull beside his wife, who had died three years before.' <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21352>> [accessed 11 September 2018]

<sup>26</sup> George Smith, 'Muir, Sir William (1819–1905)', *Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780192683120.013.35144>> [accessed 28 September 2018].

<sup>27</sup> Garnett.



which had represented her as ‘sombre and seraphic’, and Stephen would later go on to write a volume on Eliot in the *Men of Letters* series, reminding us of the unusual extent to which she took on a masculine authorial persona.<sup>28</sup> In his *DNB* entry, however, Stephen is at pains to fit her into the category of Woman. He writes in her entry that ‘though she had an extraordinary capacity for the assimilation of ideas, she had the feminine tendency (no one was more thoroughly feminine) to accept philosophers at their own valuation.’<sup>29</sup> That bracketed duplication goes beyond discussion of her intellectual achievements to categorize her personality in essentializing – and derogatory – gendered terms, which are thus implicitly timeless rather than modern.

Of all the eminent 1819 women in the sample, Queen Victoria’s entry exhibits the greatest incongruity between status and representation. Although Lee copes with her recency by celebrating her modernity, he deals with her agency by explicitly gendering it. He emphatically positions her within the cyclical rhythms of the domestic sphere: all but one of the cohort’s eight instances of the collocation ‘domestic life’ occur in Victoria’s entry.<sup>30</sup> Even when the adjective is absent, the implication is present: Lee muses that in 1860, ‘apart from political questions her life still knew no cloud’, construing that life predominantly as a ‘domestic’ one.<sup>31</sup> We see very clearly the challenge – experienced repeatedly by Victoria’s biographers – of how to depict her as a sovereign while preserving her self-projected image as a respectable wife and mother. Charlotte Yonge’s *The Victorian Half-Century: A Jubilee Book* (1887) similarly struggled to balance international events with the (often incidental or contrasting) life of the Queen, while Margaret Oliphant’s ‘Life of Her Majesty the Queen’ (1880) was posthumously republished in 1900 with the subtitle ‘The Domestic Life of the Queen’.<sup>32</sup> Despite the voluminous scale of Victoria’s *DNB* entry, Lee compresses her significance to a domestic scale and sphere supposedly befitting her gendered family role.

How then did Lee convey agency and action in Victoria’s life while prioritising that domestic sphere? His entry on her contains disproportionately concentrated references to sympathy: while the entry makes up a third of the total length of the 1819 cohort’s corpus,

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<sup>28</sup> Sarah Wah, “‘The Most Churlish of Celebrities’: George Eliot, John Cross and the Question of High Status’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 15.3 (2010), 370–87 (p. 377) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2010.519529>>.

<sup>29</sup> Leslie Stephen, ‘Cross, Mary Ann or Marian (1819–1880)’, *Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780192683120.013.6794>> [accessed 26 September 2018].

<sup>30</sup> The one other instance describes artist Joseph Crowley’s subject-matter, which included ‘history, domestic life, and portraiture’.

<sup>31</sup> Lee, ‘Victoria’.

<sup>32</sup> *Selected Works of Margaret Oliphant vol. 7: Writing on Biography 1862-97* ed. by Trev Broughton, general series editors Elisabeth Jay and Joanne Shattock (Pickering and Chatto, 2012). On Yonge, see Kingstone, pp. 125–35.

approximately two thirds of the words with the stem ‘sympath-’ occur in her entry (93, in comparison to a total of 46 in the rest of the cohort). We read that her ‘sympathies were with the Stuarts and the Jacobites’, about ‘her sympathy with her conservative ministers’ and ‘sympathy with her subjects’ welfare’, among many other instances. Sympathy has been a subject of much theorising in literary studies: Rae Greiner, for instance, sees a metonymic sympathy of ‘fellow-feeling’ as structurally inherent to the realist fiction of George Eliot, and the sympathy in Queen Victoria’s entry similarly generates mutual sympathy.<sup>33</sup> It sometimes refers to Victoria’s need for sympathy, for example after Albert’s death. But sympathy also begets itself: ‘One of [her grief’s] most permanent results was to sharpen her sense of sympathy ... ; no widow in the land, in whatever rank of life, had henceforth a more tender sympathiser than the queen’.<sup>34</sup> Here it becomes reciprocal, a bond between monarch and subject. This pattern of sympathetic exchange suggests mutual experience between generational contemporaries.

This mutuality is, however, not situated in an equal power relationship. It is part of a paternalistic – though feminised – monarchical benevolence. Robert Vischer views sympathy (in contrast to empathy) as intrinsically hierarchical, and Lee presents Victoria’s sympathy as something she deigns to bestow. Its function becomes clearer alongside another keyword in Queen Victoria’s entry: ‘visit’. Of the 201 uses across the cohort, 150 are in her entry. This frequency reminds us of what John Plunkett has described as the ‘unprecedented number of regional tours, foreign visits, and civic engagements’ undertaken by the royal couple, but Victoria’s visits also show a striking alignment with the sympathy ascribed to her. Plunkett suggests that visits to areas hitherto ungraced by royal recognition, such as Manchester (which had not yet been granted city status when Victoria and Albert visited in 1851), were a sign of ‘respect [for] northern industrialism.’<sup>35</sup> We see the two key terms come together when Lee tells us that ‘in 1898 she indicated the course of her sympathies by thrice visiting at Netley Hospital the wounded men from India and the Soudan [sic].’ These two keywords have similar functions, acting as substitutes for action. Sympathy is an internal response; visiting is brief, perhaps ineffectual but undeniably symbolic, a core part of what Plunkett describes as Victoria’s new ‘civic publicness’.<sup>36</sup> This British monarch ruled more of the

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<sup>33</sup> Rae Greiner, ‘Thinking of Me Thinking of You: Sympathy versus Empathy in the Realist Novel’, *Victorian Studies*, 53.3 (2011), 417–26 (p. 425) <<https://doi.org/10.2979/victorianstudies.53.3.417>>; Rae Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Lee, ‘Victoria’.

<sup>35</sup> Plunkett, pp. 13, 43.

<sup>36</sup> Plunkett, p. 14.

world's surface than any of her predecessors, but her executive powers were concomitantly more constrained. What she offered instead was what, according to Rohan Maitzen, gained prominence in nineteenth-century historiography: the almost imperceptible 'indirect agency' that was 'consistent with women's accepted form of power: influence.'<sup>37</sup>

The 'gradual revolutions' this indirect agency could achieve might be generated by discreetly influential women, or by multiple anonymous but potentially representative individuals. Lee insisted in a 1896 *Cornhill* article on the *DNB* that individuals were only eligible for inclusion who were 'to a decisive degree distinguishable from their neighbours': no man (his term) could be included for being 'a devoted husband and father', because these characteristics, 'however meritorious, are practically indistinguishable from those of thousands' of others.<sup>38</sup> However, in the case of Victoria – thrust into greatness by birth rather than by her actions – he visibly undermines his own rule. He includes her due to dynastic and political status, but goes on to emphasize the very indirectness of her agency. Maitzen traces how the nineteenth-century growth of social history could also enable new forms of women's history, since both put emphasis on indirect agency as a mechanism of historical change.<sup>39</sup> In Lee's entry on Victoria we see the opposite move, as he ties this woman's history to that of her subjects and contemporaries.

## Conclusions

The *DNB* contributors writing on the 1819 cohort had to deal with the challenges of narrating very recent lives. One result is that where autobiographical material existed, the entries relied to a surprising degree on the narrative structures in which the subjects themselves envisaged their lives. Across the cohort overall, however, and in linguistic terms, the *DNB* tried to resist hostages to fortune. Contributors avoided present-minded uses of the term 'modern', and instead indicated subjects' modernity through the more indisputable temporal measurement 'the first time'. Corpus linguistic analysis also demonstrates discrepancies among the 1819 cohort (as across the *DNB*) between the representation of male and female subjects. The *DNB* was male-dominated in its contributors and its subjects, and the 1819 cohort is no exception. Contributors' discomfort with applying the conventions of the male biographical entry to women can be seen most clearly in Lee's entry on Queen Victoria.

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<sup>37</sup> Rohan Amanda Maitzen, *Gender, Genre, and Victorian Historical Writing* (New York: Garland, 1998), p. 40.

<sup>38</sup> Lee, 'National Biography', p. 261.

<sup>39</sup> Maitzen, p. 199.

It was not in the *DNB* staff's aims – or perhaps ability – to represent this or any cohort in generational terms. The practical process of compiling the *Dictionary*, taking place across more than fifteen years and ordered by the vagaries of the alphabet rather than chronology, acts structurally to minimize any cross-cohort unity of representation. Any generational affiliations among the 1819 cohort's entries can only be seen by juxtaposing texts never designed to be read consecutively. Nonetheless, analysing that cross-section as a corpus can reveal shared patterns of representation. These stem in part from these individuals' status as exact contemporaries, and in part from the overlap between their lives and those who wrote about them.

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